

Caroline Harris

ENG 100

Formal Assignment #1

12 October 2017

### Faith or Family

“I have been asking for this since October!” I rip the last pieces of red wrapping paper off the pink box. The American Girl Doll I have been obsessed with since the magazine surfaced out front of my door was finally in front of me.

“It’s the right one I hope.” My grandmother said sarcastically, already knowing my response. I turned to give her the biggest hug I could manage. My head rested on her stomach and began to bounce as she laughed from my ecstatic reaction.

“Can we open it now?” I grabbed the box and almost begged for it to finally be open. My excitement was unbearable and all I wanted to do was skip dinner and just play. My grandmother smiled and began to rip the tap off the edges with her long red nails. Her cheeks did not rest as her smile continued when she untied the plastic entrapping the dolls arms and legs. I let out a tiny scream when she was finally free and my grandmother clasped her hands together proud of herself. She always went all out for Christmas and tended to be the one who gave you the best present. Her religious affiliation sparked this passion ever since I could remember.

My parents allowed me to choose what I believe, who I am, and what decisions I can make. I have never received pressure from them to fill their expectations as I have become a smart, kind, moral person. My mom told me at a young age that my grandparents may struggle to have a relationship with me because of my independence and realistic beliefs. My father and I

are very similar and he broke from all contact with my grandparents as their judgemental and negative attitudes refrained him from his happiness. Their relationships with my Mom and PopPop foreshadowed my very own. I decided at a young age that I did not believe in God or the Holy Bible. I never planned on getting married in a church, following traditions, or getting confirmed. My brother, Blaise, followed in my footsteps and refused to do so too which may have been a “follow-the-leader” decision, but he has not regretted it since. If my grandparents knew of this, I would be seen as immoral and blame it on my father, claiming he did not raise me well. Do not think I am being over dramatic; Blaise and I used to mock my grandparents beliefs and rules by saying that we are giving church up for Lent or saying Januarius will be my confirmation name, the patron saint of blood drives and volcanoes, which resulted in these harsh words and shame.

As I continued my education into my high school years I created a sense of maturity and leadership in myself. I became fairly certain of who I am, my weaknesses, my strengths, my interests, and my beliefs. The bond my father and I had grew even stronger as we figured out my future plans for college. What I did not realize at the time was as I began to figure out my life, I was choosing who was going to stay and who would leave.

“You should be confirmed.” My grandmother stares down at the newspaper, but has a glance of reflection than actually reading. She hasn’t put on her reading glasses yet, but acts as if she can see the small print.

“I’ll consider it.” I continue to watch the game my grandfather put on in the living room as we wait for my family to call us saying they are ready to go to the beach. The sunlight seeped

through the curtains and reminded me of the temperature. I internally begged for this phone call to come.

“Did Blaise make his first Communion?” Disappointment was laced in her words as she sought an answer already given and known.

“No.” I look over towards my grandfather who has not bothered to consider the beginnings of this repetitive conversation.

“I don’t think you can get married in a church without finishing.” She threatened. She tapped her nails against the marble counter in sync with the ticking clock. The wait was unbearable as I questioned why I decided to stay with my grandparents this weekend. Sweat began to roll down my forehead from the heat and anxiety; I understood my decisions and struggled with the idea to tell her. My PopPop rocked in his chair, squeaking against the floorboards which I presumed to drown out the noise.

“What about Dorothy? For my mom.” Memom continued to push as if my decision regarding my faith would retract her ticket to Heaven. I looked down at my phone and decided to text my friends to see what they were doing tonight. I knew the conversation would end once she got the answer she wanted, but I could not give her it. I had to find plans for the night, so I did not have to go to their home. I bit my lip as I fought the temptation to tell her my relationship with God and Christianity; there wasn’t one.

“I’m taking Brayden to breakfast and church on Sunday, if you would like to come.” My Memom asked almost using my little cousin as a bribe.

“I’m okay, thank you though.” I politely declined.

“It’s ridiculous that you are following in your parent’s footsteps. I would be so proud if you would come with us. You would love the priest and my friends will be there.” Her persuasion had reprimanding undertones.

“I think it would be disrespectful if I went, Mom.” I have repeated myself several times to her about my reasoning. She continues to believe it is a mix of teenage angst and rebellion or the mere fact that I am a Millennial. I do not believe it is right if I attend church and practice a belief I do not care for because personally I believe it is similar to mockery or lying. I would not go out of my way not to attend though. You would not find me sitting on the curb as my family was inside the church, but I am not willing to go.

I began my senior year of high school not speaking to my grandparents. We did not attend their Christmas or Easter which drew a line in the sand. My brother received a birthday present, new school clothes, a huge birthday present, when I received nothing. Although, every holiday that year was the best I have ever experienced. It was peaceful and fun as I spent it with the people who mean the most to me. We were ridiculed for it, but my mother agreed that it was the right decision because she cared about my happiness and my father’s more than her mother’s.

“All you care about is Mick, Caroline, and Blaise. It’s absolutely ridiculous that you decided to break our tradition for traitors.” My mom put her phone on speaker, so my family could hear the lecture she was hearing. My family and I huddled around the kitchen table to hear their side. The smell from Christmas dinner still lingered in the air in our house and my grandmother probably still had people over hers.

“It has been two years mom. Caroline and Mick aren’t against figuring this out, but your lack of respect has become unbearable for even me. I love these guys to death and their

happiness is what brings me happiness.” She smiled with relief. She hung up the phone before a response could have been made from the other side.

I value family, but I still believe ending the relationship between my family and my grandparents was the ideal decision. My mother has never been happier as she regained control of her life and truly found positivity and support in my father, brother, and I. My father, despite their criticism, has become very successful in his mission to provide for our family materialistically and mentally. For myself, I would not be the woman I am without my parents and fear the person I may have been if I listened to my grandparents. I am happy and excited for my future; even though, only few close family members and friends will truly appreciate my decisions and actions. And that’s okay.