

Roman catholicism vs  
conservative  
protestantism  
theology religion  
essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Protestant movement, after breaking away from Roman Catholicism, further fragmented during the following centuries. At the present time, there are over a 1, 000 Christian denominations in North America alone, in addition to many thousands of independent, unaffiliated congregations, para-church organizations, and personal or couple ministries. Although there are many mainline and liberal Protestant faith groups, most are conservative in nature. Some beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church and conservative Protestant denominations are in opposition to each other. Examples are: The acceptance of the theory of evolution by the Catholic Church, and the continuing rejection by most conservative Protestants. The acceptance of homosexual sexual orientation -- but not same-sex behavior -- as morally neutral by the Catholic Church, but not by many conservative Protestants. The rejection of the death penalty by the Catholic Church, and the continuing acceptance and promotion by most conservative Protestants. Catholics place ultimate interpretive authority in the Pope and Magisterium. Conservative Protestants place it with the individual Christian and his/her interpretation of the Bible. Catholics teach that the bread and wine during the mass becomes the actual body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus. Protestants generally regard the two components as symbolic of Jesus' body and blood. The true church, according to the Roman Catholicism, is their church organization. Based on scripture, Protestants believe that the church, the Body of Christ, is comprised of those who have been born again and have the Spirit of God. Who has authority in the church? In Catholicism, they say it is the pope, who operates in apostolic succession over cardinals, bishops, and priests. The Catholic Church's position: the priesthood is necessary, as only priests can perform the sacrament necessary for spiritual health. Additionally, only the <https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church can correctly interpret the meaning of the Bible. However, the Bible tells us that Jesus alone has all authority and power and then He gave some in the church to lead - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers also called the five-fold ministry gifts. Martin Luther taught that all believers had a responsibility to serve as a bridge builder for the Kingdom. The premise for his teaching of the priesthood of all believers was all believers have equal access to God; thus, no other person is needed to go to God on behalf of another. Protestant belief posits that Christ tore down the middle wall of partition; we can go boldly to the throne of grace, according to Hebrews 4. All believers can pray for themselves; however, if you are in a position where you need additional or supplementary prayer, James 5 recommends that you call for the elders of the church. Ecclesiastical prayer is important, but doesn't serve as the exclusive way to communicate with God. There is power in the corporate anointing out of which the fivefold ministry gifts function, but believers don't have to have them in order to confess and ask for forgiveness and salvation from God. Catholics and conservative Protestants generally agree on some major theological matters. The most important area of agreement is on the nature of the Triune God. While some of their expressions of this doctrine are steeped in tradition, the essence of the triune God-head is taught the same - with the same understanding of the nature and functions of God in each Person. Both agree on the existence of angels, Mary's virgin conception; Jesus' sinless life, incarnation, crucifixion, bodily resurrection, and His imminent return of Jesus to earth in the second coming; and heaven and hell. They agree that His crucifixion brought about atonement - the potential to bridge the gulf between humanity and God caused by sin. However, they

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

disagree on how this was achieved. They partly agree about the significance of baptism, but disagree about the timing when it is normally performed (Catholics perform infant baptism). They do not agree on which books are included in the official canon of the Bible. Perhaps the main difference between conservative Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is how man can be saved or enter the Kingdom of God. The methodology of salvation in Roman Catholicism is Pope Leo the X on the church's position said, " Both faith and good works, acts of devotion, charity, the sacraments, etc. are necessary for salvation." Protestant beliefs are expressed in the " five Solas," which Martin Luther interpreted based on his study of scripture (Ephesians 2: 8) - for by grace are you saved not by works, lest any man should boast. Sola means " alone" in Latin. The first three Sola statements of the early Protestant movement stressed that:" Sola Scriptura:" The Bible is the sole authority for Christian beliefs and practices. The Catholic Church stresses a balance between Biblical support and the tradition of the Catholic Church itself." Sola Gratia:" One is saved through grace alone, given to the believer by God directly. The Catholic Church stresses the importance of faith, baptism, sacraments, and works for God's grace." Sola Fide:" Salvation is by the individual's faith alone in trusting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Again, the Catholic Church stresses the importance of church sacraments. The two groups differ most obviously on other matters of belief and church practice - particularly with regard to the rapture, authority within the church, church organization, freedom of the individual, freedom of each congregation, etc. The divisions are deep and long-standing. This has led to prejudice and discrimination. Hostility is particularly high in some countries in South America, where Protestants - particularly Pentecostals - have been taking "

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

market share" away from the Catholic Church. Bloodshed has resulted in some areas. The gap between the two groups appears to be increasing with time. Future reunification of the Christian religion appears impossible. In spite of these conflicts, these two wings of Christianity have been able to take joint programs in some areas. Catholics and Protestants have cooperated in North America to: Restrict abortion access Oppose equal rights and protections for gays and lesbians, including same-sex marriage Oppose physician-assisted suicide, and other " hot" moral and religious topics. They differ slightly in their approaches to what they regard as the two most serious social evils: homosexuality and abortion access. Regarding homosexual behavior, both groups consider homosexual behavior to be hated by God and a major sin. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that, in most cases, a homosexual orientation is not chosen. They consider a homosexual orientation to be a disordered state. It is rarely changeable in adulthood, and is not, in itself, sinful. The church dichotomizes orientation with behavior, however, and regards all homosexual behavior to be intrinsically sinful, regardless of the degree of love and commitment within the relationship. Homosexual support groups in the Catholic Church promote celibacy. Most conservative Protestants downplay the concept of sexual orientation and emphasize same-sex behavior, believing what people do is more important than what they feel. Most believe that homosexual behavior is indirectly caused by poor parenting and/or sexual abuse during childhood. They view such behavior as chosen, abnormal, unnatural, and changeable. Their homosexual support groups emphasize changing behavior with the goal of opposite-sex marriage. Regarding abortion access, both groups believe that human life, in the form of a spermatozoon and ovum, becomes a

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

human person with a soul at the time of conception. Ending the life of that human person is murder at all stages of development from conception to birth and beyond. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that ending the life of a pre-embryo, embryo, or fetus cannot be allowed, except in very rare cases where a life-saving operation on the woman results in the unintended death of the embryo or fetus. Individual Roman Catholics, however, often take a position that is more liberal than the official stance of the church.

Conservative Protestants differ in their stance on abortion access. Some would permit it in cases where the pregnancy was initiated through rape or incest. At the other extreme, some believe that abortion is never warranted, even to save the life of the woman. Overall, on matters that are not related to human sexuality, the Roman Catholic Church tends to be far more liberal than conservative Protestant denominations. Its bishops often speak out strongly on moral matters such as: Elimination of the death sentence  
The elimination of poverty  
Provision of universal health care  
Social injustices that have arisen from uncontrolled capitalism  
Unjust wars, etc. Comparison of Beliefs  
Any summary list of comparisons between Catholics and Evangelical Protestantism is not going to be comprehensive within one table, because within Evangelical Protestantism, there are significant differences among Baptists, Methodists, Church of God, Fundamentalists, Pentecostals, etc., that cannot be explained in a few words."... Evangelicals hold that the Catholic Church has gone beyond scripture, adding teachings and practices that detract from or compromise the Gospel of God's saving grace in Christ. Catholics, in turn, hold that such teaching and practices are grounded in scripture and belong to the fullness of God's revelation. Their rejection,

Catholics say, results in a truncated and reduced understanding of the  
<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

Christian reality." [1] Each one of these theological beliefs can easily be expanded into a full essay. However, some of the major contrasts between Roman Catholic and Evangelical Christian beliefs are shown below [2]:

## **Theological Belief**

### **Roman Catholic Church**

### **Conservative Protestants**

**Apostolic succession** Believe that present-day ordinations can all be traced back to the original apostles. Concept rejected as historically invalid; it simply didn't happen. **Attitude towards each other** The church considers Protestants to be Christians, but possessing only part of the truth. Some consider Catholics to be non-Christians. **Authority within the church** Vested in the hierarchy of the church. Within the believer (soul freedom), the congregation, and the denomination. **Baptism, significance of** Sacrament that regenerates and justifies. Testimony of a prior regeneration after trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior. **Baptism, timing** Usually done in infancy. Usually done later in life after person is "born again." **Bible, status of** Historically teaches that the original writings by Bible authors are inerrant. This is being debated. The original writings of the biblical authors' writings are inerrant. **Bible, content** The church includes the same 66 books in the Bible as do Protestants, but it also adds the books of the Apocrypha. Most accept only the 66 books of the Old and New Testament. Most conservative Anglicans also include the Apocrypha. **Change of beliefs, practices** Debate and dialogue is sometimes forbidden, particularly on human sexuality topics. **Relatively free discussion allowed, except, in some denominations, on matters related to homosexuality.** **Church, structure** Hierarchical. Usually democratic, except

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

among some new religious movements. Clergy, selection of Appointed; all male; almost all unmarried. Elected; mostly male; single or married. Discipline Pressure from the clergy and laity. In serious cases, errant members can be denied the sacraments or excommunicated. Pressure from the clergy and laity. Various denominations have formal policies of shunning, disfellowshipping, and excommunication. Ecumenical action The church views the fragmentation of Christianity into thousands of faith groups to be a sin. They want non-Catholic Christians to join the Catholic Church. Some view Catholics as non-Christian. Thus, they are to be treated as other lost souls, on a par with Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Wiccans, etc. Others view Catholics as brothers in Christ and engage in joint projects on social matters. Forgiveness of sin Achieved through repentance, church ritual, with the involvement of a priest. However, a person can be baptized or had their last confession heard by anyone Achieved through prayer to God directly without any human intercessor. Hell More than a physical place, hell is a state of being involving " the pain, frustration, and emptiness of life without God." The New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia defines hell in the strict sense, as " the place of punishment for the damned" including limbo of infants, limbo of the Fathers, and purgatory. A real physical place of unbearable torture, which lasts for all eternity with no hope of mercy, relief or cessation. Homosexuality, nature of A homosexual orientation is generally unchosen; thus, it is not, in itself, sinful. It is a disordered state. However, all homosexual behavior is sinful. They generally downplay the concept of sexual orientation, and concentrate on homosexual behavior, which they consider to be a major sin. They view homosexuality as chosen, unnatural, abnormal, and changeable. Immaculate Conception of Mary, circa 20 BC.

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>



[See also, virgin birth, below]Required belief. Denied. Infallibility of the PopeIn rare circumstances, members are required to believe in matters of religious doctrine and faith as stated by the Pope. Denied. LimboA place for infants who die before being baptized, and for Old Testament saints. Concept is not officially taught. Most Catholic theologians have abandoned belief in limbo. Existence denied. Lord's Supper/EucharistA sacrifice. Christ's body and blood are physically present and are consumed by believers (transubstantiation)Memorial meal. Christ's body and blood are present symbolically only. Mary's statusMary's status is below Jesus', but above that of the saints. Some regard Mary as co-redemptrix with Jesus; this is not currently taught by the church. The Virgin Mary plays a relatively minor role. Only trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior saves a person. Non-Christian religionsHave some value for the truth that they contain. However, some rituals can inhibit salvation. Some consider them worthless, dangerous, and demon-led. PrayerTo God. Also may ask Mary or a saint to intercede on their behalf. Prayer is addressed to God, not to saints. PurgatoryA state of being in which souls are cleansed by purifying punishments before they can enter heaven. Does not exist. SacramentsThe means of grace. The symbols of grace. SaintsSaints form a major part of the religion. People can pray to saints and ask them to intercede. Protestants believe that all born again believers are saints and that no special emphasis should be given to them. One prays to God, not to saints. Salvation, achievingDependent on faith, and church sacraments. Dependent on faith only. Salvation, losingIt is lost when a responsible person commits a mortal sin. It can be regained through repentance and church sacrament. Usually, once a person is saved, they cannot lose their salvation. Some denominations teach that one can lose

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

one's salvation. Salvation among non-Christians It is possible that those outside the Roman Catholic Church can be saved in spite of the errors in their religious beliefs. Opinions differ. Many feel that all those who have not been saved are lost and will spend eternity being tortured in hell. Statues, venerating Frequent veneration of statues and images as symbols of Jesus, Mary and of the individual saints. Many consider veneration of statues as idolatry - a violation of the "graven images" prohibition in the second of the Ten Commandments. Truth Mainly found in scripture, as interpreted by the church. Also found in church tradition. Most believe it is found only in scripture, as interpreted through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within the saved individual, their congregation, and denomination. Virgin birth (actually virgin conception; circa 5 BC) Required belief. Nearly universal belief. Visibility of the Church The hierarchy of the church, including the laity, plus the Church's Spirit, referred to as the "Spotless Bride of Christ." Invisible fellowship of all saved individuals. Only God knows the exact makeup of the church. Note 1: Many people confuse the Immaculate Conception with the virgin birth. The former is a Roman Catholic belief that in about 20 BC, when Mary herself was conceived, she was without original sin. However, the generally held belief among all conservative and most mainline Christian denominations that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived about 6 BC. Religious liberals generally consider both to be mythical events that never happened. The citation for the article and table: Introduction to Christianity: Comparing the beliefs of Roman Catholics with those of conservative Protestants Distinctive Catholic Practices Catholic Mass With the possible exception of some Anglican churches, the Catholic liturgy tends to be more formal and ritualized than its Protestant

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

counterparts. Services follow a prescribed liturgy, including call and response and prayers. Priests wear more elaborate vestments than most Protestant ministers. Catholics usually celebrate the Eucharist more often than do Protestants, usually weekly. In Catholicism, the Eucharist is called the Mass.

### Catholic Sacraments

Catholics observe seven sacraments (sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, holy communion; sacrament of confession, marriage, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick), which are religious rituals they believe to be commanded by God and effective in conferring grace on the believer. The sacrament of baptism is also called "The door of the Church," because it is the first of the seven sacraments because most Catholics receive it as infants. It also the first in priority, because the reception of the other sacraments depends on it. It is the first of the three sacraments of initiation; the other two are the sacrament of confirmation and the sacrament of holy communion. Once a person is baptized, he or she becomes a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Traditionally, the rite (or ceremony) of baptism was held outside the doors of the main part of the church, to signify this fact. Christ Himself ordered His disciples to preach the gospel to all nations and to baptize those who accept the message of the gospel. In His encounter with Nicodemus (John 3: 1-21), Christ made it clear that baptism was a necessary part of the salvific experience. However, the Catholics believe it is necessary for salvation. They believe that when Jesus told Nicodemus he must be "born again of water" to enter the Kingdom of God (John 3: 5), He was referring to baptism. Thus, for Catholics, the sacrament is not a mere formality; it is the very mark of a Christian, because it brings us into new life in Christ. Catholics make allowance, however, for those who have never been formally baptized. Early on, the Catholic Church

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

recognized that there are two other types of baptism besides the baptism of water. The baptism of desire applies both to those who, while wishing to be baptized, die before receiving the sacrament and " Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of conscience" (Constitution on the Church, Second Vatican Council). The baptism of blood is similar to the baptism of desire. It refers to the martyrdom of those believers who were killed for the faith before they had a chance to be baptized. This was a common occurrence in the early centuries of the Catholic Church, but also in later times in missionary lands. The baptism of blood has the same effects as the baptism of water. The Rite of BaptismThe Catholic Church has an extended ritual for baptism, which is normally celebrated, and includes roles for both parents and godparents. However, the two essential elements of the rite are: the pouring of water over the head of the person to be baptized (or the immersion of the person in water) and the words " I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Since the form of baptism requires just the water and the words, this sacrament, like the sacrament of marriage, does not require a priest. Any baptized person can baptize another. In fact, when the life of a person is in danger, even a non-baptized person - including someone who does not himself believe in Christ - can baptize a believer, provided that the person performing the baptism follows the form of baptism. In the Catholic Church today, baptism is most commonly administered to infants. While some other Christians strenuously object to infant baptism, believing that baptism requires affirmation and consent on the part of the person being

<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

baptized, the Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, and other mainline Protestants also practice infant baptism. There is evidence that infant baptism was practiced from the earliest days of the Catholic Church. Since baptism removes both the guilt and the punishment of original sin, Catholics believe that delaying baptism until a child can understand the sacrament may put the child's salvation in danger, if by chance, he die unbaptized. Adults who convert to Catholicism also receive the sacrament of baptism, unless they have already received a Christian baptism. A person can only be baptized once as a Christian, so if he was baptized as a Lutheran, he cannot be rebaptized when he converts to Catholicism. An adult who converts is normally baptized after proper instruction in the faith, called the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). Baptism is then immediately followed (in the same service) by confirmation and communion. Baptism has six primary effects, which are all supernatural graces: The removal of the guilt of both original sin (the sin imparted to all mankind by the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) and personal sin (the sins that we have committed ourselves). The remission of all punishment that we owe because of sin, both temporal (in this world and in purgatory) and eternal (the punishment that we would suffer in hell). The infusion of grace in the form of sanctifying grace (the life of God within us); the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude (or courage), knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord) and the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). Becoming a part of Christ. Becoming a part of the Catholic Church, which is the mystical Body of Christ on earth. Enabling participation in the sacraments, the priesthood of all believers, and the growth in grace.

[3]MonastriesThere are several Catholic monastic orders, the most well  
<https://assignbuster.com/roman-catholicism-vs-conservative-protestantism-theology-religion-essay/>

known are the Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians. Catholic monks and nuns take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and devote themselves to a simple life focused on worshipping God. Vow of Celibacy Unlike their counterparts in both Protestant and Orthodox churches, Catholic priests take vows of celibacy. This practice is rooted in the papacy's early connections with monasticism, but has become controversial in recent years in part as a result of child abuse scandals. Other distinctive Catholic practices include veneration of saints, use of the crucifix, and the use of rosary beads in prayer.