

# SACRAMENTS.

## CATHOLIC ANECDOTES

### CHAPTER VI.

## ON THE SACRAMENTS.

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534. *Institution of the Seven Sacraments.* -

You are not unaware, my young friends, that it was Our Lord who instituted the seven sacraments; but what you, perhaps, do not know so well, are the passages of Holy Scripture which point out that institution.

Well! Grotius is about to make them known to you, and Grotius is a learned Protestant doctor, born in Holland, and who lived in the XVIth century.

"Baptism," says he, "is mentioned in St. Matthew (chapter 28, verse 19):

*Go all you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

"- Confirmation appears in the Acts of the Apostles (chapter VIII., verse 17):

*Then they laid their hands upon them; and they received the Holy Ghost.*

"- The Eucharist is mentioned in many places, especially in St. Matthew (chapter 26, verses 26, 27 and 28):

*And whilst they were at supper Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke and gave to His disciples; and said:*

*Take all you and eat, this is My body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks; and gave to them, saying:*

*Drink all you all of this.*

"- Penance (or Reconciliation) is likewise found in St. Matthew (chapter 16, verse 19):

*And I*

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*will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.*

"- Extreme Unction (the Sacrament of the Sick) appears in those words of St. Mark (chapter VI., verse 13):

*And they anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

"- Order is mentioned implicitly in a great number of passages, but it is so in a positive manner in the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy (chapter V., verse 22):

*Impose not hands lightly upon any man; and in the second letter to Timothy (chapter 1, verse 6)*

*Wherefore it is that I exhort you to stir up the grace of God, which you received when I imposed hands upon you.*

"- Finally, Matrimony, instituted at the beginning of the world, was raised by Our Lord to the dignity of a Sacrament; hence St. Paul plainly says, in the Epistle to the Ephesians (chapter V., verse 32):

*It is a great Sacrament.*" (The Greek word used is sometimes translated as 'Mystery', which is the name given to Sacraments in any of the writings of the Greek Fathers of the Church.) Thus spoke the Protestant Grotius.

Such are, my friends, some of the most formal passages of the New Testament, touching the institution of our sacraments, and it is certainly very curious that they are collected by a Protestant, as I have just now told you.

- G. S. G.

535. *The Wants of Man in Society.* -

I know not, dear friends, whether you have sometimes made the following reflection: that the seven sacraments answer to all our spiritual wants, which are generally analogous to our corporal wants. Thus, for the natural life, seven things are necessary to man.

1st, that he come into the world;

2nd, that he grow

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and strengthen;

3rd, that he take wholesome and regular food, to repair his strength and preserve and develop life within him;

4th, that he employ remedies to cure himself, if he grow ill;

5th, that he subject himself to a strict regimen to try to recover his health when he is enfeebled by age and infirmities;

6th, that there be magistrates to protect and defend him, and even at need to punish him, if he should become hurtful to himself or others;

7th, that he leave after him a family, more or less numerous, for the preservation of mankind.

Well! dear friends, it is just the same with the divine and supernatural life, as you are going to see by the special object of each sacrament.

1st, Baptism makes us born to the life of grace, which is the proper life of our soul;

2nd, Confirmation increases that life of the soul, making us perfect Christians;

3rd, the Eucharist is a celestial nourishment, which preserves and develops the spiritual life within us;

4th, Penance (or Reconciliation) is, as it were, a universal remedy, which restores health, and sometimes even life to our soul, when it has been wounded or killed by sin;

5th, Extreme Unction, the Sacrament of the Sick, effaces all traces of spiritual diseases, and restores to the soul the strength it may have lost;

6th, Order gives spiritual magistrates, empowered to direct, defend, and if need be to punish us for our own good and that of others;

7th, Matrimony perpetuates the Church of God by giving her spiritual children. Do you perceive, dear friends, that this comparison is calculated to make us admire the wisdom of God, and His goodness

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in our regard?

- GRIDEL, *Soirees Chretiennes*, VI. 125.

536. *Our Sacraments Appreciated by Protestants.* -

I am happy, children, speaking of our seven sacraments, to be able to quote for you the opinion of a famous Protestant.

I mean the celebrated Goethe, a poet and philosopher, and one of the mightiest geniuses of Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Notwithstanding the strange errors into which he had the misfortune of falling, his superior intelligence knew how to render a solemn homage, the sincerity of which no one can suspect, to the sublime harmony which exists between the Catholic religion and the highest faculties of the soul, with its purest affections.

"Protestant worship, considered as a whole," said he, "is too meagre, too empty. Examine it in detail, and you will find that the Protestant has not enough of sacraments; there is but one in which he participates actively and spontaneously, and that sacrament is the Supper; for, as for Baptism, he only sees it conferred on others, and he does not actually feel its salutary effects on himself. Yet the Sacraments are what is most sublime in religion; they are the visible symbol of an extraordinary grace and favour which God grants to men." After this preamble, Goethe gives a rapid and eloquent description of our seven sacraments; then he adds: "It is important that the source of salvation which springs for us in these sacraments should flow, not once only, but whilst we are on this earth. And these means, the

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efficacy of which we shall have experienced during our whole life, we shall feel at the gates of death, ten times more still their inestimable benefits. Following a custom which has taken root in his earliest years and which is become dear to him, the Christian, whose life is fading away, embraces with fervour the visible symbols of the truths which promise him a new life, earth has nothing more to offer him, its promises are dumb; but he receives from Heaven the pledges of an eternal felicity." I regret, children, that this passage from the German writer is somewhat long; but I have quoted enough of it to make you feel both the happiness of the Catholic, who has all the sacraments at his disposal, and the sad condition of our erring brethren, who vegetate in the grievous and voluntary privation of the first helps.

- NOEL, *Cat. de Rodez.*, V., 179.

537 *The Marvellous Fountain.* -

I have read, my very dear friends, in the *Explanation of the Nancy Catechism*, a somewhat ingenious comparison on the Sacraments, which are, as it were, so many canals through which we may receive the waters of grace. In the midst of a vast plain, ever green and flowery, there was a beautiful and magnificent fountain. It shed its limpid and abundant waters over the fields by means of seven little channels that were ever full. It is true that its waters sometimes appeared a little bitter, but they had a wonderful virtue. In fact, according as one drank from one stream or another, they received its salutary effects; here, old men

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became young and vigorous; there, the ugly, those who had any deformity, any natural defect, appeared handsome, straight, well formed; all the sick returned thence healed and strengthened. Even the bodies of the dead were there restored to life when plunged in, with certain precautions. But better still than that, my friends: at this marvellous fountain the poor became rich; the wretched found happiness; sorrowful people drank gaiety and joy. Beside this fountain there is another, whose waters also flow in great abundance; it appears, at first, to be as sweet as honey; but scarcely is it in the stomach when it produces colic, vomiting, nervous convulsions, and often even death.

Well! would you believe it, dear friends, that, notwithstanding the daily experience of the different effects of these two fountains, although many persons, undoubtedly, come to draw water from the first, a very great number fear not to drink of the second. It is a folly, you will tell me. Doubtless it is, and a great folly. Try, my good friends, never to be of the number of those who are attacked by it. You understand that the first spring of which I have spoken to you is the Sacraments, whilst the second is the deceitful joys and pleasures of the earth.

- GRIDEL, *Soirees Chret.*, VI., 134.