

Review of: "Clergy Vestment: An Analysis Of The Ecclesiological And Theological Journey Of African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches In South Africa"

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The article provides a trend analysis of the practice of clergy vestments in Pentecostal and charismatic denominations in South Africa by locating it within a global context traced back to the Church Fathers. Today, most believers would assume the practice of vestment donning to be a given. However, the author provides the dialectical context that enlightens the reader, especially on the ecclesiastical rationale. For example, other than reasons of identity, vestments play an immersive role for the church followers in the ecclesiastical teachings and practices of the particular denomination. It is interesting to note that the South African experience is intimately linked to Afro-American Pentecostal practices, which have ultimately taken root in the faith practices of the country's churches.

The article, however, falls short of an analytical approach to the adoption of church vestments that would explain an autonomous path pursued by the South African church separate from external influence. Being members of the AIC fraternity, the expectation would dwell on the role of "African Identity" in forging a unique spectacle of church vestments. Maybe the identity function may not arise in the appearances of the clergy but is retained in the style of worship. As such, the question remains, does the unique African identity matter (in the 21st century) in both worship and the attendant optics exemplified by the adoption of church vestments? Can one argue that the growth of the Independent Church in the USA black diaspora extends and shares fraternal emotions with the African Independent Church in South Africa and the rest of the continent? Can this then explain why a unique homegrown African Church experience does not feature as much but tends to align itself with ecclesiastical currents elsewhere?