

Hum 130 week 9 final project



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World Religions Report: Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants

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Report: Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants Abstract

All over the world, different religions exist and are respected by people who believe in that faith. Looking beyond what we know about our own religion, we will find a various number of religions that influence the people, culture, and politics in the place where they are practiced. Through a closer examination of the religion that we are familiar with and another religion, we will discover the similarities and differences between them. The aim of this report is to compare two of the many denominations of Christianity: Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants. Mainly, I aim to understand Catholicism as a religion by interviewing someone of its faith and a priest.

And to further that understanding, I will compare Roman Catholicism to Conservative Protestant. The comparison and contrasting of the two religions will help us understand their belief systems, and how they are related and different from each other. Before further analyzing and discussing the beliefs behind these religions, it is important to first learn the basic facts behind them, such as their backgrounds.

Introduction Those who follow the life and teachings of Christ, the son of God, are considered Christians. The first Christian Church was established almost two thousand years ago, soon after Jesus's death, and became the birth of Christianity (BBC, 2009). The first Christian Church is believed to be the first Roman Catholic Church. People were baptized and converted to Christianity through the preaching of Christ's disciples. The early days of the religion were not easy as they struggled to be accepted by the majority

of society. They faced persecutions for a long-time, until a Rome Emperor, Constantine, converted to Christianity ??“ a happening that paved the way for the wide acceptance of Christianity as the religion of the whole Roman Empire (Windmill Ministries, n. d.

). Christianity??™s unified faith became divided when the conflicts between Christians from East and West erupted due to differing views on things such as the management and leadership within the Church; wherein, the West became the Roman Catholic Church (Windmill Ministries, n. d.).

However, the Western Christians were also divided through a revolt called the Protestant Reformation. The Protestants questioned the administration of the Catholic Church, some practices and belief that the Catholic Church, and the Church??™s authority to interpret the Bible (Windmill Ministries, n. d.). Consequently, Protestant as a Christian denomination was born. This was followed by the birth of other Christian denominations, such as the Gnostics, Jewish Christians, and Pauline Christians (Robinson, 2009). Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants are only two of the many faith groups comprising Christianity.

Thus, their members are some of the two billion followers of the largest religion today, while about 50% of Christians identify themselves as Roman Catholics (Robinson, 2009). Although each denomination differs in their interpretations and follows different practices, every denominations beliefs are rooted from the teachings in the Bible. Catholicism: Interview Summary To learn more about the Catholic religion, I chose to interview a couple I have been friends with for over three years. Walt and Janie Lesher are

Catholics who regularly attend church two nights a week ??“ Wednesdays and Saturdays. They also attend Church on special occasions, such as Easter and Christmas. The interview was conducted at the Lesher??™ s residence before visiting St.

Johns Catholic Church to attend the mass and meet with Father Schmeidler. Before going to church I spoke with Janie about her religious beliefs. Religion has been part of her life as she was raised as a Catholic, and has been attending Church for as long as she can remember.

Over the years Church has meant several things to her. She says that the more she attends the more meaningful it becomes and the clearer more things become to her. As a child, she was confused about confession. She thought that she had to confess every minor wrong she did every week but as she grew up, she realized that confession was not about the minor things, but more about the ??? big things.??? Today, she knows that God is always with her and if she were to do a terrible thing, she can confess her sin, and God will forgive her. She believes that the Church is a place of comfort and that it helps her get through her days and weeks.? She values her religion and enjoys the fact that she has a place to go for worship.

She hopes that when she dies, the way she has lived her life will allow her to go to Heaven, in which she will be granted everything God has told her she would receive. Her favorite part of Mass is communion. She believes that receiving communion is like partaking of the Last Supper ??“ that God is giving her a part of Himself. She says that if she had to do without communion she would not be as connected to God. The one teaching Janie

does not believe in, although she adheres to, is that birth control is not allowed. Walt converted from Christianity to Catholicism in 1963 after he and Janie married. Although he has always enjoyed attending church, he says he enjoys it more today than he did 10 to 12 years ago when church service was recited in Latin.

He believes in God and he believes that the church helps him to center his life. He says that although Christians and Catholics sometimes believe different things, both religions believe in the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, and that Jesus was conceived by Immaculate Conception. Like Janie, the one teaching Walt does not believe in is the lack of birth control. Both believe that birth control should be left up to the individual and not be a requirement of the church. The church itself was very beautiful; it contains several statutes and paintings, and multiple stained glass windows. Father Schmeidler made the bible readings easy to understand by restating the information in today's language, and although he was speaking about the teaching in the bible, he compared the teachings with today's occurrences to make the teachings easier to remember. Although Mass consisted of kneeling, standing, and sitting it was not uncomfortable as we were not required to do any of them for an extended period. Altar boys were ringing bells, people went forward to receive communion, and collection plates were passed around.

The entire service only lasted about 45 minutes and was very beautiful. After the Mass, we were able to speak with Father Schmeidler for a few minutes. He first explained the ritual of communion. Communion is a sacrament that commemorates Jesus' Last Supper. The Priest consecrates the bread and

wine that is consumed by the congregation ??” the same way Jesus did at the last supper. Father Schmeidler said that practicing Catholics attend Mass regularly, receive Holy Communion, confess their sins to a priest on a regular basis, and attend other church sacraments. Special days are also set aside each year to honor particular saints.

Catholics pray directly to these Saints for answers for their prayer. One example would be Saint John, the Apostle of Charity. Another is Saint Jude, who is known as the Apostle of Hopeless Cases. He explained that individuals pray to these and other Saints requesting help for their self and for others. Such practices and beliefs still play a vital role in the lives of contemporary Catholics.

Comparing and Contrasting: Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants
The Roman Catholicism beliefs and ideology were kept by Christians of the West when the unifying belief of the Christian Church was divided due to the conflict between Christians of East and West. As the Western Church separated from the East, it was also divided into different Western denominations after several revolts against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. These opened various interpretations and beliefs, from the meaning of being Christian to the meaning of the different practices. Roman Catholicism has continually grown despite the division in the Church, while other Christian denominations, such as the Conservative Protestants, also continued to grow over the years. Although these denominations, including Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestant share the same foundation of the Holy Bible, they have differing views, practices, and beliefs of what the Bible says, which reflects in their

teachings. In their religious beliefs, we will find that Roman Catholics and Conservative Protestants have a number of differences.

For example, the timing and significance of baptism differs in the two religions. For Catholics, baptism is the sacrament that signifies regeneration and justification, which is usually done during infancy. For Protestants, it signifies the testimony of regeneration after accepting Jesus as Lord, and should be done only when the person is an adult and is ??? born again.

??? As discussed earlier, Catholics also believe that their sins are forgiven once they repent them to a priest through confession. However, for Protestants, the forgiveness of sins can be achieved without the need of human intercessors (Robinson, 2008). The two religions also give a different amount of importance or respect to some of the beliefs of the other. In short, a person may be very important for the one, while not important at all to the other. One example is the status of Mary. While the Catholic Church accepts a scientific belief, specifically the theory of evolution, Conservative Protestants rejects this belief. Catholics regard Mary to be superior to saints and is next to Jesus because she is believed to be the Mother of God.

As the Mother of God a person can pray through her and their prayers will reach Jesus. For Conservative Protestants Mary plays a somewhat minor role; they believe that a person only needs to be saved to accept Jesus to be the Lord and savior. Moreover, it is a widely held Catholic belief that saints play a major role in the religion and that one can pray to them. On the other hand, Protestants deny this belief (Robinson, 2008). Catholics believe the sacrament of eating the Eucharist represents Christs body and blood, which

is physically present and consumed by believers. This is known as transubstantiation (Axia College of University of Phoenix, 2005).

Protestants believe the Eucharist symbolizes Christ's life present in the believer. They reject the concept of transubstantiation. These are only few of the contrasting views and beliefs of Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants. While each religion differs in their religious aspects, it is to be expected that they differ in their views on societal issues that exist today, such as the theory of evolution and capital punishment. The Catholic Church accepts the theory of evolution, while Conservative Protestants deny it. The Catholic Church is known to be a main detractor of the death penalty but most of Conservative Protestants accept and even promote this type of punishment (Robinson, 2008). Regardless of the numerous disagreements in religious and other beliefs, they agree on some theological beliefs, which is important. They both agree that angels exist, and that Jesus was conceived by the Virgin Mary.

Catholics and Conservative Protestants believe in Heaven and Hell, the Holy Trinity, and Jesus as a Deity. They also share the belief that Jesus lived a sinless life and that He was incarnated. They both believe that Jesus was crucified, died, resurrected from the dead, and will come back in the ??? second coming??? (Robinson, 2008). Conclusion As important as the various religions that exist today around the world are, the various denominations that they have are also as important.

Those who honestly believe they follow the life and teachings of Jesus are all considered Christians. When Jesus died and was resurrected, movements

that started the Christian Church erupted; wherein, the three main movements are the Gnostics, Jewish Christians, and Pauline Christians (Robinson, 2009). Until today, the Gnostic Christians survives, while all other Christian faith groups'™ history can be traced back to Pauline Christian (Robinson, 2009). This only means that even in the very beginning of the Church, it has already been divided, regardless of the conflicts that erupted between Christians throughout the history. They are divided because they differ in some of their religious beliefs and interpretations. The same happens with more than 1, 200 denominations of Christians in North America and 34, 000 around the world today (Robinson, 2008).

Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants are only two of these thousands of divisions of the Church, but are two of the most influential and widely followed. The denominations, including Roman Catholicism and Conservative Protestants, may have different interpretation of being a Christian but their unifying belief and their foundation remains the same. What is important is the person'™s faith and how they live their lives as true Christians, like Walt and Janie Lesher. Furthermore, as Christians of any denomination, the main goal should be to deepen their relationship with God, which can be achieved through following the teachings of Jesus Christ.

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