

WHY A GENEVA GOWN?



“It is natural that the man who officiates in the worship of the Church be clothed in a manner corresponding to the task assigned to him and expressing visibly what he does. Moreover, whoever leads in the act of worship does not perform as a private party but as a minister of the Church; he is the representative of the community and the spokesman of the Lord. Hence, an especially prescribed robe, a sort of ecclesiastical “uniform,” is useful for reminding both the faithful and himself that in this act he is not Mr. So-and-so, but a minister of the Church in the midst of a multitude of others.” (French Calvinist, Richard Paquier, *Dynamics of Worship: Foundations and Uses of Liturgy* [Fortress Press, 1967], p. 138).

THE PASTOR'S ROBE IN WORSHIP

"It must...be observed that the wearing of particular clothes to mark particular occasions or functions appears to be so nearly universal in the history of human society that it may be regarded as a natural cultural law, departure from which is not only psychologically unhealthy, but also in practice all but impossible: if, for example, the celebrant of the Eucharist today decides to wear 'ordinary clothes,' they immediately cease, psychologically, to be ordinary clothes, and become another form of symbolical ecclesiastical garb, their very ordinariness making an extraordinary theological or sociological point." [W.J. Grisbrooke, "Vestments," *The Study of Liturgy*, 543].

INTRODUCTION

After my ordination to the Gospel ministry I began wearing the traditional and recognized uniform of my calling: The white tab-collared shirt during my weekday ministry. Choosing to wear the recognized pastor's uniform has proved beneficial beyond anything I could have imagined. The collar has provided me with countless opportunities for ministry and evangelism that I would have missed otherwise. It has helped make Christ Community Church readily visible and available to the community via their minister. Just as the traditional church building with its steeple and cross symbolizes the presence of a congregation of believers in the community, so also the visible presence of the pastor in his uniform makes the ministry visible and accessible to those outside the church. The collar has encouraged people to ask about our church and my ministry. Some have asked for help. Others have had questions about difficult situations they are facing. This visibility has been good for our church and my ministry as a pastor. Wearing the uniform has served also as a constant reminder to me of my calling, of how I should speak and act before the world as a representative of Jesus Christ and His Church.

Following on this positive experience, I want to share with you the reasons why Presbyterian ministers have worn and do wear pastoral robes while leading worship. My conversations with the families of the church about the robe have been encouraging. Many of you have expressed your desire that the minister clothe himself in a way that identifies him as pastor. This essay is designed to help you as a congregation better understand the biblical and historical reasons for the ministerial robe. I present the case for the robe in the body of the essay and answer possible objections at the end. There is also a "cliff-notes" version of the reasons on pages 10 and 11.

THE PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We take for granted that judges, policemen, doctors, nurses, EMTs, the military, mailmen, etc., all wear distinctive uniforms. They do so because they do not act or speak for themselves. You could say they are *under orders*. They represent the law and government of the county, city, state, or nation in which they serve. In the same way, a minister represents the law and government of another kingdom, the kingdom of Christ. The clothing he wears should make this evident. The pastor is likewise a man *under orders*. He doesn't act or speak for himself, but for Jesus Christ. The pastor's authority

does not come from his financial or social status. It does not arise from his education. It does not derive from his personality. On the contrary, the pastor has no authority outside of his connection by ordination to Christ and His apostles.

It is this understanding of the minister's office that made it the virtually unbroken practice of the Christian Church to robe her ministers while conducting the worship of the church. Reformed and Presbyterian churches have shared in this conviction, expecting that their pastors would be clothed in the pastoral robe while leading worship. They understood that by ordination a minister is authorized to do and say something distinctive and authoritative in the organized body of Christ, especially as the Church is assembled for corporate worship. He is called to speak and act for the Lord in an official capacity. He is the means through which Christ becomes present to His people in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. To reinforce this truth, ministers have been traditionally placed in robes. By doing so the man is hidden or covered and the God-ordained office is accented. Instead of highlighting his personality, social status, economic standing, style of dress (nice suit!), etc., the robe covers up these things and calls attention instead to his role as an authorized minister of Word and sacrament. The man is eclipsed, and the ordained office is in full view. The pastoral robe then is a reminder to both the minister and the people that God is present through the Christian ministry to bless and serve the congregation. Wearing it doesn't set him *above* the congregation, but visibly sets him *apart* from them because of his unique function during the Lord's Day worship service.

Even the Scottish Presbyterians, who were strongly anti-Roman Catholic, wore the pastoral robe while preaching and leading on the Lord's Day. The painting on the front cover of this essay is by John Lorimer, entitled "The Ordination of Elders," painted in 1861. You'll notice the Scottish pastor in the painting wearing a robe and white preaching bands around his neck, while the elders surrounding him are wearing their usual Sunday best. Perhaps the example of the Scottish Presbyterians helps us to understand that a robe in worship is not characteristically Roman Catholic. We do not believe as Rome does that a robe is necessary to the administration of the sacraments. There is no biblical support for such a notion. But Presbyterians have believed the robe is helpful and beneficial in displaying the minister's office in general. This is why many Protestant denominations and groups (remember the word "Protestant" identifies those who protest the *Roman* Catholic Church) have clothed their clergy with the robe during worship; these include but are not limited to Presbyterians, Reformed, Lutherans, Congregationalists, United Methodists, Wesleyans, Evangelical Covenant Churches, Episcopalians, Baptists, and the list could go on. A pastor in a robe has nothing to do with Catholicism (see Objection #1 below).

CLOTHING AND CALLING IN THE BIBLE

There is no explicit command one way or another concerning ministerial clothing in the New Covenant. But the minister has to be clothed in some fashion. Perhaps a better question is, do we have any general guidance in Scripture about whether the minister should wear something different from the rest of the congregation? The answer: Yes. Throughout Scripture, we discover that clothing manifests calling and status (cf. the robe in the Joseph stories), and more specifically the Aaronic priests wore elaborate robes that could not be worn by anyone else (Exodus 28). Pastors in the NT are not the

same as Aaronic priests, but ministers do have a distinct role and calling in the church as those whose entire lives are devoted to the Lord's service. In fact, the office of priest is virtually identical to that of pastor or minister in the New Covenant church: He teaches God's Word, represents the people before the face of God, supervises religious meals, blesses the people, and organizes/disciplines the people of God for worship. Though this connection does not amount to a command requiring a minister to wear a robe, Scripture's general rules suggest that a minister's calling should be manifested in his clothing, both in worship and outside worship.

The Lord provided special garments for Aaron and his sons in their role as pastors of Israel in the Old Covenant (Exod. 28:2; Mal. 2:7; Neh. 8:7-8, 9). These special garments were not vestments in the Roman Catholic sense. They were ministerial robes which reminded the people of the purpose, duty, and responsibility of Aaron's family as ministers of the Lord. Now, obviously, as was noted earlier, the pastor is not point for point an Old Covenant priest – though Presbyterians have always acknowledged that there is an analogy and that the two share common functions (they teach, bless, administer sacraments, govern, etc. cf. Westminster DPW) – nevertheless, the giving of these garments to Aaron and his sons establishes a timeless, trans-cultural principle not bound to the Old Testament or ancient Israel. As whole-Bible Christians we acknowledge that the substance of the command is still valid for the worship of the Christian Church. The "glory and beauty" or "dignity and honor" of the robes mentioned in Exodus 28:2 should always characterize the administration and conduct of biblical worship. The rationale for ministerial robes in Moses' day is fundamentally the same in ours. Pastors should be dressed appropriately for leading God's people in the sanctuary, which means they should adorn themselves in ways that emphasize and point to the office and role of the minister in worship, rather than in a manner that draws attention to their own person. The Christian Church consistently has uniformed her ministers in robes for accomplishing this purpose.

The Bible teaches that clothing and calling go together. People wear what they are and are what they wear. Biblical examples of clothing depicting the office, calling, or function of a person are found in Gen. 9:20-27; 39:1-13; 37:3-11, 23; 41:1-44; all of the references in Exodus and Leviticus to the clothing of the priests; 1 Sam. 2:19; 15:27; 18:4; 24:4-5, 11, 14; Ezra 9:3-5; Est. 8:15; Is. 22:21; Matt. 22:11ff; 27:31; Mk. 16:5; Lk. 15:22; Rev. 1:13; 4:4; 6:11; 19:13, 16. This office/clothing concept, though biblical and ancient, is not foreign to us. We noted above that those who hold office and exercise public functions tend to clothe themselves in terms of their vocation and calling. They wear uniforms because they are representatives of something or someone other than themselves. They have an official and public role. PCA pastor, Dr. Robert Rayburn, Jr., in his discussion of the minister's robe writes, "We do not obey them or listen to them [judges, mayors, congressmen, or policemen] as individuals, or because of their personal virtue or opinions. But because they hold office. The judge speaks for the law and the minister speaks for God. The man himself should fade into the background and the office should come to the fore. What has happened over the last generation has been the reverse. The man has come to the fore and the office has been in full retreat from the view of the congregation."

The pastor's ordination authorizes him to act and speak officially for Jesus Christ. He is set apart to function in this official capacity for the congregation. The

congregation should be assured that when their minister reads, pronounces, preaches, prays, breaks bread, distributes, and blesses he does so speaking and acting for the Lord Himself. They should have no doubts about this; rather they should believe that what they receive from their minister they receive from the Lord Himself. The people are to think: this is the man who has been authorized by the church (and Jesus) to perform these functions in Jesus' Name. The robe helps us in this regard to de-emphasize the pastor as a private individual with personal opinions, and instead visibly emphasize his role as Christ's official spokesman, publicly representing the Husband to the Bride.

Interestingly, the question for our Reformed forefathers was never whether the pastor should wear a robe, rather, discussion revolved around the kind of robe he should wear. Traditionally, the black Geneva gown has been the regular choice of Reformed and Presbyterian ministers, often worn with white preaching-bands around the neck or a colored stole placed over the shoulders. The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 3rd ed. provides this definition for the Genevan robe: "The Black preaching-gown worn by early Reformed ministers, loose fitting, with full sleeves. It is now worn by Presbyterians and Calvinists. Its use is held to emphasize the ministry of the Word, over against belief in a sacrificing priesthood."

THE INEVITABILITY OF A PASTORAL UNIFORM

Many evangelical ministers in our day do not wear a robe while leading in worship. At the same time, everybody, no doubt, has seen D. James Kennedy wearing a version of the Geneva gown in his televised ministry, which should remind us that there are still well-respected and mainstream ministers continuing the practice. But for those who choose not to wear a robe, even in this choice they do not escape the concept of ministerial clothing. Remember, the minister must be clothed in some fashion. Instead of a robe they adopt another style of uniform: That of secular leaders – a dark suit and conservative necktie, clothing generally associated with and a symbol of secular authority in our culture (cf. the President of the United States). This unwittingly becomes the pastor's "clerical garb" before the worshipping congregation and the world. But it must be kept in mind that this change in dress only occurred in the 20th century when ministers began wearing suits like the other men were wearing to church. And you are probably aware that it hasn't stopped there in some churches. As congregational dress has become more casual many ministers have started wearing casual clothing during worship as well – polo-shirts and kakis, some even Bermuda shirts, shorts, and sandals. But even this change in dress symbolizes and communicates something to those inside and outside the church.

Clothing is inescapably powerful as a symbolic means of communication. Just as the location of the pulpit and table have symbolic significance in the sanctuary, so also the minister's clothing has symbolic significance in the sanctuary: It should visibly communicate that he is the ordained servant of the risen Christ, called to lead God's people in worship. What the pastor wears in (his "work clothes") is prophetic. It "tells us" a message. His clothing naturally sets the tone for the worship service. Is it reverent and formal? Is it glorious or dowdy? Is it bright and beautiful? Does it clearly identify him? (Some visitors to CCC have expressed confusion as to who the pastor is since the members of the session all wear suits and ties on Sunday morning. Honestly!). Inevitably, the pastor's clothing reveals something of the expectation the people have of

their shared worship experience. And what he wears during worship says something about how he views God, worship, his office, the people, the Church etc. Is the Church of Jesus Christ egalitarian, everyone being the same with no distinction in office? Is the Church a business, where money and commerce are not distinguished from sanctuary duties? What the pastor wears in worship gives visible answer to these questions.

SUMMARY

In Christian worship, biblically and historically, ministers have worn distinctive garments while leading in worship. The robe testifies visibly to their office as representatives of Christ. The pastor plays a symbolic, instrumental role during worship. He represents Christ, the Husband, to the Church, His bride. When he leads worship, the robe helps remind us that it is not “my friend, so-and-so” up front. God in Christ calls us to worship, to confess, to hear His word, to give, etc., and He does so by means of His ordained servant. The pastor does not act for himself, but for Christ. When he performs the duties pertaining to his office he represents his Lord. When he leads the congregation in prayer before God, he symbolizes Christ leading the Church in prayer before the Father. When he reads and preaches the Word, he symbolizes Christ speaking to His Church. When the minister baptizes he symbolizes and represents Jesus who baptizes by the Holy Spirit. When the pastor stands at the Lord’s Table he serves bread and wine on behalf of Christ. The Bible teaches that Jesus speaks, baptizes, and serves us at the table by means of His ordained ministry. These truths are reinforced when the pastor wears something that reminds the people of his special calling *for them* on the Lord’s Day.

In closing, I wish to remind you that at the center of our mission as a church is the sanctuary and our worship of the Triune God. Our evangelism and hospitality, our missions of mercy and education, and our passion to faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of God, begin with such true worship. The robe helps promote and cultivate the solemnity, joy, beauty, and special character of our life together in the sanctuary during the morning worship service at Christ Community Church. Just as it is proper for the pulpit and table to be robed with paraments, it is only fitting to robe the man whose office and duties pertain to these. The Geneva Gown is a practice in line with the general rules of the Word of God concerning clothing and calling, in line with what the historic Church has practiced, and in line with what other Reformed and Presbyterian churches do worldwide.

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

1. The robe is Roman Catholic.

We have briefly discussed this assertion already, but for the sake of pastoral sensitivity I’ll approach it again. Why do some think a pastor in a robe is Roman Catholic? Perhaps it is the bare fact that Roman Catholic priests wear any robes whatsoever? But let’s work through the logic of this thinking. To put things in perspective, are we really going to renounce pews, pulpits, communion tables, baptismal fonts, Bible readings, singing, prayer, Creeds, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, church buildings, postures like standing and sitting, etc., based purely on the fact that you will find these as prominent parts of a Roman Catholic worship service? Of course not! Why would some be comfortable doing

this when it comes to the pastor's robe? Maybe it is because they are not used to pastors dressing this way. We tend to react against what's unfamiliar to us on an emotional and gut-level. But here we must be especially careful. Nobody's church experience is absolute and infallible, and, consequently, no one's church experience can become the standard for what we do in worship. Traditions are good, but not for their own sake. Traditions are good only inasmuch as they serve biblical truth.

The historical fact is the Magisterial Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) and their disciples all retained distinctive clothing for their ministers inside and outside of worship. If you look at paintings of these men you will find them dressed in their clerical garb. Why would these Reformers reject Rome and all its perversions of Christian truth, and yet continue wearing robes if doing so was characteristically Roman Catholic? The answer should be obvious: Robes are not specifically linked to Roman Catholicism in such a way as to make them wrong or inappropriate for Protestant ministers. Like everything else listed above, Reformed churches use robes differently than Rome does. Rome believes the priest *must* wear special vestments while performing the Mass. We recognize that this is unbiblical in the same way that we recognize the Roman church is unbiblical in their view of the Eucharist, baptism, the Virgin Mary, the priesthood, Peter as Pope, and a whole host of other doctrinal matters and practices. At the risk of being cliché, we mustn't throw the baby out with the bathwater when it comes to the pastor's robe in worship. If we are true to our heritage as Presbyterians, we won't.

2. The robe is a uniquely part of Old Testament worship and should not be used in the New Covenant.

We've touched on this earlier, but again, as Reformed Christians our worship practices must be built upon the whole Bible. We must take our instruction from all 66 books of Holy Scripture. It is a single book, a single coherent revelation of God's mind. And it has always been, therefore, a single worship of God's people: the same grateful praise, confession, submission offered to a holy God by sinners saved by grace. Also, we must regulate our worship according to the precepts, principles, and examples found within the totality of God's Word. The opinion that the Old Testament temple and sacrificial system have nothing to do with life and worship in the New Testament finds no justification in the New Testament itself.

The only rationale for special ministerial clothing – given twice in Exodus 28:2, 39 – is that the priests should have “dignity and honor” as they superintend the worship of God's house. Many seem to think that OT priests wore special clothing because they were offering sacrifices. This is, to be sure, the idea of vestments in, say, the Roman Catholic Church. But the Bible never says this. The only reason the Bible provides for the special clothing of the priest is that given here: that they might have the dignity and honor appropriate to their office as God's representative to the people and the people's to God.

Surely no one thinks that the Christian ministry should be without dignity and honor but, if so, why not employ the trans-cultural and trans-temporal means God approved of for adding honor and dignity to the office, namely a special uniform. There is nothing

uniquely Old Testament about this. We do this today even in the broader culture. Judges wear robes, policemen and firemen uniforms, so do doctors and nurses, professors when they march in academic processions. There is no rationale provided for clerical garb in Exodus 28 that does not make the same sense in our time as it did in the days of Moses.

3. Jesus has fulfilled the typological nature of the Aaronic priesthood/ Jesus did not wear distinctive clothing, he was humble.

This is true. Jesus was the counterpoint of Aaron in the sense that he fulfilled the prophecy that was embodied in Aaron. Jesus was the anti-type to Aaron's type. Jesus is the true and eternal high priest *after the order of Melchizedek*.

But saying that Christ is the fulfillment of the prophecy embodied in Aaron does not mean that all aspects of Aaron's office, viz. being an earthly servant-priest, have been discontinued in the new epoch.

We must think carefully at this point. The successor of Aaron as a serving priest *on earth* is not the Lord Jesus, but the Christian minister. Jesus did not serve as an earthly priest or serving minister in his own day. His disciples baptized, but he did not (Jn. 4:1-2). He did not lead a congregation in worship. He participated in the worship of the temple under the oversight of Jewish priests as it was in his day. He did not himself administer the sacrament until he created the Lord's Supper in the Upper Room the night of his betrayal.

Consequently, Jesus' ministry is not prototypical (a model on which something is based or formed) by way of outward and external example. His ministry is prototypical by way of extension and continuation. Jesus does not send his disciples out with instructions that they should do what he did. Instead, he gives them the Holy Spirit and in that way continues in them what was begun in himself when he received the Holy Spirit and went forth preaching the forgiveness of sins and using up his life in loving service for those given to him.

Luke refers to his Gospel as the first book which deals "with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). The aorist form "began" implies that the story which is to follow contains what Jesus is continuing to do and say in the acts and words of his ministers. The apostles and ministers are called shepherds (Acts 20:28; 1 Pt. 5:2ff.; cf. 1 Cor. 9:7), stewards of the household of God (1 Tim. 3:2 ff.; Ti. 1:5, 7; 1 Pt. 4:10 ff.) and a husbandman (2 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 9:7) – all titles which Jesus used of himself. From heaven, the Shepherd continues his work in the shepherds; the Householder continues his work in his stewards; the Husbandman continues his work in the husbandmen.

This is to say that Jesus was not an earthly minister in the way he has appointed his apostles and pastors to be. Ultimately, Jesus is *the* true, heavenly Minister and Pastor of his Church (Heb. 8:1-2). But he wasn't a clergyman while on earth (Heb. 8:4). He was not from the tribe of Levi, but Judah. His priesthood was not Aaronic, but greater than Aaron's (Heb. 7).

Upon his ascension to heaven, Jesus very clearly created a ministry to serve the church upon earth and left instructions for the performance of that ministry. He appoints pastors in His Church to minister *under Him and in His Name* (Eph. 4:8-12). The fact is, there is a continuing “priestly” ministry in the New Testament, performing the same functions as the priesthood in the Old Testament, and there is nothing in either Testament to suggest that the nature of that ministry has changed in any fundamental way.

To substantiate what was just said, the apostle Paul as a minister of the gospel describes the entirety of his gospel ministry to the Gentiles as “priestly service,” viewing his Gentile converts as “an offering” to God (Rom. 15:15-16).

4. The robe will be a visible symbol of a clergy-laity distinction.

George W. Sprott has written: “Those who disbelieve the Christian ministry as an Order are...quite consistent in objecting to ecclesiastical robes.” Sadly, today in many churches, including those that are Reformed and Presbyterian, you find the notion that the “clergy-laity” distinction is unbiblical or contrary to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. This thinking follows the Anabaptists by abandoning any type of clothing that may distinguish the pastor from any other person in the congregation. The argument often runs thus: While there was a professional priesthood in the Old Testament, in the New Testament we are all priests. Therefore, minister and congregation should be dressed in the same way and no distinction made between them.

The idea, however, of the priesthood of all believers comes from the OT, not the NT; it comes, in fact, from a statement in Exodus 19:6 where the Lord says to Israel: “you shall be for me a kingdom of priests...” There is nothing distinctively New Testament about this idea or reality. The priesthood of all believers did not mean that there wasn’t a special priesthood in the Old Covenant and it is never taught to mean that there isn’t a special priesthood in the New Covenant. The “priesthood of all believers” as it is taught in the Bible no more provides an argument against clerical garb for ministers in the New Covenant than it provides an argument against a distinct and authoritative ministry in the New Covenant. The demarcation between ministers and people is a distinction often observed, in both the OT and the NT, and there is no argument against that distinction that can be raised from biblical materials. The fact that the distinction between ministers and people can be and has been abused in Christian history is not argument against its validity. The truth is you find the distinction everywhere you look in the Bible.

This distinction between people and pastor is created by ministerial ordination. If by ordination we are not distinguishing a man from the rest of the congregation and authorizing him to do and say what he would not otherwise be authorized to do and say, then what are we doing in ordination? It is certainly not a status thing. And we do not believe it is communicating some change in the man’s being, making him something like a super-Christian. No, the minister is ordained to represent Christ symbolically, instrumentally, and ritually in the organized body of Christ. As David Cornick has stated, “Ministers...are called by God and accepted and authorized by the church, they

are the means through which Christ becomes present to his people in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.”

Jesus very clearly created a ministry to serve the church upon His ascension to heaven and left instructions for the performance of that ministry. The clergy-laity distinction, therefore, is biblically necessary and beneficial, but must be properly understood. The distinction does not mean that the minister is placed *above* the people as though he were somehow closer to God or spiritually superior; no, his ordination doesn't set him *above* but *apart* from the congregation in his special task and calling. As mentioned earlier, the robe makes visible the intention and reality of ministerial ordination; wearing it doesn't set the pastor *above* the congregation, but visibly sets him *apart* from them because of his unique function during the Lord's Day worship service.

5. The robe will call attention to the pastor.

As has been argued in this essay, this is precisely the reason for using the robe: It is worn to draw appropriate attention to the pastor in his official capacity as an ordained servant of Jesus Christ, authorized to speak and act in His Name. The robe does not call attention to the individual, but to the God-appointed office. Attention of this nature is biblical and beneficial (even necessary) given ministers are the chosen means through which Christ becomes present to serve and bless His people in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. In my experience, a pastor is in greater danger of calling attention to *himself* as an individual by wearing a nice suit and tie.

6. The robe will be a distraction to the people in worship.

On different occasions people have come up to me after a Sunday morning service and said, "That sure is a nice suit!" or "Great tie!" Now, I'm not at all offended by this, but it has made me realize that people are currently tempted to distraction on Sunday morning by my suits and neckties. When it comes to distracting people in worship, a plain robe can hardly compete with the variety and new editions of a normal wardrobe.

7. The robe will make the pastor unapproachable.

It can be argued persuasively that the robe makes the minister more approachable in his capacity as pastor. It forces "Jason Stewart" to recede and brings forward the office of pastor. The robe will highlight the pastor's office and role. In fact, people in my experience are more apt to address the pastor with spiritual questions and concerns when he is dressed in a traditionally pastoral way. This happens all the time when I wear the pastor's collar. With the robe, people will be reminded that Jason is their pastor, the one whom Christ has given them to minister to them the things of God. After all, people want to be able to trust their pastors.

People long to be able to place some kind of secondary confidence in the office of the pastor (our primary confidence, of course, is in God's Word!). An outward sign of that office helps people. This is not hard to prove. Think about doctors, nurses, judges, and policemen. People want them to wear something distinctive that reminds them of their

expertise or calling. We are helped when our doctor wears a white uniform. The uniform assists us in remembering that we can place some confidence in him. This is his calling. The uniform reminds us of his training and commitment. The same ought to be true with our pastors. Biblical teaching as a whole links clothing and calling. You are what you wear or you wear what you are. Just as judges, physicians, policeman, and auto mechanics wear clothing that befits their calling, so should the pastor, especially when he is performing the specific duties of his office during the Lord's Day worship service?

=====

The following works were used as resources and material for this essay: "The Reformed Elder," *The Expository Times*, David Cornick, 98,: 235-240; *The Worship of the English Puritans*, Horton Davies; *Order in the Offices, "Worship and Office"*, Charles Dennison; *The Minister in the Reformed Tradition*, Harry G. Goodykoontz; *The Sociology of the Church*, James B. Jordan; *The Lord's Service*, Jeffrey J. Meyers; *The Dynamics of Worship*, Richard Paquiers; *The Second Annual Conference on Worship: The Theology and Music of Reformed Worship*, "Worship from the Whole Bible," Robert S. Rayburn; *Root of the Vine: Essays in Biblical Theology*, "The Ministry in the New Testament," Harald Riesenfeld; *The Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland*, George W. Sprott; *The Study of Liturgy* ed. Cheslyn Jones, Edward Yarnold, Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul Bradshaw; *The Doctrine of Ministerial Order in the Reformed Churches of the 16th and 17th Centuries*, James Ainslie.

THE PASTOR'S ROBE AT A GLANCE

1. The Lord placed special robes on Aaron and his sons in their role as the as the pastors of Israel (Exod. 28:2; Mal. 2:7; Neh. 8:7-8, 9). These garments would remind the people of the purpose, duty, and responsibility of Aaron's family as ministers of the Lord. The pastor is not an Old Covenant priest – though Presbyterians have always acknowledged an analogy between the two (they teach, bless, administer sacraments, govern, etc. cf. Westminster DPW) – nevertheless, the giving of these garments to Aaron and his sons establishes a timeless, trans-cultural principle not bound to the Old Testament or the law of Moses. As whole-Bible Christians we acknowledge the substance of the command is still valid for the worship of the Christian Church. The "glory and beauty" or "dignity and honor" of the robes mentioned in Exodus 28:2 should always characterize the administration and conduct of biblical worship. In this sense, the rationale for ministerial robes in Moses' day is fundamentally the same in ours.
2. Clothing and calling go together in the Bible. People wear what they are and are what they wear. Biblical examples of clothing depicting the office, calling, or function of a person are found in Gen. 9:20-27; 39:1-13; 37:3-11, 23; 41:1-44; all of the references in Exodus and Leviticus to the clothing of the priests; 1 Sam. 2:19; 15:27; 18:4; 24:4-5, 11, 14; Ezra 9:3-5; Est. 8:15; Is. 22:21; Matt. 22:11ff; 27:31; Mk. 16:5; Lk. 15:22; Rev. 1:13; 4:4; 6:11; 19:13, 16. In our culture judges, policemen, doctors, nurses, EMTs, military, mailmen, clergy, and many more, all wear distinctive uniforms to set them apart and remind us of their callings. Their clothing is a symbol that communicates what they do. Scripture's general rules

suggest that a minister's calling should be manifested in his clothing, both in worship and outside worship.

3. It has been the custom of Presbyterian ministers to wear robes while leading worship. Even the Scottish Presbyterians, who were strongly anti-Roman Catholic, wore the Geneva gown while preaching and leading on the Lord's Day. The pastor is ordained to speak and act for the Lord in an official capacity. He is the means through which Christ becomes present to His people in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. To reinforce this truth, ministers have been traditionally placed in robes. In doing so the man as an individual is covered-up and the ordained office is in full view. The robe doesn't set the pastor *above* the people, simply *apart* (visually) from them for the purpose of ministering to them in the corporate worship of the church.
4. The center of our mission as a church is the sanctuary and our worship of the Triune God. Our evangelism and hospitality, our missions of mercy and education, and our passion to faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of God, begin with biblically guided worship. The robe helps promote and cultivate the solemnity, joy, beauty, and special character of our life together in the sanctuary during God's worship at Christ Community Church.
5. Ministerial robes are consistent with the general rules of the Word of God concerning clothing and calling, with what the historic Church has practiced, and with what many other Reformed and Presbyterian churches do worldwide.