

SACRED VESTMENTS

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1975 lecture with slides¹

The conventional vestments of Christian clergy don't concern us here, because all authorities agree that they are late, that they are of pagan origin, adopted late by the church. No one understands -- they're fourth century at best.

The basic equipment of the Catholic clergy, for example, is a dark brown or purplish-brown surplice, meaning "which covers the skin garments." Super pellicam used to cover a skin garment, and you know what it is now; it seemed to become an ordinary dark brown dress for the ordinary Roman day worker, ordinary clothes of a Roman citizen, not of the nobility. In fact, you remember that the early Christians used to be made fun of because their leaders did not wear special clothes in public. These special vestments were inherited at a later time.

Then the stole goes with it. The stole is strictly a gift given by the emperor, first by Constantine to Pope Sylvester as a personal gift, following the old Persian custom. The king gives a congratulatory robe -- that's the stole. He gave it to other bishops too, and they started passing it around after the 4th century. But it's admitted by everyone to be of purely pagan origin. So is the cappachon (cope), the ancient _____ or pugilatus; an archaic _____, which went with it, as well as the cap (the camelaucium). Constantine offered Sylvester the imperial crown to wear, but Sylvester refused it. So he did give him a white cap formed like a Phrygian cap, which he put on his head with his own hands, and which was worn by the bishop and his successors in procession as a mark of royal favor. A similar accoutrement is a dortelsus??, which later on became the bishop's mitre -- but none of this really concerns us.²

The liturgical colors are first given significance in the 9th century. The Roman clerics say, the devout Catholics say, the great authorities on this say that they have absolutely no antique or sacred Christian background. They are not ancient and they are not sacred in the church at all in themselves. The first explanation of them was given by Iragamus?? III, who died in the beginning of the 13th century. Of that Ullmann says in the most recent book on the Roman rite, in which he tries to discover a reason for them, that white is festive, red is for martyr's days, black is for penance, and green for non-festival days -- all of which is logical enough, but the point is that the innocent must work out the answers for themselves. The key to the whole thing has been lost. They don't have anything.

So the Christian robes don't concern us, the conventional ones. But the apocalyptic (the Jewish and Christian), which scholars such as Vasco Ponsaro?? [Catanzaro??] only began to take seriously around 1960, and which were totally ignored before 1948, tells a different story. These writings have a great deal to say about certain holy garments and their nature and significance. What they say is in closest agreement with the oldest writings of the Egyptians and

¹ Tape transcript edited by F.A.R.M.S. Staff.

² In general, see Ferdinando Cabrol & Henrico Leclerq, eds., Relliquiae Liturgicae Vetustissimae, Monumenta Ecclesiae Liturgicae I (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1913).

Babylonians, for that matter, taking us into a world which has been completely forgotten until our own day, and introducing us to concepts in modern times first made known to the world by Joseph Smith.

In the Appendix to the book on the Egyptian endowment, we cite the Pistis Sophia,³ a very early Christian writing. Well, it's written in the third century, but it's described as if it belongs to forty-day literature.⁴ The Lord spoke to the disciples after the resurrection. He formed a prayer circle (the disciples quote here) with his "disciples and their wives, stood around behind Jesus, who himself stood at the altar, thus facing, as it were, the four corners of the world, with his disciples who were all clothed in garments of linen." Jesus proceeded to give the prayer (Pistis Sophia IV, 353:16-22 [136]).⁵

By way of introduction, I ought to mention that the Pistis Sophia says it's derived from Second Jeu, and that Second Jeu was a book written originally by Enoch and then hidden up in the cleft of a rock (Pistis Sophia II, 247:4-7 [99]; III, 349:15-20 [134]).⁶

Second Jeu says: "All the apostles clothed in linen garments formed a circle, foot to foot"(Second Jeu 114:10-15 [47]),⁷ and Jesus, taking the place of Adam, proceeded to instruct them in all the necessary ordinances. The point is, when they formed a prayer circle, they always mentioned "clothed in their garments" or "clothed in white linen." Next the passage we cited from Cyril of Jerusalem at the last item in the Appendix to my book.⁸ This is the fullest description we have, the only definite mention we have of particular garments, and we see why it was not well known and was not followed through: "Yesterday, immediately upon entering, you removed your street clothes. And that was the image of putting off the old man and his works. . . . And may that garment, once put off, never be put on again!" (2:2) "As Christ was baptized, and after his baptism . . . went forth to confront the Adversary, so you, after your holy baptism and mystic anointing [see, the washing and anointing], were clothed in a protective garment, ["armor of the Holy Ghost," he called it], to stand against the opposing . . . power" (3:4). "Having put

³ Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment (SLC: Deseret Book, 1975), pp. 273-278.

⁴ See Nibley, "Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum," Vigiliae Christianae, 20 (1966), 1-24 (FARMS Reprint N-EVA), for full discussion of the literature.

⁵ As arranged and translated in Carl Schmidt and Violet MacDermot, Pistis Sophia (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 706-707; similarly in Second Jeu, 99:6-9 [42], and following sections, as translated and arranged by Schmidt & MacDermot, The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex (Brill, 1978), pp. 126-127 (also Schmidt, Texte und Untersuchungen, 8:99 [p. 54 (40)]).

⁶ Schmidt & MacDermot, Pistis Sophia, pp. 494-495, 698-699.

⁷ Schmidt & MacDermot, Books of Jeu, pp. 156-157 (pp. 66ff [53g ff], in Schmidt, Texte und Untersuchungen, 8:114, cited in Nibley, BYU Studies, 19:46-47 = FARMS Reprint N-EAR).

⁸ Nibley, Message, pp. 279-283 (= Mystagogikai Katacheseis).

off the old man's garments of sorrow, you now celebrate by putting on the Lord -- the garments of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:10). "Having been baptized in Christ, having put on Christ [notice the imagery that follows; you put on Christ, you put on the new man, you put on the new body; this is very closely connected with the putting on of clothes], you will put on Christ like a garment. You come to resemble the Son of God" (3:1).

The next day he says: "After you have put off the old garments and put on those of spiritual white, you should keep them always thus spotless white. This is not to say you must always go around in white clothes [these clothes were real; furthermore, we know of the baptismal garments, we have seen pictures of them], rather, that you should always be clothed in what is really white and glorious" (4:8). Then he cites Isaiah 61:10 that "my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation." This is the fullest of early Christian references to the vestments. But you notice here that they're not vestments in the modern sense at all. They are worn by all Christians; they're not worn all the time, and not as a sign of clerical vocation within the church . . . not as a public sign.

The combination of the items that makes up the full clothing behind this comes from the description of the high priestly garments at the beginning of the 28th chapter of Exodus. Very recently in Jerusalem they produced a magnificent book based on an attempt to reconstruct the kelim, the supillectila, the implements, and equipment of the temple as described, and the priestly garments. At the end of this book is the part that describes them in detail.⁹ In this particular passage there is a general assemblage (listing), and then a description of what the articles are:

"Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother," the Lord tells Moses (Exodus 28:2), lekabod uletip'aret "both for glory and for magnificence," to give an impression, to fill one with awe, to give you the words they use there. And the Lord instructed Moses to say to all the people of "thoughtful-mindedness," and "intelligent" people, "that they shall do so, and make such garments for Aaron, for holiness, and for his priesthood, to represent his priesthood to me" (Exodus 28:3). So these are priesthood garments here, and this is what they consist of: "And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an 'epod [the much disputed ephod!], and the me'il," a "cloak, a covering, a long garment"; "and a ketonet," the "shirt"; and "a tashbets," which is a checkerboard, a thing of elaborately worked embroidery, or something like that; "a mitre"; the word for "mitre" is mitsnepet, "a turban," "a round cap"; "and a girdle" or "sash": "and these garments they shall make holy for Aaron, thy brother, and for his sons, to serve me in the priesthood" (Exodus 28:4).

So they break them down here, according to the latest study. Here we have shesh, your "white linen." They must be white linen -- both the ketonet, or "shirt," which is of white linen, and the pants that go along with them (Ex 39:28). Then, what is the ephod? This is what they say the ephod is, because this is the one that falls down. We have more descriptions of this: they have it on the two shoulders, and so forth, tied with the knots. Everything is tied, you understand that -- never any buttons here; everything must be tied;

⁹ Moshe Levine, The Tabernacle: Its Structure and Utensels, trans. Esther J. Ehrman, et al. (Tel Aviv: Melechet ha-Mishkan, 1969), from the 1968 Hebrew Mele'khet ha-Mishkan: Tabnit ha-Mishkan veKelav.

and this is their speculative reconstruction of the ephod. The ephod is nearly always rendered . . . well, they render it "apron" here, actually. And here is the ephod, and here is the me'il, and this is the covering of the garment of the ephod, and this is the ephod, or apron. Because of that word sabib (Ex 28:31-34), I think it must be somehow embroidered. And there he is in the full outfit here; not so full either. There's from the back. That's the breastplate; that's different.

Now here's a closeup of what he's wearing. It gives a description of the cap here: "and you shall make a mitsnepet shesh" -- of white linen (Ex 28:39). Mitsnepet means a "turban," or something, wrapped around about with white linen, and this is only worn by the high priest. "This gold band shall be of pure gold," it says (Ex 28:36), and this is worn only by the high priest, and he wears it on top of others. The book has a note which tells us: "there are three levels at which the garment is worn: one, the high priest, one on the Day of Atonement, and one, the ordinary." This is the cap that everyone wears, as it is . . . it has a high priest band on it.

These are speculative reconstructions, the best that they can do. But we have fuller descriptions in combinations. The fullest, and one of the most instructive, is that from the Testament of Levi from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.¹⁰ Levi goes to Beit-el (the house of God) after he's received his trials and test; he goes to the place of the temple to receive the ordinances -- that's Beit-el, the house of God. That's the same place where Joseph Smith saw the ladder representing the three degrees of glory -- the temple.¹¹ I render this very literally. It goes this way: Levi goes to Beit-el, and there he says, "and I saw seven men, clothed in white, who said to me, 'arise and put on ['endusai] the stole'" (8:2).¹² This is a holy, protective leather garment. Originally it had to be leather -- the first one -- and they associate this with Pericles' lion skin that he always wore, and also the leopard skin which an Egyptian priest must always wear over one shoulder. It protected Pericles when he went through the world on his 12 labors as the benefactor of the human race; it was a lot of risk and he needed protection. Well, what gave it to him was the stole. Later this became the imperial stole which the emperor gave to Pope Sylvester; but at this time it is that holy protective leather garment of the priesthood.

There were additional items too. First, there was the stephan: Anything that surrounds or encircles the head -- crown, wreath, or chaplet (following the form used here) -- very probably that is the stephan. The main emphasis of the word is that it crowned the head, and was round, and surrounded or encircled it. Then there was the logion tes syneseos, that is, the oracle-breastplate -- the Urim and Thummin of understanding. There was the podere, a

¹⁰ For a recent translation of the Testament of Levi, see J. H. Charlesworth, ed., The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, I (Doubleday, 1983), 788-795; cf. Jubilees 32:1.

¹¹ Evening & Morning Star, I:3 (August 1832) = HC, I:283 = TPJS, 12-13.

¹² This is a Greek text, and there are some interesting studies detailing each of these items today; you'll find the sources for them in the last edition of the Liddell and Scott, the big one now: H. G. Liddell & R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, 9th ed. (Oxford, 1940/ with supplement, 1968).

long overall robe that hung down to the feet and went over one shoulder. This is the basic robe of truth. There was the petalon; the petalon was some garment made of wild olive leaves, signifying faithfulness. Next came the zone, or "girdle," also called mitra, as worn by a wrestler -- a band of sin, of 'echema, "firmness." So, the girdle is a symbol of strengthening, you see. Last of all, he received the 'ephoud of prophecy (8:2).

Each of the seven angels, the seven men in white, as he placed an item of clothing upon Levi, said: "From this time, thou art a high priest of the Lord, thou and thy seed after thee, for all eternity. And the first anointed me with holy oil and gave me the staff of judgment. And the second washed me with pure water and gave me bread and wine in the Holy of Holies, and placed upon me the holy and glorious garment [the leather ~~stole he used again~~, the protective garment]. The third placed about me a linen robe like an ephod" (8:2-6). This mention of a linen robe shows that the ephod is not that little brightly colored plaid thing; though the plaid, the first tunica, the apron is universal. The Scotch plaid is the same item worn as the Arabic, qumbaz; it's a sacred tribal garment, a garment of identification. The tribe of Levi still has it, but like the Scottish clans, your plaid is the crest which is on your arrow, woven two ways. Your plaid identifies you; it identifies your tribe, and your arrow after you've shot it. Thus, you can get it back again so you can claim your victim, so you can claim whether you shot him. Otherwise there'd be a lot of fighting.

The same thing was worn by the early Greeks, and the same thing you will find everywhere: this very archaic plaid, all around the Mediterranean . . . the plaid and bagpipes, they go together. The Scotch wear them; the Irish wear them. It's a very ancient dress. The qumbaz of the earliest Samaritan priests first was made of the leaves of the ficus religiosus, the fig tree. Later on it was made of leather; they substituted it later. The usual process for this substitution is: the leaves, then leather -- Robert Isler made quite an examination of this¹³ -- and then last of all, linen. They reproduced it in linen. Well, anyway, Levi is given the glorious garment, and the third angel "put on the linen robe like an ephod, and the fourth put a girdle or sash about me like a belt," homoian porfurai (8:6-7). He says, "like a belt" -- "resembling a belt." "And the fifth gave me the olive branch of prosperity, a flourishing state of body [piotetos], and the sixth placed a stephan around my head" [this is an interesting thing, the stephan]. The seventh one tied on the stephan on the shoulder -- it tied on the priestly surrounding -- and he filled my hand with incense material [thumiamatos] to show that I was to serve as a priest of the Lord. And he said to me, 'Levi, thy seed is chosen to have authority in three things, in similitude of a semeion of the glory of the Lord to come: 1) he who first believeth, Adam, who was the first to hold the priesthood, in degree, love, and ministry, and there shall be no greater than he, 2) the priesthood of Aaron or Levi, and 3) the priesthood to come, bringing a new name. For a king shall arise out of Judah and establish a new priesthood after the manner of the Gentiles which shall be unto all nations. His parousia, his glorious coming, cannot be told; it's secret, as an exalted prophet of the seed of our Father Abraham'" (8:8-15). And Jacob awoke. And he says, when he awoke, "I hid these things in my heart and told them to no man"

¹³ Eisler, YESOUS BASILEUS OU BASILEUSAS, II (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1930), pp. 33-38, cited in Nibley, N-EVA, n. 78.

(8:18-19). These things were very secret, and they're not communicated to us, you see, in the Old Testament. It's a fuller description of the garments than we find in the 28th chapter of Exodus. The significance, the symbolism of some of these things is explained, but it's top secret -- so much for the Testament of Levi.

Jerome, who lived 15 years in Palestine, was more acquainted with the early church than any other man of his time. He said, "the priestly garments are full of cosmic symbolism. But we don't know what they are. They have some celestial and divine meaning."

In the Wisdom of Solomon: "For upon Aaron's long high-priestly robe was the whole world pictured, and the glories of the Father were engraved upon the four rows of precious stones his majesty" (18:24). Well, let's move on here.

The Zohar¹⁴ tells us that the same marks were in the mantle of the temple. I want to show you a recent discovery regarding these marks here: In 1966, in the Bar Kokhba Cave, on the Dead Sea, they found a cave of scrolls, and also a lot of old garments, remarkably well preserved. Some of them had the gamma patterns on them. Here's one of them with the gamma pattern. This to show how these patterns stay around and are interpreted in various ways. This was a part of a garment, and the discoverer, Professor Yadin, wrote about it, saying, "An amusing development in early Christian art . . . [these date from the time of the Bar Kokhba -- early part of the 2nd century]. "An amusing development in early Christian art can now be better explained: in many of the famous mosaics in Rome, Ravenna and Naples, especially from the 5th century AD and later [but earlier also], one can see that all the mantles of the Biblical figures are depicted with a single pattern similar to the Greek gamma."¹⁵ It's a little thing with a right angle -- a square. Some good examples, here are the most famous . . . this is 4th century, from Ravenna; some of you may have seen these. These are rather small reproductions but showing heavenly figures. There's the gammadia there. The pattern is on the edges of the robe, but it's quite common. You can find hundreds of examples of it in earliest Christian life. You don't find them later because by then they're transferred to the altar cloth, but originally they belonged to the veil.

Yadin says: "It is known that Christian artists used earlier Jewish illustrations and particularly illuminated Bibles in order to emulate their motifs. By that time the differences between the two types of mantles had been forgotten, and the gammas appeared in full . . . , they may have assumed that all patterns were gammas," but all we find is these marks. An especially holy person will have this mark on him. "The pattern ultimately became the most popular in the altar-cloth of the Christian church, and even the altar-cloth itself came to be known as the gammadia."¹⁶ We find two types of early Jewish garments. He is amused by them because, he says, the Christians didn't understand them. But was this the ultimate explanation of the Jews? Do we

¹⁴ See the English translation of The Zohar by Harry Sperling & Maurice Simon, 5 vols. (N.Y.: Rebecca Bennet Publ., 1958).

¹⁵ Yigael Yadin, Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Last Jewish Revolt Against Imperial Rome (N.Y.: Random House, 1971), pp. 76,79, and the accompanying plates.

¹⁶ Yadin, Bar-Kokhba, p. 79.

have earlier examples than the first centuries here? The Christian form is not original. What was the original Jewish usage? An amusing development? Yes, it was an amusing Jewish development from earlier forms, much earlier. We have the same thing in Egyptian garments. Here we get some interesting ones. I have some reproductions of them here.

We should first point out that there are certain marks on the garment, marks of recognition for the initiated, and the marks themselves always have this cosmic symbolism. There are a great many references to this in the Pistis Sophia. For example: "I found an ordinance inscribed upon my garment" ('enduma), says the hero, "written in five words. It is the garment which belonged to you in the preexistence, from the beginning, and when your time is come on the earth, you will remove it and return home to us." But he says, "In this garment, it had the five marks," which he calls xaragme, meaning "cuts" or "marks" (Pistis Sophia I, 18:7-10 [10]; 20:12-13 [11]).¹⁷ These are referred to often. He says there are three sets, and they refer to three degrees of glory (~~18:22~~). The second glory has the marks and all the glory of the name, and the third garment has all the mysteries of the ordinances. That's the doctrine of the three garments of Jesus, and the five xaragme, and other references to it. In the newly discovered Kephalia -- that's a new one-- these are the five mysteries that, incidentally, they considered the strings-- which later became the tsitsits -- they considered them the fifth sign or mark, because they were very special. These five mysteries, these five tokens, first originated among the Godhead. This is what the Manichaean Kephalia (it's in Coptic) tells us, which was discovered in Egypt around 1965, so it's quite a recent find. They were brought to this world, being preached by an apostle. Men learned them and established them in their midst. These five things, five tokens, are the marks of the church. The first is the greeting of peace, by which one becomes a son of peace. The second is the grasp of the right hand, by which he is brought into the church. The third is the embrace by which he becomes "a son," and editors would assume that means "of the church."

The Odes of Solomon, discovered in 1906, said, "Thy seal is known, and all thy creatures know it, and thy hosts possess it, and the elect angels are clad with it." Being clad with certain signs here are the five archons (4:7-8). Discovered around 1913, the Coptic Bartholomew says Adam and Eve had certain characters or marks written upon their garments as signs of the Holy Ghost. They were written in seven places.¹⁸ And the Pastor of Hermas¹⁹ mentions it; Sophia again.

In 1840, they discovered a princess in Thebes that had almost the same

¹⁷ See generally, Schmidt & MacDermot, Pistis Sophia, pp. 34-41, and passim.

¹⁸ Nibley, BYU Studies, 19:45-47,58, citing Wilmart & Tisserant, Revue biblique, 10 (1913), 321-327; see also summary and bibliography in M. R. James, trans., Apocryphal New Testament (Oxford, 1924/1953), pp. 181-186; on Adam & Eve, p. 184.

¹⁹ English translation of Hermas and other early Church Fathers can be found in the multi-volumed Ante-Nicene Fathers (reprint, Eerdmans, 1950).

name as the Joseph Smith princess, Katumin,²⁰ she was called Karamata. It shows, as Petrie describes it, the compass and the square on either breast. Schaeffer in 1906 discovered one, among other things, and here are the pictures of the two of them. You see a compass here, and a square, and these two together. By 1960, quite a number of them had been found, and he?? was able to generalize. He says that the square here probably means, rectitude, uprightness; and the compass, which is hung in that position, they assume, because it has a mark on the top of it, means making equilibrium. It means balance or measure in all things. So the Egyptians had these same marks, these gammaia marks. Their original positions were located on either breast. In Asia Minor; a lot of them have been found in Palestine in graves there. Rome, Seville, and Genoa, St. Joseph, 1930, they found some. But they say they're all of Egyptian origin. Not necessarily; here are some found at Heliopolis, Egypt, that are reproduced by Cook in his work on glyphs,²¹ and so forth. Well, this shows how these things get around. They're lost; they become simply designs; nobody understands what they are; nobody understands particularly what the words mean anymore. So we speculate as we try to reconstruct them.

Remember, when the temple was destroyed, the priesthood went, and the robes of the priesthood disappeared (or their ministrations), so they don't bother about that anymore.

There are various aspects of the garments we will talk about here. But I think it's safer to generalize at this point. Incidentally, when the ordinances were lost, the garment became purely allegorical. There is a great deal about it allegorically; the famous literature of Spain, in Mozarabic Spain, and earlier than that, there is the Latin poem called "The Lorica."²² Lorica being the garment which is described as a protective apron, and so forth. But the garment became purely allegorical. This whole function is theatrical. It became clumsy, costly, ornate, and impractical -- a showpiece. Constantine at Nicea is a good example of that. His garments were completely encrusted with jewels. So, says Eusebius, when sunlight hit him -- it was carefully prearranged that sunlight would hit him when he stepped out and appeared before the assembly -- you would have thought it was an angel of heaven. He was painted up like a doll, his face all painted like a mask, and so forth, and he moved like an Egyptian pharaoh.²³

But at the other extreme, of course, you say that the garment is all unique, that it was the real thing, that it was magic. You had the garment,

²⁰ In, for example, the comments accompanying the Papyrus 'Amen-hotep characters: Kirtland Egyptian Manuscripts ##6 (p. 3), and 7 (p. 1), in Joseph Smith's "Valuable Discovery Notebook." See FARMS Reprint N-MEN.

²¹ Arthur B. Cook, Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1914-1940).

²² Leo Wiener, Contributions Toward a History of Arabico-Gothic Culture, I (N.Y.: Neale Publ., 1917), 60-73.

²³ Eusebius, Life of Constantine, III, 10 (A.D. 325) = Migne, PG, 20:1063-1066; note the similar appearance of King Agrippa I at Caesarea (A.D. 44), also described by Eusebius, Church History, II, 10, 1-5, following Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 19, 8, 2 (343-345), and Acts 12:19-23.

and that was all you needed. The magic is not the garment. The garment is not magic. Later on, they said that all you need in order to have Moses' divine power is his staff, the staff of Aaron. Or, that if you could find the Seal of Solomon, then you would have the power. We know that these things work only according to faith. You see, in Israel, as with the Nephites and Lamanites also, they sinned on both sides, just like the esoteric and exoteric. They either over-dressed in fine clothes and all manner of costly apparel, or else they ran around like the Nephites and Lamanites did in their times of degeneracy without anything on at all. It's equally offensive because it's a vulgar display of your person in either case. If you over-dress or under-dress, you're just showing yourself off. This distracts from the purpose of the whole thing.

The putting on of the body is not only compared with the putting on of the garment, but it's accompanied by an act. A newborn babe receives his swaddling clothes in a ritual -- the baptismal garment of the new Christian. The garment was regarded as an extension of the body. It's like an aura. It is an expression of personality, and it's a necessary protection. The thing about garments, as you know, is that they belong to those symbols that are more than symbols, like water and food. Just as water cleanses symbolically, it cleanses and revives and purifies literally; it also is the water death -- overwhelming; you have to pass through it, and so forth. It really does those things -- it really does refresh, really does revive, really does cleanse, really does soothe, and it really can drown you. With a garment, it's a sign of protection, of dignity, of modesty; it's not just a sign of those things, it actually does impart those things.

There's a very early Syrian hymn on baptism, for example, that says though you're stripping off the garment outside you, "do not put off the garment within you when you've been baptized. For if you continue to be clad in this, the storms and trials of life shall not prevail against you. Beware of the enemy, lest he strip you as he did Adam, and make you an alien to the kingdom." It propounds this idea of a protection necessary in this world, and so forth. We have many passages regarding that. A famous one from the Odes of Solomon: "I stripped off and cast it from me [the earthly garment], and the Lord renewed me in His garment, and I possessed meat by light and from above, he gave me rest" (11:10-12). Or from another Ode of Solomon: "I put off darkness and clothed myself in light, and my soul acquired a body, free from sorrow or pain" (21:3-4), as the passing from one state of existence, one body to another, is always compared with the putting on and putting off of garments. It's accompanied by such. There's an interesting one from the Bodmer Papyrus. This is a newly discovered one, a very new one. It says an interesting thing: "The garment is as necessary and therefore as real a part of the body as food is." Food isn't really a part of the body, but when you eat it, it does become so. It's a symbol; it gives you strength, and so forth, and it does become a part of you. It's the same thing with the garment. It's like food -- it's extraneous; it's out there; you can acquire it and put it away, if you want. But at the same time, it's a real part of you, so intimate. They used to think that the contact with it had a definite significance.

There's a wonderful passage in the Mandaean Hymn of the Pearl,²⁴ when the hero goes back to heaven. They had a lot to say about the heavenly garment.

²⁴ Nibley, Message, pp. 267-272.

When you left the world above, every time you passed from one state of initiation to another, you changed garments. We make some change in the garment or some alteration -- you add something on in each state of initiation. In the Pearl, when he starts going back to heaven -- there is this old doctrine which you meet quite often -- that when we left our heavenly home, we left our garment up there -- our spotless garment -- and we want to return to it, to be able to wear it again. It's now being kept for us in reserve up there, and one of the great tragedies of messing things up in this life is that you won't be able to go back and wear it. Of course, it stands for other things. But they yearn to go home to their garment and return to it. When the prince goes back to his garment laid up in heaven, he hurries homeward, yearning for his garment. The garment and the toga were wrapped and they were sent down by his parents. He put them on half-way -- he was so eager -- and he suddenly says, as if in a mirror, "the garment was my very first. It fitted me; it would fit no one else." But all of a sudden it glittered and it recalled to his mind all his former glory, because there were signs on it. He returned to his garment.

Well, this is almost an obsession with the forty-day literature, that is the literature of Christ after the resurrection. He sits with the apostles and he says to Aaron, "Don't touch me, I'm not in the right garments yet." Remember, he left his garment in the tomb. They found it folded there in the tomb. There was an angel sitting there, and at the foot of the couch on which he'd been lying there was the garment neatly folded. He was gone and he had put on another one. This was the one he was wearing when Mary met him, according to a very old version, and he told her not to touch him. He says, "I'm going to my father and receive the garment that's waiting for me." Then he talks to the apostles a lot, and he says, "When I've finished my work here, and I've had my last meeting with you, then I will put on that other garment. I can't until I'm full with my earthly mission here." Then he will go back and put on his garment. This is the idea of returning to one's robes of glory.

This is clearly reflected, incidentally, in the Book of Moses in the expression "clothed upon with glory" (Moses 7:3). Why the insistence on that particular word? Enoch says, "I was clothed upon with glory. Therefore I could stand in the presence of God." Otherwise he couldn't. It's the garment that gives confidence in the presence of God; you don't feel too exposed. That garment is the garment that awaits you above. It is the official garment of heaven, the garment of divinity. So as Enoch says, "I was clothed upon with glory, and I saw the Lord," just as Moses saw Him, "face to face, . . . and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence" (Moses 1:2). In the Slavonic Enoch, discovered in 1892, we read, "the Lord spoke to me with his own mouth: 'Take Enoch and remove his earthly garments and anoint him with holy oil and clothe him in his garments of glory.' And I looked at myself, and I looked like one of the glorious ones" (II Enoch 3:10). No different from them in appearance, he's qualified now. It's in the manner of initiation. He can go back and join them because he receives this particular garment of glory.

And in the Apocalypse of Moses, another recent discovery, Adam, we're told, after being washed three times in the Acherusian Lake, was conducted back

to the third heaven. Then he was clothed in linen garments and anointed with oil, and he was prepared to go into the presence of the Father.²⁵

Then in the Apocalypse of Elijah too, we read, "Then will Gabriel and Uriel portray the fiery columns. They will come down as in a column from heaven and they will lead them into the holy land. And they will settle them there so that they may eat of the tree of life and wear a white garment, and there they will not thirst" (5:5-6). So this return to the garment has a great deal of that motif.

The Acts of Judas Thomas, another recent discovery, contains the famous Psalm of Judas Thomas: "They shall be in the glory, and they shall be in the joy into which some enter. And they shall put on shining garments and shall be clothed with the glory of the Lord, and they shall praise the living Father of whose food they have received which never has any impurity in it, and they will drink of eternal life."²⁶ There you get your food and your garment together, and so forth.

There's a puzzling passage in the Coptic Gospel of Phillip, which was found in the 1950s, where it says that in this world, our garments are inferior. The garment is inferior to the person (Nag Hammadi Codex II,3, 57:19-22).²⁷ Well, let's hope it is. That's why we shouldn't try to boost ourselves too much by putting on the fine apparel. But in the next world there won't be that distinction. The garment will be so much a part of us, we won't think of it. People wonder why, when the Angel Moroni came, Joseph Smith said, "I could see into his bosom," and saw he was wearing nothing else but a very white cloak, sort of, over him (JS-H 31). Well, it wasn't necessary. For one thing, you see, he was not coming to minister in the ordinances. For another thing, Joseph Smith had not been, himself, introduced to the garments. He had not received his endowments. There is no reason in the world why Moroni shouldn't come to him informally and in a very easy and relaxed outfit.

Well, there's so much written about garments. Hugo Gressmann, who wrote about this in all the Hebrew literature, says, "the garment of linen is the cultic representation of the body of life."²⁸ The reason why the early Egyptians adopted linen, you see, is that **linen** won't get bugs and maggots and other things in it, whereas wood will, being organic. Leather and wool decay and smell and get bugs in them. Linen does not. Linen remains white and clean. It turns yellow; nevertheless we have thousands of pieces of linen of great antiquity from Egypt in beautiful condition, beautifully made. From the first dynasty in Egypt, we have magnificent linen, the equal, as Drioton says,

Moses Gaster, The Asatir: The Samaritan Book of the "Secrets of Moses", etc. (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1927). Compare the Coptic Bartholomew in James, Apocryphal NT, p. 165, and the ending of the Apocalypse of Paul summarized in James, p. 554 (excerpting the Apocalypse of Elijah).

²⁶ Sources in Nibley, Message, p. 267.

²⁷ See James Robinson, ed., The Nag Hammadi Library (Harper & Row/Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1977), p. 135.

²⁸ H. Gressmann, Die Lade Jahves und das Allerheiligste des Salomonischen Tempels (Berlin: Kohlhammer, 1920), ??

to any linen that could be made in France today. It's so good. But they took it very seriously.

"All the saints looked forward to the time when this garment would be removed and the heavenly garment resumed." We've given a number of quotations from that. Next, no unclean person can be clothed in the garments of glory. The investiture is always preceded by a washing and purification and anointing -- the bestowal of the special status, and the garment should be white linen. Part of the purification is the removal and discarding of the garments until then. Then an interesting rite which has recently been discovered (Jonathan Z. Smith has written on it²⁹), is the rite of trampling on the old garment. When you renew a covenant or when you turn aside and leave your old life, you take off your old clothes, trample them, and put on new ones. Well, this may be what they do, you remember, with their garments around the Title of Liberty, when "they cast their garments at the feet of Moroni, saying: We covenant with our God, that . . . he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression" (Alma 46:22). Leading the people, Moroni virtually says, "This was the garment of our father Joseph." It was the double garment, part of which had decayed and part of which had not. This story that was not known in the West until recently. The first person who ever pointed it out -- the whole story of Joseph's garment is told by Tha'labi -- where they go and trample on them, and they take their oath and say, "May we be trampled on as we trample on these garments, if we break our covenants -- if we break our oath."³⁰ Well, this practice this is well attested now. There are some other cases in which it happened too.

Here's a case in the Second Book of Jeu, a very important Coptic writing. In fact, Carl Schmidt thinks it's the most important of all early Christian writing. The Lord, after the resurrection, orders the apostles to clothe themselves in white linen robes and then he orders them to be washed again; he seals them, and then they receive fire in the spirit at their spiritual baptism (109:6 - 112:10 [62-65]). There is also an interesting note that was picked up among the Elephantine writings. In Elephantine there was a Jewish community way back in the 6th century B.C. They may have left Jerusalem at the time that Lehi did, and they got permission to build a temple there, way up the first cataract of the Nile in the sixth century, and they did. Here is a note that somebody left, which says -- this is from a priest or an officer of the temple -- he'd forgotten and left his garment in the temple annex and would his friend please be good enough to pick it up for him and bring it home. He had a special garment to put on when he went in.³¹

There's an Oxyrhynchus fragment from the 3rd to 5th century which received a good deal of notice. This is a story which is regarded as one of the authentic stories about Jesus. One of the high priests takes him to task, and saying, "What is this talk about being pure? I am pure." It's a Pharisee who

29 In Church History??

30 Tha'labi, Qissas al-Anbiya, cited in Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Mormon, chapter 17 (notes 16-17); also discussed below.

31 Ostracon, Cairo 49,624; Bezalel Porten, Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony (Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1968), p. 277.

meets him in the court of the temple and he says to Jesus, "I am pure, for I have washed in the pool of David and I have changed my old clothes and put on the white garments and being thus purified, I proceeded and I participated in the holy ordinances and handled the holy vessels." Jesus said to him, "The dogs and the pigs have bathed upstream from the pool of David where you bathed. You anointed yourself, but the whores and the tax collectors do that. They bathe and anoint themselves and put on fair garments, but does that cause them to be pure?"³² This is an important point. Jesus is not making fun of the purification and so forth, but he is saying that the garment is inadequate without the thing that it signifies, of course. It won't protect you unless you're true and faithful to your covenant, and only to the degree to which you don't dishonor your garment has it any significance at all. Only on that condition that you don't dishonor it, that you're pure, that you are true and faithful to your covenant -- does the garment have any benefit.

On the other hand, you say, "Well, if you have these virtues, what do you need a garment for anyway?" Well, this has been commanded, and this was rather an important thing because it works both ways. The garment will teach you sobriety, and sobriety will sanctify it and make it meaningful.

Here is another one. A Coptic missal published in 1915, saying in effect: "Let us put on the splendid apparel, suitable to the honor that befits this great event this day [that is to say, righteousness and charity and judgment and every good quality, for this is the apparel that pleases God]. Let us never permit ourselves to be stripped bare through carelessness. Woe unto those whom the bridegroom shall see without the wedding garment when he comes."³³

The Acts of Thomas, another new one: "To the wedding feast I have been invited, and I have put on white garments. May I be worthy of them. May I remember to keep my light bright that I may keep its oil," etc.³⁴ Another very important writing is the so-called Gospel of Truth. It was discovered in Egypt. It's one of the Nag Hammadi papyri: "The Word of the Father clothes everyone from top to bottom, purifies, and makes them fit to come back into the presence of their Father and their heavenly mother" (Nag Hammadi Codex I,3, 23:33 - 24:7).³⁵ Well, there are many other examples.

Jerome says this: "No one can receive the vestments who has not first been cleansed, washed of all uncleanness, all impurity, nor had been first ordained and received a priesthood (et ordinatur et sacratus). And except he has been reborn as a new man in Christ (nisi cum Christo loco sum resignata) [he received baptism, in other words]). Then you may put on the linen vestments (tum induamur vesti linea)," which has nothing of death in it but is entirely the garment of life. As we see when they come out of the baptism he says, "the first thing we do to those that come out of the water, we clothe

³² James, Apocryphal NT, pp. 79-80.

³³ Encomium of Theodosius, Archbishop of Alexandria, Egypt (British Museum Oriental Manuscript 7021), in E. Budge, Miscellaneous Coptic Texts (Oxford Univ. Press, 1915/1977), pp. 915-917.

³⁴ James, Apocryphal NT, p. ??

³⁵ Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library, p. 41.

them round about (baptisme consurgintos, signis lucis investati), we cover them properly with truth and having washed away all their previous sins.

The reason for white, and this is expressed by Plato also, we find in numerous references. Plutarch and Hesiod said the Egyptians used this rationale.³⁶ And in the Thomas, the Dyer, it seems contradictory to say, "Are you washed white in the blood of the lamb?" Since when do you wash anybody white in blood? Well, the idea expressed in these documents is that if you mix all colors together, you must have a garment which can take all colors, which is perfectly white, meaning it can take any color. If you combine all colors together, all experience together, all knowledge, what you will get (if there's any light at all), is light. Of course, if you turn off the light, it will be black. But it is the light, it is the garment of light in which all colors are, all the colors of the spectrum; and that's why white is the only perfect one.

As Höpfner³⁷ says, the linen garment is in and of itself the only garment of the Egyptian priests. There are many examples of that, and some have been found.

Note that one receives the garment always "passing from one stage of existence to another." It marks the condition one is in. To change the garment is to change your condition. Therefore, it goes with the passage of initiation -- we mentioned that. Secrecy is important there.

I want to mention here the very interesting story of the faith of the garment of the priesthood -- the garment of Adam. It's quite an epoch of what happened to this garment.

Adam, when he came here, had his garment. Then he received a garment of life, when in the Garden of Eden he was gloriously clothed in 'or, and then he changed it for 'ur. 'Or and 'ur are the same word, and this has led to a great deal of trouble. 'Or is "light," 'ur is "skin." So he put off his garment of light at the Fall and had to clothe himself in a garment of skin. That's reversing the process. He lost his garment of glory with the Fall. There's a good deal about that. But I want to find out what happened to this garment. Afterward he received a leather garment which was nonetheless a glorious one, a sign of authority. Eisler calls it the garment of protection³⁸; it was very important. It was necessary to protect Adam in his exposed and fallen state. He'd gotten himself into a dangerous position in which he needed protection assurance, and so he got this kind of garment. He could no longer wear his glorious one. It's up above waiting for him now.

"Many of you who will put me on," says the Odes of Solomon, "shall not be injured. They shall possess a new world that is incorrupt" (33:12). The garment is for protection when one visits other worlds. You have to have a special garment. There's a lot about Jesus when he goes from world to world, how he changes for each one -- "when in Rome, do as the Romans do" (well, that's the explanation given). He's not to be recognized except by the

³⁶ Plutarch, Isis and Osiris, 61, 375E; 77, 382C; E at Delphi, 20, 393CD (Moralia V; cf. VIII, 4, 5, 670).

³⁷ Theodor Höpfner, Plutarch über Isis und Osiris (Prague: Orientalisches Institut, 1940-41/ Darmstadt, 1967/ Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1974), ??

³⁸ Eisler, YESOUS, II:33-38.

faithful and the righteous to whom he gives the tokens. Others are not supposed to know. So he puts on the garment of the world he's visiting. Interesting concept.

Now Philo, a very early Jewish writer at the time of Christ, tries to explain the leather garment and then he gives up. He says, in effect, "I don't understand, but I would assume that the coat of skin means the human body, because that's what Adam acquired when he fell and became human and mortal."³⁹ We have many passages on this particular leather clothing and protection. This becomes the palladium; it becomes the golden fleece (which is a garment, a skin garment, which protects you from all ill, if you have it). That's the palladium, which is held on the arm of the thing -- she holds it there, as the garment which will protect -- the overseeing, the protecting one, and she protects them with the symbol of the palladium which she holds up -- this is leather.

John Chrysostom says this garment of Adam at the same time signifies both kingship and repentance, because he's in a fallen state. They make a lot of this; there's a great John the Baptist tradition in a lot of texts about John the Baptist who went around dressed in skins, in camel's hair, in various things, in garments or skin, or in light or various interpretations. He preaches repentance because he's the voice in the wilderness, representing Adam in the dark and dreary world. There have been many studies. John Chrysostom talks about this, and the Slavic Halosis of Josephus,⁴⁰ and others. The Slavic Halosis says, "At the time there was a most wonderful man who wandered around in an uncanny sort of way." People didn't understand him -- he was like a man cast out. He compared himself to Adam in the wilderness and he wore a garment of skin and he called upon all people to repent. Furthermore he lived on a primal diet of locusts and honey. "He lived like a spirit without flesh," Josephus says. "His mouth knew no bread, even at the Passover. Wine and strong drink he would not allow in his presence. He went about exposing every form of iniquity." This was his calling and this is what it represents here. It's the garment of repentance. As a result, you find it being worn by the earliest monks everywhere. The Syrian monks wear the leather garment which they call "the garment of repentance."⁴¹

I Clement, the earliest Christian writing known for a long time after the New Testament, says, "Let us be imitators of those who in goatskins and sheepskins went about proclaiming the coming of Christ. I mean Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, among the prophets" (chapt. 17:1). So John the Baptist was just following type -- following the men who went around in goatskins and sheepskins proclaiming the coming of Christ, i.e., in a state of humility and repentance.

There is a new discovery, the Coptic Revelation to Peter,⁴² which talks about a community of saints up in the mountains that he visited. They were transfigured, but they all wore sheepskins and coats of skin. These skins

³⁹ Philo Judaeus, Questiones & Answers on Genesis, I, 53 (Gen 3:21).

⁴⁰ R. Eisler, YESOUS, II:6-8, 16.

⁴¹ Eisler, YESOUS, II:30-38.

⁴² Photocopy of article in Aegyptus in possession of author -- not available in Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library or James, Apocryphal NT.

signified that they were already dead to the things of this world. There was a whole community of them described.⁴³ Theophylactus says that James wore only one garment all his life, and it was a garment of repentance of the brother of the Lord. He never cut his hair; he was a very strict Nazirite. He says that James wore no wool, but only linen, and his hair was never cut, even though he was a very, very old man. "Why," Thomas says, "did you come to the desert?" Remember, Jesus says the same thing about John the Baptist too. "Was it to see a man in soft garments? No. Kings and the great ones wear soft garments and they will not be able to know the truth." So it's the raiment of repentance.

This takes us to Joseph's coat, which was the garment of a slave, we're told. Now, Noah exhorted the righteous, says the Book of Jubilees, to cover their shame (7:20). According to the Book of Adam,⁴⁴ it was commanded that they hide the shame of their flesh as it had been commanded in the heavenly tablets. In order to do this, Adam had what is called "the garment of mortification," like the ihram, which Moslems use the same way. It was very valuable, so it was handed down from father to son.

Here's an interesting account -- a completely unknown work, but a very valuable one, called the Combat of Adam. Satan is always trying to get this garment. It starts out with Satan trying to get it from Adam. There are a number of very old versions of the way in which the garment was stolen and faked by kings, among other of the vicissitudes of the garment. In this particular one, we're told that Satan sent one of his five friends back to Jared's cave to get the garment of Adam. He didn't get it, but he faked it and he put on a mask and he returned, wearing this mask of great beauty which fooled Jared and people into thinking that he had the real thing. He got the people to follow him, but it was a fraud.⁴⁵ For this reason, as Basil the Great says, the garments of Adam were not immediately forthcoming because they were prizes reserved only for the man who could escape Satan's fraud, whom Satan was constantly trying to get. He did not receive permission to make these public because of that particular danger. That's a tradition that Basil recalls. Furthermore, the Pistis Sophia tells about a fight for possession of the garment in heaven. They rebelled against the light, and everything was shifted to another frame reference. They tried to stay in power as long as they could, so they tried to grab the garments, but the new order came suddenly. They could not use their own contaminated stuff, so they tried to get new ones before they were kicked out (Pistis Sophia I, 104 - II, 160). Those are very dramatic stories that are told there.

The Psalm of Thomas says that "those who were not of my Father's house took up arms against me. They fought me for my holy garment, my light garment, which lightens the darkness. They tried to take it from me."⁴⁶ Then the Jasher book tells us that "after the death of Adam, the garments were given to

⁴³ Not in Robinson or James; nor is this the "Apocalypse of Paul."

⁴⁴ In J. P. Migne, Dictionnaire d'Apocryphes, 2 vols. (Paris, 1856), I:87-88.

⁴⁵ Combat of Adam in Migne, Dictionnaire d'Apocryphes, I:329ff.

⁴⁶ Cf. James, Apocryphal NT, pp. 411-414; Nibley gives sources in Message, p. 267.

Enoch, the son of Jared, and when Enoch was taken up to God, he gave them to Methuselah, his son. And at the death of Methuselah, Noah took them with him in the ark. And as they were leaving [the ark], Ham stole those garments from Noah his father, and he took them and hid them from his brothers." Then Ham secretly gave the garments to his favorite son, Cush, and handed them down in the royal line.⁴⁷ Now, this idea of the stolen garment we meet a good deal. The garment of Adam was owned also by Noah and Ram, the brother of Jared, we're told in one document, but the idea is that Ham, the father of Cainan, saw the skin garment of his father and he showed it to his brothers outside, and took it, and made copies of it, and claimed it for himself. According to Rabbi Eliezer, when Noah came to himself he saw what had happened: That Ham had stolen his garments -- the word they use for "nakedness," is the word "skin garment," the same word. "Nakedness" is simply a derived or secondary meaning. The word means "skin covering," that's what it means. Ham took it, made copies of it, and when Noah found out what he'd done, he cursed him and said, "because you grabbed it ahead of time, Ham, you can't have the priesthood until the end of time. Meanwhile, I will give this to Shem, and part of it to Japheth, but you can't have it." Why? Because he anticipated Ham would get it illegally. Ever after that, to show that he was justified, Ham tried to fake it and caused a great deal of confusion thereby. In the Midrash Genesis Rabba, Rabbi Johanan says, "Shem began the good deed [they returned the garment to their father], and then Japheth came and hearkened to him; therefore, Shem was granted the tallith and Japheth the pallium" -- the big cover (XXXVI, 6). It is a cloak with clasps and buttons on the shoulder. Tallith here means a fringed garment, and Rabbi Johanan means that the reward of Shem, the ancestor of the Jews, "was the precept of the fringes" in the garment, "while that of Japheth," representing the Greeks, "was the pallium," the "cloak, betokening his dignity."⁴⁸

But it goes on and tells us that as a reward they received from God prayer cloaks (others say it was robes of state), while Ham was denied the protection of the garment, because he had stolen it. This is the priesthood that he was trying to get illegally. And Rabbi Eliezer says in the Pirqa de Rabbi Eliezer, "the coats which God made for Adam and Eve were with Noah in the ark. When they went forth from the ark, Ham, the son of Noah, brought them forth with him, and gave them, as an inheritance, to Nimrod. When he put them on, all the beasts prostrated themselves because this was the garment which Adam wore in the Garden and the beasts all revered him because he had dominion over them as long as he acted as God would act. Therefore, the sons of man made him king over themselves." He fooled everybody into thinking he had the priesthood because he had the garments. In the Abraham Apocalypse,⁴⁹ "Cush loved Nimrod, the son of his old age [Cush got them from Ham], and gave him that garment in which God had once clothed Adam as he was forced to leave paradise." This garment passed from Adam to Enoch to Methuselah to Noah, who took it into the

⁴⁷ Book of Jasher 7:25-29; Book of Jasher (SLC: J. H. Parry, 1887/ reprint, SLC, 1972), p. 15.

⁴⁸ Following notes in Soncino ed. (London, 1939).

⁴⁹ Apocalypse/Testament of Abraham source and discussion in Nibley, BYU Studies, 19:52, 55, 58, 64 (FARMS Reprint N-EAR).

ark. Here Ham misused it and secretly handed it to his son Cush. Nimrod, while wearing this garment, was invincible and irresistible. Those garments enabled him to conquer the world and proclaim himself its ruler, so that mankind offered him worship. Our colleagues are acquainted with the profound mystery concerning these garments, which is one of the secrets they kept to themselves. Then what happened? Nimrod got it, then Esau was jealous of Nimrod, who was another great hunter. He laid in ambush and slew Nimrod and took the garment from him, and he brought it home. Actually this garment was the birthright that Jacob got from Esau. He got it back again. This was the garment of Jacob -- the garment of Ham.

Here's an account of that. "Nimrod, Amraphel, king of Babel, went forth with his people on a great hunt. At that time he was jealous of the great hunter Esau. As Nimrod approached with two attendants, Esau hid and cut off his head before the other two. Esau then fled with the costly garment of Nimrod, which had made him victorious over the entire world. Then he ran exhausted to Jacob, after hiding the garment." That's the deal he made: he was willing to sell it in a financial sense. "Nimrod, the king of Babel went hunting in the field; Esau was observing Nimrod all the day, for jealousy had formed in his heart, Esau against Nimrod. Esau lay in ambush and cut off his head and then he took the valuable garment of Nimrod because Nimrod prevailed over the land, and ran and concealed it in his house. This was the birthright which he sold to Jacob. There are other versions of the same thing.

The Pirge de Rabbi Eliezer says "Jacob stole the garment from [Esau's] tent and he dug a hole in his tent and he buried the garment, saying 'my brother does not deserve such a blessing'" [Well, it's true, but you've got to be careful]. Later, "Esau [this is the Veraci Trava?? (Vayikra Rabba??)], when he slew Nimrod, Rebecca dressed up Jacob in that garment in order to make Isaac think that it was Esau he was blessing." Notice the confusion. Somebody is always trying to steal it; somebody's always trying to fake it. It reminds one of "The King's Ankus," that story by Kipling. But always there is the false version of it going around. "Then Jacob buried the garment. It was this garment in which the firstborn of Israel performed the priestly functions of Mt. Sinai. It was the priestly garment of Adam."

Another version says the same thing. Ham, Cush, Nimrod, Esau, all are accused of stealing the garment. There is a great deal said about stealing. Finally, the garment that came to Joseph: There's that marvelous story in Tha'labi about the two garments.⁵⁰ We're told that when Jacob got the garment, his sons had taken it from Joseph to prove to Jacob that his son Joseph was dead. But Jacob gives a very interesting speech on this. He's blind, and he knows there are two garments. He weeps because of the part that has been rotted away (this is the story that Moroni tells), showing that Israel shall fall away, but rejoices because of the part that hasn't been, and therefore had joy and weeping at the same time. He recognized it, Tha'labi says (Tha'labi picked up these stories of the Jews living in the Persian villages in the 9th century), by the smell of the garment of paradise, because it was the garment that Adam had worn in paradise. Moreover, Abraham says there was no other garment like it in the whole world, and Jacob knew it was the garment of Abraham. Above all, he recognized it because of certain marks or cuts in it.

⁵⁰ Qissas al-Anbiya, cited in Nibley, Approach, chapt. 17 (nn. 16-17); cf. Alma 46:24-25.

He felt the marks and he knew that it was the only garment -- there was none other like it in the world. It was the one that Adam had in paradise, it was the one that Abraham had too.

Philonenko made up something of a study of this in the Twelve Patriarchs.⁵¹ The stealing of Joseph's garment by his brethren: this garment shows him to be the type of the Savior. This is exactly what Moroni says: we are the outcasts of Joseph, we're despised, rejected, acquainted with grief. We're told about the figure of Joseph in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs in every particular, the garment of Joseph and the story it told is told of the two garments, of the good one and of the bad one, which we find in Alma 46:24-25.

And then there's the Testament of Benjamin -- telling about an Ishmaelite who tried to use it and fake it and was smitten for it.

So we have these things going around, now, various items and so forth, breaking them down . . . everything is in total confusion. If you missed that, I have it from memory here. I always get confused because some notes are too good to miss and so forth, and since it's late and we're not going to have questions . . . but since nobody has any questions . . . unless somebody does have some questions.

Q. In the book of Jacob in the Book of Mormon, Jacob is taught to . . .

A. Yes, these things are very close. As I say, the garment is very close to the thing it symbolizes. It is the thing it symbolizes, as the basic symbols are. And that expression -- that's another beautiful example of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Those little things slip in all the time -- the idea that your confidence will wax strong in the presence of God -- we wouldn't call for the rocks to cover you only if you receive this garment of glory. Of course, this was Moses. He was clothed upon with glory. Therefore he could stand in the presence of God. And this Jacob brings out. He says, unless you're justified, you'll be naked in the presence of God, and you certainly wouldn't want that to happen.

See generally:

Norris, Herbert, Church Vestments: Their Origin and Development (London: J. M. Dent, 1949).

⁵¹ M. Philonenko, Les interpolations chretiennes des Testaments des Douze Patriarches et les manuscrits de Qumran (Paris, 1960). For translations, see Charlesworth, OTP, I.