

# [The apostle paul, saint augustine and martin luther assignment](https://assignbuster.com/the-apostle-paul-saint-augustine-martin-luther-assignment/)

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The Apostle Paul, Saint Augustine & Martin Luther Their impact on the Christian Faith March 12, 2009 The Apostle Paul, Saint Augustine, and Martin Luther have been three very important figures in the Christian church. Each went through a unique personal experience that changed the course of their lives. Those experiences were important to them and they should be important to anyone of the Christian faith. In this research paper I will explore these experiences and how they do and do not relate to each other.

The Apostle Paul Paul was born with the name of Saul, in Tarsus of Cilicia, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. He was born both a Jew and a Roman citizen. He grew up in Tarsus and became a tentmaker like his father and grandfather before him. He was taught to be an orthodox Jew. He later journeyed to Jerusalem and attended the Pharisaic school. He did not become a rabbi, but became a member of the temple police. He then set about persecuting the followers of Jesus with unequaled religious zeal. His orthodoxy, and it alone, was the reason for his hostility to Christ and his zeal as a persecutor” (Bornkamm 15). He attempted to do what he could to destroy the church of God. It was on a journey to Damascus to arrest followers of Christ that Paul’s life was changed forever. He experienced an intense light that blinded him, and he heard a voice that said, “ Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ” Saul asked, “ Who are you, Lord? ” The reply came, “ I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ” (Acts 9: 4, 5) When Paul opened his eyes he was blind.

His companions, who had also heard the voice but had not seen the light, led him into Damascus. There a man named Ananias, a follower of Jesus, placed his hands upon Paul and took away the blindness. He was baptized into the faith immediately. The beginning of Paul’s new life was at hand. He would become, arguably, the most important disciple of Jesus in the early church. Although this revelation happened immediately, it took three years for it to fully manifest itself. During this period, Paul was hiding in Arabia, reflecting on everything that had happened.

When he returned, he went straight to the Apostles in order to become one of them. He never met Jesus and was not part of the group that crucified him, but he believed that because of his experience on the road to Damascus, he had been reborn under Christ. In some ways Paul was considered a mystic because he had shared a religious union with Christ and that experience changed his life forever. “ Paul saw his conversion as the working out of a plan devised much earlier by God. The goal of that plan was the extension of God’s grace to the Gentiles” (Murphy-O’Connor 80).

The conversion was not really a conversion it was merely a revelation, a transformation. “ If Paul was ‘ converted’ ‘ from’ something ‘ to’ something else, it certainly was not ‘ from’ Judaism ‘ to’ ‘ Christianity’. Paul continued to be a Jew to his dying day, a fact which most Christians nowadays choose to neglect and which many Jewish scholars find exasperating” (Wilson 61). Paul didn’t really completely give up Judaism, he just realized that many of the practices were wrong. “ Perhaps the acrimonious sectarianism of Judaism struck Paul as foolish and nauseating” (Wilson 71).

He became what some scholars call a Christian Jew. “ His beliefs about Jesus were simply added to his Judaism” (Freed 9). He believed that Jesus was the Messiah not by birth, but because of “ his suffering, death, and resurrection” (Freed 8). This bears similarity to the myth that he grew up with Herakles (Hercules). In that legend of his predecessors, Herakles, a half-god, descended in to Hades to fight for them. In sacrificing himself, he became their savior. Paul would spend his remaining years attempting to teach the new Way in the synagogues of the region.

He would be rebuffed, sometimes violently, and was frequently jailed. His final arrest brought him to Rome to answer charges where, after two years of imprisonment, he died about 64 AD. Saint Augustine Augustine was born at Thagaste, a small town in the Roman province of Numidia in North Africa. His mother was a devout Christian, but his father never embraced the Christian faith. He received a classical education that both schooled him in Latin literature and enabled him to escape from his provincial upbringing.

Trained at Carthage in rhetoric, which was a requisite for a legal or political career in the Roman empire, he became a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage, in Rome, and finally in Milan, a seat of imperial government at the time. At Milan, in 386, Augustine underwent religious conversion. He retired from his public position, received baptism from Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, and soon returned to North Africa. In 391, he was ordained to the priesthood in Hippo Regius and five years later he became bishop. After the fall of Rome and the pagan attacks that blamed Christians for it, St.

Augustine set out to meet the challenge. In 413 he started the City of God which was completed in 426, twenty-two books later. In his books, St. Augustine divides the human race into two parts, “ the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the two communities of men, of which the one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil. “(E & E pgs 117-118) According to St. Augustine, there exists two cities: the Earthly and the Heavenly city. two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. ” (E. E. pg 117) The heavenly city symbolically represents the church, and the Earthly city represents the state. St. Augustine sees value and function in the state in terms of justice and reason. “ But the earthly city, which shall not be everlasting (for it will no longer be a city when it has been committed to the extreme penalty), has its good in this world, and rejoices in it with such joy as such things can afford. (E. E. pg 118) The state provides social tranquility here on earth, but it is not as important as the tranquility that awaits those in the heavenly city. He does not see the Earthly city as evil. In fact, he believes that the state is necessary for providing earthly tranquility. However, St. Augustine believes that this earthly peace is not nearly as important as the peace that awaits those of the Earthly city. “ But the things which this city desires cannot justly be said to be evil, for it is itself, in its own kind, better than all other human good. (E. E. pg 119) The only real difference between these two cities is that the people of the Earthly city “ neglect the better things of the heavenly city, which are secured by eternal victory and peace never-ending, and so inordinately covet these present good things that they believe them to be the only desirable things, or love them better than those things which are believed to be better- if this is so, then it is necessary that misery follow and ever increase. ” (E. E. 119) Plato influenced St. Augustine, and this can be seen in his writings.

For example, Plato addresses the problem of the just society, that each individual has his own version of what is just. Plato writes that, ” But in reality justice, though evidently analogous t this principle, is not a matter of external behavior, but of the inward self and of attending to all that is, in the fullest sense, a man’s proper concern… Justice is produced in the soul, like health in the body, by establishing the elements concerned in their natural relations of control and subordination… ” (E. E. pgs 43-44) St.

Augustine agreed with Plato’s idea that justice is an individual case and writes that, “ all men desire peace with their own circle that they wish to govern as it suits themselves. For even those whom they make war against they wish to make their own, and impose on them the laws of their own peace. ” (E. E. pg 123) On the whole, I admired St. Augustine for his answer to the pagan charge that the fall of Rome was because of the Christians. I don’t think anyone could have chosen a more tactical and impressive rebuttal than him.

He felt that Rome fell because the people running Rome lived in the earthly city. That because the rulers ruled for themselves and not for God, and that God punished them. And to write twenty-two books is simply amazing. I agree with St. Augustine on the slavery issue. St. Augustine felt that slavery is wrong, that God intended man to rule over the beasts, not for man to rule over fellow man. Slavery is a sin, and I agree with St. Augustine that every man in the eyes of God is equal, that all men are of the same blood.

Saint Augustine met with allegations and challenges of the pagans and was concerned with the views of Church and state as separate but related spheres: they occupied different realms and held different values, but both exist in this world. Augustine’s thought was that through faith one may attain an understanding. This concept is exposed when he said, “ Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand. ” (E. E. 132) He believed that reasoning originates in the act of faith.

He also believed that ” because of Original Sin, no one can entirely govern his own motivation and that only the help of God’s Grace makes it possible for persons to will and to do good. “(Brown 139) Augustine retired to Cassiciacum because of health problems that came on in this part of his life. He began to put together the teachings of Plato with the teachings of Paul. He began to define a new way of life, similar to that of the Egyptian monks. He began to work on several personal projects. He spent the next several years in personal contemplation about his life and moving about the region.

He wanted to do something more with his life. He would eventually become a Catholic bishop at Hippo. The monastery of his church would be filled with Augustine’s past friends and was made permanent. “ Augustine’s monasterium in Hippo became a ‘ seminary’ in the true sense of the word: a ‘ seed-bed’ from which Augustine’s proteges were ‘ planted out’ as bishops in the leading towns of Numidia” (Brown 143). This group was the beginning of an order of monks that would span several centuries. Because of his work, he became a true citizen in the City of God. Martin Luther

Martin Luther was the son of a German miner. As he was growing up, both of his parents were very strict on him. “ Some biographers state without hesitation that Luther’s father beat into him that profound fear of authority and those pervading streaks of stubbornness and rebelliousness which allegedly caused Luther to be sickly and anxious as a boy, “ sad” as a youth, scrupulous to a fault in the monastery, and beset with doubts and depressions in later life; and which finally made him pursue the question of God’s justice to the point of unleashing a religious revolution” (Erikson 63).

His mother caned him for stealing a single nut. “ The rule was that of the rod” (McGiffert 8). Both were very religious and he became so as well. He was educated in the University at Erfurt and was destined for law school. On one journey back to the university, at the age of twenty-one, Martin was caught in a storm, filled with lightning and thunder. “ In mortal dread of death, he threw himself on the ground, crying to the patron saint of the miners, to whom he had often turned in seasons of distress: “ Help, dear Saint Anna! I will become a monk” (McGiffert 17).

By the morning of July 17th, 1505, he was an Augustinian monk at the monastery in Erfurt. By the morning of July 17th, 1505, he was an Augustinian monk at the monastery in Erfurt. Luther’s early years in the monastery were a time of deep spiritual trouble, filled with fears of his own worthlessness and sinfulness. Though he lived a Christian life and performed many good works, he did not feel saved. Then he discovered his own salvation, and the beginning of his Protestant vision, in a passage in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.

Salvation, he suddenly understood Paul to be saying, was “ the free gift of God” and came “ by faith,” not through the good works. Martin recorded following the experience that he felt that he had been born again. The whole Scripture now had new meaning for him. He began to realize that the practices and beliefs of the Catholic Church regarding salvation, religious authority, and the priesthood were completely wrong. He discovered personally that salvation could be achieved through faith in Christ. Catholics believed that faith in Christ and leading a Christian life were necessary for salvation.

Protestants believed that through faith in Christ the life of a true Christian would appear. Luther believed that salvation is a matter of faith in Christ and neither the church nor the state has the authority over the “ individual conscience”. He strongly believed that everyone is a free spokesperson in his relation with God. Luther believed that all the church authorities from the pope down must be overthrown. Luther placed emphasis on personal Bible study. He was the first to bring personal Bible study to the life of the “ common people”.

Because Luther had found the true way of salvation by studying the Bible, he wanted all the people to have the same opportunity. However, the Bible was not written in German, thus the people had to rely on what the Catholic Church thought about its content and doctrine. Thus, Luther’s believes of role of the Catholic Church and a personal Bible study increased the urgency for education. Although the education reform had its premises on the ability to be able to read the bible, Luther also believed that education should include law and all the sciences. He believed that the books of logic, poetry and rhetoric should be retained.

Luther was also the first to plead for a universal education, meaning for an education for all people, without regard to class or special life work. As he found salvation in the Bible, he wanted to make education accessible for the “ common people”. Therefore, in order for someone to be saved from sin, a deep understanding of the Bible needs to take place. For the common people to understand the Bible’s doctrines knowledge of reading is needed. By having an universal education system, the common people can receive the education that is needed in order to read the Bible and therefore achieve salvation.

In short, Luther’s belief in an universal education system was mainly to give the common people an opportunity to be educated for spiritual interest and salvation of the soul. Martin Luther also believed that the schools and universities must be establish and conducted by the state and not by the Church. For many years, the people had been told that the Scripture, church councils, and pronouncements of the popes were all divinely influenced by the will of God. Luther stated that only the Scriptures were divinely inspired. The priests were also supposedly in possession of the ability of “ laying on of hands”.

This power came from the Apostles and was passed on to priests by the bishop. Luther argued that all Christians had access to God through prayer, and that the priests were to be nothing more than full-time spiritual caregivers. Luther’s 95 Theses, nailed to the door of the Wittenburg church, spoke against indulgences. If a person contributed to the church monetarily, God would spare him from experiencing Purgatory. By selling indulgences, the church made a lot of money. Luther fought back, saying that the church was tricking the German people. He told them that salvation was possible through repentance alone.

Indulgence sales dropped off almost instantly. Luther had his share of trouble with authority figures. Pope Leo X was the first. He requested that Martin withdraw some of his theses as heretical. When Martin refused, the Pope issued a bull excommunicating him from the church. Luther burned it in a public bonfire. Emperor Charles V called Luther before an imperial diet at Worms to lay the ban of the Empire on him if he would not recant. To this Luther replied with his most ringing declaration of defiant faith: “ I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe” (Bainton 144). Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen” (Bainton 302). Luther worked for a while in seclusion translating the Bible to German. Meanwhile, his Lutheran churches were being built all over Germany. All of his churches rejected papal authority and named the local prince as the head of the church. When German prince signed a “ protest” against an imperial decree against church innovations, the reform movement acquired the name Protestantism. Luther himself lived to old age much to anyone’s surprise. He married a former nun, Katharina von Bora, and raised a family that would become the example of a Protestant minister’s family.

Comparison and Conclusion: These three men are important figures in the Christian religion. Each religious experience was unique and different. Paul was a Jew who came to know Christ and in doing so became a Christian Jew. Augustine was a man desperately seeking truth to his life. Because of the words of Paul, he found that truth and became a monk. He later founded a new order through his practices. Luther, a law student, became an Augustinian monk because of an odd spiritual occurrence. He too searched for salvation and truth, but could not find them in the Catholic Church.

He made a realization about Christ that would again change his life, completing the process that started in a storm. He was also influenced by the writings of Paul. These men lived during separate lifetimes, hundreds of years apart. Yet, because of them, religion was reexamined, brought to new people, and changed. What if Paul had not converted? Would Augustine have converted as well? Would Luther have converted? Their stories indicate that maybe there is a Great Plan in which we are all a part of. Faith would seem to play a large part in this. Bibliography Paul Bornkamm, Gunther. Paul. New York: Harper & Row, 1817.

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