

Light on the sacraments

The hidden or esoteric meaning of the seven sacraments

In this short article I will compress some information from diverse sources on the sacraments. Also, the symbolism of Bread and Wine will be concisely dealt with.

First of all, I have no problem with religion or religious practice, provided it be true to the true meaning and goal of religion: helping people to establish a bond with the Divine, especially the divine *within* them and the divine in others.

Religion, properly understood, provides a moral basis for life. While humanism, as a philosophy and practice is fine, it cannot provide a solid basis or principle for daily life. There are simply too much questions humanism, and atheism, etc., can't deal with, because lacking in insight in the structure of the human being.

History shows that a religion usually degenerates relatively quickly, when its founder has died. A priest caste takes over, establishing power over the masses. Doctrines are literalized, twisted, or wrongly applied. The same has happened with the sacraments in Christianity. It may be profitable when you study chapter 13 and a bit of chapter 14 of Jacob Boehme's book "[The threefold life of man](#)". Boehme criticizes the distortions that have crept in the understanding and application of the sacraments and the pretensions of priests and pastors.

Undoubtedly, many people will have asked themselves, while in a contemplative mood, "what is the meaning of this ritual, be it the Eucharist, Baptism, or some other Sacrament. Is it literally "the body of Christ" that we are eating or His blood that we are drinking?

And what about infant baptism? After all, the infant has not him- or herself chosen to be a follower of this or that Christian denomination, so, what is happening there? And what about the Confession, or forgiveness of sins?

These are good questions, and they are never satisfactorily answered by church officials. There is a good reason for that: they can't. If they would know the true background of these rituals (sacraments) they very likely

wouldn't want to tell you, and if they didn't know, they couldn't. You will readily understand this statement when you read on.

The truly religious person, in the true catholic (i.e. *universal*) sense, cannot help but to probe into the depths of Being and try to understand what their religion is about, whence it came, how it has changed (councils of Nicea and Constantinople), and, what recent discoveries have been made (Dead sea scrolls, Nag Hammadi Gnostic scrolls, etc.). One would expect a massive interest in these things, but in reality the interest of many Christians is not so much aroused. Why?

Are people being a little lazy? Afraid? Is it the comfort of having a certain circle of friends in a religious community that one wants to keep? Is it the discouragement of the churches regarding asking questions?

Whatever be the case, the call of the Spirit within inevitably leads one to follow the path *within*, be it in this incarnation or another.

Ok, Let's start dealing with the Sacraments. I take the order and naming (translated) one can find in lit. 1.

From my sources about Christianity (D.J.P. Kok, lit. 1; De Purucker, lit.3, Vitvan, lit. 5) I can state the following points, condensed, about the sacraments. These points applied to the mystery schools of old, and still apply today, on the inner planes of being, without necessity of outer ceremony or rite. The world has changed, and much what has been "esoteric", i.e. hidden to the profane, has now become available to the educated masses, especially the so-called "lesser mysteries", pertaining to the first three sacraments.

The sacraments have to do with one's orientation on life, moral development, and choice to work for the benefit of general humanity. They pertain to spiritual evolution.

In my humble estimation, the seeker for wisdom would do well to consider joining an organization that works for the benefit of the human race, and all other life, in order to be able to connect better with other like-minded individuals, establish a nurturing environment, and help maintain one's orientation to the spirit within.

1. The Baptism with water. In the mystery schools of old, the baptism with water pertains to instruction in the wisdom teachings, the perennial philosophy, or Gnosis; It is also symbolic for changing one's orientation to life. A change from orientation on the outward world, the sense-world (being a Hylic **) to an orientation on the psychic ** world, the energy world within (compare Vitvan on the First Crossing). Note the clever

choice of water as a symbol of cleansing off the dirt (earth) from one's body and especially one's mind; also, water is a symbol for the psychic world; the fluid nature of both is apparent.

The increase in the number of "Psychics **", i.e. people who are starting to seek meaning *within* rather than without is the main reason for writing this little article. The Hylics don't care, and the Self-realized or Pneumatics ** already know these things.

This sacrament is also very much about the **application** of the instructions in daily life. After all, without practicing what one has learned, no lasting experience can be gained.

Instructions are like pointers or signposts on the way. They are helpful, but the individual has to walk the path, do the work, take decisions him- or herself.

No imposition of rules of conduct is applied, the aspirant has an autonomous will and chooses to follow the spiritual path him- or herself. No vicarious atonement. See also the sacrament of Confession.

** see Freke quote near the end of this article.

2. **Confirmation.**

When the aspirant has progressed on the Path, he or she gets ready for the second sacrament: the Confirmation. This is a Formation in a sense. It confirms what one has formed oneself into by the first sacrament. It refers to **commitment** to the Way within, the Path; the Journey. It refers to steadfastness in Faith. No concessions to outer pressures. No longer conforming to the fleeting sentiments and opinions of the world. Taking the inner decision to really follow the Path of spiritual evolution.

More and deeper instruction is given to the aspirant or neophyte, in former days as a member of a mystery school, but nowadays more integrated in regular structures. The so-called lesser mysteries, which pertain to the first three sacraments, and concomitant teachings, have become freely available to the public at large, through various channels, among which theosophical ones and related schools. My free [ebook](#) gives a good introduction to these teachings.

3. **The Eucharist, Oblation or Communion.** See the section on bread and wine (or grape juice) symbolism. This sacrament refers to *communion with the Spirit and the world, as manifestation of Spirit.*

In the mystery schools of old, it was the communion of the disciples, being one in heart and mind. Living in feeling of unity with and of all life. Consciousness in the disciple grows strong that the outer world is an expression of the Divine. Living in a feeling of non-separation. Also, this pertains very much to the understanding and *experience of the unity of the composite human being (spirit, soul, mind, body)* that one is.

As a logical consequence, when one's experience of the inner worlds becomes stronger, this results eventually in meeting one's guardian angel or higher Self, in what is called Epiphany. A beginning form of Theophany or the shining and appearance of the inner Higher Self. See lit. 3.

If you haven't done some [study of these matters](#), you won't be able to follow my exposition. **The higher sacraments pertain to direct experience of the divine.** No place for dabblers in occultism, psychic experiments, etc., here. Those types will burn their fingers, get smashed, etc. This are serious matters.

Instruction continues on this level of development, but direct experience of the inner worlds becomes stronger. It becomes easier to tune in to others, as a natural communication, as the inner faculties become more evolved.

4. **Confession.**

This has nothing to do with confessing one's sin to a priest and even less with being forgiven! How deep has the church sunk to make people believe they can forgive someone's sins and trespasses. No one can forgive you for your faults. Karmic debt cannot just be erased, it is dealt with by yourself in this or another life and then transcended.

Here one makes up the balance-sheet of one's life.

One learns from one's mistakes and focuses on the Goal or Ideal.

No regrets, no concentration on faults or mistakes.

Then .. there is the birth of the Christos force in/through the psyche. The noetic (spiritual) control of one's psychic nature is further enhanced. "The Eleusinian Initiates were said to descend into the Earth and be reborn therefrom." (Pryse quote, lit. 2).

In the mystery-tradition, it is said that the neophyte descends into "hell" or into Purgatory (Kama-loka) in order to help some souls to free themselves from their being stuck into such a condition.

It seems to me that the spirit of the neophyte has to be "earthed", i.e., a connection with earth has to be made, in order to bring the spiritual forces to work in matter. There is much mystery concerning the higher initiations (all the sacraments are in reality initiations of different kinds).

I refer you to lit. 3a and 3b.

Christianity has put the "descent into hell" together with the crucifixion, but this is incorrect according to my understanding. The crucifixion comes later and pertains to another mystery sacrament.

Sacraments 5, 6, 7.

I will deal with these last three sacraments together, since these have so much to do with inner experience. It can hardly be put into words, and in practice these sacraments are less relevant to the human being in current stages of development.

These sacraments deal with stages of highly developed spiritual realization.

5. The Anointing. Here one meets one's Higher Self, "face to face", so to speak, on the inner spiritual plane. Anointment with the spirit. I suppose this is a relative term. The fourth sacrament involves some of this too, but less intense. Growth of Christos-force. One certainly is a "Pneumatic here" (see Freke quote).

6. True Priesthood or becoming a true Sannyasin.

You will have gathered by now that true priesthood is something of the Spirit within. It has nothing to do with external education, church, etc. The esoteric explanation of this aspect is very illuminating: no one should be a Priest or Celibate, before he or she has redirected the life-force a.k.a. sex energy (in one of its aspects) to the higher centers (chakras). To do otherwise is to fool oneself and others and leads only to suppressed sexual desires, and abuse of others. The sex-scandals in the churches and in sects prove this abundantly. The fact that the Roman Catholic church has put this sacrament to false use is enough proof of this church's degeneracy. [The same can be said about many or most other religions where symbolism is involved.]

The sannyasin is one who *renounces (crucifies)* all personal interests and works for the well-being of the human race (and the other kingdoms as well).

The inner Light is strongly at work here. Transfiguration.

This is the Buddha stage of development. See my writings on the "seven jewels of wisdom", sixth jewel, first article in [my free Ebook](#).

7. Holy Marriage.

This sacrament has nothing to do with ordinary marriage. How could it? Do you really think such worldly matters as marriage, often dictated by economic motivations, lust, infatuation, etc., has anything to do with a sacrament? No, it pertains to the **inner side of the male and female energies**: The joining or integration of the inner male and female sides.

In a sense it can be called the *marriage of soul and spirit*: the human and divine nature merge-combine in a unity. I take the notion of soul here in the Platonic sense, *psyche*, as an assembly of forces: desire-mind, emotional part, and reason.

Spirit, or, Nous, in the Platonic sense, pertains to the enlightenment principle, called buddhi in Vedantic terminology. Together this marriage gives rise to enlightened mind, or buddhi-manas. Manas refers to the thinking faculty. I have to refer to my ebook on integrative philosophy, science, and spirituality (lit. 8) for an elaboration of this subject-matter.

This sacrament can be called the *Resurrection in Spirit*. In a sense, this merging or integration takes place gradually, all along the inner Path of spiritual development, to culminate in this stage.

The full completion I am writing about now, is rare. It has to do with the teaching about the avatars, or the descent of the divine Spirit into a human being in a great Teacher.

The symbolism of Bread and Wine.

From the [encyclopedic theosophical glossary](#): (emphasis mine)

' Bread and Wine "The outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace," bread and wine stand at once for the actual elements used in initiation ceremonies and for the attainments of which they are symbolic.

Taking the Bacchic Mysteries as an example, wine was given as the blood of the grape and of Bacchus, *blood signifying life*, and Bacchus representing the mystic Logos which "was made flesh."

So the whole rite means the imparting to the candidate of the divine life by conscious union of his lower self with the god within -- a union brought about by the self-devised efforts of the lower self.

In the same way, *bread or grain symbolized the intellectual aspect of the attainment, intellect being the "body" of the spiritual influx.'*

'The Christian sacrament was adopted from the pagan rite. The Protestant Churches administer the sacrament in both bread and wine as the symbol of a divine grace received by the devout participant. The Catholic Church teaches that the sacred elements are actually transubstantiated by miraculous means into the blood and body of Christ, denying the cup or the wine to the laity, and regarding the rite as propitiatory for the sins of the participants and of mankind in general. The old pagan rite contained the idea that partaking of the wine meant allying oneself with the vital energy of the spiritual divinity within the neophyte, and the partaking of the bread was symbolic of a similar union of the neophyte's mentality with the cosmic mind for which the bread stood. See also SOMA; WINE'

According to [Hippolytus](#) (writing about the Eleusinian mysteries), 'the revelation at the heart of the ritual was the display of "the mighty and wonderful and most perfect mystery - a harvested ear of corn - in silence."' - a symbol of the intellectual aspect of the attainment as seen in the quote above.

For more background of the connection of the mysteries with the gospel stories, see the refreshing work of James Morgan Pryse "The restored New Testament" (lit. 2).

From the [Freke-Gandi book](#):

"LEVELS OF INITIATION

Both Pagan and Gnostic philosophical systems described four levels of human identity: physical, psychological, spiritual and mystical. Gnostics called these four levels of our being the body, the counterfeit-spirit, the Spirit and the Light-power. The body and the counterfeit-spirit (our physical and psychological identities) make up the two aspects of the eidolon or lower self. The Spirit and Light-power (our spiritual and mystical identities) make up the two aspects of the

immortal Daemon - the individual Higher Self and the shared Universal Self.

The Gnostics called those who identified with their body 'Hylics', because they were so utterly dead to spiritual things that they were like unconscious matter, or hyle. Those who identified with their personality, or psyche, were known as 'Psychics'. Those who identified with their Spirit were known as 'Pneumatics', which means 'Spirituals'. Those who completely ceased to identify with any level of their separate identity and realized their true identity as the Christ or Universal Daemon experienced Gnosis. This mystical enlightenment transformed the initiate into a true 'Gnostic' or 'Knower'.

In both Paganism and Christianity these levels of awareness were symbolically linked with the four elements: earth, water, air and fire. The initiations leading from one level to the next were symbolized by elemental baptisms. In The Book of the Great Logos Jesus offers his disciples 'the Mysteries of the three baptisms' by water, air and fire.

Baptism by water symbolizes the transformation of the Hylic person, who identifies solely with the body, into a Psychic initiate who identifies with the personality or psyche.

Baptism by air symbolizes the transformation of the Psychic initiate into a Pneumatic initiate who identifies with their Higher Self.

Baptism by fire represents the final initiation which reveals to Pneumatic initiates their true identity as the Universal Daemon, the Logos, the Christ within, the 'Light-power' - 'the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world', as John's gospel puts it. Such an initiate had realized Gnosis.

These, then are the levels of initiation in Gnostic Christianity."
(end of quote)

The future of Christianity

It seems to me, that there is only a future for Christianity in these secular times, when churches (denominations) start incorporating the true meaning of the sacraments into their faith, teaching and practice. In how far Gnostic and related churches have done that already is not my specialty. It only makes sense that true spirituality will survive, being inherent in the human race. Forms may change, essence remains.

References/bibliography

1. D.J.P. Kok "Het grote misverstand". Dutch language. St. Isis, Den Haag. Netherlands.
2. J.M. Pryse: [Restored New Testament](#).
3. G. De Purucker. [Fundamentals of the esoteric philosophy. also : The four sacred seasons.](#)
4. Anna Kingsford [lecture on the Credo](#).
Also, see "[The Perfect Way; or, the Finding of Christ](#)"
Anna wanted to establish an esoteric Christianity. She died too young, unfortunately. Well known for her fervent anti-vivisection activities, eco-feminism, vegetarianism.
5. Vitvan. The First Crossing; The Christos. See www.sno.org
6. Henry T. Edge. [Theosophical Light on the Christian Bible](#)
7. Timothy [Freke-Peter Gandi book](#): The Jesus mysteries. Was the original Jesus a pagan God?
8. My [ebook on integrative philosophy](#).
Bridging the gap between science and religion.