

ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the language of Christian religion with particular reference to the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal denominations. Chapter one embodies the introduction to the study, the objective of the work, its scope and delimitation, a brief origin of Christian religion, and that of the two denominations. Chapter two is a brief review of the related literature. Chapter three brings out the features of the language of Christian religion; the lexical, grammatical, metaphorical, typographical and graphological features. Chapter four is a further analysis of the sermons, rituals, liturgies and sacred text of the two denominations. The final chapter includes a comparative summary analysis of the two denominations, a brief conclusion of the work and recommendation.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

SERMON: It is a moral statement whose aim is to dictate a certain kind of behavior through series of examples.

LITURGIES: It can be invocations, petitions and they can be written to be read or sung.

THEOLOGICAL TEST: It is a discursive document with a moral purpose written by a biblical scholar, theologians or clergy

RITUALS: It is a specific ceremony to mark baptisms and funerals.

OMNIPOTENT: Having total power, able to do something.

SUPERNATURAL: Events forces or powers that cannot be explained by the laws of science and seem to involve gods or magic.

BENEDICTIONS: A blessing pronounced at the end of church service.

CARNALITY: A state of being unspiritual.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The major objective of language is communication but the manner in which language communicates appears to be interlinked with individual experiences in terms of linguistic attitude, cultural influences and personal perception. Register is a term that is used to describe variations in language according to use. For instance, Thorne says that lawyers use a legal register, doctors a medical register and the priests a religious register (95).

The language of Christian religion will be examined by analysing the spoken and written forms of the language of Roman Catholic Church and the selected Pentecostal denominations. Christian religion is the most widely distributed of the world religions. In the 1990s its total membership exceeded up to 1.9 billion people (Probert Microsoft Encarta). There are other systems of beliefs and values such as Platonism, Marxism, Freudianism or Democracy. Christianity is in

many ways comprehensible only to those who share its benefits and strive to live by its values.

Wilken points out that Jerusalem is the center of Christian religion, at least until its destruction by the Roman armies in A.D. 70. From it Christianity radiated to other cities and towns in Palestine and beyond. At first, its approval was large although it was not completely confined to the adherents of Judaism to which it was presented as new but not a brand new religion (820).

Leith states that in its very beginning, Christian religion manifested a dual relation to the Jewish faith, a relation of continuity and yet of fulfillment of antithesis and of affirmation. The forced conversion of the Jews in the Middle Ages and the history of anti-Semitic condemnations of both by church leaders are the evidence that the antithesis could easily overshadow affirmation. The fateful loss of continuity with Judaism has however never been total (450).

Above all, the presence of so many elements of Judaism in the Christian Bible has acted to remind Christians that He who they worshiped as their Lord was Himself a Jew and that the New Testament does not stand on its own but it is appended to the Old Testament. An important source of the alienation of Christianity from its Jewish root was the change in membership. And at the same point, Christians with Gentile backgrounds began to outnumber the Jewish Christians. Clearly, the work of Apostle Paul was influential. Born a Jew, he was deeply involved in the destiny of Judaism, but as a result of his conversion, he believed that he was a "chosen instrument" to bring the message of Christ to Gentiles. He was the one who formulated his epistle to several early Christian congregations and many of his ideas constitute the core of Christian religion (453).

Manners says that the Christian religion is easier to describe historically than define logically. Such a description does yield some insights into continuing practices and essential characteristics of the Christian religion. One of such elements is the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ. This is in one way or another, a feature of all historical varieties of the Christian belief and practice. Jesus Christ died so that his followers might share in the life of the Father in heaven and become the children of God. His crucifixion, death and resurrection, to which the early Christians referred when they spoke about him as the one who had reconciled humanity to God, made the cross the chief focus of Christian faith and devotion. It is also the principal symbol of the saving love of God the Father (520).

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Greek word *katholikos* (katholikos) from which catholic is derived means "universal". It was first used to describe the Christian church in the early second century. Since the East-West schism of 1054, Norman states that the western church has generally been known as 'Catholic' and the Eastern Church as 'Orthodox'. Following the reformation in the 16th century, the church in communion with the Bishop of Rome used the term Catholic to distinguish itself from the various Protestant churches (15).

According to Payer, Roman Catholic Church is the world's largest Christian church with more than a billion members. Its leader is the Pope who holds a supreme authority in concert with the college of Bishops. The church defines its mission as spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, administering the sacraments and exercising charity. It operates social programmes and institutions throughout the world including schools, universities, hospitals, missions and shelters (930).

Having played a prominent role since the fourth century, it teaches that it is "one Holy Catholic

and Apostolic Church' founded by Jesus Christ. Its Bishops are consecrated successors of his Apostles and the Pope, as the successor of Saint Peter, possesses a universal primacy of jurisdiction through twenty-one ecumenical councils. The church maintains that it is guided by the Holy Spirit from falling into doctrinal error. The belief of the Roman Catholic is based on the Holy Bible and Sacred traditions interpreted by the church's teachings and they are detailed in the catechism of the Catholic Church. Catholic worship is called the liturgy, the central component is the Eucharist (938).

THE LANGUAGE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SOME SELECTED PENTECOSTAL DENOMINATIONS

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