

“Clothed Upon With Glory”: Sacred Underwear and the Consecrated Life

By Alonzo L. Gaskill

There are three ritual acts that pre-modern religions traditionally have in common: eating, washing and clothing. Ancient peoples engaged in rites of communion, wherein covenants with God and/or man were made and renewed through the partaking of food. Similarly, among most of the ancients, ceremonial washing was a requisite rite of passage with salvific connotations. The ritual act of clothing, receiving clothes, or being clothed has also held a sacral place in the faith of many of our predecessors.¹ While each of these acts is sacred and symbolic, our attention here will be on the latter of the three—the idea of clothing as a symbol of consecration.

“The transforming effect of clothes,” one source informs us, “has always given them considerable emblematic power.”² The significant role played by clothing in ancient society is particularly apparent in the Bible, where prophets used clothing metaphorically to make ethical exhortations, send theological messages, or to show the status or character of significant figures.³ The importance of apparel in scripture and ceremony can be physical, economic, social, moral, or spiritual.⁴

Priestly or religious clothing is often intended to represent “the garb of God”, and dressing in “special clothing” can denote a change in role or status.⁵ The changing of one’s clothes has long been a sign of consecration and preparation for “spiritual duties.”⁶ Thus, in the fourth century, Cyril of Jerusalem explained this about the Christian act of clothing: “As soon, then, as ye entered, ye put off your tunic; and this was an image of *putting off the old man with his deeds*.” Cyril then added: “May the soul which has once put him off [i.e., the ‘old man, which waxeth corrupt in the lusts of deceit’], never again put him on...”⁷ Thus, the sense for early Christians was that donning religious articles implied that one was a new person; committed and consecrated to his or her God. In many cultures, sacred garments are seen as a representation of the wearer’s moral and spiritual qualities—qualities developed largely because the wearer has faith in and devotion toward his or her God. Obviously not all clothing, in scripture or in life, is symbolic. Much of it is nothing more than practical. Nevertheless, literal and figurative meanings are intertwined in nearly every category of clothing.⁸ The apparel we wear speaks as loudly about who we are, what we desire, and what we will become, as does perhaps anything else.

A Subject of Ridicule

While members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not publicize the fact that they wear covenantal clothing—sacred, symbolic undergarments—it is no great secret either. Adult Latter-day Saints, as one of their most hallowed and significant rites of passage, enter into one of their Temples to receive their “Endowment”—a term which means “gift”.⁹ This rite of passage was defined by Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, as follows:

“Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, ...and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.”¹⁰ In other words, when a Mormon attends the Temple, he or she enters into covenants to live a moral, honest, faithful and Christian life. They hold that making these covenants helps them in their efforts to lay hold upon salvation. As part of that covenant-making process, Mormons receive a symbolic garment that they wear as a reminder of the covenants they have entered into—somewhat like a Roman Catholic priest and the clerical clothing he dons once he has taken holy orders. Catholic priests wear their clerical collars on the outside; Mormon’s wear their garments underneath their clothing. But the concept is not dramatically different.

As it relates to their symbolic value, beyond representing the wearer’s promises to God, for many Latter-day Saints the Temple garments are also a symbol of the flesh of Christ and the need for the wearer to seek to live a life of holiness. As faithful and consecrated living requires always keeping such truths at the forefront of one’s mind, Latter-day Saints feel it appropriate to wear the garments every day. Of course, Mormons do not wear them when bathing, swimming or doing similar activities. But if an activity can be performed while wearing them, Mormons will leave them on, much like traditional underwear. What is sacred in the minds of LDS-Christians is not the underwear itself, but what the underwear symbolizes. Thus, there is nothing “magic” about these items of covenantal clothing. They are simply a sacred reminder of one’s promise to try to be better; to be more holy in his daily walk.

While sacred covenantal underclothing is not unique to Latter-day Saints, their use of such apparel tends to be misunderstood, as similar clothing often is by those “outside” of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism and Eastern Orthodoxy. As a singular example on August 24, 2012, NBC’s “Rock Center” (with Brian Williams) aired a segment entitled “Mormons in America.” A portion of the program probed the fact that Temple endowed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints wear special underwear. As part of the program, interviewers asked members of the Church the purpose of the garment and then, in an apparent effort to inform the audience, a man and woman were shown wearing nothing but a pair of LDS Temple Garments. Whether intentional or not, the NBC segment presented the concept of religious underwear (common to many ancient and modern religions) in such a way so as to make the practice of wearing such clothing seem not sacred, but somewhat weird—even cultish. In all probability, the producers of the NBC piece were unaware of the fact that millions upon millions of people today—whether Jew or Gentile—wear symbolic undergarments to remind them of the covenants they have entered into. Thus, though sometimes misunderstood or even mocked, the practice is foundational to many traditions—and serves as a powerful means of consecrating and focusing the life of the wearer.

Priests of the Ancient Jewish Temple Cult

As attested in the Hebrew Bible, the priests and High Priest who served in the ancient Israelite Temple wore various articles of ritual clothing. It is widely accepted that one of those items of sacred apparel was a “special undergarment” in the form of “linen breeches” or underpants.¹¹ One text refers to these as “femoralia” or “drawers.”¹² The books of Exodus (28:42) and Leviticus (6:10) both tell us that the priests were to wear these “linen breeches,” which extended “from the loins even unto the thighs” (Exodus 28:42). In addition to the linen underpants, the priests also wore a “coat” or “shirt” on the upper half of their bodies, beneath their other liturgical vestments. In AV Exodus 28:39 we read: “And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen.” One source suggested that this coat or shirt was worn next to the skin and had sleeves. While scholars are not in complete agreement as to whether this sleeved shirt extended just slightly past the hips (like the Roman *tunic*), or perhaps all the way to the ankles (like the Greek *chitōn*),¹³ what is evident is that it was an undergarment of sacred significance.

The biblical text itself makes it clear that this priestly underwear was received as part of a process of consecration and induction into the holy priesthood. And while the scriptural text does not elaborate on their symbolic meaning, scholars almost universally hold that these garments were not simply practical: there was some emblematic meaning to the various articles donned by the temple priest.¹⁴ One text interprets the meaning of this holy underwear as follows: “The subject of holiness...is seen typified in each of the garments made of the fine twined linen, giving us an appreciation of the term ‘Holy Garments’. The coat [or undershirt] that clad his person would signify an holiness of the heart that beat beneath it...whilst these linen breeches [or underpants] that covered his nakedness declare an holiness of the flesh” or “desires and passions.” This same source adds: “The white coat” worn as an undergarment was “the emblem of righteousness.”¹⁵ One text on rites of passage noted that exchanging things or receiving gifts—including the receipt of ritual garments—binds the receiver to the giver. The receipt (or exchanging) of such items is equivalent to “pronouncing an oath” or entering into a covenant.¹⁶

Orthodox Judaism

Drawing on their own scriptural tradition and liturgical heritage, modern male Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews also wear an undergarment required of the faithful men in Hebrew Bible times.¹⁷ In Deuteronomy 22:12 we read: “Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself.”¹⁸ The garment of contemporary Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewry is not the “breeches” of the Levitical priest but, rather, an undershirt, of sorts, which they call *tallit katan*—sometimes translated “small tallit” or “little covering.”¹⁹ This holy article has the appearance of a small poncho-like shirt, and is worn under the outermost clothing by pious Jewish men.²⁰ On its four corners are twisted and knotted tassels called *zizit* (or *tzitzit*)—meaning “fringes.” The 613 knots in the four tassels or cords are symbolic of the 613 commandments in the Law of Moses—commandments that Orthodox Jews seek to live each day.

While the wearing of this sacred undergarment is tied to the Torah, Jewish tradition also explains how and why God (i.e., YHWH) commanded the Jews to wear special underwear—different from that found among their non-Jewish neighbors.

The sin of the Sabbath-breaker was the occasion that gave rise to God’s commandment of *zizit* to Israel. For He said to Moses, “Dost thou know how it came to pass that this man broke the Sabbath?” Moses: “I do not know.” God: “On week days he wore phylacteries on his head and phylacteries on his arm to remind him of his duties, but on the Sabbath day, on which no phylacteries may be worn, he had nothing to call his duties to his mind, and he broke the Sabbath. Go now, Moses, and find for Israel a commandment the observance of which is not limited to week days only, but which will influence them on Sabbath days and on holy days as well.” Moses selected the commandment of *zizit*, the sight of which will recall to the Israelites all the other commandments of God.²¹

Thus, according to this traditional account, for Jews who wear the *tallit katan*, it is a gift from God. It is a daily reminder of the covenants, promises and obligations the wearer is under. It is a constant reminder of what God expects of him, and what he has promised his God he will seek to be. As the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* states, “strictly observant Jews wear the *tallit katan* under their upper garment the whole day, so as constantly to fulfill the biblical commandment of *zizit* (Num. 15:39), a reminder to observe all the commandments of the Torah.”²²

For many of the most faithful, this undergarment has powers—powers by which the wearer can be protected.²³ Illustrative of this is the following story from the *Babylonian Talmud*.

There was a man who was very careful in his observance of the *mitzvah* (i.e., the Law). He was ever found wearing the *tallit katan*, as the God of Israel had commanded. One day he heard of a prostitute in a far-off city and determined to make a visit. As the moment of his indiscretion arrived, now wearing nothing but his sacred undergarment, a miracle took place. The four knotted cords of his garment “struck him across the face”, thereby awakening him to the sinful choice he was about to make. Stunned by the miraculous occurrence, he and the prostitute dropped to the floor to contemplate what they had just witnessed. As the man explained to the harlot about how his fringes had testified of his evil desires, she was spiritually moved. She left her life of sin, followed him home, earnestly studied the Torah, converted, married him, and they lived happily ever after.²⁴

The Jewish undergarments (*tallit katan*) are not only a powerful symbol of the covenant relationship of the Jew with his God, they are also a gift from that God to protect and deliver the wearer from sin, temptation and, therefore, damnation. As one source notes, “to be enfolded by the *tallit* is regarded as being enveloped by the holiness of the commandments of the Torah,

denoting a symbolic subjection to the Divine Will.”²⁵ The *zizit*, or “tassels” attached to the four corners of the sacred undergarment serve as a “talisman” or “amulet” for many who wear it. For the faithful, they function “as a protection against immoral conduct (an interpretation derived from Numbers 15:39).”²⁶

Unique in our day, and different from the underwear of his neighbors, the Modern-Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish man wears his *tallit katan* as a symbol and reminder of his commitment to live a holy, faithful and obedient life; and as a help in so doing. As one encyclopedia points out: “The rabbis regarded the *zizit* as a reminder to the Jew to observe the religious duties...”²⁷

Zoroastrianism

Like Orthodox Jews, faithful Zoroastrians also have a sacred undergarment that is worn throughout one’s adult life, and as a representation of the wearer’s commitment to *Ahura Mazda* (i.e., God) and the ways of the Parsee tradition. Unlike in Judaism, however, in Zoroastrianism the garment is worn by men *and* women.

Somewhere between a child’s seventh and fifteenth year²⁸ he or she participates in the *Navjote* (or *Naojot*) initiation rite.²⁹ During that rite the youth is washed and endowed with a rather plain white “sacred undershirt” which is to be worn next to the skin the remainder of the Zoroastrian’s life. This undergarment, known as a *sudreh* (meaning “protection” or “advantageous path”), has a small pocket on the front side, in the center and right at the neckline. This pocket is called the *gireh-bân* (meaning “purse” or “bag of righteousness”), and the wearer is to metaphorically fill it with good works, good thoughts and good deeds each day of his or her life. It is a reminder to the wearer that while he or she is free to pursue wealth, seeking personal righteousness is even more important.³⁰ It is a “symbol of the necessity of (a) obedience to God, (b) closing up the door against sin and (c) breaking up the power of destruction.”³¹ Consequently, one text states that the wearer “makes his ‘sudreh’ an armor, a protection against which all attacks of demon or evil forces become futile. Thus he becomes the real conqueror of evil powers.”³² For Zoroastrians, then, this garment is a gift which provides the wearer with protection when it is utilized as God intended.

In addition to the sacred undershirt, initiates also receive a belt of sorts to be worn over the *sudreh*. This cord/belt is called the *kusti* (meaning “boundary” or “limit”—as it divides the upper body from the lower regions). Symbolically speaking, it is a reminder to the wearer of the need to nurture the body’s “higher characteristics” (i.e., the things of the heart and brain), while controlling (and, in some cases, suppressing) the “lower characteristics” or physical appetites (e.g., greed, lust, etc.).³³ One Zoroastrian text informs us that “it is incumbent on all those of the good religion, women and men, every one [*sic.*] who attains to fifteen years [of age], to wear the *sacred thread* girdle.” By this “girdle” it is believed “the whole of demons and fiends” are “made extinct.”³⁴ Because the “sacred thread girdle” or *kusti* has traditionally been made out of wool, it represents to the wearer the need for innocence and purity. The 72 threads with which it is

woven are symbols of the 72 chapters of the sacred Zoroastrian scriptural text known as the *Yasna*. During his daily prayers, the wearer of the *kusti* unties and reties the knots of the “sacred girdle.” This ritual untying and tying serves to “cement” the wearer’s “commitment to the faith”³⁵ and protect him from sins.³⁶

For practitioners of the Parsee faith, wearing this garment serves to remind them of their covenantal responsibilities to their God (*Ahura Mazda*). As they daily untie and retie the *kusti* (while reciting their prayers), their obligations to live a holy life are brought to their remembrance, as is their promise to fill the *gireh-bân* with good things—holy things. In Zoroastrian belief, God had twin sons: one “beneficent” and one “hostile.” The good son sought for good things; the bad son for that which was evil. Just as these two sons chose different paths, each Zoroastrian has two paths presented to him—the good and the evil. The sacred undergarments of the Zoroastrians (the *sudreh* and *kusti*) are a protection from evil, helping the practitioner to focus on the path of God, and to not be seduced by the path of sin.

Sikhism

In the year 1699, the last of the mortal Gurus—*Gobind Singh*—founded the Khālsā; an initiated body of believers who had participated in the *Amrit Sanchar* (a rite of initiation appearing much like a Christian baptismal ritual). These initiated members of the order served as members of the 18th century Sikh military.³⁷ As part of their formation, *Gobind Singh* introduced the “Five Ks”; five articles worn by members of the Khālsā as a statement to the world about who they are, and as a reminder to the wearer as to what he was obligated by covenant to be. From that time forward, Sikhs who have been initiated into this “castless fraternity” stood out, because of their unique appearance.³⁸ The “Five Ks” consist of:

- ❖ *Kesh*—Uncut hair. This is a symbol for naturalness before God. For some Sikhs it represents the need to accept who you are and the way God has made you; to accept God’s will, even if it *seems* to be different from your own.³⁹
- ❖ *Kangha*—A comb, more symbolic than functional. It highlights the need for the faithful practitioner to exercise “mental order”; to control the mind and, thereby, control the body; to exercise “controlled spirituality” (i.e., to consciously live a spiritually centered life).
- ❖ *Kirpan*—A steel dagger, sometimes worn in the form of an actual knife, and other times worn as a pin or brooch. This is emblematic of the Sikh’s willingness to stand up for the truth, and to push back on aggression toward their faith.⁴⁰ When a brooch made of two crossed swords is worn, it is sometimes seen as a symbol for the combination of political and

religious authority—acknowledging that man would do better if his civil laws were God’s laws, rather than trying to create his own.

- ❖ *Kara*—A steel bracelet, typically worn on the right wrist. This is representative of the need to be disciplined in one’s actions, thereby developing unity with God. It implies that what one does or pursues should be in accordance with God’s will and wants. Consequently, the bracelet also denotes the human who seeks to develop the attributes of the Divine by living in harmony with the divine.
- ❖ *Kach*—Knee-length, baggy, white underpants. These stress the need to have “moral strength” and a chaste life. They are a representation of the Sikh commitment to not have sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage.⁴¹

While each of these items were originally associated solely with the Khālsā, today the “Five Ks” are commonly worn by many Sikhs—and by both sexes. One scholar noted: “Not all Sikhs have been members of the Khālsā. Nevertheless, the institution has come to define the image of the Sikh to outsiders and to be regarded by many within the community as the orthodox expression of its identity.”⁴² Elsewhere we read:

Those Sikhs who elect to take initiation as members of the Khālsā must swear when they undergo the *pāhul* ceremony always to observe the Five Ks. Women as well as men can undergo this ceremony and the women who do so must also promise to wear the Five Ks. These are the Amrit-dhari Sikhs (those who have drunk the amrit of initiation), as opposed to the Kes-dhari (those who [simply] maintain the Kes [or uncut hair]). All Amrit-dhari Sikhs are also Kes-dhari, but only a small proportion of Kes-dhari are Amrit-dhari, for only a small proportion of Sikhs take initiation. No one knows precisely just what that proportion is...

Are those who are not Amrit-dhari Sikhs therefore freed from observing the Five Ks? In theory they may be released, but the strict variety of Sikh thinking certainly does not agree. According to this strict view every Sikh, whether formally a member of the Khālsā order or not, is bound to observe the Five Ks.⁴³

Technically, therefore, the “Five Ks” are marks of a particular order of Sikhs. However, a significant number of Sikhs who have never been initiated into the Khālsā wear them.

Though these commonly recognized marks of Sikhism are a unit—worn together—our concern here is the *kach*; the sacred underpants of Sikhism. While the other five “marks” are largely worn openly, for all to observe—like the priestly garments of ancient Israel, the *tallit katan* of Ultra-Orthodox and Modern-Orthodox Judaism, the *sudreh* of Zoroastrianism, LDS

Temple garments, and the phylakton *savanon* of Eastern Orthodoxy (which we shall discuss below)—the Sikh *kach* is worn beneath the clothing, concealing it from view.⁴⁴ It is an inward sign of an inward commitment. In outward behaviors, the wearer’s commitment is manifest. But the garment, itself, is not shown. The “moral strength”⁴⁵ and “chastity”⁴⁶ it symbolizes is on public display (in the life of the practitioner), but the symbol, the reminder of the covenant made to God (i.e., “One True Name”), is hidden from all but the one who has covenanted. As with each of the faiths we have discussed in this paper, the undergarment is ultimately a private symbol of a consecrated life.

Eastern Orthodoxy

During the consecration of the altar of a new Greek Orthodox church, the holy table is prepared to be the “place of the sacraments” by being ceremonially washed, anointed, clothed with an altar cloth and then consecrated. For Eastern Orthodox Christians, the altar represents the tomb of Christ. Thus, metaphorically, His body lies therein. Consequently, the Orthodox hold that the altar must undergo its own ordinances akin to what an Orthodox Christian would participate in. Accordingly, the altar participates in a “baptism” (or washing), “chrismation” (or anointing), “clothing” in an altar cover (the newly baptized initiate typically receives a white garment to wear after his/her baptism), and the “receipt of the emblems of Christ’s flesh and blood” (newly baptized children receive of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper).⁴⁷

In conjunction with this ritual baptism of the altar, there is a practice in the Eastern Orthodox Church which mirrors much of what we have been discussing. Before washing and anointing the Altar Table the Bishop puts on a white linen garment called the *savanon* or *sratchítza*.⁴⁸ The garment is worn in addition to the Bishop or Archbishop’s liturgical vestments, and throughout the majority of the rite of consecrating the altar.⁴⁹ Near the conclusion of the consecration, at the point that the “vigil light” is placed upon the altar, the Bishop removes the aforementioned white garment.⁵⁰ The *Savanon* is then cut up into small pieces and each person who attended the consecration is given a square of the white cloth to be used as a phylakton—“a blessed object worn by an Orthodox Christian as a protection against evil.”⁵¹ It functions as a sort of amulet or talisman for the faithful Orthodox Christian.

Certainly not all members of the Eastern Orthodox faith subscribe to the use of a phylakton; though the Greek Orthodox congregation in which I was reared did.⁵² For believers, the encouragement was to pin or sew this piece of blessed white cloth—this piece of the archbishop’s vestment—to one’s underclothing, thereby insuring “protection against evil.”⁵³

In a sort of tangential use, but with related undertones, it has been common for families emigrating from Greece to send their sons to the “new country” to get established and to prepare a place for the rest of the family. These pioneer boys would often bring with them a phylakton as a source of protection and luck. One text notes that one of the family’s “most important [parting gifts to their emigrating sons] was an amulet around their necks, a small cloth square enclosing a pinch of Greek earth.”⁵⁴ The homeland “was holy to the Greeks.”⁵⁵ Like the phylakton given to

those who attend the consecration of an Orthodox altar, this version of the phylakton is also seen as something which can serve as a shield and protection to the wearer. The Greeks held that there were four “dangerous hours” in one’s life—times when divine protection was more urgently needed; times which caused great anxiety for families. These were between birth and baptism; between engagement and marriage; the first forty days after a woman gave birth; and during the period of later life when an elderly person lost his or her vitality. During these times, as well as in times of travel, Greeks would commonly use a phylakton. One source notes that they would sew little squares of white cloth, “enclosing in them a piece of holy scripture or a sliver of the True Cross...to withstand the Evil Eye.” They then pinned these phylakton to their shirts or underclothing “for protection against evil.”⁵⁶ Because the original use of these Greek amulets appears to be liturgical, it seems likely that the cultural use among newborns, the engaged, new mothers, the elderly, and emigrants stems from the religious use which preceded it.

While the Eastern Orthodox practice is, in many ways, different from the other traditions discussed above, nevertheless, at its core, the principle is similar: a white garment, worn in a way so as to not be visible, blessed and holy, to be used by the faithful as a shield and protection against evil and sin. The *savanon*, once distributed as a phylakton, becomes a symbol of a faith’s covenants and relationship with their God—and of their God’s promise to intervene, shield and protect.

Conclusion

Though the wearing of “sacred underwear” may seem strange at best to most Westerners, this ritual behavior is clearly ancient in origin, and common in practice.⁵⁷

Additionally, there is a manifest similarity in the meaning of the garments in each of the faiths we have discussed. While there are nuances in the implications and symbolism, generally speaking, the sacred undergarments of the ancient temple priests, the Modern-Orthodox Jew, the practitioners of Zoroastrianism and Sikhism, the Latter-day Saints, and even the phylakton of Eastern Orthodoxy, represent covenants and consecration. They are reminders to the wearers of the sacred things God has done *for* them, and the promises He has made *to* them. Though worn discreetly, they encourage the wearer to live faithfully and openly his or her religion.⁵⁸

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Notes

¹ Curiously, the Evangelical movement (developing in modernity) has largely rejected all three of these. For many within that tradition, while the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper has a place, it is not a requisite

rite or a salvific ordinance. Baptism, though practiced by many Evangelicals, is also seen as more of an outward symbol, but not a saving rite. Consequently, a high percentage of those who consider themselves Evangelical Christians feel no need to be baptized. Finally, while many Christian denominations have clothing rites (for the baptized, the ordained, the married), the Evangelical movement typically does not.

²Jack Tresidder, *Symbols and Their Meanings* (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2000), 134.

³Douglas R. Edwards, “Dress and Ornamentation,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, six volumes (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:232.

⁴Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman, III, editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 317. See also, Edwards in Freedman (1992), 2:232.

⁵See John Tvedtnes, “Priestly Clothing in Bible Times” in Donald W. Parry, ed., *Temples of the Ancient World* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 665 & 666. Elsewhere we read, “The fact that God Himself revealed the pattern for these vestments should alert us to the possibility that they imitate the clothing that is worn by heavenly beings. And indeed, there is some evidence to support this view. A post-biblical Jewish commentary on the book of Exodus explains that the high priest’s garments were like those worn by the Lord. And one extrabiblical source also describes an angel wearing eight garments, alluding to those worn by the earthly high priest. With this connection between the heavens and the earth, it is little wonder that they were called ‘holy garments’ (Exodus 28:2, 4; 31:10; Leviticus 16:4).” Matthew B. Brown, *The Gate of Heaven: Insights on the Doctrines and Symbols of the Temple* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 1999), 81.

⁶See Ryken, Wilhoit and Tremper (1998), 319.

⁷Cyril of Jerusalem, “Catechetical Lectures,” Lecture 20:2, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, editors, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, fourteen volumes (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 7:147. Emphasis in original.

⁸Ryken (1998), 318. Even fabric, like wool and linen, had symbolic importance. Only priests, for example, were allowed to mix the two in ancient Jewish tradition (Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:11).

⁹LDS Temples are different from their Sunday meeting houses. While Mormon chapels are open to anyone—LDS or non-LDS—Mormon Temples are open to the public only prior to their dedication. Once dedicated, however, only those who are seeking to faithfully live the teachings of the Church are allowed entrance. Thus, even some who are members of the Church may have never entered an LDS Temple because they choose to not fully live the faith. Latter-day Saint reasoning for this restriction is twofold: (1) They wish the Spirit of the Lord to be there unrestrained. Having individuals in the Temple who are not seeking to fully live the commandments would likely influence that Spirit. (2) In their Temples, Mormons enter into covenants with God to live a holy life. Clearly those who are not committed to living the teachings of the Church are not ready to make such covenants.

¹⁰John A. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1998), 416.

¹¹See Edwards, in Freedman (1992), 2:234. See also, Philip J. Hyatt, “Dress,” in James Hastings, editor, *Dictionary of the Bible*, revised edition (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), 223.

¹² See Janet Mayo, *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1984), 153. The 1609 *Douday Bible's* rendering of Leviticus 6:10 is as follows: "The priest shall be revested with the tunike and the linnen femoralles."

¹³ See Ramban Nachmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, five volumes (New York: Shilo Publishing, 1973), 2:484-485; Edwards, in Freedman (1992), 2:233; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Exodus," in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, twelve volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976-1992), 2:467.

¹⁴ While Christians typically describe the meaning of these articles of clothing in terms of Christocentric symbolism, that view is generally held by scholars to be eisegetical. Most academics assume the priests of the ancient temple cult did not have the messianic lenses we do when it comes to their rites, rituals or ordinances. Of course, this is a point of debate.

¹⁵ Charles W. Slemming, *These Are The Garments: A Study of the Garments of the High Priest of Israel* (London: Marshall, Morgan Scott, Ltd., 1945), 127 & 31.

¹⁶ See Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, translators (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 29-30.

¹⁷ This garment is worn by Ultra-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox Jews, but not typically by Conservative, Reformed or secular Jews. Orthodox women do not wear the fringed undergarment (*tallit katan*), although in recent years some females in Conservative, Reform, or Reconstructionist groups have begun to wear it.

¹⁸ Similarly, in AV Numbers 15:37-41 we find this: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they *make them fringes in the borders of their garments* throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God."

¹⁹ In the opinion of many, this sacred undershirt is related to, though not identical with, the aforementioned "fine linen" shirt (Exodus 28:39) of the Temple priests.

²⁰ Rarely, a special belt, known as a "gartel," may be worn in connection with the *tallit katan*. This likely stems from the "curious girdle" worn by the ancient priest (Exodus 28:8).

²¹ Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, seven volumes (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 3:241.

²² *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, corrected edition, seventeen volumes (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, n.d.), 15:745, S.v., "Tallit Katan."

²³ Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav maintains the garments "are a safeguard against immorality," pointing to examples in drunken Noah and in the Genesis creation myth. Thus by wearing the pure white *tallit katan*, we mitigate darkness and destruction. See Tzvi M. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism* (Maryland: Jason Aronson Publishers, 1977), 512-513.

²⁴ See *The Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Menachot 44a.

²⁵ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 15:744, S.v., “Tallit.”

²⁶ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16:1187, S.v., “zizit.”

²⁷ See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16:1187, S.v., “zizit.”

²⁸ Among the faithful, this rite of passage always takes place by the end of the fifteenth year—as the age 15 is seen by Zoroastrians as the age of adulthood. Those who do not become initiated into the faith by that age are seen as “ill-behaved” and as placing themselves “in the power of the evil *druj*” (i.e., in the way of error and deceit). See Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 144.

²⁹ The term *Navjote* (or *Naojot*) means “new birth”, as the initiate is seen as a “new person”; one just now “born into” the faith of Zoroastrianism. [See Gherardo Gnoli, “Zoroastrianism,” in Mircea Eliade, editor, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, seventeen volumes (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 15:587.] The ceremonial investiture is preceded by a sacred washing rite, called *Nahn*.

³⁰ See Modi (1979), 145-146.

³¹ Modi (1979), 149.

³² Behman Sorabji Banaji, “The Warfare of Zoroaster,” in *Advocate of Peace Through Justice*, Volume 86, Number 1 (January, 1924): 35.

³³ See Modi (1979), 150-152. See also Michael Strausberg, “The Significance of the ‘kusti’: A History of Its Zoroastrian Interpretation,” in *East and West*, Volume 54, Number 1/4 (December 2004): 15.

³⁴ See *Sad Dar* 10:1 & 4, cited in E. A. West, translator, *Pahlavi Texts* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1901), 268.

³⁵ See Firoze M. Kotwal, “Ritual Aspects of the Gathas and Their Continuity in Later Tradition,” in *Iran & the Caucasus*, Volume 3/4 (1999/2000): 8.

³⁶ See Strausberg (2004): 10.

³⁷ Some Sikhs seem uncomfortable with connecting the *Amrit Sanskar* to Baptism, as its meaning and purpose are not the same as Christian baptism—though the forms are akin to each other. See W. Owen Cole, Review of W. H. McLeod’s, *The Chaupa Sing Rahit-Nama*, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* Number 1 (1989), P.184.

³⁸ Sikh Missionary Center, *Sikh Religion* (Detroit, Michigan: Sikh Missionary Center, 1990), 200. One scholar of Sikhism has pointed out that while most Sikhs accept that Guru Gobind Singh was the source for these special items of clothing, some historians believed that they were not part of the faith until the end of the nineteenth century. See, for example, Hew McLeod, “The Five Ks of the Khalsa Sikhs,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Volume 128, Number 2 (April-June, 2008), Pp. 328-331.

³⁹ This is sometimes also spelled *Kes*.

⁴⁰ Early in their history Sikhs were heavily persecuted by Muslims.

⁴¹ “These are a reminder of the duty of purity and also a reminder to Sikhs to act for the faith.” Though a less common interpretation, one source suggested that the Sikh underpants were “to indicate alertness

and readiness to fight.” Michael Molloy, *Experiencing The World’s Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change*, fifth edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 206.

⁴² Willard G. Oxtoby and Alan F. Segal, editors, *A Concise Introduction to World Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 334. Men and women can participate in the amrit initiation and wear the 5 Ks, which were originally associated with the Khalsa, but today are generally embraced by all Sikhs. There is no specified age of initiation. One must simply be old enough to read scripture and to comprehend the articles of the Sikh faith. See Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, “Sikhism,” in Lindsay Jones, editor, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, second edition, fifteen volumes (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 12:8395 & 8397.

⁴³ McLeod (April-June, 2008), pp. 327.

⁴⁴ The *Kangha* is openly worn in the hair of a Sikh woman. On male Sikhs, however, it is often obscured by their turban. This is not an attempt to hide the comb, as they hide the undergarment. It is a practical matter (i.e., the turban helps to control their hair).

⁴⁵ John Bowker, *World Religions – The Great Faiths Explored and Explained* (New York: DK Publishing, 2006), 84.

⁴⁶ Bowker (2006), 95. See also *Sikh Religion* (1990), 200.

⁴⁷ See Taxiarchae-Archangels Greek Orthodox Church, *The Consecration of Our Beloved Church* (Watertown, MA: Taxiarchae-Archangels Greek Orthodox Church, 2000), xvi.

⁴⁸ See Isabel F. Hapgood, *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church* (New York: Association Press, 1922), 493-511 & 613; Taxiarchae-Archangels (2000), xv-xvi. Hapgood notes that this white garment carries several symbols: that it encircles the neck symbolizes the wisdom and obedience of the wearer; that it covers the body, particularly the breast, symbolizes the Word; that it shrouds the loins symbolizes the wearer’s purity and strength. See Hapgood (1922), 613, note 2.

⁴⁹ One text on the rite states: “Functionally, the *savanon* is a large bright white garment in the shape of an alb that protects the bishop’s vestments during the washing of the table. Symbolically, it represents the mortification of his body to all sin and the vesting of purity and blamelessness which he must possess in order to complete the consecration rite. The envelopment of his body with the brilliance of the cloak shows him to be mystically, on the one hand, Christ, and, on the other, a living altar.” Gus George Christo, *The Consecration of a Greek Orthodox Church According to Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Detailed Account and Explanation of the Ritual* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 28, footnote 25.

⁵⁰ Hapgood (1922), 501; Taxiarchae-Archangels (2000), xviii.

⁵¹ Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, “Savanon” (Kansas City, MO: Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, 1987), back cover. See also Christo (2005), 28, footnote 25, where we read: “Once the entire consecration procedure is over, the bishop divests of the *savanon*. It will be cut into tiny pieces and distributed to all the members of the congregation at the end of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. The tiny pieces are a *phylacton* or a *phylactery* (a blessed object worn as a protection against evil).” In addition, see Nikon D. Patrinos, *A Dictionary of Greek Orthodoxy* (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, Dept. of Education, 1984), 17-18.

⁵² For dissenters, the use of blessed objects, like the sacred garment (or vestment) of the Archbishop (i.e., the *Savanon*), is superstitious nonsense. The notion of wearing a white piece of blessed or holy cloth somewhere on one's underclothing for protection against evil or temptation is, to some, superstitious at least, and potentially blasphemous at most. For those who are non-practitioners (or non-wearers), this tradition sounds like an extension of the iconoclast controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries. See Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, new edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 30-35.

⁵³ Explanation of the power of phylakton, Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation (Kansas City, Missouri: October 4, 1987), back cover.

⁵⁴ Helen Papanikolas, *An Amulet of Greek Earth* (Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 2002), 4.

⁵⁵ Papanikolas (2002), 53.

⁵⁶ See Papanikolas (2002), 29 & 53.

⁵⁷ Biblical Judaism is traditionally dated to the life of Abraham, placing its origins in the second millennium BCE. (Though some would place the wearing of sacred undergarments to the era of Adam and Eve – Genesis 3:21). Zoroastrianism dates somewhere between 1,500 and 1,000 BCE. Eastern Orthodoxy traces its origins to the founding of Christianity in the first century of the Common Era. Setting aside Mormonism, Sikhism is the most modern of the faith's we've discussed; originating in the 15th century. Though technically neither Sikhism nor Mormonism qualify as "ancient," the culture from which Sikhism stems is, indeed, ancient, and Latter-day Saints see themselves as a "restoration" of primitive or ancient Christianity.

⁵⁸ A lack of reverence for that which is sacred to one tradition ultimately shows disrespect to all because those who are deeply religious are really interconnected in ways which easily go unnoticed. The sacred undergarments of these various traditions, and the commonality of their purpose and meaning, are an invitation to ecumenism and appreciation for each other's tradition, and the deeply spiritual things which we share. Thus, we must never ridicule that which we do not understand. We are always better served by attempts at building bridges and understanding—and by seeking to highlight the ties that bind us one to another.