

In time, all his past learning and beliefs would begin to take their place in his mind. His former training and habits began to re-assert themselves again. The Rabbinical interpretation of the Scriptures which he had learned from his youth, explanation of certain Messianic prophecies, and the words of those prophecies, would again make themselves heard. His old habits and the spiritual hopes and aspirations of one who was of the most ardent and religious nature began to awaken again, after the stunning blow they received on the Damascus road. By degrees he began to resume his normal life, except that a new and far-reaching Truth had taken possession of him, like a search-light, and it was pouring its brilliant beams into the deepest recesses of his soul and everything he had known and believed under its sway. At first, this Truth seemed to him as if it would reign and rule him. As time passed, the new Truth was turned on all those other beliefs he had held, and this new Truth began to take its proper place in his life.

St. Paul found that the Truth open and expanded many of the old truths. Many things that were looked upon as ultimate truths proved themselves to be but half-truths. Many puzzling anomalies in the old beliefs are removed, and unexpected relations are discovered between paradoxes that seemed irreconcilable. Matters that were clung to in spite of their apparent unreasonableness, are found to have their place. Connecting links are discovered between doctrines that seemed to have no relation to one another, and all that was unreasonable is discarded while things that seemed meaningless are shown to have their meaning. Dislocated fragments of unconnected truths take their place and find their true interpretation, while many doctrines that seemed at first that could no longer be held if the new Truth is to be maintained, are found to take a higher place.

In the outburst of the light that shone upon the mind of St. Paul, it must have seemed to him at first that the newly received doctrine of the Incarnation was irreconcilable with his old monotheistic faith; but he found that it enriched and enlarged it. How was his mission to the Gentiles to be reconciled with the traditional belief that the Jews alone were the people of God? It would seem as if they were irreconcilable and that one or the other had to be abandoned. He gives his solution in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and shows how, so far from being irreconcilable, one was the complement and expansion of the other. The new Truth throws a new light upon the old, and so far from destroying it, showed that it had a power of broadening and unfolding, like a seed under the warmth and light of the sun. ** (excerpted from www.theanglocatholic.com)

Quote: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

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The Conversion of St. Paul



"Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." (Acts of the Apostles 9:3-6)

The Conversion of Saint Paul

*Conversion is the heart of the Christian experience. Conversion is best described in the New Testament in the Letters of St. Paul, and with good reason-no one experienced a more dramatic conversion than St. Paul on the road to Damascus. As recorded in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus himself called for conversion when He announced “the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

The Bible is filled with figures who sinned, became repentant, and underwent conversion, such as Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene. St. Peter denied three times that he was an Apostle of Christ during the Lord’s Passion; when the cock crowed, he went out and “wept bitterly” (Mt. 26:75). Following the Ascension, Jesus told him to “feed my lambs” (John 21:15). Saul, persecutor of the Church, became Paul, the greatest missionary of the Gentiles, following his conversion. Mary Magdalene was a woman of ill repute before Jesus drove out seven devils from her (Luke 8:2); she became an ardent follower, and was the first to see Jesus following His resurrection (John 20:11-18).

St. Augustine describes his own conversion in his Confessions (Book 8, Chapter 12) while reading St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh, take no thought of it for its lusts” (Romans 13:14). St. Thomas Aquinas, in his discussion of grace in the Summa Theologica, describes St. Paul’s own conversion as a sudden reception of grace (in contrast to the gradual transformation over time) as “Paul, suddenly when he was in the midst of sin, his heart was moved by God.”

Paul, himself, briefly refers to his own conversion experience in only four places in but of two of his Letters. In 1 Corinthians 9:1, Paul asks an emphatic question, “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord.” Later in the letter, Paul is describing the Gospel teaching that Jesus died for our sins, was raised on the third day, and began appearing to the Apostles; in Corinthians 15:8-9, he relates, “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the Apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” He writes in Galatians 1:11-12 that “the Gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Paul adds in Galatians 1:15-16, “When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.” *(excerpted from www.jesuschristssavior.net)

The Fruits of Paul’s Conversion

**At the moment of his conversion, St. Paul, as quickly as possible, escaped from the crowd, and in the solitude of, as some think, Mount Sinai, thought out seriously and deeply, for three years, the relations between the old religion which he had left, and the new into which he had entered. The change was overwhelming. In a way, it affected his whole character, yet in another way, it did not. It transformed him, it endowed him with new gifts, it enriched, broadened and expanded his whole nature. It turned the narrow-minded Pharisee, the typical Jew, who looked with religious contempt upon the Gentile world, and gloried in the Law, into the great Catholic Apostle. Paul, as a man, however, was fundamentally the same person, the new was grafted upon the old. All that was good in him remained, all that was true in his old faith he clung to, to the very end. There was the same enthusiasm, the same whole-hearted devotion to what he believed and perhaps a little of the same intolerance. May it not be said of him as he passed from his narrow creed to the larger faith of the Catholic Church, that he is a typical instance of the truth of our Lord’s words, “I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” His character, his faith, were not destroyed by Christ, but fulfilled.

It would be difficult to find an instance of a man so changed as Saul of Tarsus, breathing slaughter against the followers of the Nazarene, and that same man, Paul the aged, writing from his prison in Rome: “Who is weak and I am not weak, who is offended and I burn not, I have become all things to all men, that by all means I might save some.” Yet he was the same man still, though transformed. This transformation was effected not by revolutionary means, though it affected a revolution in him, as it did in the world to which he preached, but by conservative means.

A new, an infinite, a blinding truth, suddenly burst in upon his soul, amidst a number of the old, and some of them but partial truths. The first effect of this amazing revelation must have been to blind him to everything else. It took, no doubt for a time, complete possession of his mind. “The Nazarenes are right. Jesus who was crucified is on the “Throne of God.” This new truth had to be acted upon. He could no longer continue persecuting this sect which he now knew for certain to be right. His mission is suddenly brought to an end, complications develop with this decision. But the new truth blinds his eyes to everything else, it rings through every fiber of his soul, and it deafens his ears to every other voice.