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An Odd Habit: A Study of the Use of the Academic Hood in the Portraits of the Archbishops of Armagh

By Peter A. Thompson

The city of Armagh, or as it is known in the Irish tongue, *Ard Mhacha* (the high place of Macha, or Macha's height), is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. It was on the hill of Ard Mhacha that Saint Patrick founded his 'great church' in the middle years of the fifth century (traditionally dated to 445 AD) and the old legends record that the saint decreed that this church should have preeminence over all of the churches in Ireland forever. Whether the legend is true, or a later creation to support Armagh's claim to the primacy, it has been and remains the seat of the successors of St Patrick, firstly the abbots, then bishops, and from 1106 AD archbishops of Armagh, a continuous succession from Patrick to the present day. There are two cathedrals dedicated to the saint in the city. The Church of Ireland (Anglican) Cathedral of St Patrick is on the hill of Armagh, the site of the fifth century church, and the Roman Catholic Cathedral sits on one of the surrounding hills.

Church House (Armagh) is situated on the hill of Armagh, beside the See House, and opposite the Cathedral and the Armagh Robinson Library, demarcating the Cathedral Close. The Primate Alexander Synod Hall is on the first floor of the building. The foundation stone of the Synod Hall was laid in 1911 and it was opened in 1913. Although built primarily as a venue for the annual diocesan synod of the diocese of Armagh, it functions as a space for large diocesan gatherings and also as a 'parish hall' for the cathedral. Refreshments after major diocesan, provincial and national events are served in the Synod Hall, and it has been used during the renovation of the Cathedral building for the regular daily and weekly services for the Cathedral congregation.

The offices of the diocesan administration are on the ground floor, as are other meeting rooms, including the Council Room, where regular meetings of the diocesan council and committees are held. During the Covid-19 pandemic (as a result of the need for increased social distancing) many of these smaller meetings were held upstairs in the Synod Hall, and during numerous tedious sessions I found my mind drawn more to the episcopal portraits hanging on the walls than the agenda under discussion. The changing fashions in episcopal dress and wigs were fascinating, but beyond a general interest it was obvious that there was a considerable period of time when the use of the academic hood with episcopal habit was considered normative, and that observation sowed the seeds of this article.

The issues around the wearing of academic hoods 'in quire' have been dealt with thoroughly by the late Nicholas Groves, whose paper in *Transactions of the Burgon Society*[1] considers history, practice, canon law and common misconceptions around the

1 'The Use of the Academic Hood in Quire', *TBS*, 8 (2008), pp. 98–105.

Fig. 1. St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.

Fig. 2. Church House, Armagh.

use of the hood. While focused primarily on musicians, it also covers the requirements and traditional use of the hood by clergy, but not specifically by bishops. In *Theological Colleges: Their Hoods and Histories*,[2] Groves gives some further information on the history and use of hoods by the clergy. This article is an attempt to build upon those sources, using as a foundation the portrait collection of the archbishops of Armagh as evidence of evolving custom and historical practice. The initial questions are what was worn, and when, thus an initial survey of the portraits will attempt to identify both the particular hoods worn, and the time period in which their use was normative. The results of this raise a secondary, often contentious, question, of whether the hood should be worn with the chimere—or not?[3] The initial survey will establish that for a period of over a century there is clear evidence of all archbishops choosing to wear their hoods over a chimere. Some comments on the origins of the chimere will then attempt to address the question from a historical perspective, thus drawing together both custom and practice across the centuries.

The terms rochet and chimere have multiple meanings, or to be more precise the garments exist in multiple (related but distinct) forms. Throughout this paper the terms are always used with reference to the classic Anglican form unless otherwise indicated. The rochet is a long white garment, similar in form to the Surplice, but with narrower sleeves, gathered at the cuff by a coloured band forming a ruffle. It is a traditional part of episcopal choir dress. The chimere is descended from a riding cloak, and is similar in appearance to a sleeveless academic gown. It is worn over the rochet, and is traditionally black or scarlet.

Several limitations to the extent of this article should be noted. Firstly it relates only to one diocese of one member Church of the Anglican Communion. A similar exercise in other dioceses and/or provinces would serve either to confirm or to challenge the general hypothesis that the use of the hood can be sanctioned by custom over an

2 London: Burgon Society, 2004.

3 Janet Mayo states boldly (and without any sources or references) that 'the bishop should never wear an academic hood with either the red or black chimere.' (*A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (London: Batsford, 1984), p. 120.)

extended period.[4] Secondly it is a collection of formal portraits, where, it might be expected, a particularly formal and conservative choice of dress would be exercised. There is some photographic and anecdotal evidence from more recent years which could enlarge the evidence in relation to customary use. Thirdly, 'it is worth bearing in mind that artists' representations of dress should be approached critically,'[5] hence the somewhat cautious appraisal of certain features and details, for example the McCann portrait.

The portraits

There are some thirty-two[6] portraits in the collection, beginning with Adam Loftus, who became primate in 1563, and chronologically complete from Henry Ussher (who became archbishop and primate in 1595) to the present day. The most recent portrait, that of Archbishop Richard Clarke, was added in December 2022, following his retirement in February 2020.

The collection is a remarkable repository of information in many areas, not least of clerical dress and contemporary fashion. The large ruffs of Henry Ussher (1595) and his successors give way to a flat shoulder covering[7] in the time of John Bramhall (1661), which in turn reduces to the more recognizable preaching bands by the time of Narcissus Marsh (1703). The same three archbishops also see the fashion changing from short cropped hair with a skull cap, to long curled hair, and finally to the clerical wig, a fashion only abandoned by Lord John George Beresford in 1822. The beards of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries disappeared for over two hundred years, not reappearing until the early twentieth century. While the rochet and (black) chimere were *de rigueur* in all of the early portraits, to that was added the jewel of the prelate of the Order of St Patrick by Archbishop Stuart (1800–22) and several of his successors. Archbishop Marcus Gervais Beresford[8] further added the mantle of the Order.

Fig. 3. The interior of the Synod Hall, showing some of the portrait collection.

The first archbishop to be pictured wearing a hood was Archbishop Knox, who succeeded Marcus Beresford in 1886, and the fashion continued without exception for

4 There are several episcopal portraits from the diocese of Clogher in C. Costecalde and B. Walker (eds), *The Church of Ireland, An Illustrated History* (Dublin: Booklink, n.d.), pp. 140–44, which confirm the findings of this article.

5 A. Ribeiro, 'Truth and Imagination: How Real Is Dress in Art?', *Journal of Dress History*, 1.1 (2017), pp. 3–5.

6 The total rises to thirty-four if the portrait of Mrs Alexander, and the second portrait of Archbishop Richard Robinson which is on loan to the Armagh Observatory are both included.

7 This was a turned-down collar, known at the time as a 'falling band'.

8 Marcus Gervais Beresford was archbishop in 1862–85. His predecessor was his first cousin once removed, Lord John George de la Poer Beresford (who was archbishop from 1822 until 1862). Marcus' father was Bishop George de la Poer Beresford, bishop of Kilmore (1802–39), who was a nephew of William Beresford, 1st Baron Decies and archbishop of Tuam (1794–1819).

120 years, the pattern only broken by Archbishop Harper who was elected in 2007. We will now examine briefly each of the 'hooded' portraits.

Robert Bent Knox (1808–93) is the first of the primates to wear a hood in his portrait. He was archbishop of Armagh from 1886 to 1893, having previously been consecrated as bishop for the united dioceses of Down, Connor and Dromore in 1849, and before that serving in the dioceses of Limerick and Kilmore. He held the degrees of BA (1829), MA (1834), BD and DD (1858) from Trinity College Dublin,[9] and LLD Cantab (1888).[10]

Fig. 4. Archbishop Knox, by Emily C. Way (1893).

The hood in the portrait (Fig. 4) is unclear, exhibiting a reasonably wide red neckband, unbound. His left shoulder appears to reveal a black lining, suggesting the DD hood. While the Dublin hoods are customarily bound on the neckband and cape, there are numerous examples where both are unbound. Within the archive of the Burgon Society[11] are a number of Dublin hoods. WBS-244 shows a standard MusB, while WBS-448 is another hood of the same shape, but unbound. The date ascribed is *c.* 1930s. WBS-407 is a standard DD, bound on the neckband and cape, while WPG-034 is unbound on both. These two examples serve to illustrate the regular deviation from the norm.

The 1972 edition of Frank Haycraft's *Degrees and Hoods* adds a curious comment to the Dublin entry. It says: 'all hoods of this University are of a special full shape. Nowadays they are edged by extending the silk lining but this was a tailor's innovation and any graduate may have his hood made without this edging, so greatly improving the appearance.'[12] No other volume on academic dress contains a comparable note, and it may be sheer speculation to ask is this an editorial addition by Franklyn.

Robert Samuel Gregg (1834–96) was archbishop from 1893 to 1896. He was consecrated as bishop in 1875 for Cork, Cloyne and Ross, succeeding his father in that see. Previously he had served in the dioceses of Cork and Connor, having been at one time chaplain to his father. He held the degrees of BA (1857), MA (1860), BD and DD (1873) from Trinity College Dublin.[13]

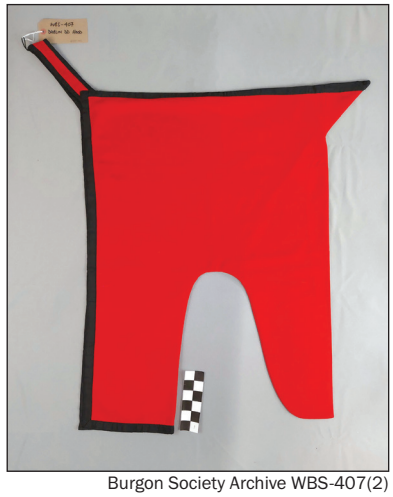
9 Full details of the scheme of academic dress in Trinity (more precisely the University of Dublin, of which Trinity is the only constituent college, and thus is used interchangeably) can be found in Nicholas Groves, (ed.), *Shaw's Academical Dress*, 3rd edn (London: Burgon Society, 2011), pp. 145–48. That of Oxford may be found on pp. 320–23, and Cambridge on pp. 110–14.

10 Biographical details from W. E. C. Fleming, *Armagh Clergy 1800–2000* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 2001), pp. 40–41.

11 At <burgon.org.uk/archive/british-and-irish-collection> [retrieved 28 June 2024].

12 Frank W. Haycraft, *The Degrees and Hoods of the World's Universities and Colleges*, 5th edn, ed. by Frederick R. Rogers, Charles A. H. Franklyn, George W. Shaw and Hugh Alexander Boyd (Lewes: Baxter, 1972), p. 28.

13 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 42–43.



Burgon Society Archive WBS-407(2)

Fig. 5. Dublin DD (bound).

Burgon Society Archive WBS-407(1)

Fig. 6. Dublin DD (bound).

Burgon Society Archive WPG-034(1)

Fig. 7. Dublin DD (unbound).

Burgon Society Archive WPG-034(2)

Fig. 8. Dublin DD (unbound).

Photos by Chris Williams

Burgon Society Archive WBS-244(1)

Fig. 9. Dublin MusB (bound).

Burgon Society Archive WBS 448(1)

Fig. 10. Dublin MusB (unbound).

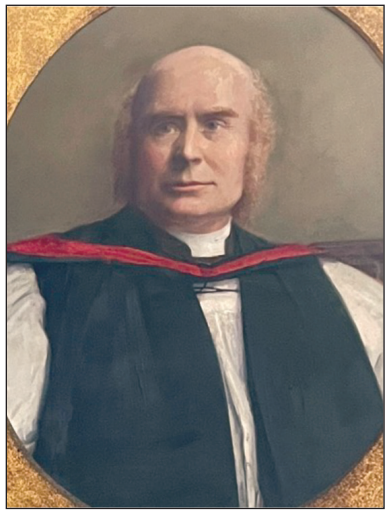


Fig. 11. Archbishop R. S. Gregg, English School, late 19th century (1894).

Fig. 12. Archbishop Alexander, by Walter Frederick Osborne (1893).

Fig. 13. Archbishop Crozier by Frederick Whiting (1911).

Fig. 14. Archbishop Crozier by Mark Milbanke (1920).

His portrait (Fig. 11) depicts a much narrower red neckband bound with black, clearly the hood of a Dublin Doctor of Divinity.

William Alexander (1824–1911) was the husband of the well-known hymn writer Cecil Frances Alexander.[14] He succeeded Gregg to the primacy and was archbishop from 1896 to 1911. He was consecrated in 1867 for the see of Derry, in which diocese he had served all his early ministry apart from a short spell as dean of Emly (a sinecure). He held degrees from Oxford: BA (1850), MA (1857), DD (1867), DCL (1876), DLitt (1907), and Dublin: LLD (1892).[15]

The Alexander portrait (Fig. 12) shows just a narrow red neckband, possibly bound in pink, suggesting the Dublin doctorate.[16] The insurance valuation of this portrait ascribes a date of 1893, so this is just possible.[17] A second portrait of Alexander hangs in the dining room, showing a hood with grey lining, presumably the Oxford DLitt.

John Baptist Crozier (1853–1920) was primate from 1911 to 1920. He was consecrated in 1897 as bishop of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin, and translated to Down, Connor and Dromore in 1907. His early ministry was spent in the dioceses of Connor and of Down. His degrees were all from Dublin: BA (1872), MA (1875), BD and DD (1888).[18]

14 Famous for hymns including 'Once in Royal David's City', 'There Is a Green Hill Far Away' and 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', amongst others.

15 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 44–45

16 A portion of the 1910 portrait is visible at <www.stpatricks-cathedral.org/people/abbots-bishops-archbishops/> [retrieved 1 July 2024]. It was painted by Harry R. Douglas, who was also commissioned to paint a portrait of Bishop William Pakenham Walsh, which currently hangs in the music room at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The bishop is wearing a Dublin DD hood over a black chimere, adding further evidence that this was normative practice.

17 Danny Kinahan, 'Valuation for insurance purposes', a formal appraisal document in the diocesan office.

18 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 46–47.

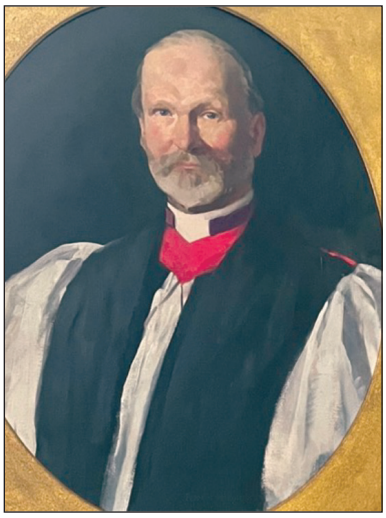


Fig. 15. Archbishop D'Arcy, by Frederick Whiting (1920).

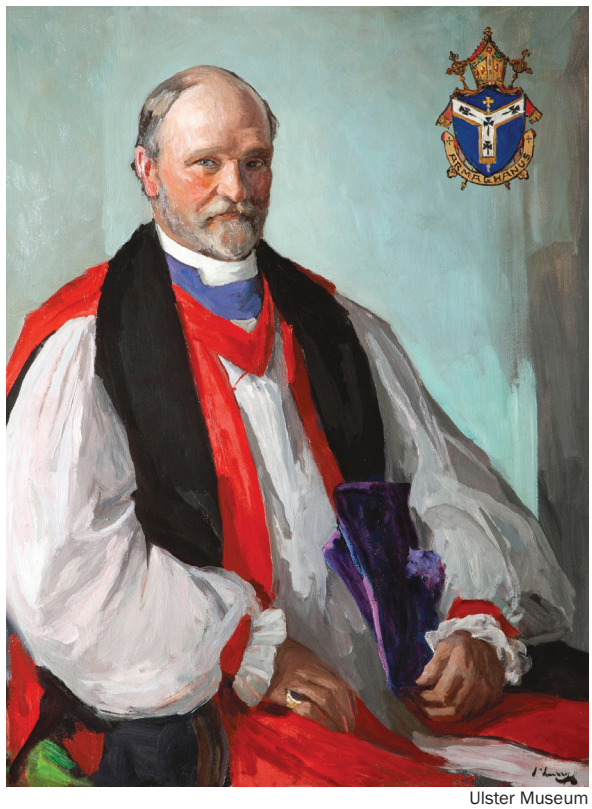


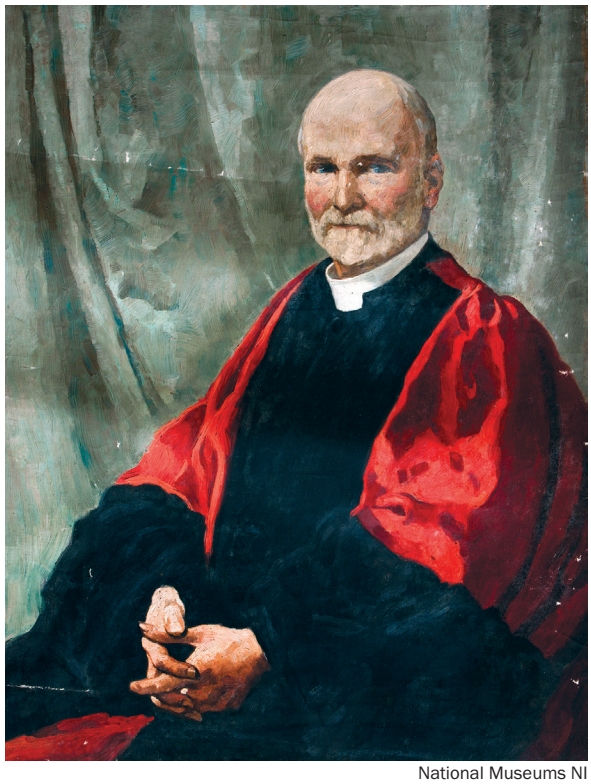
Fig. 16. Archbishop D'Arcy, by Sir John Lavery (1928).
Ulster Museum

The hood in his portrait (Fig. 13) is clearly the Dublin DD, a scarlet neckband, bound black. Like Alexander, Crozier has a second portrait in the dining room (Fig. 14), the earliest example of a scarlet chimere and hood, again clearly the Dublin DD, worn rather nonchalantly over the shoulder. Archbishop Crozier is the first archbishop who is clearly wearing an episcopal ring.

Charles Frederick D'Arcy (1859–1938) was consecrated as bishop of Clogher in 1903, translated to Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin in 1907, to Down Connor and Dromore in 1911, to Dublin in August 1919 and less than a year later to Armagh in June 1920. His early ministry was spent between the dioceses of Down and Connor. He graduated from Trinity College Dublin as follows: BA (1882), MA (1889), BD (1892), DD (1900) and LittD (1934). He was an HonDD of Oxford (1920), the Queen's University of Belfast (1929), and the University of Glasgow.[19] He is one of only two archbishops to have been so honoured by QUB.[20]

Frustratingly, the Whiting portrait (Fig. 15) exhibits only a plain red neckband perhaps indicating the Oxford degree, although as noted above unbound neckbands are not unknown in Dublin. This portrait is dated 1920, the year the Oxford degree was awarded. There is, however, another portrait of Archbishop D'Arcy, by Sir John

19 This later degree is recorded in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* but not in Fleming.
20 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 48–49.



National Museums NI

Fig. 17. Portrait of an Unidentified Cleric, by William Conor (1881–1968).

Fig. 18. Archbishop Day, by Sir Oswald Birley.

Fig. 19. Archbishop J. A. F. Gregg, by Frank McKelvey (1939).

Lavery, in the Ulster Museum.[21] In this portrait he is wearing a scarlet hood with a similar neckband as the portrait above, which appears to be lined black and unbound. The shape of the neckband and the slight curvature at the base of the cape are suggestive of the Oxford DD, through not conclusive. A third portrait has come to light, described as 'Portrait of an Unidentified Cleric' in the collection of the National Museums of Northern Ireland (Fig. 17). The portrait is by William Connor, and clearly depicted Archbishop D'Arcy. He is wearing the gown of a Doctor of Divinity, which could be either that of Dublin or Oxford.

John Godfrey Fitzmaurice Day was elected by the House of Bishops 'ad interim' bishop of Armagh on 15 June 1920, the Armagh Synod having failed to elect a new primate, and appointed to the vacant bishopric of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin in September 1920. In 1938 the House of Bishops again elected him, this time to the vacant see of Armagh. He was elected on 27 April, enthroned on 9 June, and after only a few days in Armagh he went for surgery and died in a Dublin nursing home on 26 September. He was a Cambridge man, graduating BA (1896) and MA (1902). He was awarded

21 At <artuk.org/discover/artworks/most-reverend-charles-frederick-darcy-18591938-ma-dd-archbishop-of-armagh-and-primate-of-all-ireland-122359> [retrieved 28 June 2024].

a Dublin DD *jure dignitatis* (1920), and an additional DD from King's College, Nova Scotia (1937).[22]

Once again the portrait (Fig. 18) only exhibits a plain red neckband (unbound). Given the fact that he was awarded the Canadian degree before his translation to Armagh, and that the portrait is most likely from the time of his translation, it is possible that the hood is for either degree. The tradition in Nova Scotia is to follow the Oxford system of academic dress.[23]

John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg (1873–1961) was a grandson of Bishop Gregg of Cork, and a nephew of Archbishop Robert Samuel Gregg (above) of Armagh. After appointments in Connor and Cork and an academic appointment in Dublin (Archbishop King's Professor of Divinity, TCD, 1911–15), he was consecrated in 1915 for the dioceses of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin. In 1920 the House of Bishops elected him archbishop of Dublin, and in 1938 they again elected him this time to succeed Archbishop Day in Armagh. He was enthroned in January 1939, and was the first archbishop to retire, in 1959 (at the age of 86). He is one of a very small number of people to be awarded the degree of DD by the Queen's University of Belfast, and the second and last archbishop of the Church of Ireland to be so honoured. He graduated from Cambridge: BA (1894), MA (1898), BD (1909), DD (1939); Dublin: BD *ad eundem* (1911), DD (1913); and QUB: DD (1949).[24]

The lining of his hood (Fig. 19) is unclear; much seems to be in the shadows, but there is just enough silk to show it is the Cambridge DD (turquoise shot rose), uniquely an earned DD (for work on John's gospel). Gregg habitually wore his Dublin hood until he received the Cambridge degree. In retirement he gave away his Dublin robes, and the gown is now in the collection of the Burgon Society. Archbishop Gregg is the first of the archbishops to wear a pectoral cross in his portrait.

James McCann (1897–1983) was elected and consecrated bishop of Meath in 1945, following a series of clerical appointments in Connor, Kilmore and Meath dioceses. He was elected as primate in 1959, and served for just over ten years, retiring in 1969. He is the first Belfast graduate to become primate, and the first primate to have earned a PhD. He initially studied in QUB, where he graduated BA in 1919. He received the following degrees from TCD: BA (1926), MA (1930), BD (1935), PhD (1944), DD *jure dignitatis* (1945), LLD (1966).[25]

For his portrait Archbishop McCann chose to wear his PhD hood, presumably as his highest examined degree rather than a degree he had received as a result of his office.[26] The painter appears to have taken some licence, adding a gold lining to his chimere, but the hood is unmistakable.[27] The comment by Ribeiro, noted in the intro-

22 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 50–51

23 See John N. Grant, 'Many Coloured Coats: The Systems of Academical Dress in Nova Scotian Universities', *TBS*, 9 (2009), pp. 183–99.

24 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 52–54.

25 Biographical details from Fleming, p. 55.

26 A portion of the 1959 portrait is visible at <www.stpatricks-cathedral.org/people/abbots-bishops-archbishops/> [retrieved 1 July 2024].

27 An Oxford Convocation habit is part-lined with the silk used to line the hood. The Dublin PhD hood is lined yellow.

Fig. 20. Archbishop Simms, by Basil Blackshaw (1969).

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Fig. 21. Archbishop Simms, DLitt (New University of Ulster).

L. Whiteside, *George Otto Simms; A Biography*

Fig. 22. At the Anglican Congress in Toronto, 1963. Archbishop Simms in the Dublin (or Huron?) DD.

L. Whiteside, *George Otto Simms; A Biography*

Fig. 23. Lambeth Conference 1978, conferring of DCL from the University of Kent.

duction, is worthy of repetition at this point: 'it is worth bearing in mind that artists' representations of dress should be approached critically.'[28] It is likely that this is the artist's attempt to add some shade and character to the portrait, and unlikely that to be a true representation of the chimere worn.

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Fig. 24. Archbishop Simms, wearing the Huron DD, General Synod 1965.

George Otto Simms (1910–91) served a three-year curacy in Dublin followed by a year as chaplain to Lincoln Theological College, thirteen years as dean of residence and lecturer at Trinity College Dublin, and a number of months as dean of Cork before being elected and consecrated bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross in 1952. In 1956 he was elected archbishop of Dublin, and in 1969 the House of Bishops chose him as archbishop of Armagh. He retired in 1980. He graduated from Dublin as BA (1932), MA (1935), BD (1936), PhD (1950), and DD *jure dignitatis* (1952). He was awarded a DD from Huron (1963) and a DCL from the University of Kent at Canterbury (1978).[29] Although not recorded by Fleming, he was also awarded a DLitt by the New University of Ulster, which has a tradition of gifting a hood to honorary graduates, and he was seen in this hood periodically (Fig. 21).

The detail of Archbishop Simms' portrait (Fig. 20) is frustratingly unclear. The neckband could be plain red, although there does seem to be a very fine gold binding, suggestive of his PhD. On balance it seems more likely that this is the brown or buff colour used by the artist to highlight folds in the material, as on his scarf. A small area of his right shoulder seems to have black binding, which would indicate DD, which on balance of probability is most likely. The subject's right shoulder is much less defined, but this might be for compositional reasons.

John Ward Armstrong (1915–87) spent the first thirty years of his ordained ministry in various appointments in the diocese of Dublin, culminating in the deanery of the National Cathedral (St Patrick's, Dublin). He was elected and consecrated as bishop of Cashel and Emly, Waterford and Lismore in 1968, and subsequently appointed bishop of the united dioceses of Cashel, Waterford, Lismore, Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin in 1977. The House of Bishops elected him to the primacy in 1980, and he retired in 1986. His degrees were all from Trinity College Dublin: BA (1938), BD (1945), MA (1957), and DD *jure dignitatis* (1981).[30]

Armstrong is the first primate who was not awarded a DD *jure dignitatis* on his consecration as a bishop, it being awarded on his translation to the primacy. He was also the last primate to be awarded the degree *jure dignitatis* by Trinity. His portrait shows a plain red neckband, presumably the DD as this was his only scarlet hood, though it is more customarily bound black.[31]

28 Aileen Ribeiro, 'Truth and Imagination: How Real Is Dress in Art?', *The Journal of Dress History*, 1.1 (2017), pp. 3–5.

29 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 56–57.

30 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 58–59.

31 A portion of the 1980 portrait is visible at <www.stpatricks-cathedral.org/people/abbots-bishops-archbishops/> [retrieved 1 July 2024].

Robert Henry Alexander Eames, OM, Baron Eames of Armagh (b. 1937) spent his entire priestly ministry in the diocese of Down. He was elected and consecrated bishop of Derry and Raphoe in 1975, translated to Down and Dromore in 1980, and to Armagh in 1986. He graduated from QUB: LLB (1960), PhD (1963), and LLD *honoris causa* (1989). He was awarded many doctorates *honoris causa*, including TCD LLD (1992), Greenwich University School of Theology DLitt (1993), Cambridge DD (1994), Lancaster LLD (1994), Aberdeen DD (1997), Exeter DD (1999), Ulster LLD (2002), London DD (2008).[32] The portrait of Archbishop Eames shows a pale blue binding on a scarlet hood, with a hint of pink lining, which is the QUB LLD.[33]

The Church of Ireland, an Illustrated History

Fig. 25. Archbishop Eames.

The wearing of hoods ceased with the appointment of Archbishop Alan Edwin Thomas Harper, who was archbishop from 2007 until 2012. He was the first archbishop not to hold a doctoral degree—neither earned, *honoris causa* nor *jure dignitatis*. He is a graduate of the University of Leeds (BA), and prior to his consecration as bishop of Connor regularly wore the distinctive Leeds green hood. Towards the end of his tenure as archbishop he was awarded an HonDD from a seminary in the United States, though he never disclosed any further details.

He was succeeded by Richard Lionel Clarke who held office from 2012 to 2020. He was a graduate of Trinity (BA, PhD) and London (BD), but again followed his predecessor's fashion in eschewing the hood. Before his elevation to the primacy, as bishop of Meath and Kildare, he was seen regularly in his PhD hood. The current primate, Francis John McDowell is a graduate of Belfast (BA) and Dublin (BTh). His portrait will not be commissioned until his retirement but thus far a hood has never been worn, and it seems that this particular fashion has reached its end, at least for the present moment, in the see of Armagh.

Canon Law

Until the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1871 the Irish Church was subject to English canon law. Post-disestablishment the Church of Ireland was responsible for its own canon law, and introduced a series of harshly anti-ritualistic canons. Curiously, there is no guidance given to episcopal vesture in the canon law of the Church of Ireland. For those unfamiliar with the history and practice of the Church of Ireland, the relevant portion of the current Canon 12,[34] 'Ecclesiastical Apparel', says:

> (1) Archbishops and bishops at all times of their public ministration of the services of the Church shall use the customary ecclesiastical apparel of their order.[35]

It continues to require the wearing of a surplice and a scarf or stole by the clergy, with the cassock, bands and hood listed as optional. The black gown may be worn when

32 Biographical details from Fleming, pp. 60–61.

33 A portion of the 1986 portrait is visible at <www.stpatricks-cathedral.org/people/abbots-bishops-archbishops/> [retrieved 1 July 2024].

34 The current canons were updated in the 1970s to permit the use of coloured stoles.

35 B. M. H. Shiel (ed.), *The Constitution of the Church of Ireland*, amended 2021 (Dublin, General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2003).

preaching, and 'no other vestment or ornament' is permitted. No doctrinal significance is attached to the variety of vesture permitted.

These are the current canons, which have now been in place since 1972. Before that point the use of the stole was not permitted, and so traditional choir dress (including the hood) was the norm.

It is interesting that the single sentence referring to those in episcopal orders is one of the most vaguely worded paragraphs in the *Constitution of the Church of Ireland*. What does the word 'customary' mean in this case? Reading these from a strictly legal standpoint (for how else can canon law be read?) there are perhaps three different interpretations which can be advanced as lawful. One is that customary refers to the episcopal order, as it has existed for almost two millennia. A second is that it refers to the custom of the Anglican family of churches or indeed the Church of England since the time it declared autonomy from Rome in the sixteenth century. A third interpretation is more parochial again, defining customary as what had become customary in the Church of Ireland at the time of disestablishment in the late nineteenth century, when the original canons were framed. Whichever interpretation is accepted, none gives any further assistance on the question of the correctness of wearing a hood over a chimere.

This raises a further question of how long does it take for practice to become customary. Over the four centuries covered in this portrait collection it is clear that practice has evolved, for example the preference for the black chimere giving way to the scarlet (during the episcopates of Archbishops Crozier and D'Arcy), the use of the clerical wig (1703–1822), the addition of the jewel (and later the mantle) of the Order of St Patrick (1822, 1862), the introduction of the episcopal ring (Archbishop Crozier) and pectoral cross (Archbishop Gregg), and the use of the hood. What this collection cannot tell us is what was worn on a regular basis, but it is worthy of note that what was seen as normative for a formal portrait sets a tone for general standards of vesture.

The chimere and hood — an odd habit?

We have established the customary use of the hood with the chimere over an extended period, and now we shall turn to the origins of the chimere to see if any further light may be shed on the historical basis for this custom.

Herbert Norris defines the chimere as:

> … a short sleeveless cloak, or coat of sheepskin of Spanish origin … called the 'zamarra'. This is the origin of the garment known as the simar, worn by royalty and gentry at the end of the fifteenth and during the sixteenth century. Also of the 'chamarre' … This is an old French word. And both it and the Spanish zamarra derive ultimately from the same root, from which we obtain the English term chimere.[36]

Norris then traces the origin of the chimere from the twelfth century and states that it was worn by bishops of the Western church as an outdoor garment, for riding and other purposes, but not as a liturgical vestment. He further asserts that it was made at first of black silk, and later in various colours, lined for warmth. He reproduces an im-

36 *Church Vestments; Their Origin and Development* (New York: Dover, 2002), p. 177. Norris, Robinson and others recognize that there are two distinct garments which have been referred to as a 'chimere', but for the purposes of this article we will exclude the garment worn under the rochet, and focus on the common understanding of the word today. For details on the *simar*, see Norris's *Costume and Fashion*, Vol. III, pp. 18–19.

age of the twelfth century archbishop, Stephen Langton, wearing a chimere of purple silk over a scarlet cassock and white rochet, and over the shoulders a hood of scarlet lined with white (Fig. 26).

From the fourteenth century he reproduces another similar plate of a bishop in cassock, rochet, chimere, hood and pileus.

Fig. 26. Archbishop Langton, reproduced from Norris.

In her book on medieval costume, Mary G. Houston makes no reference to the chimere.[37] The discussion on clerical costume focuses primarily on the Eucharistic vestments and monastic habits, making little reference to vesture for the offices, and none to the outdoor dress of the clergy. The discussion on academic dress in the fifteenth century observes the use of the *taberdum*, the *cappa clausa*, the *pallium* (not to be confused with the archiepiscopal *pallium*) and the *super-pellicum*. This lack of reference to the chimere as either clerical or academic supports Norris's belief that its origins are as an outdoor garment.

N. F. Robinson looks to establish a common ancestry in the chimere and the various types of academic habit identified by Houston. He refutes the suggestion that the chimere is a form of the *cappa clausa*, opining that it is, in fact, a form of tabard, although he does suggest that it is 'not unlikely' that the *cappa* might also, in fact, be a 'dignified form of the tabard'.[38] On this basis he believes the chimere and the (academic) habit have a common origin: 'The black chimere has a common origin with the scarlet habit or chimere of an Oxford Doctor of Divinity. It is a form of the tabard (*tabardum* or *taberda*) or the colobbe (*collobium*) which was worn as a civil dress by persons of different classes, clerical and lay, both in England and on the Continent, but distinguished by the material, length, &c.'[39] He goes on to suggest that the *cappa clausa* was a cumbersome article of apparel, and thus clergy availed themselves of the permission to substitute the sleeveless coat, tabard or colobbe. This same substitution was made, he suggests, at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, although Cambridge does retain the *cappa clausa* for occasional use.

37 *Medieval Costume in England and France, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Dover, 1996).

38 'The Black Chimere of Anglican Prelates', *Transactions of the St Paul's Ecclesiological Society*, 4 (1900), pp. 181–22 (p. 189).

39 Ibid., p. 188.

The 1908 report[40] follows Robinson in connecting the historical origin of the chimere with the tabard and *collobium*, essentially an overcoat. It also recognizes that a wider range of colours was used, including green, violet and murrey, and not limited to just scarlet and black.

W. H. Pinnock[41] advances an alternative view, that the chimere is descended from the *mantelletum* of the Middle Ages. He cites multiple sources, all of whom agree that the chimere was of scarlet silk, until the reign of Elizabeth I, when Bishop Hooper objected to so gay a vestment, and thus the chimere of black satin was adopted as befitting the gravity of the episcopal office.

Percy Dearmer, in *The Ornaments of the Ministers*, takes up the idea of the chimere as an overcoat, and describes it as 'part of the episcopal walking-dress which the bishops are warned not to "intermit" by the 74th Canon of 1604; and it is always used by them as their Court-dress and in the House of Lords.'[42] He equates the episcopal chimere to the priest's gown, and advances the view that it should not be used in the liturgy, although he concedes that it might be used when priest or deacon would wear a gown: when preaching and when assisting at the offices when not officiating. He notes that while the tippet is worn with the chimere the hood should not be, but 'some bishops in the last fifty years have mistakenly added the hood,'[43] an observation which concurs with our study of the episcopal portraits.

In 1925 F. C. Eeles describes the 'ordinary dress of the English bishop' as that which had been worn for centuries, namely: 'the cassock, rochet, chimere, hood, scarf and cap',[44] and so it would appear that by that time the inclusion of the hood was expected as normal. He goes on to note that some medieval pictures appear to show the bishop wearing the hood over the chimere, but it is possible that these were pictures of academic rather than clerical habits. He suggests that in the later medieval period hood and scarf were not normally worn together; when the scarf was adopted the hood was discarded. He traces the resumption of the wearing of hoods by bishops to the example of Dr Samuel Wilberforce in the nineteenth century. Wilberforce (1805–73) was consecrated bishop of Oxford in 1845.

The Warham Guild Handbook (1932) adds an interesting complication to its description of the chimere, where it says 'Chimeres are generally made of silk for ordinary use; they may be of black silk lined with the colour appropriate to the degree of the wearer.'[45] This suggests a position which confuses the riding cloak with an academic habit, the habits of the University of Oxford being lined according to the particular degree.[46] The introduction of pleating at the back of the chimere to accommodate the increasing size of the sleeves of the rochet resulted in a garment which is very similar

40 Convocation of Canterbury, Upper House, *The Ornaments of the Church and its Ministers: Report of the Sub-Committee appointed February 1907* (London: SPCK, 1908).

41 *The Laws and Usages of the Church and the Clergy: Ecclesiastical Vestments, or the Ornaments of the Minister* (Cambridge: Hall & Son, 1856).

42 London: Mowbray, 1908, p. 162.

43 Ibid, p. 165

44 *The Episcopal Ornaments, an Outline* (London: The Warham Guild, 1925).

45 *The Warham Guild Handbook*, 2nd edn (London: Mowbray, 1932), p. 53.

46 Note the poetic licence taken by Peter Greenham in the McCann portrait.

to the doctoral convocation habit, as used in the University of Oxford. A further confusion arises over the fact that the chimere is the convocation dress for bishops—convocation of the church, not the university. It seems quite possible that both of these areas of confusion have given rise to the ideas that the chimere belongs with the academic hood, and that only holders of doctoral degrees can wear the scarlet chimere.

Alex Kerr, drawing on the note on medieval academic dress by F. E. Brightman printed in R. T. Günther's book on the monuments in Magdalen College, Oxford, asserts the view that the chimere was a particular form of habit, a *cappa* with two side slits for the arms, and was used (in Oxford) by 'Bachelors of Divinity and Canon Law and Doctors of Medicine and the Civil Law; the present "Convocation habit" of Doctors in Oxford and the Chimere of Bishops ...'[47] However, he also acknowledges (in a footnote) that Hargreaves-Mawdsley takes the opposite view: 'some believe that the episcopal chimere had a different origin and only late came to resemble this academic habit.'[48]

The 1911 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes that the origin of the chimere has been the subject of much debate, the view that it is a modification of the cope has been discarded, 'and it is practically proved to be derived from the medieval tabard ... an upper garment worn in civil life by all classes of people both in England and abroad. It has therefore a common origin with certain academic robes.'[49] From the fifteenth century onwards this sleeveless tabard tended to supersede the *cappa clausa* as the out-of-doors upper garment of bishops. The article goes on to suggest that while it may have denoted academic rank, it was part of the civil costume of prelates.

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* is even less nuanced than the above article, describing the chimere as 'a gown without sleeves, worn by Anglican bishops and doctors of divinity ... it is frequently worn at liturgical functions, but also constitutes part of episcopal full dress on important civil occasions, and of the full academic dress of those entitled to wear it.'[50]

R. A. S. Macalister (1896) proposes yet another theory. Acknowledging the chimere to be 'one of the greatest puzzles to be found in the subject of vestments', he goes on to suggest that this short coat 'could be a modification of the cope or almuce—possibly a combination of the two vestments'.[51] He also holds the view of Pinnock (see above) that it is the English version of the *mantelletum*.

While there is no agreement on the precise nature of the connection between the chimere and the academic gown, there is a general agreement that the chimere originated as an upper layer of outdoor dress. It may indeed be the case that there is a common origin in the medieval tabard, but a divergence of practice from an early stage. The introduction of a yoke, due to the increasing size of sleeves on the rochet in the seventeenth century, certainly brought convergence in contemporary styles of both

47 'Layer upon Layer: The Evolution of Cassock, Gown, Habit and Hood as Academic Dress', *TBS*, 5 (2005), pp. 42–58 (p. 44).

48 Ibid, p. 44, fn. 11.

49 'Chimere', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911), p. 164.

50 *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 4th edn, edited by Andrew Louth, F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 330.

51 *Ecclesiastical Vestments: Their Development and History* (London: Elliot Stock, 1896), p. 199.

garments, furthering the confusion. However, the earliest examples of the outdoor cloak were commonly worn with a hood, and on that basis it would seem somewhat illogical to object to the use of the hood over the chimere today. To restrict the scarlet chimere to use with doctoral hoods only would seem to reinforce the erroneous conflation of the ecclesiastical and the academic.

Conclusion

How long does is take for a custom to become hallowed by tradition? In ecclesiastical terms the practice often precedes a change in canon law, as it did, for example, with the legalization of stoles in the Church of Ireland in 1972. Until the canons of the church were altered by the vote of General Synod, stoles were technically illegal, though their use had become quite widespread.[52] The granting of canonical permission was the result of that change in practice. The wearing of an academic hood over a chimere is not, as we have seen, subject to canon law, but merely to custom and tradition. There is clear evidence of the wearing of the hood and chimere by archbishops of Armagh for a period of at least 120 years, and the fact that this was recorded in formal portraits lends weight to the normativity of this practice. It is entirely possible that this tradition has a longer pedigree, because Marcus Gervais Beresford (the later of the two archbishops Beresford), who occupied the primatial see for a further twenty-four years, chose to be painted in the mantle of the prelate of the Order of St Patrick, but it is unlikely that this would have been worn with any regularity in a liturgical setting. It is also possible that hoods have been worn before and since, but not on every occasion and thus not seen as essential to a portrait.

It is likely that recent practice has changed for two reasons, one being that several primates have not held doctoral degrees (and the erroneous belief that only a doctoral hood should be worn over a chimere) and the other being a general decline of sartorial standards along with a more informal approach to liturgy amongst many of the clergy (of the Church of Ireland) which is leading to the abandonment not just of the hood, but of all forms of vestments and vesture, except on the most formal of occasions, in an increasing number of parishes and dioceses.

Apart from the issue of tradition, it has been established through the illustrations in Norris (and Robinson) that the hood was worn over the chimere in the twelfth century and later, as a practical outdoor garment, and thus logically as both have migrated indoors and become established clerical vesture, it seems reasonable to suggest that there is no reason they should not continue to be worn together.

The final question is a more vexing one, namely which hoods can or should be worn? If the episcopal chimere is to be understood as a variant of the doctoral convocation dress, then it would appear reasonable to suggest that only a doctoral hood is appropriate, but if it is recognized to be nothing more than a medieval 'overcoat' then it would appear that any hood could be worn. From an aesthetic point of view the black chimere, which appears to be enjoying something of a revival, is certainly a most comely garment for any hood to be worn over, while the scarlet chimere might not be

52 While, as we have observed, bishops enjoy a particularly non-restrictive canon, formal portraits such as we have been considering tend towards conservative choices of apparel. It is not unusual for a bishop to push the canonical and traditional boundaries in places where this would be less contentious.

so kind to the multiplicity of colours and designs now appearing, and of course it can no longer be taken for granted that doctors wear scarlet!

Acknowledgement

Photos from the Burgon Society Archive by Chris Williams.

List of Portraits

Arranged by date of the paintings.

Emily C. Way (*c.* 1847–after 1906), Portrait of Robert Knox, Archbishop of Armagh, 1893. Three-quarter length, oil on canvas, 54.5" x 42.5".

English School, late 19th century, Portrait of Primate Gregg, Archbishop of Armagh, 1894. Half length, framed as an oval, oil on canvas, 28.75" x 23.75".

Walter Frederick Osborne (1859–1903), Portrait of Primate Alexander, Archbishop of Armagh, 1893. Half length, framed as an oval, oil on canvas, 28.5" x 23.5".

Harry R. Douglas (1862–1934), Portrait of William Alexander, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe 1867–96, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland 1896–1911. Three-quarter length, oil on canvas, 55" x 42.5".

Frederick Whiting (1874–1951), Portrait of J. B. Crozier, Archbishop of Armagh, 1911. Half length, framed in an oval, oil on canvas, 28.5" x 24".

Mark Milbanke (1875–1927), Portrait of John B. Crozier, 1920. Three-quarter length, oil on canvas, 54.5" x 24.5".

Frederick Whiting (1874–1951), Portrait of C. F. D'Arcy, Archbishop of Armagh, 1920. Half length, oval, oil on canvas, 27.75" x 23".

Sir John Lavery (1856–1941), Portrait of Most Rev. Charles Frederick D'Arcy, MA, DD 1859-1938, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, 1928. Oil on canvas.

Sir Oswald Birley (1880–1951), Portrait of John George Fitzmaurice Day. Half length, oil on canvas, 38" x 31.75".

Frank McKelvey (1875–1974), Portrait of John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland, 1939. Half length, oil on canvas, 39" x 33".

Peter Greenham RA (1909–92), Portrait of James McCann, Archbishop of Armagh, 1959. Three-quarter length, oil on canvas, 36" x 32".

Basil Blackshaw (1932–2016), Portrait of George Otto Simms, Archbishop of Armagh, 1969. Half length, oil on canvas, 28.75" x 25".

English School, late 20th century, Portrait of John Ward Armstrong, Archbishop of Armagh, 1980. Half length, oil on canvas, 35" x 29".

Mary Dugdale U.S.W.A., Portrait of Robin Eames, Archbishop of Armagh, 1986. Three-quarter length, oil on canvas, 38" x 30".