Clothed Upon: A Unique Aspect of Christian Antiquity

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Ancient texts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi codices, the pseudepigrapha, and Rabbinic and early Christian literature have much to say about the ritual significance of sacred vestments. The symbolism of donning sacred vestments, of putting on a garment in a ritual context, assumes a plan of salvation that acknowledges certain conditions necessary to obtain certain blessings.

The ritual action of putting on a sacred garment is properly termed an “endowment.” The word garment is, in fact, representative of ordinances found in ancient texts. The Greek word ἐνδύμα that means “garment,” or ἐνδύσαμαι, “to clothe upon,” was used to represent sacramental, baptismal, and sealing ordinances in the Clementine Recognitions, an extremely important and ancient Christian (Ebionite) work. The Latin induere, meaning “to clothe,” and induere, “to lead or initiate,” are the roots for our English word endowment. All connote temple ordinances.

The endowment, the complex of ordinances associated with the donning of sacred vestments, contained in ancient Judeo-Christian texts, provides a framework for symbolic interpretation. The doctrine of the preexistence, for example, appears frequently in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the pseudepigrapha, and the Nag Hammadi texts. The soul

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3Note the following two examples of the notion of the preexistence in the Dead Sea Scrolls: “Before things came into existence He determined the plan of them” (The Manual of Discipline [IQS] 3. 15–17, as quoted in Theodore H. Gaster, ed. and trans., The Dead Sea Scriptures [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976], p. 48); and “by wisdom of thy knowledge thou didst establish their destiny before they came into existence” (Thanksgiving Hymns [IQH], in Herbert G. May, “Cosmological Reference in Qumran and the Old Testament,” Journal of Biblical Literature 82 [1963], p. 32n). For similar references in the pseudepigrapha, see 2 Enoch 23. 4–5: “All the souls of mankind, however many of them are born, and the places prepared for
must journey to the earth in order to prove itself as part of God’s plan set down before the foundation of the world. In order for the soul to return to the presence of God, certain ordinances are necessary. Among these ordinances are baptism, washings, anointings, special garments, and signs as seals and passwords to pass by the angels who guard the gate to God’s kingdom. In some accounts, one must be married in the Holy of Holies of the temple in order to obtain the highest of three degrees of glory. Thus, the plurality of the heavens is among the most universal of ancient doctrines, with special glories represented by the moon, stars, and sun. Those who could not receive all the necessary ordinances regarding the γιγνόμενα, or required knowledge in this life, could receive them beyond the grave. The account of Christ’s descensus ad infernos, or his journey to the spirit world after his death to preach the gospel, is another doctrine

them from eternity for all souls are prepared from eternity before the foundation of the world’” (as translated in R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, 2 vols. [London: Oxford, 1913], 2:444, and The Testament of Naphsini 2, 2–4). The abode for preexistent souls is the promptuaria animarum, according to 2 Baruch 23: 5. The preexistence of Moses is indicated in the Assumption of Moses 1. 13–14. Abraham saw the “[divine] world counsel . . . [wherein] whatever I had determined to be was already planned beforehand in this [picture], and it stood before me ere it was created.” He also saw “they whom I [God] have ordained to be born of thee and to be called My People” (as quoted in G. H. Box, ed. and trans., The Apocalypse of Abraham [London: SPCK, 1919], pp. 68–69). The idea is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls via the Essenes, according to Marc Philonenko in Les Interpolations Chrétiennes des Testaments des Douze Patriarches (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), p. 39. For references in Rabbinical literature, see Temchuna Pikkude 3; Chaggiga 12b; Bereshit Rabba 100. 8; 3 Enoch 43. 3; and Wisdom 8. 19–20. For examples in Gnostic literature, see the Gospel of Thomas, Logia 49 (“Blessed are the lonely and the elect, for you will find the kingdom. It is from there that you have come and will return again.”); Logia 84 (“When you see your images [ΕΙΚΟΝ] that came into existence before you, which neither die nor are manifested, how much you then will bear!”); and the Gospel of Truth 18—all located in Mario Erbetta, Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento (Turino, Italy: Marietti Editori, 1976), pp. 271, 278, and 526.


Those who did not know the ordinances will be placed with another, still in the body, who will accomplish the ordinances for them. See Apocryphon of John 2. 1 in James Robinson, The Nag Hammadi Library (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 113–14; Pistis Sophia 98. 43–93; 108. 1ff.; 128. 1ff.; and 147. 39ff. in Erbetta, Gli Apocrifi, pp. 468, 479, 494–95, and 514; and 2 Euseb 42, in Erbetta, Gli Apocrifi, p. 336.
common to many manuscripts. Christ does not go to the wicked, however; he goes to his former prophets to organize an ecclesia, after which they all receive the σφωραγις, or seal that represents baptism for the dead, and they mount up to heaven together as resurrected beings. The preaching in the spirit world is left up to the Apostles, who also administer a vicarious baptism for the dead. Although certain of these doctrines are specific to Gnostic Christianity or specific sects of the Jews around the first century C.E., the salvific framework presupposed in these texts is found in both.

The idea of the garment is completely at home throughout the ancient world, always in connection with ordinances of initiation related to the endowment. The garment is usually mentioned in relation with other ordinances, especially the anointing. In the Slavonic Enoch, for example, the Lord tells Michael, "Go, and take Enoch from out of his earthy garments and anoint him with my sweet ointment, and put him into the garments of My glory." The Testament of Levi, a work closely related to the Dead Sea Scrolls, tells us that in a dream, Levi saw seven men in white raiment saying unto me: "Arise, put on the robe of the priesthood, and the crown of righteousness, and the breastplate of understanding, and the garment of truth, and the plate of faith, and the turban of the head, and the Ephod of prophecy." Then each of them brought forward a thing and put it on me, and said unto me: "From henceforth become a priest of the Lord, and thou and thy seed forever." And the first man anointed me with holy oil, and gave me a staff of judgement. The second washed me with pure water, fed me with bread and holy wine and clad me with a glorious robe. The third clothed me with a linen vestment like an Ephod. The fourth put round me a girdle like unto purple.


11Pastor of Hermes, Similitudes 9, 16 (in Migne, PG 2, 995): "They therefore being dead, were nevertheless sealed with the seal of the Son of God, and so entered into the kingdom of God. . . . Now the seal is the water of baptism. . . . [T]hese Apostles and teachers, who preached the name of the Son of God, dying after they had received his faith and power, preached to them who were dead before; and they gave this seal to them. They went down therefore into the water with them, and again came up. But these went down whilst they were alive and came up again alive: whereas those were before dead, went down dead, but came up alive." (Cf. Gospel of Nicodemus 15-20; and Clement of Alexandria Stromata 2, 4.)

12Enoch 22, 8.

13Testament of Levi 8, 14-22.
The scene portrayed in the Testament of Levi recalls the investiture of the king and high priests at the temple on the occasion of Year-rites, which rites take us back to the earliest records of history. The anointing was not always the simple anointing of the head but often refers to a more complete anointing of all the various parts of the body. Cyril of Jerusalem, who initiated a revival of temple ordinances, albeit a specious and short-lived revival, told the newly initiated neophytes of the fourth century:

You have received the first anointing on your brow to deliver you from the shame of the first man for having transgressed the Law, and that you may reflect on the glory of Christ, the second on the ears, that you might hear and properly understand the divine mysteries. . . . The third [anointing] on the nostrils, that by so receiving the holy ordinances you say, "We are the sweet odor of Christ to the saved of God." After that you were anointed on the breast and clothed with a breastplate of righteousness.

Cyril mentioned an anointing of "the five senses," i.e., eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and brow, while Theodore of Mopsuestia mentioned an anointing of the whole body that is "the sign that you will be clothed on with a garment of immortality." This ordinance of anointing bears a certain affinity with the Egyptian ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth.

The reception of the garment became an ordinance per se closely associated with baptismal washings. Like baptism, putting on a new garment represented putting off the old man and being clothed in "Christ" and putting on a resurrected body after symbolic death. The early Christian or late Jewish Odes of Solomon abound in the symbolism of baptism and tie the garment to the baptismal ritual: "I stripped off sin and cast it from me, and the Lord renewed me in his raiment" (Ode 11. 9–10). "I put off darkness and clothed myself with light" (Ode 21. 2). "I have put on incorruption through His Name, I have put off corruption by his grace" (Ode 15. 6). "And I was clothed with the covering of thy spirit, and thou didst remove from me thy raiment of skin" (Ode 25. 8). Ambrose of Milano states:


\[\text{15} \text{A. Hamman, L'Initiation Chretienne (Paris: Bernard Grasset Editeur, 1963), pp. 46–47; also in Migne, PG 33. 1092. The anointing is studied at length by Leonel L. Mitchell in Baptismal Anointing (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966).}\]

\[\text{16} \text{Hamman, L'Initiation Chretienne, p. 126.}\]

\[\text{17} \text{Nibley, Joseph Smith Papyri, pp. 196ff. According to the Clementine Recognitions, all prophets must be anointed (see A. C. Cox, Ante-Nicene Fathers 8. 90).}\]

\[\text{18} \text{Danielou, Jewish Christianity, p. 327.}\]
"You have received white garments as evidence that you have been clothed again of the chaste veil of innocence . . . after being redressed in these garments by the bath of regeneration." 19 Theodore of Mopsuestia adds:

When you advance to the holy baptism you take off your clothes. Adam was born in the beginning without any reason to be ashamed, but after having transgressed the commandments and becoming mortal, he needed a garment. Just as you received the gift of the holy baptism to be born again to grace through Him and to become immortal as a figure, it is required to take off your clothes, the sign of mortality and evidence of the sentence that submits man to the need of the garment . . . but at the time you come up out of the water you will recover yourself with a shining garment. That is the sign of the radiant and glorious world . . . When you resurrect you will recover yourself with immortality and incorruptibility; that garment . . . will then be necessary for you. 20

In the Pistis Sophia, a Gnostic text of great importance, the garment is marked with the sacred Name and with five mysteries. 21 One symbolically puts on Christ, in Gnostic speculation, through receiving baptism and the garment. 22

The ancient garment was adorned with other marks besides the Name. E. Goodenough, in his study of Jewish symbolism, discovered that in Christian art the garment and robe were marked with signs at right angles, the gamma or square, or simply with a straight bar with prongs. He concluded that the marks had some religious significance or symbolic force. 23 It should be noted that the ancient garment bore the same tokens as the veil of the temple at Jerusalem. In the Testament of Levi, for example, the veil is the ἐνδυμα of the angel or the personified temple. 24 Many ancient texts confuse the garment with the veil of the temple, such as Ambrose of Milano’s Tractate of the Mysteries or the Hebrew Book of Enoch where “garment” and “veil” are used interchangeably. 25 Enoch is clothed with the veil in the Hebrew Book of Enoch:

25Nibley, Joseph Smith Papyri, p. 246.
The Holy One . . . made me a throne similar to the throne of glory. And He spread over me a curtain [veil] of splendour and brilliant appearance of beauty, grace and mercy, similar to the curtain [veil] of the throne of glory; and on it were fixed all kinds of lights in the universe. 26

According to Hugo Odeberg, who translated the Hebrew Enoch, the veil was marked with “the secrets of the world’s creation and sustenance . . . in short, the innermost Divine secrets.” 27 The purpose of the marks on the garment and the veil was to initiate the recipient into the divine secrets of the universe. Enoch also received a garment that was marked with divine secrets: “The Holy One . . . made me a garment of glory on which were fixed all kinds of lights, and He clad me in it. And He made a robe of honour on which were fixed all kinds of beauty.” 28

Each step of progress in initiation was marked by some change of the garment or robes, and so the symbolism of the garment implied increased glory, moving from one existence to another. In the Dialogue of the Savior, Judas and Matthew ask Christ, “We wish to know with what kind of garments we will be clothed when we come forth from the corruption of this world.” The Lord replies, “Since you are sons of truth, it is not with these temporary garments that you will clothe yourselves.” 29 In the Gospel of Philip the Lord adds that “it is necessary to rise in the flesh since everything exists in it. In this world those who put on garments are better than the garments. In the kingdom of heaven the garments are better than those who put them on.” 30

The garment also represented the preexistent purity of the initiate, and as such it represented blessings stored up in heaven to which the soul returns. In The Pearl, that all-important early Christian work, the soul is reared in its preexistent palace of glory but it must leave behind this glory in order to sojourn on the earth for a period of probation. Upon his leaving the preexistent palace, says the poet, “they removed from me the garment of light which they had made for me in love, they also removed my purple robe, made exactly to fit me.” 31 The noted scholar Hoffman comments that “the

27Ibid., p. 28.
28Ibid., p. 32.
29Dialogue of the Savior 143, in Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library, p. 235: ‘The Lord said ’ . . . You will clothe yourselves with the light and enter into the bridal chamber.’ Judas said, ‘How will our garments be brought to us?’ The Lord said, ‘Some will bring them to you and [others will receive them], for they are [the ones who bring] you, your garments. Who [can] reach that place which is the reward? But they gave the garments of life to the man, for he knows the way on which he will go.’ ”
30Gospel of Philip 57, in Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library, p. 135.
garment represents the pre-existent glory of the candidate while the robe is the priesthood that is later added to it."32 In order to return to the kingdom of God, represented in the poem by the palace of glory, the soul must be clothed in the garment. The Pearl continues:

And I saw the garment made like unto me. . . . And adorned myself with [it] . . . and in my royal robe excelling in beauty I arrayed myself wholly. And when I had put it on, I was lifted up unto the place of peace [salutation] and homage, and I bowed my head and worshipped the brightness of the Father which had sent it to me, for I had performed his commandments, and He likewise that which He had promised, and at the doors of his palace which was from the beginning I mingled among [his nobles], and He rejoiced over me and received me with Him into his palace.33

A. F. J. Klijn states that the idea of preexistence comes from Judaism, where the idea of the heavenly robe "may be taken from the description of Adam and Eve in paradise."34 Of course, he refers to the tradition that Adam's nature was like bright light before the Fall, even as the garment is a garment of light, but after the Fall Adam lost his preexistent glory.35 J. Rendel Harris points out that the Odes of Solomon also contain the ideas of "the pre-existent soul that has to leave heaven for earth, and that of the unfallen creation of God, whose environment is changed from a coat of light to a coat of skins." The "garment of skins" became the "garment of light" possibly because the Hebrew בָּרֵךְ (coat of skins) so closely resembles בָּרֵךְ, meaning "coat of light."36 Even so, the Apocryphon of James tells us that when the spirit returns to its heavenly treasure it will become "as you were first, having clothed yourself, you become the first who will strip himself, and you shall become as you were before removing the garment."37

The garment also represents the treasure laid up in heaven awaiting the soul's return, and, in this context, the glory of the resurrected body.38 An ancient Christian writing known as the Ascension of Isaiah states, "The saints will come with the Lord with their garments which are now stored up in the seventh heaven, with the Lord will come those whose spirits are clothed upon."39 The Book of

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34 Ibid., p. 278.
37 Apocryphon of James, in Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library, p. 253.
39 Ascension of Isaiah 4, 6. Cf. 8, 26, 9, 13, and 9, 24-25.
Enoch is replete with references to garments. In connection with the resurrection the Book of Enoch says, "And the righteous and elect shall have risen from the earth, and ceased to be downcast in countenance. And they shall be clothed with garments of glory, and they shall be the garments of life from the Lord of Spirits." The Manual of Discipline, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, contains a concept very similar to that of the Book of Enoch:

And as for the visitation of all who walk in this spirit [of truth] it shall be healing, great peace in a long life, and fruitfulness, together with every everlasting blessing and eternal joy in life without end, a crown of glory and a garment of majesty in unending light.

Evidently, the Qumran Covenantors believed that the righteous become priests and kings together with everlasting progeny or eternal families. E. Goodenough states that "the Essenes gave a white robe of holiness to each new member to mark his entry into the order—that is, upon his initiation, and thereafter he wore white always." The throne and crown are often mentioned in relation to garments because the rites involved are properly a type of coronation where every initiate is anointed and blessed to become "a priest and king to the Most High God." The concept of a garment received in the resurrection is found in the Book of Mormon. "The spirit and the body shall be restored to itself again. . . . And the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, even with a robe of righteousness." The idea of the garment is very ancient indeed. Ancient texts place it in the context of the pre-earth council where God the Father commanded all creatures to recognize Adam's glory because he was created in the image and likeness of God. Adam was placed on a throne and given a crown of glory and a sceptre. Satan refused to acknowledge Adam, saying, "It is he who should worship me! I existed before he existed." Satan claimed to be the first-born, and for

404 Ascension of Isaiah 7. 22 explains that each recipient of the garment also receives a crown and a throne: "For above all the heavens and their angels has thy throne been placed, and thy garments and thy crown which thou shalt see." Again, in 8. 14: "When from the body by the will of God thou hast ascended higher, then thou wilt receive the garment which thou seest, and likewise other numbered garments laid up [there] thou wilt see, and then thou wilt become equal to the angels of the seventh heaven." Finally, in 9. 12–13: "How is it that they have received the garments, but have not the thrones and crowns? And He said unto me: 'Crowns and thrones of glory they do not receive, till the Beloved will descend in the form in which you will see Him descend.'" (See also Testament of Levi 8. 5–9; Pastor of Hermes Similitudes 8. ii, 1–4; Odes of Solomon 1. 1–2; and 1QS 4. 7–8).
405 Rapoport, Myth and Legend in Ancient Israel, 8:165; Discourse on the Abboton, in Erbetta, "L'investitura di Abbaton," 1:475; Vita Adae et Evaæ, in Charles, Pseudopigrapha, 2:137; and Genesis Rabba 8.
such arrogance God commanded the angels of the council in heaven to "take the writings from his hand, remove his kingly garments and armour and cast him to earth."46 When Adam sinned, he too lost his garment of light, but God gave solace to Adam, saying, "Of my mercy I did not turn thee into darkness, but I made for thee thy body of flesh, over which I spread this skin for thy protection."47 Protection from the elements is one of the main purposes of clothing, but this garment represented the armor of protection against Satan.48 In the Paraphrase of Shem, "after [Shem's] stay on earth he received honour from his amazing garments, which provided both protection and glory."49

The saga of the stolen garment is an indication of the importance attributed to the garment in ancient thought. Upon leaving the garden, Adam was given a garment of the skins of animals that represented his mortality but was a reminder also of his preexistent glory.50 Satan, wanting his preexistent glory back, continually tried to deceive others by appearing as an angel of light. Thus, while Adam was praying to heaven one day for extended light and knowledge, Satan appeared as an angel of light so "that Adam would think within himself that it was a heavenly light, and that Satan's hosts were angels."51 In the Apocalypse of Adam, the evil God appears to Adam, claiming to be the only God, the God who created Adam himself.52 In the later account, when Satan appears, Adam prays, "O Lord, is there another God beside thee in the world?"53 Upon his inquiry, three angels appear in order to teach him of the holy baptism.54 The angels cast

46Discourse on the Abbatten, p. 476. See also Vita Adam et Eue 15. 1-16. 1: Genesis Rabbah 8 in Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 1:165. The real problem was over the plan to create man. In the Genesis Rabbah, God consults with the heavenly council about his plan of creation. They divide into two camps, and those against God's plan to create man are cast out. In the Discourse on the Abbatten, when God tells the heavenly council of his plans they are unsure. Therefore, Adam's body lay without a spirit of life for forty days. At that point, Christ interceded: "Father, give him the spirit, I will be his advocate." After this the Father said, "If I give him the spirit, My Beloved Son, you will be constrained to descend into the world and suffer great pains for his sake, in order to redeem him and bring him back to his original state one more time." The Son then replied, "Give him the spirit; I will be his advocate, I will descend to the world to fulfill your will." (Erbeta. Gli Apocrifi, 1:475, my translation).


49Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library, p. 312: "I put on my garment which is the garment of the light of the Majesty which I am."

50Goodenough, Jewish Symbols, p. 169: Genesis 3:21: Combat of Adam and Eve 23. 7. 50. 5-6, and 51. 3-7.

51Combat of Adam and Eve 27. 2-4. 10; cf. 60. 1-3, in Migne, Dictionnaire des Apocryphe 1. 177: "Satan came to the cave clad in a garment of light and girt about him a bright girdle. . . . He transformed himself in order to deceive Adam.


53Combat of Adam and Eve 24. 10, in Migne, Dictionnaire des Apocryphe 1. 305.

Satan out, informing Adam, "'Adam, fear not! This is Satan and his host. He wishes to deceive you as he deceived you at first. The first time he was hidden in the serpent, this time he has transformed himself into an angel of light.'"55 The messengers tell Adam further, "'Adam, he wished to take from you this earthly garment of sheepskin, to destroy it, and not let you be covered with it.'"56 In the Manual of Discipline, the instructor [לֶבֶן] tells the story of the Creation and Fall to teach the new initiates to distinguish between the evil spirit of darkness and the good spirit of light by "'their different signs of differentiating tokens.'"57

The story of the stolen garment is recapitulated many times in ancient literature. According to Ginzberg, Adam's garment was given to Enoch.58 From Enoch the garment went to Methuselah and then to Noah. Ham stole Noah's garment from him while Noah was sleeping. Upon awakening, Noah blessed his two sons but cursed Ham because Ham had stolen the garment.59 Abraham also had to deal with garment robbers. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, when Satan appears to Abraham, God tells the angel Jaoel, "'Go Jaoel and strengthen him.'" Jaoel greets Abraham, "'I have been sent to thee to strengthen thee and bless thee in the name of God.'" Abraham asks about the presence of Satan, "'What is this my Lord?'" And the angel replies, "'This is ungodliness, this is Azazel!'" And the angel says to it, "'Depart from this man!'" The angel casts Satan out, saying, "'The vesture which in heaven was formerly thine hath been set aside for [Abraham].'"60 According to the Rabbis, Abraham received the priesthood after the order of Adam and along with it "'a garment of skin which God gave Adam.'" This same skin had been handed down as the "'high-priestly robe'" directly from Seth to Methuselah, from Noah to Japeth and Shem, and from them to Abraham.61

In the Pistis Sophia, the glorious garment of Christ is given to the Twelve Apostles, who are said to have been preexistent. On the garment which Christ received from his Father, the name of the mysteries was written. The scene is evidently that of Christ giving the mysteries of the kingdom to his disciples immediately before his

55Combat of Adam and Eve 27, 12, in Migne, Dictionnaire des Apocryphe 1. 307.
56Ibid., 51. 8, in Migne, Dictionnaire des Apocryphe 1. 319.
58Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 1:79, 135, and 139.
60Box, Apocalypse of Abraham, pp. 45-53: "Assazel had thus lost his garment of immortality and become mortal, while Abraham gained it.'"
61Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, Hebrew Myths (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 70 and 78.
ascension into heaven. After having taught all the necessary mysteries, Christ put on his garment and "arose on high to the door of the firmament. . . . The doors melted and opened before Him simultaneously. When the ἀρχῶν-archs and powers and angels saw the light of the garment they were overcome. They saw my shining and resplendent garment that I had put on, they saw the mystery on which was written their name, and they were much disturbed." The garment here is a means to pass by the angels stationed to block the way to the gate of heaven.

The necessity of royal garments to pass through the gates and into the presence of God is another very ancient concept. Hugo Odeberg has characterized the garment of glory as

the light substance in which the inhabitants of heaven appear; the "glory" is light, splendour, probably conceived of as a reflection, outflow of the Divine Glory, the splendour of the Shekina. The putting on "the raiment of glory" is a necessary condition of entering the highest heavens, God's abode of light. Hence, the garment is also a mark of the holy, celestial nature of its bearer.

In Egypt, the changing of robes had long been a very significant concept. For example, in the very old Pyramid Texts the garment was given to those entering the presence of the gods: "O, N., Take thy garment of light, take the veil upon thee! . . . That it might gain respect among the gods." In the Sumerian myth of Inanna, the goddess is arrayed in seven ordinances. She covers her body with the "pala-garment," the garment of Queenship. She then descends to the gate of the netherworld where she is met by the typical question—response of the gatekeeper, "Who art thou? . . . Why hast thou come?" The gatekeeper checks her for each of her seven ordinances separately. Inanna enters the netherworld to be judged and then to be confined for three days and three nights. After receiving "the food of life and the water of life," she is sprinkled with water and ascends from the netherworld in a manner reminiscent of the early Christian accounts of Christ's descensus ad infernos and his subsequent ascension.

In the much later Egyptian Book of the Dead, the garment is a protection against evil. The rubric accompanying chapter 125 reports that "this chapter is said by the deceased when he is cleansed

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62Pistis Sophia 1. 1 and 8. 1—2, in Erbetta, Gli Apocrifi, p. 396.
63Ibid., II. 1—10, in Erbetta, Gli Apocrifi, p. 402.
64Odeberg, Hebrew Book of Enoch, p. 52.
65Goodenough, Jewish Symbols, 9:143—44.
and purified, and is arrayed in linen garments and shod with sandals of white, and his eyes are anointed with antimony, and his body anointed with oil." The candidate announces, "I am pure! My breast is purified by libations, my hind parts have been dipped in the lake of truth. . . . I have washed myself." The initiate is then introduced at the door: "Let thyself advance!" Again the typical question-response occurs as the gatekeepers ask, "Who art thou?" They say to me, "What is your name?" The reply is a code name. The gatekeepers reply, "We will not allow thee to enter unless thou tellst us our names." When the initiate announces the names of the seven gates, they reply, "Thou knowest us, pass therefore by us." At the seventh and last gate the ordinance is a bit more elaborate. The doorkeeper announces, "Thou shalt be announced [to the god of the gate]." The initiate is asked, "For what purpose hast thou come?" To this he replies, "I have come and journeyed hither that my name may be announced to the god!" The guide-psychopomp asks, "In what condition art thou?" "I am purified from evil defects and wholly free from the curses." Thoth replies, "Therefore thy name shall be announced to the god." The keeper asks, "What is that?" The initiate replies, "He is Osiris [the great Egyptian god]." Thoth says, "That is correct. Advance now." 68

The ancient texts make it perfectly clear that the candidate must be properly clothed and possess the γυνσίς, or the name of God, in order to pass through the last barrier to the presence of God. In many documents the prophet passes through seven heavens and must receive a garment of glory to enter into the highest heaven where God dwells. The garment becomes brighter as the prophet passes through each successive heaven. The prophet must also possess the proper identification or sign in order to enter each heaven. 69 In the Apocalypse of Paul, for instance, Paul passes through seven heavens and comes to the gate guarded by "principalities and authorities." The spirit, his guide, tells Paul, "Give him the sign that you have, and he will open to you. And I gave him the sign," and the seventh heaven opened. 70 The quasi-canonical Pastor of Hermas is a good illustration of the necessity of both the garment and the name:

No man shall enter into the kingdom of heaven except he shall take upon him the name of the "Son of God." . . . The gate is the Son of God, who is the only way of coming to God. . . . No man can enter

68Ibid., pp. 589ff.
69Goodenough, Jewish Symbols, 9:145. Cf. Ascension of Isaiah 7: 25; 1 Enoch; 2 Enoch; 3 Enoch; Testament of Levi; Apocalypse of Abraham; Ascension of Moses; Jubilees; Testament of Abraham; and 4 Ezra.
70Apocalypse of Paul 23, in Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library, p. 241.
into the kingdom of God except these [virgins] clothe him with their garment. It availeth nothing to take up the name of the "Son of God" unless thou shalt receive the garment. . . . A man shall in vain bear his name unless he is endowed with his powers. 71

Christ is also represented as the door to the kingdom of heaven in the Odes of Solomon. "He gave me the way of His precepts and I opened the doors that were closed. . . . Nothing appeared closed to me: Because I am the door of everything" (Ode 17. 8, 10). Since the gate is Christ, the scene at the gate is often one of intimate union with Christ, as in the Apocryphon of James. After the spirit is clothed again with its garment, Christ tells the Apostle,

Behold, I shall reveal everything to you, my beloved. Know that you come forth just as I am. Behold, I shall reveal to you Him who is hidden. Now stretch out your hand. Now take hold of me. . . . Those who wish to enter and seek to walk in the way that is before the door, open the door through you. 72

The Book of Mormon also refers to the straight way before the gate and identifies the Holy One of Israel with the gatekeeper.

. . . the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before Him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel, and He employeth no servant there, and there is no way save it be by the gate, for He cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is His name. 73

The doctrine of the Name of God as a key word runs like red ribbon through the history of revealed religion. Thus, if the Pistis Sophia proclaims, "Thou art the key, O Savior, which opens the door of all things and shuts the door of all," 74 the author is merely citing Isaiah 22, "I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle. . . . And the key of the House of David will I lay upon His shoulders, so He shall open and none shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place." 75 One is immediately reminded of the Pistis Sophia, where one communicates knowledge to God through certain passwords and signs:

And they shall test the soul to find their signs in it, as well as their seals and their baptisms and their anointings [ χρίσματα ] and the virgin of light will seal that soul and the assistant [ παραλέπτες ] will baptize that soul and give it a spiritual anointing. Then the assistant send the soul to the glorious Saboath the Good, [the Gnostic God] who is at the

71 Pastor of Hermas Similitude 9. 113, 117, 121-22.
72 The Second Apocryphon of James 53 and 57, in Robinson, Nag Hammadi Library, pp. 252-53. A similar ordinance is found in Odes 37: 1-3, 42. 1-4, and in The Pearl, lines 98-101.
73 Nephi 9:41.
74 Erbetta, Gli Apocopiti, p. 492.
75 Isaiah 22:21-23.
gate of life, who is called Father and who gives His seals to the soul. At the gate the soul cries, "Father!" and the soul gives his seals and responses, with the seal of each degree \( \tau \acute{\alpha} \epsilon \iota \upsilon \) in the right hand, and the soul communicates knowledge with the right hand of every order \( \tau \omicron \omicron \omicron \upsilon \sigma \omicron \omicron \) with hymns of glory. . . . And Melchizedek will seal that soul and lead it to the treasury of light [that is within the veil].

The seal here is a sign of recognition. The *Odes of Solomon* tell us that "God's seal is known, and thy creatures know it, and the heavenly angels possess it, and the elect archangels are clothed with it." In *2 Jev*, Christ tells the Apostles, "This is the name: \( \Upsilon \omicron \omega \omicron \gamma \zeta \alpha \epsilon \omega \gamma \)" Pronounce it once, holding in your hand the seal. Then the guards of the gate and the veil will withdraw and you may reach the place of their Father, who will give you His name and His seal, and then you will pass the door inside to His treasure." One important point is stressed in *2 Jev*, and indeed by several of the texts dealing with these sacred ordinances: The name and ordinances are of the upmost secrecy.

CONCLUSION

Documents cited from all over the Near East, and ranging from 2000 B.C. to A.D. 400, all tell a story pregnant with meaning to Latter-day Saints. The story is an organic unity that can be traced back to the

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And the virgin of the Light and the seven other Virgins of the light all examine that soul, and they all find their signs within it, and their seals and their baptisms and their inunctions [i.e., anointings]. And the virgin of the Light seals that soul. And the Paralemptrai [i.e., assistant] of the light baptise that soul and give it the spiritual inunction. And each of the virgins of the light seals it with their seals. And also the paralemptrai of the light give it into the hands of the Great Sabaoth, the Good, who is above the gate of life in the place of the right, who is called Father. And that soul gives him the glory of his songs of praise and his seals and his defences. And Sabaoth the Great and Good seals it with his seals, and the soul gives its knowledge and the glory of the songs of praise and the seals of the whole place of those of the right. They all seal it with their seals, and Melchisedek the great paralemptrae of the light, who is in the place of the right, seals the soul. And the paralemptrae of Melchisedek seal that soul and take it to the treasury of the Light . . . the place of inheritance.

77*Odes of Solomon* 4. 8.


"When you come to this place, seal yourselves with this seal: This is its name: [Zaicopra] while the cipher . . . is in your hand. Furthermore say this name [AICOPAR] three times, and the watchers and the seals are drawn back, until you go to the place of their Father and he gives (you his seal and his name) and you cross over (the gate into his treasury). This now is the placing of this treasure."

79Erbetta, *Gli Aproci*, p. 334: "Behold, I have told you the name that I promised from the first to reveal to you, so that the places of the treasure withdraw and you could come to the place of the true God. . . . Thus I have told it to you, preserve and hide it, don't repeat it. . . . Now I have told you the name that you asked me to, hide it in your heart." (Cf. Testament of Levi 3. 30 and *The Apocalypse of John* 51.)
oldest rites known to man, all of which cluster around the idea of the temple. The ancient symbolic meaning of the garment itself outlines a rather familiar story: (1) the ancient garment represented the preexistent glory that was laid aside while (2) we put on another garment that represented our mortality as a consequence of the Fall; (3) the ancient garment was not only a reminder but also a protection against the evil one as we sojourned here in the lonely world; (4) it also represented the glory of the resurrected body, and (5) an added robe represented the added righteousness procured for entrance into the kingdom of God and for passing by the angels posted there; (6) when one donned the garment, one also took upon himself a name for passing through the gate, the name of Jesus Christ, with whom ultimate unity became possible through these ancient ordinances.