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## PREACHING AS THE SOUTHERN PROTESTANT SACRAMENT: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S NOVELS

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### Abstract

*The Blessed Sacrament, also Most Blessed Sacrament, is a devotional name used in the Latin Church of the Catholic Church, as well as in Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Methodism, and the Old Catholic Church, as well as in some of the Eastern Catholic Churches, to refer to the body and blood of Christ in the form of consecrated sacramental bread and wine at a celebration of the Eucharist. In the Byzantine Sacrament, the terms Holy Gifts and Divine Mysteries are used to refer to the consecrated elements. Christians in these traditions believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic elements of the bread and wine and some of them, therefore, practice Eucharistic reservation and adoration. This belief is based on interpretations of both scripture and sacred tradition. The Catholic understanding has been defined by numerous Christian unity councils, including the Fourth Lateran Council and the Council of Trent, which is quoted in the Religious instruction of the Catholic Church.*

**Keywords:** *Baptism, Fundamentalism, Jesus Christ, Salvation, Heaven, Sacrament, Religious, Sin.*

### Introduction

There are seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, which according to Catholic theology were instituted by Jesus and entrusted to the Church. Sacraments are visible rites seen as signs and efficacious channels of the grace of God to all those who receive them with the proper disposition. The Sevenfold list of sacraments is often organized into three groups: the sacraments of initiation (into the Church, the body of Christ), consisting of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist; the Sacraments of healing, consisting of Penance and Smearing of the Sick; and the Sacraments of service: Holy Orders and Matrimony.

### The Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church lists the Sacraments as follows: "The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony."<sup>(2)</sup>The Catholic Church teaches that the sacraments are "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions."<sup>(4)</sup>The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "Christian

initiation is accomplished by means of the sacraments which establish the foundations of Christian life. The faithful born anew by Baptism are strengthened by Confirmation and are then nourished by the Eucharist."<sup>(13)</sup>The Catholic Church sees baptism as the first and basic sacrament of Christian initiation. In the Western or Latin Church, baptism is usually conferred today by pouring water three times on the recipient's head, while reciting the baptismal formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). In the Eastern Catholic Churches of Byzantine Rite immersion or submersion is used, and the formula is: "The servant of God, is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."<sup>(15)</sup> Though sprinkling is not normally used, its validity is accepted, provided that the water flows over the skin, since otherwise it is not a washing. Confirmation (Catholic Church)Confirmation or Chrismation is the second sacrament of Christian initiation. "It is called Chrismation because the essential rite of the sacrament is anointing with chrism. It is called Confirmation because it confirms and strengthens baptismal grace."<sup>(19)</sup> It is conferred by "the anointing with Sacred baptism (oil mixed with balsam and consecrated by the bishop), which is done by the laying on of the hand of the minister who pronounces the sacramental words proper to the rite."<sup>(20)</sup> These words, in both their Western and Eastern variants, refer to a gift of the Holy Spirit that marks the recipient as with a seal.

Through the sacrament the grace given in baptism is "strengthened and deepened."(21)

### **Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Confession)**

The Sacrament of Penance is the first of two sacraments of healing. The Catechism of the Catholic Church mentions in the following order and capitalization different names of the sacrament, calling it the sacrament of conversion, Penance, confession, forgiveness and Reconciliation. It is the sacrament of spiritual healing of a baptized person from the distancing from God resulting from sins committed. When people sin after baptism, they cannot have baptism as a remedy; Baptism, which is a spiritual regeneration, cannot be given a second time. It originated with the Reformation, a movement against what its followers considered to be errors in the Roman Catholic Church. Ever since, Protestants reject the Roman Catholic doctrine of Papal supremacy and Sacraments, but disagree among them regarding the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They emphasize the priesthood of all believers, justification by faith alone rather than by good works, and the highest authority of the Bible alone (rather than with sacred tradition) in faith and morals. The "Five morals" summarize basic theological differences in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestantism is popularly considered to reform of the Roman Catholic Church — notably by Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, and Jan Hus — only Luther succeeded in sparking a wider, lasting, and modern movement. In the 16th century, Lutheranism spread from Germany into Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Estonia, and Iceland. Reformed (or Calvinist) denominations spread in Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Scotland, Switzerland and France by reformers such as John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, and John Knox. The political separation of the Church of England from the pope under King Henry VIII began Anglicanism, bringing England and Wales into this broad Reformation movement. Protestants developed their own culture, with major contributions in education, the humanities and sciences, the political and social order, the economy and the arts, and many other fields. Protestantism is diverse, being more divided doctrinally, theologically and ecclesiastically than either the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, or Oriental Orthodoxy. Without structural unity or central human authority, Protestants developed the concept of an invisible church, in contrast of the Roman Catholic view of the Catholic Church as the visible one true Church founded by

Jesus Christ. Some denominations do have a worldwide scope and distribution of membership, while others are confined to a single country. A majority of Protestants are members of a handful of Protestant denominational families: Adventists, Anglicans, Baptists, Reformed, Lutherans, Methodists, and Pentecostals. Nondenominational, evangelical, charismatic, independent and other churches are on the rise, and constitute a significant part of Protestant Christianity. Proponents of the branch theory consider Protestantism one of the three major divisions of Christendom, together with the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodoxy (both Eastern and Oriental).

Protestantism also spread from the German lands into France, where the Protestants were nicknamed Huguenots. Calvin continued to take an interest in the French religious affairs from his base in Geneva. He regularly trained pastors to lead congregations there. Despite heavy persecution, the Reformed tradition made steady progress across large sections of the nation, appealing to people alienated by the inflexibility and the complacency of the Catholic establishment. French Protestantism came to acquire a distinctly political character, made all the more obvious by the conversions of nobles during the 1550s. This established the preconditions for a series of conflicts, known as the French Wars of Religion. The Civil wars gained impetus with the sudden death of Henry II of France in 1559. Atrocity and outrage became the defining characteristics of the time, illustrated at their most intense in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of August 1572, when the Roman Catholic party annihilated between 30,000 and 100,000 Huguenots across France. The wars only concluded when Henry IV of France issued the Edict of Nantes, promising official toleration of the Protestant minority, but under highly restricted conditions. Roman Catholicism remained the official state religion, and the fortunes of French Protestants gradually declined over the next century, culminating in Louis XIV's Edict of Fontainebleau which revoked the Edict of Nantes and made Roman Catholicism the sole legal religion once again. In response to the Edict of Fontainebleau, Frederick William I, Elector of Brandenburg declared the Edict of Potsdam, (place) giving free passage to Huguenot refugees. In the late 17th century many Huguenots fled to England, the Netherlands, Prussia, Switzerland, and the English and Dutch overseas colonies. A significant community in France remained in the Cevennes region.

Protestants refer to specific groupings of congregations or churches that share in common foundational doctrines and the name of their groups as denominations. The term denomination (national body) is to be distinguished from branch (denominational family; tradition), communion (international body) and congregation (church). An example (this is no universal way to classify Protestant churches, as these may sometimes vary broadly in their structures) to show the difference: Protestants reject the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine that it is the one true church, believing in the invisible church, which consists of all who profess faith in Jesus Christ. Some Protestant denominations are less accepting of other denominations, and the basic orthodoxy of some is questioned by most of the others. Individual denominations also have formed over very subtle theological differences. Other denominations are simply regional or ethnic expressions of the same beliefs. Because the five solas are the main tenets of the Protestant faith, non-denominational groups and organizations are also considered Protestant.

Various ecumenical movements have attempted cooperation or reorganization of the various divided Protestant denominations, according to various models of union, but divisions continue to outpace unions, as there is no overarching authority to which any of the churches owe allegiance, which can authoritatively define the faith. Most denominations share common beliefs in the major aspects of the Christian faith while differing in many secondary doctrines, although what is major and what is secondary is a matter of idiosyncratic belief.

## Protestant Culture

### The Berlin Cathedral, a United Protestant Cathedral in Berlin

Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Although the Reformation was a religious movement, it also had a strong impact on all other aspects of life: marriage and family, education, the humanities and sciences, the political and social order, the economy, and the arts. Protestant churches reject the idea of a celibate priesthood and thus allow their clergy to marry. Many of their families contributed to the development of intellectual elites in their countries. Since about 1950, women have entered the ministry, and some have assumed leading positions (e.g. bishops), in most Protestant churches. As the Reformers wanted all members of the church to be able to read the Bible, education on all levels got a strong boost. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the literacy

rate in England was about 60 per cent, in Scotland 65 per cent, and in Sweden eight of ten men and women were able to read and to write. Colleges and universities were founded. For example, the Puritans who established Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1628 founded Harvard College only eight years later. About a dozen other colleges followed in the 18th century, including Yale (1701). Pennsylvania also became a Centre of learning.

Members of mainline Protestant denominations have played leadership roles in many aspects of American life, including politics, business, science, the arts, and education. They founded most of the country's leading institutes of higher education. The Protestant concept of God and man allows believers to use all their God-given faculties, including the power of reason. That means that they are allowed to explore God's creation and, according to Genesis 2:15, make use of it in a responsible and sustainable way. Thus a cultural climate was created that greatly enhanced the development of the humanities and the sciences. Another consequence of the Protestant understanding of man is that the believers, in gratitude for their election and redemption in Christ, are to follow God's commandments. Industry, frugality, discipline, and a strong sense of responsibility are at the heart of their moral code. In particular, Calvin rejected luxury. Therefore, craftsmen, industrialists, and other businessmen were able to reinvest the greater part of their profits in the most efficient machinery and the most modern production methods that were based on progress in the sciences and technology. As a result, productivity grew, which led to increased profits and enabled employers to pay higher wages. In this way, the economy, the sciences, and technology reinforced each other. The chance to participate in the economic success of technological inventions was a strong incentive to both inventors and investors. The Protestant work ethic was an important force behind the unplanned and uncoordinated mass action that influenced the development of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. This idea is also known as the "Protestant ethic thesis."(139)

## Conclusion

Modernism and liberalism do not constitute rigorous and well-defined schools of theology, but are rather an inclination by some writers and teachers to integrate Christian thought into the spirit of the Age of Enlightenment. New understandings of history and the natural sciences of the day led directly to new approaches to theology. Its opposition to the fundamentalist teaching

resulted in religious debates, such as the Fundamentalist–Modernist Controversy within the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in the 1920s.

Protestantism has had an important influence on science. According to the Merton Thesis, there was a positive correlation between the rise of English Puritanism and German Pietism on the one hand and early experimental science on the other. The Merton Thesis has two separate parts: Firstly, it presents a theory that science changes due to an accumulation of observations and improvement in experimental technique and methodology; secondly, it puts forward the argument that the popularity of science in 17th-century England and the religious demography of the Royal Society (English scientists of that time were predominantly Puritans or other Protestants) can be explained by a correlation between Protestantism and the scientific values. Merton focused on English Puritanism and German Pietism as having been responsible for the development of the scientific revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries. He explained that the connection between religious affiliation and interest in science was the result of a significant synergy between the ascetic Protestant values and those of modern science. Protestant values encouraged scientific research by allowing science to identify God's influence on the world—his creation—and thus providing a religious justification for scientific research.

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