

# The Seamless Coat of Jesus

by Samuel Logan Brengle

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*The seamless coat of Jesus represents the unity and love of the Early Church and The Salvation Army, and serving the Lord with humility is essential to maintaining this unity and love.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:13

**Topics:** "Unity in the Church", "Love and Humility"

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## Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the significance of Jesus' seamless coat as a symbol of unity among His followers. He reflects on how Jesus, despite His suffering, never sought pity for Himself and instead focused on His mission, revealing His divine identity to His disciples. Brengle warns against the dangers of division within the Church, likening it to the rending of Jesus' coat, and stresses the importance of love and humility in maintaining unity among believers. He calls for the Church to embody the seamless robe of Christ, serving as a shelter for all, and urges Christians to prioritize love and selflessness to prevent any rending of this sacred bond.

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## Transcript

Jesus never pitied Himself, nor did He seek the pity of any man. One day He asked His disciples, 'Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?'

'John the Baptist,' replied one

'Elijah,' said another.

'Jeremiah or one of the prophets,' answered a third.

'But whom say ye that I am?' He asked.

'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' replied ever-ready Simon Peter.

At last their eyes had pierced through the veil of His humanity, the disguise of His lowly village ancestry, and His humble occupation as a carpenter, and recognized the King, King Eternal, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. The splendor of His Being, before which seraphim and cherubim, angels and archangels veil their faces, was so accommodated to their poor eyes and minds that their eyes were not blinded and they were not afraid.

'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona,' said Jesus, 'for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.'

The secret was out! The Son of God, the Eternal Word, 'full of grace and truth,' was made flesh and was in the world, dwelling among men. But the secret must not just yet go further, so 'He charged His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ.' It must not be bruited abroad. He must draw the veil yet closer about Himself, that only sincere, humble souls might know Him, and that the sin of men might run its course, and its malignity and utter enmity to God might be revealed in their treatment of Him, the well-beloved, only begotten Son of the Father.

From that time forth Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.'

Such statements, it should seem, would have dumbfounded the disciples. But not Peter; his poor, dull mind was roused and his tongue loosed, and he took Jesus 'and began to rebuke Him, saying: Be it far from Thee, Lord ('pity Thyself' is the marginal reading), this shall not be unto Thee.'

But Jesus did not pity Himself, and He would have none of Peter's pity nor worldly counsel and comfort. 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' said He to Peter, 'thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.'

But while Jesus would not pity Himself, nor even permit Peter to counsel pity, yet what, humanly speaking, could be more pathetic than the scene at the Cross, when He, the most loving and devoted of the sons of men, and the poorest, was stripped of His only suit of clothes, His only earthly possession, and nailed nude to the Cross to die, while those who crucified Him divided the poor little bundle of clothes among themselves and cast lots for His seamless coat?

His coat without seam, that must not be rent! Think of that careless, cruel soldier stalking about in the coat of Jesus! What a picture!

But while the soldiers, for their own selfish purpose, spared the seamless coat that day, how often has it been rent since then, and that by those who profess to know and love Him.

I like to think of that first society of His people, which we now speak of as the Early Church, as the seamless robe of Jesus. It enshrined His spiritual presence. He clothed Himself with it as with a garment. Through its members He, the risen Christ, was still seen by the children of men.

He was revealed in its spiritual life. To the wonder-struck multitude on the day of Pentecost, amazed at the glowing, fire-baptized disciples, and inquiring, 'What meaneth this?' while 'others, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine,' Peter replied: 'This Jesus whom ye crucified hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.'

The radiant, joy-filled, fearless, conquering life of the Early Church was the life, the presence of Christ, in its members. 'It is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me,' wrote Paul. And 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.'

He was made manifest in the activities of the Early Church. 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?'

asked Peter of the Jerusalem crowd after healing the lame man at the temple gate called Beautiful. 'The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus . . . and His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.' What they did, they did by the power of Christ working in and through them, as the branch brings forth fruit by the power of the vine from which comes its life.

But most surely was He seen and known in and by the love which His disciples had one for the other. 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,' said Jesus, 'If ye have love one to another.' While they loved 'they were of one heart!' and so long as they were of one heart, they were of one mind.' Their unity began in the heart and extended to the head, and worked itself out in deeds of loving fellowship and service. Many of them even sold their possessions and had all things in common, so great was their love for the Saviour and for each other.

Like the coat of the Master, the infant Church was 'without seam, woven from the top throughout.'

The first rent in the seamless robe came when Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, sought credit for a love and generosity of which their wretched hearts were destitute, by pretending to give all when they were holding back part of the price of their sold possession.

A wider rent was threatened when the Grecians began to murmur against the Hebrews 'because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.' But this was wisely and promptly arrested by the action of the Apostles in appointing 'seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,' to look after that business.

The rending of this seamless robe can always be traced back to lack of love. The great heresy of the ages is not manifested so much in false doctrine as in failing love and consequent false living. Faith is lost when love leaks out and living becomes selfish. Heresy begins in the heart, not in the head. The heretic of the early Christian society was the loveless schismatic. 'I hear there are divisions' ('schisms,' margin) 'among you,' wrote Paul to the Corinthians, 'and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies ' ('sects, schismatics ') 'among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.'

In the tenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, Paul gives us examples of what befell God's ancient people, the Church in the wilderness, and he says: 'These things were our example. . . All these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.' As we study the history of Israel we see, as in type, the things we must do and avoid doing if we would save ourselves and guard the heritage God has given us. Again and again we see the rending or attempted rending of the seamless robe of the Ancient Church. Sometimes it was through envy and jealousy that the rending was attempted. On one occasion Miriam and Aaron would have rent the seamless robe. They spoke against their brother, Moses: 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?' But the Lord was listening. 'The Lord heard it . . . and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them,' and lo! 'Miriam became leprous, white as snow.' Korah and Dathan would have rent the robe, but again with sure and swift judgment God acted as umpire, and Korah and Dathan perished in their presumption.

Again the rending was attempted by Absalom through unholy ambition. By flattering words and fair promises he sought to steal the hearts of the men of Israel, only to perish in his deceit and pride and have his name handed down through the ages and spit upon as a synonym of unfaithfulness and basest

treachery.

A fatal rending was finally occasioned by the supercilious pride of those in authority, against which God Himself took up arms. When Rehoboam, turning from the advice of wise old men, listened to the haughty counsel of his young nobles and declared his little finger should be thicker than the loin of his father, ten tribes forsook him, and the seamless robe of the Ancient Church of Israel was fatally and finally rent asunder and is not yet mended, for to this day the ten tribes are known as the 'lost tribes.' What the oily duplicity of Absalom failed to accomplish the insolent arrogance of Rehoboam brought to pass. A further rending was caused by the shameless, sinful neglect of those who should have shepherded the sheep. Jeremiah and the lesser prophets weep and lament and bitterly protest against those who fleece and scatter the sheep instead of feeding and shepherding them, causing the people of God to wander and perish for lack of humble oversight and loving care.

Paul found partiality, favoritism, and a partisan spirit endangering the unity of the seamless robe in Corinth: while at Ephesus he foresaw danger arising from the perversity of those who selfishly sought leadership, and he forewarned them in his farewell address of this danger.

Listen! 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own Blood. For I know ' -- Oh, the pity of it! -- 'I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them' -- rending the seamless robe, to gratify their own lust for leadership

I think of The Salvation Army as a seamless robe of the Master, beneath whose unrent folds in all lands cluster unnumbered multitudes. Little children, unspoiled as yet, but compassed about with innumerable perils, are there, looking to The Army for the bread of Eternal Life whereby their souls shall live, for guidance amid hidden and treacherous snares, and for protection from lurking and watchful foes. Adolescent boys and girls are there, with all their inexplicable moods and trying tempers, their day dreams, their pride and foolishness, their loyalty and rebellions, their ardor and despair, their hopes, their loves, their fun and laziness, their humility, conceit, strange insight, and hasty judgments, their sensitiveness and abysmal ignorance; there they are beneath the folds of this seamless Salvation Army robe of the Saviour.

Straying girls and wronged women are there: great sinners, terrible criminals, hopeless outcasts, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, are there. Widows and orphans, husbands and wives bearing burdens of toil and care and anxiety, are there. Aged people, with white hair and feeble steps and dim eyes, are there. The heathen are coming under its world-wide sheltering folds, and for the sake of all these who look trustingly to it for safety and shelter, it must not be rent.

For sixty years sinister eyes have watched to see it rent in twain. Futile attempts have been made by some to rend it, and they have torn off a bit here and there. But the robe still spreads its ample and ever-expanding folds over the nations.

It must not be rent, and yet it may be unless we 'serve the Lord with all humility of mind,' and in honor prefer others before self, remembering Paul's exhortation to his Philippian brethren 'Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory: but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.' Let us keep in mind the prayer of Jesus just before the shame and suffering of Pilate's judgment hall and the tragedy of

the Cross. I pray for them . . . that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect In one: and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me ' (John xvii. 21, 23).

If ever this seamless coat is rent, then in the solemn words of the Redeemer: 'Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.'

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