

Importance of Faith Versus Organized Religion

One of the most debated religious and philosophical topics today is whether or not organized religion is even practical in today's world. Many Americans still go to church every Sunday, temple on Saturday, and pray towards Mecca at least five times a day; however, since the mid-1800's, **there has been a strong push in America towards a more private faith-based way of viewing religion.** Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau believed in the inner soul and the way to transcendence is to find God in nature and inside you. They believed that a congregation or a preacher could not help to enlighten you that this was solely internal. **The argument is that you do not need to “drag” yourself to church every Sunday to still be religious and the book of Samuel shows that blind belief is not always the best answer.**

At first in the book of Samuel, Saul is a reluctant hero of sorts. God told Samuel that he will find the King of Israel by visiting every city. Finally, Samuel came upon Saul who was described as “a choice young man, and a goodly: and *there was* not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward *he was* higher than any of the people” (1 Samuel 9:2). This talks not only of his bearing, but of his nature as well. He was the goodliest of all Israelites. He is already being set up to become the protagonist and he is the chosen of God and is an imposing figure among his people; however, we get a glimpse at the future of Saul when he is announced by Samuel.

And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought

him, he could not be found. Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. (1 Samuel 10:20-23)

He was not immediately to be found because he hid from his God appointed duties. Saul goes on to prove himself in battle against the Ammonites winning the support of his people and showing that he was the great king that God foretold Samuel of. Up to this point, Saul is a very static character and matches many other characters of the Bible as godly inspired heroes, but it is after his war against the Philistines where his son Jonathan proves himself that Saul begins to turn into a dynamic character not seen in the Bible to this point.

Following the war against the Philistines, God tells Saul, "I remember *that* which Am'alek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Am'alek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Samuel 15:2-3). Saul leads his people against the Am'alek, but he does not destroy all the ox and sheep. He allows his men to take home the best and most choice of the animals. He also takes the leader Agag prisoner rather than slaughtering him as well. God then tells Samuel of Saul's misdeeds. Samuel confronts Saul informs him of God's anger. "The LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel" (1 Samuel 15:35). This shows a definite switch in his character. He goes from being protagonist to antagonist in seconds for arguing the semantics of God's decree.

From here it seems that God decided to haunt Saul. He had Samuel convey his blessing onto David son of Jesse. David was summoned to court to soothe an "evil spirit from the LORD" (1 Samuel 16:14). David then assumes the role of protagonist as Saul becomes envious

of the fame David receives at war against the Philistine and Goliath. He plans to kill David by sending him on a suicide mission to recover 200 foreskins from the Philistines as a dowry for the marriage of his daughter. David with God on his side manages this so Saul takes a more direct approach when further tempted by the evil spirit of God inside him. He tries to kill David twice. David escaped Saul with the help of Saul' son Jonathan and his daughter Michal. David later has two chances to kill Saul but decides to leave that in God's hands. God eventually forces Saul into a losing battle that he and his three sons decide to impale themselves on their own swords.

Saul is traditionally seen as the despot King who disobeyed God and needed to be punished. However, in a society such as the present day United States known for its civil liberties and ability to question leadership, Saul can be seen as a hero who decided to stand up against God's constant hypocriticalness. God decreed that no man shall murder another and that wrath is one of the seven deadly sins, but he punished Saul for not murdering and slaughtering every single baby and woman in Amalek and carrying out God's personal vendetta. In a way Saul is a defender of free will and civil liberties and even proved God wrong. "The LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel" (1 Samuel 15:35).

Way too many Americans and Christians throughout the world put too much faith in the idea that the Bible is the word of God and absolute truth. People will search through the Bible like demons to answer their own questions of insecurity and self doubt and have been doing this for a millennium. Southern Christian slave owners justified slavery through the bible with the argument that it had been done over and over in the Bible and the Old Testament. Frederick Douglass, a minister himself, stated that white Christian slave owners were the worst slave owners because they seemed to be the most abusive and believed that God was on their side by twisting the meaning of a few pages. The same thing is done today with homosexuals.

People memorize passages from the Bible that they will spit out at a moments notice when the topic of gay marriage is discussed. In America, church is purposefully separated from state so therefore biblical passages have no bearing on whether not congressional legislation should be passed or not. Secondly, these people use these passages from the Bible to mask their own insecurities and try to shield themselves from something they do not understand. **Well once again, “The LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:35). This one simple statement unhinges the entire doctrine of organized Christianity.** For if God is all powerful and infallible and his word is True and the Bible is God’s word, then the idea of organized Christianity is built upon a hypocrisy. **However, this is not my argument at all except that simply organized religion relies too heavily upon a book mostly made up of myth and the worship of its passages. [I think your opposition follows?]**

There are also many advocates for organized religion and for good reasons.

Religion, as with any large organization, can come together as a unified group to perform astonishingly large projects. Using many of the words written in red that were spoken by Jesus himself, Christianity is led to a more generous and giving path. Many local churches here in Pennsylvania alone went on organized trips to New Orleans and southern Mississippi to help hurricane Katrina victims rebuild homes and churches. A lot of churches still run missionary work that bring aid and relief work to many third world countries throughout the world. Church groups are also very helpful in the community and back in early Europe and even early America they were responsible for the building of schools and other important community institutions.

Despite all of this, many things have been carried out in the name of the church that were not so good as well. The crusades, military strife in the Middle East, etc plus the corruption of the Catholic Church in both the middle ages and currently in the world. [You need

to attach that fragment to the preceding clause using a comma or a dash—fragments are often useful, but not necessarily in formal writing.] **Although organized religion has done many good things, it is not important to the overall idea of religion. Faith is the most important thing a human being can have whether its faith in a higher power, faith in themselves, faith is some purpose, or faith in a loved one.** Human beings are constantly questioning everything and need answers to verify not only their existence but to verify who they are. Without faith in an afterlife or faith that they are doing the right thing, then human existence would be miserable. Humans need to have faith for there a reason to be human. Whether you believe in God and put faith in his word, or like former Arizona Cardinals football star Pat Tillman who gave up his multi-million dollar job to join the United States Army and die for his country because he had faith in the cause of America and freedom, **its that faith that drives human existence.**

You do not need a church, synagogue, mosque, preacher, or rabbi to have religion. The shortest distance to truth and faith is to the higher power you worship. You don not need to be “forced” to go to church every Sunday as many Americans put it to have faith in religion, in your ideals, or in yourself. [Very nicely stated—you make some valid points. Of course, other opposition might argue that scripture about not forsaking fellowship:]

EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING FOR GENERAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (Adopted from Deborah A. Stewart's Effective Teaching: A Guide for Community College Instructors)				
WRITER:	PROJECT = ()			
	EXCELLENT (A-B)	GOOD (B-C)	FAIR (C-D)	WEAK (D-F)

<p>Focus MAX=20</p>	<p>Clear, central thesis & purpose; addresses all aspects of thesis. (19-20 points)</p>	<p>Clear, central thesis & purpose; addresses most aspects of the thesis (17-18 points)</p>	<p>Clear thesis & purpose, but too broad or unfocused (15-16 points)</p>	<p>Thesis is unclear, unsupported, vague or confusing; purpose is unclear. (14 or less points)</p>
<p>Content MAX=10</p>	<p>Good background info; comprehensive approach; excellent insight into topic; evidence of strong reflective analysis and keen awareness of audience (10 points)</p>	<p>Satisfactory background info; comprehensive approach; good insight into topic; evidence of good reflective analysis and general awareness of audience. (8-9 points)</p>	<p>Some background info, but offers only routine or general insight into topic; evidence of some reflective analysis; may have a few inconsistencies in addressing audience and purpose (6-7 points)</p>	<p>Too much or too little info; may be too specialized or personal for general audience; evidence of weak reflective analysis; inconsistencies detract from text's overall development (5 or less points)</p>
<p>Support MAX=10</p>	<p>Excellent support drawn from student's experience and knowledge; examples work to enhance and deepen the focus of the thesis (10 points)</p>	<p>Good support drawn from student's experience and knowledge; examples work to illustrate the focus of the thesis (8-9 points)</p>	<p>Support comes primarily from either student's experience or knowledge; examples work only minimally to support the focus of the thesis (6-7 points)</p>	<p>Support may be irrelevant or unsubstantiated; examples may contradict or offer little support for the focus of the thesis (5 or less points)</p>
<p>Organization & Structure MAX=20</p>	<p>Clear, logical progression of ideas; argument builds in strength; paper contains clear, engaging introduction that previews the paper's main argument; paper has coherent, well-developed paragraphs and uses transitional phrases effectively; paper also contains strong conclusion, which draws together and summarizes main points (19-20 points)</p>	<p>Clear, logical progression of ideas, although some parts of argument may be stronger and more developed than others; good use of paragraphs to develop and organize main points; uses a number of transitional phrases to signal shifts and connections; paper contains clearly defined introduction and conclusion (17-18 points)</p>	<p>Halting progression of ideas; some parts of argument may be weak or out of balance with others; a few undeveloped paragraphs and phrases; paper contains an introduction and conclusion, but they may be weak or generalized (15-16 points)</p>	<p>Paragraphs seem out of order; argument is undeveloped and paragraphs may be lacking clear transitions (14 or less points)</p>
<p>Written Quality</p>	<p>Uses college-level vocabulary; varies sentences and wording;</p>	<p>Uses college-level vocabulary; varies sentences and</p>	<p>Uneven quality of writing; relies heavily on two or three types of sentences;</p>	<p>Unclear, unvaried sentences; suffers from wordiness, slang or underdeveloped thoughts;</p>

MAX=20	uses vivid examples; has strong, consistent voice and appears fluent in nature (19-20 points)	wording; uses good examples but may fluctuate in tone or voice or fluency (17-18 points)	redundant in places; choppy or halting voice (15-16 points)	distracting gestures; lists examples,, rather than combining for complex sentences (14 or less points)	
Mechanics MAX=20	Excellent grammar, spelling, usage, and punctuation; paper flows effortlessly and reads well (19-20 points)	Good use of grammar and mechanics; not more than 5-7 errors per page; paper flows well (17-18 points)	Fair use of grammar and mechanics; errors are mostly minor in nature; paper is readable despite some distractions (15-16 points)	Frequent or consistent errors in grammar and mechanics; interferes substantially with readability of paper (14 or less points)	
FOCUS = 20	CONTENT = 10	SUPPORT = 9	ORGANIZATION & STRUCTURE = 18	WRITTEN QUALITY = 19	MECHANICS = 18

COMMENTS: TOTAL = 94 Your character analysis was nicely expanded into this paper—you actually did a wise thing, since I thought the character analysis sounded persuasive. Even though you added elements of the character analysis verbatim, they were well added. Besides, the character analysis was longer than it had to be—you only needed 1-2 pages for the character analysis. I think you've earned your 35% with these two assignments.