

# Sacramentalism

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this tutorial today you're going to look at the idea of sacramentalism. The various world religions treat the idea of sacramentalism in different ways, depending on how and what they consider to be a sacrament. This lesson will start with Christianity, the tradition in which sacraments are regarded as particularly significant in the spiritual life of the believer. Then you'll see how sacramentalism might be expressed in an Eastern religion, Hinduism. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. [The Lord's Supper](#)
2. [Other Sacraments in Christianity](#)
3. [Hinduism](#)

## 1. The Lord's Supper

In Christianity, a **sacrament** is a sacred rite. The sacred rites are things that are recognized and observed and believed to be necessary for salvation. Within Christianity, the most important significant sacrament is usually considered to be the Holy Communion. This is also called the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper.

There are doctrinal differences regarding this sacrament, and for that reason, it's given different names. The term **Holy Communion** is defined as the reception of bread or wafers and wine that have been transformed into the literal blood and flesh of Jesus Christ. This process is called transubstantiation.

Many branches of Protestantism, however, don't hold to the doctrine of transubstantiation. Instead, they consider this sacrament to be a ritual that is a symbolic commemoration of the **Last Supper**, when Jesus offered himself for the sins of humanity. For this reason, they give it the name the Lord's Supper, which is another key term to keep in mind.

For Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the ritual of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, is simply called the Sacrament. For the Sacrament, adherents eat bread and drink wine, although in most cases since the late 1800s wine has been replaced with water. In other churches, the sacrament is called the Eucharist, which is a Greek word. It means "Thanksgiving." This term is used by the Eastern Orthodox or

oriental Orthodox Church, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, reformed Presbyterian, United Methodists, and Lutherans.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### Sacrament

In Christianity, a sacred rite.

##### Holy Communion

In Roman Catholicism, the reception of bread/wafers and wine that has been transformed into the literal blood and flesh of Jesus Christ.

##### The Lord's Supper

Commemoration of Jesus' willingness to sacrifice Himself for the forgiveness of human sin, traditionally involving the consumption of small amounts of bread and wine (or appropriate substitutes, such as wafers and grape juice)—also called “Communion” or “Holy Communion” in some Christian sects.

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## 2. Other Sacraments in Christianity

The second sacrament in Christianity is the **baptism**. Baptism is the anointing of a new believer or church member with water as a sign of acceptance and cleansing by God. This is often done for babies and children but also can be performed on adults in recognition of their entering the faith.

For most Protestant denominations, the list of sacraments includes only the Lord's Supper and baptism. In fact, many Protestant sects of Christianity generally avoid the term sacrament, following Martin Luther's doctrine, which states that for something to be considered a sacrament it had to have its justification and grounding in the direct teachings of Jesus and the direct actions of Jesus according to the Gospels.



#### DID YOU KNOW

In the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches, which are also called the oriental orthodox churches, there are five additional sacraments: confirmation, confession, marriage, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick.

Luther believed that the five other sacraments were unnecessary for salvation. He was critical of the Catholic Church, which he believed was over-instituting the sacraments with the effect of separating the believer from Jesus Christ and from God. But for Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians, the additional five sacraments are essential components of one's salvation and final redemption.

In Roman Catholicism, **confirmation** is a sacrament by which a believer is accepted into the church. Confirmation is usually done when the believer reaches adulthood, or the age of reason, when he or she can make an individual, personal commitment to the faith. In Eastern Orthodox Christian churches, this is done right after baptism.

In Roman Catholicism, **confession** is a sacrament by which a priest may forgive a worshipper's sins in exchange for the worshipper's willing and full admission of his or her sin and performing an act of penance. Penance is

some kind of a task that is done, or prayer that is offered, to aid the process of forgiveness. This is also to help the sinner become more conscious and aware of his or her actions.

In Christianity, generally **marriage** is defined as the joining of one man and one woman together in a lifelong household, familial, and sexual relationship. Marriage is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church and some other Christian sects as well, including many Protestant denominations. In these contexts, marriage is generally understood as a symbolic reflection of Christ's sacrificial and undying love for the Church, which is the collective body of believers.

The church is therefore frequently referred to in the New Testament as the body of Christ. Marriage is meant to reflect this mystery and commitment and therefore is a significant factor in the adherence, or final salvation.

**Holy orders** are the ordination or appointment of people to posts within the Church, a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church. The main posts or positions include bishops, priests, and deacons. The **anointing of the sick** is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church in which a gravely ill person is blessed by a priest.

The term anointing in this case is different from the anointing that's done for a baptism or confirmation. The anointing of the sick as a sacrament in the Roman Catholic traditions refers to some sort of healing, including the forgiveness of sin and aiding someone in their passage to eternal life.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### **Baptism**

In Christianity, the anointing of a new believer or church member with water as a sign of cleansing and acceptance by God.

##### **Confirmation**

In Roman Catholicism, a sacrament by which a believer is accepted into the Church.

##### **Confession**

In Roman Catholicism, a sacrament by which a priest may forgive a worshipper's sins in exchange for the worshipper's willing and full admission of sin as well as the doing of penance.

##### **Marriage**

In Christianity generally, the joining of one man and one woman together in a lifelong household, familial, and sexual relationship; a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church and some other Christian sects.

##### **Holy Orders**

The ordination or appointment of people to posts within the Church, a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church.

##### **Anointing of the Sick**

A sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church in which a gravely ill person is blessed by a priest.}}

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## 3. Hinduism

One of the Eastern religions that recognizes a sacred exchange between the adherent and the divine is Hinduism. A **prasad** in Hinduism is a gift, usually food, which is given by a worshipper to a deity. Often it is placed in front of a murti, a statue, or an image of a god, which is then considered to be blessed, and after a period of time is consumed by the worshipper.

This is a sacred exchange that guides and assists him or her on the path to freedom and enlightenment. You might think of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist or Holy Communion as being similar to this Hindu holy practice of offering the prasad.



#### TERM TO KNOW

##### Prasad

In Hinduism, a gift (usually food) given by a worshipper to a deity, which is then considered to be blessed and is consumed by worshippers.



#### SUMMARY

Sacramentalism is really an attitude toward the sacraments. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox recognize seven sacraments, and many Protestant denominations recognize only two as necessary for salvation. The first sacrament is the **Lord's Supper**. The **other sacraments in Christianity** are baptism, confirmation, confession, marriage, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick. In **Hinduism**, the practice of giving food to a deity, Prasad, to assist one toward liberation and enlightenment is a sacrament.

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#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### Baptism

In Christianity, the anointing of a new believer or church member with water as a sign of cleansing and acceptance by God.

##### Confession

In Roman Catholicism, a sacrament by which a priest may forgive a worshipper's sins, in exchange for the worshipper's willing and full admission of sin, as well as the doing of penance.

##### Confirmation

In Roman Catholicism, a sacrament by which a believer is accepted into the Church.

##### Holy Communion

In Roman Catholicism, the reception of bread/wafers and wine that has been transformed into the literal blood and flesh of Jesus Christ.

##### Holy Orders

The ordination or appointment of people to posts within the church, a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church.

**Lord's Supper**

Commemoration of Jesus' willingness to sacrifice Himself for the forgiveness of human sin, traditionally involving the consumption of small amounts of bread and wine (or appropriate substitutes, such as wafers and grape juice)--also called "Communion" or "Holy Communion" in some Christian sects.

**Marriage**

In Christianity generally, the joining of one man and one woman together in a lifelong household, familial, and sexual relationship. A sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church and some other Christian sects.

**Prasad**

In Hinduism, a gift (usually food) given by a worshipper to a deity, which is then considered to be blessed and is consumed by worshippers.

**Sacrament**

In Christianity, a sacred rite.

**The Anointing of the Sick**

A sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church, in which a gravely ill person is blessed by a priest.