

TOWEL, a cloth used for the purpose of drying the hands, face or body after bathing or washing. These cloths are made of different materials, known as "towellings," the two principal kinds are "huckaback," a slightly roughened material for chamber towels for face and hands, and Turkish towelling, with a much rougher surface, for bath towels; finer towellings are made of linen or damask. The term has a particular ecclesiastical usage as applied to a linen altar cloth or to a rich cloth of embroidered silk, velvet, &c., covering the altar at all "such periods when Mass is not being celebrated."

The Mid. Eng. *towaille* comes through the O. Fr. *touaille* from the Low Lat. *toacula*, represented in other Romanic languages by Sp. *toalla*, Ital. *tovaglia*; this is to be referred to the Teutonic verb meaning "to wash," O. H. G. *twahan*, M. H. G. *dwahen*, O. Eng. *þweán*, and cf. Ger. *Zwehle*, provincial Eng. *dwile*, a dish-cloth.