

Someone who undergoes religious conversion, experiences a profound transformation of different aspects of her being. Her emotions are changing as well as her behaviour. Her beliefs change as well. What is meant by this is that she changes her way of thinking about the world. She starts to believe in God, she interprets her life as a gift, she treats certain events as a miracle, an expression of God's anger, sympathy, she ascribes a special role to certain historical figures (such as Jesus or Muhammad) etc.

The aim of this project is to answer the question: what needs to happen for such a change in beliefs to occur? Explaining it by invoking the notion of "conversion" does not explain anything. The fact is that religious beliefs (beliefs that one acquires when she converts, beliefs that redefine her view of the world) do not appear in a predictable way. One cannot create them by sense experience, very rarely do they also appear because one accepted a philosophical argument. The observation that there are lots of people who seek God, but do not find Him, suggests also that it is not enough simply to will to believe. So, what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for acquiring religious beliefs? What needs to happen so that the intellectual conversion would take place? These conditions would be henceforth referred to as FAITH (being a narrower term than "religious faith").

The project is an original contribution to Philosophy of Religion. The research would be carried using the methods of contemporary analytic Philosophy, but ideas from so-called continental Philosophers, such as Kierkegaard and Pascal, would be developed as well. The first part of the project would concentrate on the critical comparison and assessment of different, already existing in an incomplete form, theories of FAITH. In the second part, a new, original conception of FAITH would be developed. The third part of the project would explore the ways in which the new conception of FAITH could contribute to the debates in contemporary Philosophy of Religion.

There are two main reasons that make the problem of FAITH an immensely attractive field of study. First of all, the adequate account of what is FAITH is of crucial importance both for philosophers of religion and theologians. Elucidating the conditions that have to occur so that one can believe that there is a God, would be an enormous contribution to the discussion about the rationality and truth-value of such beliefs, or to the discussion about the Divine Hiddenness problem. Secondly, for the contemporary analytic mainstream of Philosophy of Religion, the problem of FAITH is mostly a side-issue. Philosophers focus their attention on religious beliefs and their characteristics. They treat them as something given and take them for granted. However, little attention is paid to the question of how it is possible at all that these beliefs occur! In this respect, the project would fill a wide gap in contemporary philosophical investigations in the nature of religion.