

MAREK LECHNIAK

## THE CONCEPT OF CONVERSION IN THE LIGHT OF SOME CONCEPTS OF FAITH\*

The issue of faith is one of the key issues of the contemporary philosophy of religion. The very concept of faith is an ambiguous term and, as Wolterstorff wrote, “the question: ‘What is the nature of (Christian) faith?’ is, in my judgment, ill-formed. Both in the Scriptures and in the Christian tradition, the single word ‘faith’ is used to pick out a number of somewhat different phenomena. Each of those has its own ‘nature’. There is no ‘nature’ of all together” (WOLTERSTORFF, 1990, 397). Therefore, there is no answer to the question about the nature of faith; there are many different forms of being to which we apply the term “faith”. On that account, the question about the nature of conversion (or types of conversion) as, most generally speaking, a radical change in a person’s life must also be relativised to particular types (concepts?) of faith.

### 1. WHAT IS CONVERSION?

William James is the author who, in the early 20th century, directed the attention of philosophers to the issue of the analysis of conversion (JAMES 1902). In *Varieties of religious experience*, he writes:

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain assurance—there are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or

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MAREK LECHNIAK, PhD, Hab., Associate Professor at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Faculty of Philosophy; correspondence address: Wydział Filozofii KUL, Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland; e-mail: [marek.lechniak@kul.pl](mailto:marek.lechniak@kul.pl); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0768-7963>.

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sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. This at least is what conversion signifies in general terms, whether or not we believe that a direct divine operation is needed to cause such a moral change. (JAMES 1902, 150)<sup>1</sup>

Here, it is worth quoting the terms that James uses as alternative concepts for “conversion”: “to be regenerated”, which emphasises the state of rebirth and restoration to life; “to receive grace”—indicating the supernatural aspect, the action of God granting grace, the reception of grace, i.e. God’s support that enables action; “to experience religion”—indicating a religious experience, the experience of God’s action; or “to gain assurance”—indicating an inner transformation and reaching the attitude of certainty. Based on the given term, conversion is a transition (change) from an inferior state (“split, inferior, unhappy self”) to a better one (unified, consciously fair and happy self), which is the consequence of a firm reliance on religious foundations. The integration of the self as a result of conversion (converting) is important here. According to James, that change can be considered by referring to the “sacred instance” or not.<sup>2</sup> Another result of conversion, according to James, is a change in the centre of the life of the convert; the central place setting the goals of life is “religious ideas”; conversion is the reorganisation of a person’s life around other goals.

In his lectures, 9 and 10, James analyses numerous accounts of religious conversions and distinguishes two types of conversion: a slow, progressive conversion and an immediate one. In the first case, called conscious and volitional, “the regenerative change is usually gradual, and consists in the building up, piece by piece, of a new set of moral and spiritual habits. But there are always critical points here, at which the movement forward seems much more rapid.... Our education in any practical accomplishment proceeds apparently by jerks and starts, just as the growth of our physical bodies does.”<sup>3</sup> In contrast, immediate conversion happens unconsciously and *by*

<sup>1</sup> “To say that a man is ‘converted’ means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy” (JAMES 1902, 150).

<sup>2</sup> Here, James has two ways of analysis in mind; one, referring to the methods of social sciences—in which case conversion is explained as the work of the unconscious—and another one, referring to the methods of theology, in which the “work of conversion” is done within the subject by a supernatural agent.

<sup>3</sup> Some authors (KERR and MULDER 1998, xiii) interpret the distinction between gradual and immediate conversion presented by James in terms of the distinction between once-born and

*self-surrender*.<sup>4</sup> In that type of conversion, “the subconscious effects are more abundant and often startling” (JAMES 1902, 163–64). Self-surrender is of key importance in that type of conversion.

There are two things in the mind of the candidate for conversion: first, the present incompleteness or wrongness, the “sin” which the person is eager to escape from; and, second, the positive ideal which the individual longs to compass.... In a majority of cases, indeed, the “sin” almost exclusively engrosses the attention, so that conversion is “*a process of struggling away from sin rather than of striving towards righteousness*”.... What then must the person do? “They must relax,” says Dr. Starbuck,—“that is, they must fall back on the larger Power that makes for righteousness, which has been welling up in their own being, and let it finish in its own way the work it has begun.... The act of yielding, in this point of view, is giving one’s self over to the new life, making it the centre of a new personality, and living, from within, the truth of it which had before been viewed objectively (JAMES 1902, 165–66).

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“twice-born” man, analysed by James elsewhere in *Varieties of Religious Experience*; such an approach is a wrong one... “Once-born” is a healthy soul, with no sense of sin, while “twice-born” is a sick soul in need of healing.

“We were brought into full view of the contrast between the two ways of looking at life which are characteristic, respectively, of what we called the healthy-minded, who need to be born only once, and of the sick souls, who must be twice-born in order to be happy. The result is two different concepts of the universe of our experience. In the religion of the once-born, the world is a sort of rectilinear or one-storied affair, whose accounts are kept in one denomination, whose parts have just the values which naturally they appear to have, and of which a simple algebraic sum of pluses and minuses will give the total worth. Happiness and religious peace consist in living on the plus side of the account. In the religion of the twice-born, on the other hand, the world is a double-storied mystery. Peace cannot be reached by the simple addition of pluses and elimination of minuses from life. Natural good is not simply insufficient in amount and transient, there lurks a falsity in its very being. Cancelled as it all is by death if not by earlier enemies, it gives no final balance, and can never be the thing intended for our lasting worship. It keeps us from our real good, rather; and renunciation and despair of it are our first steps in the direction of the truth. There are two lives, the natural and the spiritual, and we must lose one of them before we can participate in the other one” (JAMES 1902, 127).

This is an important passage as it shows that conversion does not have to start with a sense of sin (cf. Acts 18:23–19:6, Acts 16:30); according to many authors, pagans had no sense of sin. Conversion in the once-born group can, obviously, be gradual or immediate, just as in the “twice-born” group. However, there is some tension here: the once-born are happy, according to James, and their self has not disintegrated—so, how to describe their conversion using James’s term introduced at the beginning? It seems too narrow to cover such cases.

<sup>4</sup> It seems difficult to adopt the unconscious with the act of self-surrender (conscious) at once. Presumably, James is referring to the unconscious process that leads the subject to the act of self-surrender.

Thus, according to James, “I surrender” is the key moment of immediate conversion; it occurs when the subject, desiring change, recognises their inability to leave their state of being bad, their inability to improve through own efforts, and appeals to an external instance as the one that can lead the person out of that state.

In light of the above considerations; however, James’s division of conversion into two types: progressive and on-the-spot (immediate) is debatable. It seems more appropriate to consider those ways of conversion as a model, typical, that do not exclude, for example, a frequent situation when, after a momentary “I surrender”, the convert (sinner), who reaches the state of giving up and turning to God for help, must undertake a gradual moral and spiritual transformation afterwards, that is, go through successive stages of conversion.

Therefore, James’s analysis is a bit ambiguous and requires an additional approach from different perspectives; I will supplement it with an analysis of the functioning of conversion in biblical literature and in the social sciences. The second approach will show the diagnostic features of conversion examined from the perspective of the social sciences, while the first one will allow reference to the original Christian literature, from which that concept is derived and which refers to the external cause of conversion, i.e. the acting God. Therefore, it is a perspective that assumes an independent object of faith (otherwise faith has no meaning; cf. 1 Cor. 15:14).

### 1.1 BIBLICAL SOURCES OF THE CONCEPT OF CONVERSION

As historians of religion and philosophy point out (KLING 2020, 1), today’s concept of conversion has its roots in ancient Christianity. To characterise a radical change or transformation while looking at something, the authors of the New Testament use Greek terms *epistrephō* (‘turn back’, ‘turn around’, ‘return’) and *metanoēō* (‘think again’, ‘change one’s mentality’, ‘repent’).<sup>5</sup> To describe conversion, the authors of the New Testament

<sup>5</sup> The gerunds *epistrophe* and *metanoia* have been translated into Latin as *conversio* (‘overturning’); “conversion” became its English derivative afterwards. The verse from Luke 17:4 is an interesting one: “And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day **turn again** to thee, saying, I **repent**, thou shalt forgive him”; in the Greek original, it goes: “καὶ εἰάν ἐπτάκις τῆς ἡμέρας ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς σέ καὶ ἐπτάκις ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς σέ λέγων **Μετανοῶ**, ἀφήσεις αὐτῷ” —both terms referring to conversion appear in the same sentence here—*epistrepsē* (‘turn back’, ‘turn around’) and *metanoō* (‘repent’ but meaning “changing the way of thinking”). The Synoptic Gospels are dominated by *metanoō*, e. g. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15) (“Καὶ λέγων ὅτι Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ”).

also use the terms “new birth”, “new creation” and “born from above” (or “born again”).<sup>6</sup> However, it should be noted that the early Christian concept of conversion expressed with the use of such words has its roots in the Hebrew word *shubh* found in the Old Testament, which means ‘turn back’, ‘repent’, ‘return’, ‘restore’, which was used many times by the prophets who admonished and begged people to return to their covenant obligations (KLING 2020, 2).<sup>7</sup> Going back to the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles tell the stories of Christian conversions—some are described in a spectacular way while others in an ordinary way. On the other hand, Greek philosophers (Cynics, Stoics and Epicureans) demanded conversion—a moral transformation different from that urged by Christians and achieved through education and commitment to a rational life. Those philosophers called for conversion and repentance, rejection of the weaknesses and corruptions of the dominant culture, coming to own senses and living a life of virtue. Thus, when discussing the concept of conversion, two types of conversion are sometimes referred to in antiquity: conversion to philosophy<sup>8</sup> and conversion to “emphasising supernatural power and the bestowing of miraculous benefits by which conversion is brought about” (MALHERBE

<sup>6</sup> The indicated terms referring to novelty and rebirth come from John’s concept of conversion, different from the concept by Paul, presented below. “The different English translations—‘born again’ and ‘born from above’—stem from the original Greek adverb *anōthen*, which can mean either ‘from above’ (as in James 1:17) or ‘again’ (as in Gal. 4:9)” (KLING 2020, 49). Conversion is also described with such phrases as “transfer out of darkness into light” (1 Peter 2:9), “a spiritual rebirth or being born again” (John 3:3), “a restoration from impurity” (Titus 2:14), “a turning from Satan to God” (Acts 26:18), “a getting rid of an old and acquiring a new humanity” (Col 3:9) or “dying to self but rising again in Christ (Rom 6:2–8)” (KERR and MULDER 1983, xi).

<sup>7</sup> The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon indicates 948 uses of that word in the Old Testament; it means ‘return’, ‘turn back’, ‘come’ or ‘go back’, ‘come back’, ‘bring back’, ‘restore, refresh, repair’ or ‘reverse’ or ‘revoke’.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Rousseau (1998), referring to the term “conversion” indicates that conversion “implies rejection of one way of life for another, generally better, after brief and intense insight into the shortcomings of self or the demands of the circumstances”. He also points out that ancient religious cults did not require such a radical abandonment of the old path. He also emphasises that one cannot accept the view that only Christianity and, to some extent, Judaism required exclusive loyalty and the abandonment of old practices. There are two rationales here: the term “metanoia” was also used by classical philosophers in the context “to come to one’s senses in a new and different way” (Hierocles said that conversion was the beginning of philosophy); unfortunately, as Rousseau pointed out: “Latin was strikingly weak in its corresponding word-power. Conversion remained resolutely wedded to its physical origins and, even in a moral sense, it had more to do with association than with psychological attitude.” The second rationale is that Christian literature often describes examples of violent “changes of heart” (e.g. conversion of Saint Augustine, *Confessions* 8, 6) in a manner very similar to earlier descriptions of such experiences (e.g. by Seneca).

1998, 230); in the paper, attention is paid to religious conversion, although the paths leading to both types of conversion may be similar. It is possible to structure different types of conversion depending on their causes, e.g. preaching, vocation, direct intervention of God, etc.

Based on the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles (MALHERBE 1998, 232), people used to convert in response to preaching and it happened immediately. Evidence from the prophets and popular Hellenistic and Jewish philosophy and tradition were used in the preaching. The important fact is that the content of the preaching was always Jesus and the goal of the preaching was the repentance of sins and conversion (e.g. Luke 24:46–49). In preaching addressed to Jews, it was a call to repent for taking part in killing Jesus, and in preaching addressed to gentiles—it was an appeal to repent in the face of the final judgment, making people aware of the fact that they could move from darkness to light and mentioning forgiveness. The response to the preaching was sometimes emotionally enthusiastic (e.g., in the town of Lystra, Acts 14:18, or the response to Peter’s preaching in Acts 2:38); however, it was not so rapid and full of enthusiasm in other cases.

The most common method of preaching used by ancient philosophers was “to destabilise the listeners, making them at one moment delighted, and then, grieved at the same thing, thus unsettling their soul. They wanted people to feel disturbed about their moral condition and to be prepared to convert to a better way of life. They expected their converts to respond emotionally as well as rationally, shudder, feel ashamed, repent and experience joy and wonder (see Masonius Rufus, psg. 49)” (MALHERBE 1998, 233). Malherbe emphasises a strong similarity between the conversion to philosophy and the descriptions of conversion presented by James. In the text by Jonathan Edwards, quoted by James, a transition is mentioned from the feeling of being in a state of damnation to the feeling of being in a state of salvation and happiness; what is important, according to Malherbe, is the experience of emotional turmoil—similar to the turmoil experienced by those converted by Saint Paul.

Empowered by God, Paul says, he stormed the fortified human intellect and laid siege to it ... demanding that it then be renewed and the new believer be transformed in the process. The way in which he brought about conversion was by engendering faith in his hearers’ hearts through preaching. This subjective response to his preaching was the work of the Spirit, who was active in his preaching and moved his hearers to oral confession.<sup>9</sup> (234)

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<sup>9</sup> The charisma of prophecy described in 1 Cor. 14:24–25 has a similar effect.

The quoted text summarises the vision described in the Letters of Paul of the process of conversion triggered by his preaching. In that description of actions leading to conversion, the following points are important: the person who leads others to conversion is empowered by God and preaches (prophesies) with the purpose of transformation (awakening of faith); the convert is also guided by the Spirit, who enables the person to change their mind in response to the preaching. God's intervention in the relationship between *the preacher and the convert* is a decisive factor in the Christian understanding of conversion; in the case of conversion to philosophy, that factor is the preacher's persuasive skills.

The Bible also mentions different ways leading to conversion, other than influencing the convert by preaching. The first one does not seem to be preceded by emotional and intellectual activity. The most significant example of such a violent conversion without preaching seems to be the conversion of Paul. Paul's conversion is described in three places in Acts.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it is an example of an immediate transformation that causes a radical desire to change life completely; the factor causing that transformation is a supernatural event: the voice: "Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" and the recognition of Jesus in the person who is calling. The way of experiencing conversion also influences Paul's way of teaching about conversion—Paul emphasises *epistrephō* and barely mentions *metanoēō* (KLING 2020, 143–47). In turn, based on his experience, Paul, while teaching through his letters, usually does not talk about his own conversion but about following Christ: "the apostle uses the verbs 'to turn' (*epistrephō*) and 'to believe' (*pisteuō*) when referring to those who received the gospel (2 Cor. 3:15–16; 1 Thess. 1:9–10) by believing in the crucified and resurrected Messiah and confessing that 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor. 12:3)" (KLING 2020, 47). The conversion described by Paul is to lead to a radical change of attitude and social relations (Gal 3:28) and the effects of such conversion are to change all areas of life: "Paul constantly reminds believers of the contrast between their pre- and post-Christian lives. The Holy Spirit has now poured God's love into their hearts (Rom. 5:5). Converts exhibit "the fruits of the Spirit": "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22–23). They do not conform to 'this world' but are 'transformed by the renewing of [their] minds' (Rom. 12:2)" (KLING 2020, 48). There is a fundamental difference between Paul's teaching and the practice of conversion to philosophy—Paul does not refer to the importance of moral growth but re-

<sup>10</sup> Acts 9:3–19, Acts 22:6–16, Acts 26:12–18.

lates moral life to God and the power of the Holy Spirit; for philosophers, education was important in the transformation, while Paul “has in mind a metamorphosis of the intellect that rejects conformity to the world and strives to discover the will of God.” The goal of the philosophers is the realisation of one’s natural potential; for Paul, it is “the formation of Christ in the believer” (MALHERBE 1987, 33).

The Synoptic Gospels emphasise other issues. In them, conversion is associated with the reaction to the preaching about the good news (euangelion)—this good news is the message of Jesus that the kingdom of God is at hand (Mark 1:14–15). By doing so, Synoptics emphasised various aspects of conversion. For Mark, it is a process of discipleship, a slow transformation of the apostles who witness the miracles of Jesus but have little understanding of his mission. Mark emphasises the fact that it is a slow, difficult and risky process of embarking on a journey full of dangers. Matthew, on the other hand, emphasises the fact that a new relationship with God profoundly changes interpersonal relationships (e.g. Matt. 5–6), while for Luke conversion is related to penance (e.g. John the Baptist’s call to conversion) but also the gracious initiative of God, who grants forgiveness and calls to accept that forgiveness (e.g. Luke 15) (KLING 2020, 34–37). Another clue is indicated by the gospel of John, which emphasises that conversion is the secret of God: “even after Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again he cautioned that ‘the wind blow where it wills, and you hear the sound of it but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit’ (John 3:8)” (KERR and MULDER 1998, xxiv).

From the above analysis, we can see that the term “conversion” can cover various issues: a change of thinking, turning away from the old path, accepting “the good news” or “new birth”. Each of the concepts captures a different aspect of conversion, although they share the motive of change based on a change in the way of thinking, turning away from the old attitude, the way of acting as well as choosing a new outlook on life and conduct. The immediacy of the change is taken into account or the emphasis is placed on the process-oriented and radical nature of the change (“new birth”). All of the concepts relate to the sphere of religious attitudes associated with belief, trust, defining one’s position in the world, etc., that is, they concern what we collectively call “faith”. Before moving on to the analysis of the aspects, moments and concepts in which conversion to faith may occur, it is worth looking at the comments on conversion formulated in the social sciences.



## 1.2 INDIVIDUAL CONVERSION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

As analyses referring to the origins of Christianity have shown, conversion can be triggered by different motives and can happen in different ways. That fact is also emphasised by representatives of the social sciences (LOFLAND and SKONOVD 1981). The problem is the very definition of conversion, as well as giving the reasons that lead to conversion. The sociological view emphasises the observable (empirically ascertainable) determinants of the conversion process;<sup>11</sup> those determinants, motives and characteristics differ in various sociological approaches (GREIL and RUDY 1984). Of interest to us is the definition of conversion,<sup>12</sup> the factors that lead to conversion and the process of conversion.

The issue of the definition of conversion often appears in general remarks preceding the description of empirical research in sociological works. Some authors emphasise the radical nature of conversion, understood as “a radical reorganisation of identity, meaning, life” (TRAVISANO 1970, 594)<sup>13</sup> or “the process of changing a sense of root reality” or “a conscious shift in one’s sense of grounding” (HEIRICH 1977, 674). Others define conversion by emphasising its process-oriented and complex nature; for example, according to Lewis R. Rambo, conversion is a process of religious change that (a) is extended over time (it is not a single event); (b) is contextual—it is influenced by (and it influences) a set of relationships, expectations and situations; and (c) the factors in conversion are multiple, interacting and cumulative. There is no single cause of conversion, no single process or simple consequence of conversion (RAMBO 1993, 5).

When it comes to the types of conversion, there are different concepts; some authors point out that conversion can be divided according to the motive that leads to it. The analysis conducted by Lofland and Skonovd (1981), in which the authors introduce the concept of a conversion motive, is an example of that approach. The authors emphasise that the different perceptions and descriptions of conversion are not only the result of different theoretical

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<sup>11</sup> With regard to research on conversion, Heirich notes that there is a fundamental difference between believers and social scientists; the former emphasise the “divine-human” encounter, while the latter propose social and psychological factors in explanation (HEIRICH 1977, 353).

<sup>12</sup> It must be emphasised that social sciences must abstract from the supernatural causes of conversion; therefore, the broader notion of conversion is adopted in the definitions and analyses, as if approaching again the perspective presented by James.

<sup>13</sup> Travisano (1970, 600) distinguishes such conversion from “alternation”, which involves a less drastic change of worldview or identity; alternation is a “variation on the subject” as opposed to conversion, which is understood as introducing a completely new leitmotif.

orientations but are in fact descriptions of features that make the descriptions of the conversion experience fundamentally different.<sup>14</sup>

While describing the different types of conversion, Lofland and Skonovd consider five main variables that determine the motive that leads to it. Those are: the degree of social pressure for conversion, the duration of the conversion experience, the degree of emotional arousal accompanying conversion, the content of that emotional arousal and the dimension indicating the order in which individuals adopt the cognitive framework of religion and actually participate in its activities. The variables are presented by Lofland and Skonovd (1981) in the following table (375):

Table 1. Lofland and Skonovd's five main variables determining the motive that leads to it.

**CHART 1  
CONVERSION MOTIFS**

		Conversion Motifs					
		1. Intellectual	2. Mystical	3. Experimental	4. Affectional	5. Revivalist	6. Coercive
Major Variations	1. Degree of Social Pressure	low or none	none or little	low	medium	high	high
	2. Temporal Duration	medium	short	long	long	short	long
	3. Level of Affective Arousal	medium	high	low	medium	high	high
	4. Affective Content	illumination	awe, love, fear	curiosity	affection	love (& fear)	fear (& love)
	5. Belief-Participation Sequence	belief-participation	belief-participation	participation-belief	participation-belief	participation-belief	participation-belief

It is worth noting that the above-mentioned variables that determine the motive of conversion are physical (social pressure or the duration of the transformation), emotional (the third and fourth variable; the first one tries

<sup>14</sup>“What converts stress in their accounts varies markedly; we suspect that the differences are not simply artefacts of the ‘accounting’ process..., biases elicited by researchers or the result of selective perception of the construction of conversion accounts. Instead, we are suggesting that subjective conversions actually vary in a number of acute, qualitatively different aspects, best differentiated by their respective ‘motif experience’. ‘Motif experiences’ are those aspects of a conversion which are most memorable by the person ‘doing’ or ‘undergoing’ personal transformation that provide a tone to the event, its pointedness in time, its positive or affective content, etc.” (LOFLAND and SKONOVD 1981, 374).

to measure the degree of emotional arousal accompanying the experience and the second one relates to its content) and intellectual (the fifth variable), which tries to determine the order in which individuals adopt the cognitive framework of the religion and actually participate in its ritual and organisational activities.

Taking the degree of intensity of individual variables into account, the authors, as shown in the table above, distinguish six main motives of conversion.

1. Intellectual conversion—it begins with the individual exploring new foundations of being by seeking knowledge about religious or spiritual issues through independent research of a cognitive nature. In terms of the main variables mentioned above, there is little or no external social pressure, the conversion lasts weeks or months, there is moderate emotional arousal during that time, the emotional tone of the experience can be described as “illumination” and, most importantly, there is a fairly high level of faith before actual participation in the ritual and organisational activities of the religion.

2. “Mystical” conversion—it is usually a sudden and traumatic change caused by an unusual experience (known as the conversion of St Paul or “the road to Damascus”).<sup>15</sup> Considering the variables, there is little or no social pressure, the convert is most likely alone at the time of the actual event. Based on the description of the convert, the most critical period of conversion is quite brief—it may last a few minutes or hours, the level of emotional arousal is extremely high—it sometimes includes theophanic ecstasy, delight, love and even fear that suggests the beginning or active intensification of faith, followed by participation in the ritual and organisational activities of the religion;

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that the very first researchers on conversion, such as William James, Edwin Starbuck, and E. T. Clark, focused mainly on mystical conversion. The reason for that might have been the more common occurrence of that phenomenon in America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Lofland and Skonovd point out, “modern definitions of mystical conversion have been created by psychoanalytically oriented scholars such as Carl Christensen, who described it as: a strong hallucinatory episode occurring within a religious belief and characterised by subjective intensity, apparent suddenness of onset, short duration, auditory and sometimes visual hallucinations and a noticeable change in the subsequent behaviour of the convert.... It is also characterised by the fact that it appears ‘not to be caused by the subject but by something external’. That ‘feeling of surrender’ is preceded by ‘withdrawal with a sense of alienation and often a sense of unreality’ and the result is a sense of sudden understanding accompanied by a feeling of arousal and an auditory and sometimes visual hallucination. There is a feeling of change within the self... associated with a sense of presence” (LOFLAND and SKONOVD 1981, 377).

3. Experimental conversion—it involves the potential convert adopting a “show me” attitude, “I will pursue that opportunity and see what spiritual benefits I can gain.” That type of motive of change resembles the usual way in which people learn new social roles and are assimilated into groups. It is often noticeable in new religious or parachurch groups. Experimental conversions involve relatively little social pressure to participate as the recruit adopts a try-it-out attitude. The actual transformation of identity, behaviour and worldview, commonly known as conversion, takes a relatively long time—often months or even years—and it does not seem that there is a high level of emotional arousal in most cases. The affective content of experience is curiosity.

4. “Affective” conversion, where the central element is the direct, personal experience of being loved, looked after and supported by the group and its leaders. In the process of emotional conversion, feeling plays the same defining role as the above-mentioned motives of intellectual illumination, mystical encounter or experimental immersion. The cognitive element is weakened (contrary to intellectual conversion). The emphasis is placed on the underlying “emotional order”. There is definitely “social pressure” but it exists and functions as “support” and attraction. The process can be long. Even if the central experience is a feeling, the usual level of emotional arousal tends to be of “medium” intensity rather than more extreme states found in rebirth or mystical motives. As in experimental conversions, belief grows from participation.

5. Revivalist conversion; according to researchers, it is based on collective behaviour; individuals are emotionally stimulated and the new way of behaviour and beliefs are promoted by the exerted pressure. For example, revival meetings are characterised by emotionally powerful music and preaching. Profound experience occurs in the context of an emotionally stimulated crowd, with participants experiencing “emotional highs” without going through a subsequent breakdown.<sup>16</sup>

6. Coercive conversion; that type of conversion is relatively rare today; therefore, there is no point to discuss it here (especially since one can not

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the description of the revivalist conversion is extremely reductionist, reducing the behaviour of individuals solely to a response to the social pressure from an emotionally aroused group. Meanwhile, in “awakening” groups, individuals experience mystical-like events while experiencing strong emotional arousal at the same time. Those observations would indicate the possibility of reducing the revivalist conversion to the combination of the mystical and affective types of conversion.

really call that phenomenon a conversion, taking into account the religious context presented above).

Rambo (1993), in turn, distinguishes some stages (aspects) in the conversion process:<sup>17</sup>

- context, i.e. the general environment in which the change takes place. Contextual factors (global, such as cultural factors, e.g. whether the converter's country is Catholic or Protestant, whether adhering to a particular belief is difficult or not, individual motives of conversion) facilitate or hinder the change and influence the whole process of conversion;

- crisis, which usually means shattering of the world considered as certain. There can be two broad sets of factors at that stage, the first of which relates to the nature of the crisis, e.g. its intensity, duration and whether it is internal or external to the person, while the second one consists of the catalysts for conversion, i.e. personal and social forces that trigger, support or inhibit it. A personal desire for transcendence, a near-death experience or an external social crisis (e.g. the death of a loved one or leader) are examples of the forces that prompt a religious quest;<sup>18</sup>

- quest, the notion of which comes from the assumption that people seek to maximise the meaning and purpose of life, to remove ignorance and to resolve incoherence (RAMBO 1993, 56). Therefore, the purpose of that stage is to find a “place”, a way (tradition, church) that would enable a person going through a crisis to fulfil the desires that the crisis has triggered or to find a new source of meaning in life, to fill the emptiness to which the crisis has led; that quest, which is ongoing to some extent, is significantly intensified in times of crisis;<sup>19</sup>

- encounter, which involves contact between the seeker and the followers of the new way of life. During the stage of encounter, the person is con-

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<sup>17</sup> As Raymond Paloutzian (1996) points out in his review, Rambo's model of the stages of conversion is systemic one rather than sequential; it is not a step-by-step model as conversion is a process in which many factors interact simultaneously and over time. Therefore, it might have been better to call the listed stages of conversion its aspects, dimensions or moments.

<sup>18</sup> The examples of crisis listed by Rambo can also be extended to positive events, such as a mystical experience (Saint Paul) or a moment of delight (e.g. while falling in love) or intellectual delight, which shatter the image of the world considered as certain so far.

<sup>19</sup> Openness to the new way in which the world is organised depends on various factors, such as, e.g., structural availability of a new religion, emotional availability (e.g. certain emotional relations with other people make the decision to convert more difficult), intellectual availability (whether or not the cognitive framework of a given movement or option is to some extent compatible with the person's current orientation) or religious availability (the new option should somehow be compatible with the existing one) (RAMBO 1993, 60–62).

fronted with a new belief, practice, religious group or tradition. Encounters can either be sought by the convert or imposed from outside. At that stage, an important role is played by the intercessors, the missionaries of the new orientation (the role of conversion in their mission, their personal experience and understanding of conversion or their motives);

– interaction; since no conversion is sustainable in vacuity, interaction of a new convert with a new religious group must intensify. Such interaction is the next stage, although it occurs in varying degrees throughout the whole process. New relationships with new emotional bonds are formed, new rituals are learnt and practised, new rhetoric provides a new system of meanings and new roles give the person a new mission;

– commitment, the stage during which individuals make a decision to dedicate their lives to a new spiritual orientation. According to Rambo, this is the focal point of the change process. After a period of intense interaction, the potential convert faces the prospect of choosing commitment. Commitment involves several important aspects. A specific turning point or decision is often required and/or such decision to commit is often dramatised and memorialised by a public demonstration of the choice made by the convert. Rituals of commitment, such as baptism or testimony, are important; observable events that are evidence of the convert's decision;<sup>20</sup>

– consequence, which covers the cumulative effects of various types of experience, actions and beliefs that either facilitate or hinder conversion; that stage includes, for example, the social consequence of a new commitment, the difficulties an individual may face, etc.

To sum up that stage of the considerations, the following important moments of conversion, captured by a social science analysis, can be pointed out.

1. The nature of conversion is process-oriented, it stretches over time.
2. There are different motives of conversion, although all of them are reduced to changes of an observable (measurable?) type.
3. It is a process of changing one's attitude towards the world or reorienting one's relationship with the world.
4. The motives or stages are not mutually exclusive and can coexist with each other (e.g. revivalist conversion can often contain elements of "mystical" conversion; similarly, one can easily imagine the co-occurrence of elements

<sup>20</sup> As Paloutzian (1996, 227) points out, Rambo rightly claims, contrary to popular opinion, that conversion is not synonymous with making a commitment to adopt a new faith at a particular point in time; what one commits oneself to may vary at different stages of the process—first, one may adopt a certain belief and try to make sense of it afterwards, or vice versa, a person can try to find alternative viewpoints before accepting a certain belief.

of intellectual and experimental types of conversion). The same applies to the stages listed by Rambo.

5. The moment of faith, as the basis of religious conversion, is omitted in the analyses.

6. As a consequence of the above, the issue of the semantic correlate of faith, i.e. the question about the object of faith, i.e. the question about God, His activity, activity towards Him, etc., is also omitted.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF FAITH

To understand conversion in a better way, a fundamental question about the concept of faith needs to be asked. As a reminder, Wolterstorff (1990) noted that there are many different types of faith; therefore, there are also many different notions of faith. When defining faith, Scott MacDonald (1993), for instance, points to its two basic components: "I hold that Christian faith is a compound state the primary constituents of which are a cognitive state, namely, a belief that certain propositions are true, and a particular sort of volitional response to the things and states of affairs represented in those propositions" (44). Each of those components can be understood differently, which already leads to diversity in defining faith (emphasising its individual components, etc.). To analyse the concept of faith, it is necessary to ask certain questions at the very beginning.

a) Is faith treated as a state (ongoing over time) or as an event (behaviour, manifestation of faith)?

b) Are only the doxastic components taken into account or the non-doxastic ones too?

c) How are the non-doxastic components understood (love, hope, trust, etc.)?

d) Are only the doctrinal components taken into consideration or non-doctrinal ones too?

Again, different approaches (concepts) of faith are not distinctive concepts but they may often refer to attitudes coexisting in a given person, and the coexistence (of elements) may indicate a fuller or more fragmented experience (following) of faith.

Some preliminary light on the understanding of the term "faith" may be shed by its use in the Bible, namely in the New Testament (MCCLINTOCK 1894). The basic term for faith is πίστις. Its main meaning is a special act of

trust (confidence) in God (e.g. Mark 5:34, Luke 7:9) but also full trust in Christ (Mark 4:40). The term πίστις is used:

- a) with reference to an object (God, Christ) (e.g. Gal. 2:16, Mark 11:22);
- b) with no specific reference “simply as faith”, which adheres with full conviction and confidence to the revelation of salvation in the New Testament, and makes this its foundation. Here, especially important is the expression (Acts 3:16), the faith which is by him, an expression which is used to point out the salvation arising from the mediation of Christ, through the looking unto Jesus, the author of faith (Heb. 12:2).

In turn, the general meaning of Πιστεύω is “to trust, to depend upon”. Very frequently πιστεύειν τινὶ denotes “to trust a person, to give credence to, to accept statements” (to be convinced of their truth); but also often “we find πιστεύειν in the signification to believe, to take for true, and hence to be convinced, to recognise (accept)”; with the accusative following (John 11:26), with the infinitive after it (Acts 15:11), with or after it (e.g. Mark 11:23–24).

After that detailed presentation of the meaning of πίστις in the New Testament, let us focus on the characteristics of the varieties of faith distinguished by Robert Audi (2008, 92–95; 2011, 53–65).<sup>21</sup> Audi distinguishes seven varieties of faith,<sup>22</sup> such as: a) propositional faith (faith that something is so; PropF); b) attitudinal faith (a person has faith in some thing, especially in some person; AttF); c) creedal faith (to have a creedal faith; CreedF); d) global faith (to be a person of faith; GlobF); e) doxastic (propositional) faith (to believe on faith; DoxF); f) acceptant faith (someone accepts another person, statement or proposed action “in good faith” or, sometimes, “on faith”; AcceptF); g) allegiant faith or loyal faith; AllegF).

Propositional faith, faith that something is so; that type of faith assumes a certain cognitive component (e.g. that God loves a man) towards which the subject has a positive attitude (here, Audi does not specify what that positive attitude is based on. That kind of faith does not entail the conviction that

<sup>21</sup> The basis for distinguishing those types are the faith locutions found in English. There may be other ways of distinguishing the varieties (types) of faith; unfortunately, the limitation of space does not make it possible to present them more extensively. Cf. e.g., the special edition of *Faith and Philosophy (Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers 7, no. 4)* dedicated to the nature of Christian faith.

<sup>22</sup> Since the literature on the problem of understanding faith and its rationality is abundant, I have decided to choose one author’s concept for analysis. The decision to refer to the approach presented by Audi is dictated by the fact that the author tries to extract and characterise the multiplicity of meanings behind which the multiplicity of referents of the word “faith” is hidden.



things are the way we believe they are).<sup>23</sup> Faith of that kind is a stronger state than [holding on to] hope.<sup>24</sup> Audi stresses that the varieties of propositional faith are doxastic propositional faith and non-doxastic propositional faith, which he calls fiducial faith. Doxastic faith, which is expressed by the phrase “believing on faith” as a kind of propositional faith, is the belief that something is such and such; faith understood in that way (unlike the generally treated propositional faith) entails the belief that things are the way they are. Although, naturally, believing on faith is contrasted with believing on evidence, Audi disagrees with the defenders of the view that doxastic faith entails a lack of evidence—one can have doxastic faith regardless of having or not having evidence. The existence of doxastic faith implies nothing about the amount of evidence a given person has; the key point is that “doxastic faith—like other kinds of faith—is conceived as an attitude that is not simply a *response to evidence*, where that is taken to be above all formation of a cognitive attitude having a content and strength appropriate to the nature and amount of the evidence in question” (AUDI 2008, 94). Doxastic faith assumes a person’s positive attitude towards the veracity of the statement, while the lack of psychological certainty regarding the statement is a necessary condition, as is the case of fiducial faith (non-doxastic). To understand faith, the relationship between faith and conviction, trust or hope is also important. As it was already stated, according to Audi, propositional faith can be doxastic or non-doxastic.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Propositional faith involving God (his attributes, qualities of action) is incompatible with complete doubt in the existence of God.

<sup>24</sup> “Hope that *p* may indeed be so desperate as to coexist with as much doubt as is possible consistently with not unqualifiedly believing that not-*p*. Faith may alternate with such doubt, but cannot coexist with any doubt sufficient to undermine a kind of trusting that the desired state of affairs obtains” (AUDI 2011, 73).

<sup>25</sup> A critical analysis of fiducial (non-doxastic) faith was conducted by William Alston (2007), who claims that he has found no example of an attitude that would meet the conditions attributed by Audi to non-doxastic faith. Based on a number of articles by Audi, Alston states that non-doxastic faith is not: flat-out belief, feeling of certitude, being subject to mistake, belief+a positive evaluation of an object, has a definitely accepted propositional object, implies existence of an object, intellectual commitment to its propositional object, tentative belief that *p*, weak belief that *p*, belief that *p* is probably true. Alston also lists features that Audi attributes to non-doxastic faith, namely: incompatible with disbelief that *p*, cognitive in having a propositional object, sufficient to qualify one as religious where the propositional object is religious, has a positive attitudinal component, involves a disposition to believe that *p*, can be strong, steadfast, involves conviction, requires beliefs other than a belief that *p*, is a positive attitude to a proposition, implies a cognitive trust faith. Moreover, Alston also claims that all the positive terms attributed to non-doxastic faith tend to point to the characteristics or implications of that kind of

Audi does not deny the relationship between faith and belief. There seems to be a certain continuity in the transition from (having) faith to (having) belief; that is, the closer we get to having the belief that  $p$ , the less natural it is to speak about faith but rather about the belief that  $p$ .<sup>26</sup> Audi, on the other hand, presents two facts that constitute the difference between PropF and belief. Generally speaking, that difference consists in the fact that faith (both doxastic and fiduciary) has a stronger relationship with non-true-valued mental states of the individual than belief (BUCHAK 2012, 140). Audi writes:

First, other things being equal, for believing that  $p$  as opposed to having faith that  $p$ , there is more tendency to be surprised upon discovering not- $p$  to be the case.... Second, consider the relationship between faith and emotions. In Mark 4:40, Jesus says to those who are afraid of the storm: “Why are you frightened? Do you have no faith?” Even outside the religious context, faith tends to eliminate or diminish fear and other negative emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and anger. Like hope, belief, even if it has the same content as fiducial faith, need not have this kind of effect, nor is belief required in an attitude that can have it. A belief that I will go through surgery with minimal discomfort and ultimate success is entirely compatible with high anxiety about the envisaged events; faith that I will achieve this tends to reduce such emotions. (AUDI 2008, 98)

The trust factor appears to be a significant contributor to that difference. It is the second important moment of faith. According to Audi, it is the basis of propositional non-doxastic faith, e.g. “you can trust people who are predictable to the extent that you can be sure that they will do what you expect them to do” (AUDI 2011, 71)—the very fact that their attitude is predictable (regardless of the beliefs about them?) can be the basis for trusting them.

Faith also seems incompatible with disbelief:

I can have such faith compatibly with an absence of any feeling of confidence regarding  $p$ , and even with a belief that  $p$  is not highly probable. But if I disbelieve  $p$ , I do not have faith that  $p$ . Moreover, although I need not (and probably cannot) have any sense of certitude regarding the proposition, there are limits to how much doubt I can feel toward it if I have faith that it is so. When the strength of doubt that  $p$  is true reaches a certain point, hope, but not faith, will likely be

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faith but do not allow to identify what non-doxastic faith is. However, the dispute related to non-doxastic faith would require a separate analysis.

<sup>26</sup> It is not clear from Audi’s characterisation whether that “approaching a belief” would be determined by the strength of the evidence—then, it would mean a kind of evidentialism (according to which the degree of our beliefs should be strictly proportional to the evidence we have).

my attitude.<sup>27</sup> Hope that *p* may indeed be so desperate as to coexist with as much doubt as possible consistently with not reaching unqualified belief that not-*p*. Faith may alternate with such doubt, but cannot coexist with any doubt sufficient to undermine a basically positive overall outlook, a kind of trusting that the desired state of affairs obtains. Hope also differs from faith in other ways. It does not imply a favourable attitude, as opposed to desire. I may find myself hoping that something will occur where I am ashamed of wanting it. (AUDI 2008, 97)

The second basic type of faith is attitudinal faith, consisting in the fact that a person has faith in some being, (not necessarily a person, it may also be, for example, faith in an institution); Essentially, that type of faith is about a relationship between persons; hence, if it concerns God, it entails the assumption that God exists (although it does not need to be a belief that God exists). That type of faith is not only a state of mind but, to some extent, a state of will.<sup>28</sup> Attitudinal faith, when it concerns God, assumes certain statements about God, so if I believe in God, that is, I have attitudinal faith, I assume certain statements about God that can be considered as expressing the doctrine of my religious faith. Faith implies certain attitudes, such as respect and trust, which lead to at least a minimal understanding of their subject matter but do not logically entail the belief that God exists.<sup>29</sup>

The third concept presented by Audi is credal faith, i.e. religious faith, that is, faith to which one belongs by virtue of one's attachment to its main

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<sup>27</sup> In Polish literature (Witwicki, Auerbach) that disbelief would correspond to the concept of supposition, i.e. the presentation of the content of the statement without any moment of assertion; supposition was treated as a borderline case of doubt (LECHNIAK 2011, 30–38).

<sup>28</sup> St Thomas Aquinas treats faith not as a state (attitude) but rather as an act (decision?) of intellect and will. “To believe is an act of the intellect in as much as the will moves it to assent. And this act proceeds from the will and the intellect” (*ST II–II*, 4:2). In response to the allegations in sec. 2, art. 9, Thomas writes that “to believe is an act of the intellect convinced of the truth of God at the command of the will moved by the grace of God and subject to the free will directed towards God.” The moment of grace is essential for Thomas, since it is a guarantee of the perfection of the act of faith: “for to believe is an act of the intellect assenting to the truth at the command of the will, two things are required that this act may be perfect: one of which is that the intellect should infallibly tend to its object, which is the truth; while the other is that the will should be infallibly directed to the last end, on account of which it assents to the truth” (*ST II–II* 4:5, p. 69). Here, the will (enlightened by grace) is the guarantor of the truthfulness of the belief (faith), thanks to which the deficiency of obviousness caused by the fact that the material object of faith is impossible (or difficult) to be known directly is “repaired” (LECHNIAK 2020, 116–18).

<sup>29</sup> “I believe in God”, as Audi points out, can be used psychologically (e.g., in the social sciences—in which case it does not imply the existence of an object of belief, or in relational use, in which case it implies the existence of an object—God; this corresponds to James’ two ways of talking about conversion).

precepts. Having faith or “being” a creedal believer (I have a creedal faith, I am of faith) is the recognition of certain principles and attitudes. In that context, faith is a certain set of statements (in this sense, it is an abstract domain); its possession is determined by the adoption of appropriate attitudes towards those statements or related statements (to belong to faith is the same as having an attitude towards the statements that constitute a set of dogmas).

Global faith, on the other hand, is a kind of faith that makes it possible to consider a person a believer and qualify that individual as religious; the basic phrase occurring in the context of that type of faith is “being a person of faith”. It is the broadest concept of faith. It does not require a person to follow any particular religion (faith) and is also sometimes contrasted with the lack of faith (any faith or belief in certain doctrines).

Acceptant faith and allegiant faith remain to be discussed. Acceptance faith means that someone accepts another person, statement or proposed action “in good faith” or, sometimes, “on faith”. Such faith, according to Audi, can be treated as a variety of attitudinal faith (a person trusts someone else on faith, e.g. accepts someone’s apology in good faith). That type of faith is often constituted by propositional faith, although, as Audi points out, it can be a type of non-doxastic faith (AUDI 2008, 95). Allegiant faith or loyalty faith is, generally speaking, fidelity, an example of which may be keeping faith with someone. That type of faith differs from other cases because to keep faith with someone is to do, for the right reasons, things that the other person would expect. According to Audi, the latter concept seems to be reducible to a combination of the other ones (as opposed to the first four: propositional, attitudinal, creedal and global faith). Now, let’s try to analyse the relationships between the above-mentioned varieties of faith, and consequently, let’s distinguish the basic ones.

The number of basic concepts of faith distinguished by Audi can be reduced as follows:

- PropF, AccF, CredF and Global F are irreducible to others;
- propositional faith can be divided into doxastic faith and fiducial (non-doxastic) faith (FidF), with DoxF entailing Belief, which is not the case of FidF;
- AcceptF may be a type of AttF or may be constituted by PropF regarding the person;
- AllegF is related to AttF but is not implied by AttF in relation to God.

The following relationships, in turn, can be identified between the basic four types of faith (AUDI 2011, 66–67).

1. PropF does not imply AttF but AttF implies PropF (concerning the object of it); moreover, PropF is the basis for the rationality of AttF (a person must have a positive attitude towards at least some features of the object of faith); both types of faith assume a positive (both cognitive and motivational) attitude towards the object of faith.

2. Each case of AttF entails at least one case of PropF concerning the same object.

3. A person of faith (GlobF) has at least PropF or AttF and the rationality of those attitudes is the basis for the rationality of GlobF.

4. A man of faith (GlobF) must in some sense be AllegF (to keep faith with God or some appropriate ideals).

5. To belong to CreedF means to have PropF at least in relation to the statements that make up the body of the doctrine assumed by, for example, the Catholic Church (belonging to faith is having appropriate attitudes towards the sentences that constitute the dogma). From the believer's point of view, CreedF is derivative of PropF or AttF.

To sum up that part of our discussion, the following can be stated.

1. In almost all of the concepts of faith identified by Audi, faith is treated as a state (attitude)—towards a statement, a person, a set of dogmas or a general attitude (a man of faith). This makes it difficult to introduce the volitional moment into the analysis; trust or fidelity, so important for faith, is not only manifested in acts (of trust or fidelity) but is actually built up in individual acts. St Thomas Aquinas, for example, pointed it out in the passages quoted above.

2. Audi's analysis points to both doxastic and non-doxastic understanding of faith. Perhaps such language phrases do exist; nevertheless, it is difficult to indicate a concept of faith in which only a doxastic element or only a non-doxastic element can be found. In my opinion, those two moments occur in each of the indicated concepts. A non-doxastic (volitional) element makes it possible to make up for the lack of proof (evidence) required for the transformation of faith into certainty or conviction (knowledge). Such a non-doxastic element may be a moment of trust or love to maintain a positive attitude towards a statement or a person.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> MacDonald points out that Aquinas's "full-fledged, salvific faith is intellectual assent informed by the appetitive act of charity, that is, by love for God. Similarly, those, such as Martin Luther, who argue that faith is primarily a kind of trust have generally acknowledged that trust in God logically presupposes at least some beliefs, such as that God exists" (MACDONALD 1993, 43).

3. It seems that the fundamental concept of faith, out of all the concepts indicated by Audi, is the attitudinal faith, which is “supported” (or supports) by a propositional faith, both doxastic (as it always assumes some propositional content about the object—the person “in whom one believes) and non-doxastic (which consists of the moment of trust, choice, abiding by choice, etc). Obviously, if one does not recognise the existence of FidF, one can speak of AllegF here, i.e. allegiant faith.

4. With regard to CreedF, there is a kind of an ambiguity in Audi’s approach: on the one hand, it is understood as a doctrine, i.e. a system of basic sentences for a given religion,<sup>31</sup> on the other hand, as an attitude of recognising that basic dogma; in the latter sense, it can be stated that CreedF can be reduced to  $PropF(D_1, \dots, D_k)$ , where  $D_1, \dots, D_k$  belong to the set of dogmas (basic sentences for a given doctrine).

### 3. “CONVERSION” IN RELATION TO THE MAIN CONCEPTS OF FAITH

1. Let us look at the first three concepts of faith distinguished by Audi in the context of the concept of conversion. Let us start with the basic concept of attitudinal faith. “Faith in” assumes propositional faith, at least to some extent. One cannot have faith in someone else unless one believes in some statements about that person and has a positive attitude towards the content of those statements. Moreover, “faith in” requires trusting the person one believes in; if the “trust” component dominates over the belief component it is a case of reliance of “belief in” on fiducial faith.<sup>32</sup> Conversion, as indicated above, has two basic meanings derived from the Bible: “metanoia” (change of thinking) and “epistrophe” (turning away from the way of acting, living). It seems that the primary factor of the two is metanoia, i.e. a change of

<sup>31</sup> Bocheński would perhaps call it an underlying dogma, i.e. the basic framework of the doctrine of a given religion (BOCHEŃSKI 1965).

<sup>32</sup> Judycki indicates four elements of faith in God: 1) the belief in the existence of God who has certain attributes and acts in the world, 2) a specific moral attitude, which can be described as a desire for the good and as an uncompromising striving for the good, 3) trust in God, and 4) an awareness of the presence of God in the form of mystical experiences of various degrees (JUDYCKI 2020, 1139–51); it seems that the moral attitude is a derivative of the other three components. According to those determinants, conversion would imply a comprehensive change of belief accompanied by the acquisition of a high level of trust in God and an awareness of God’s permanent presence (theoretical or practical, given, e.g., in prayer).

thinking. That change should be radical enough for the person to be able to definitely change the way they act.<sup>33</sup>

Based on the analyses of conversion in the social sciences, it is a process that consists of many stages and there may be different motives involved; it is important for the converts to go through the stage of crisis; this was also emphasised by James. The motives of crisis may vary (at least as in the concepts by Lofland and Skonovd). What is important, there may be (Rambo) two types of factors: related to the nature of the crisis and to the catalysts of conversion, i.e. personal and social forces that trigger, support or inhibit the process (e.g. borderline events that prompt the subject to religious search). When it comes to “faith in”, there is a conversion from the lack of “faith in” to “faith in”, or a transition from “faith in *x*” to “faith in *y*”. The stage of crisis seems to trigger conversion and leads to an intellectual transformation and a related transition in the area of aspirational powers (feelings and/or, as a consequence, will) or to the achievement of such an intensity of any of its components that leads to a crisis and, consequently, to a change in the way of thinking (a change in the belief component or the “trust” component). It is important that the crisis is preceded by a stage of context, i.e. a specific situation (social, mental, life circumstances).

The situation of conversion (as metanoia) is, to some extent, analogous to the scientific revolution (according to the concept of Thomas Kuhn). Following that analogy, Rambo’s stage of context corresponds to the stage of normal science, determined by the paradigm adopted by the researcher. The motive (analogous to the aforementioned motives of Lofland and Skonovd) for the change of paradigm is the occurrence of anomalies in the application of scientific theory while facts are explained; those anomalies, unless they can be ignored or removed within the framework of the prevailing scientific theory, lead to the stage of crisis. It should be noted that crisis in Kuhn’s concept does not occur only at the level of change of conviction—it would be easy to remove such a crisis using a corrected scientific theory (and it could be removed, for example, in the spirit of procedures described by Popper in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*). Revolution is more radical<sup>34</sup>—it leads to

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<sup>33</sup> In an approach that stresses the effort of the individual (voluntarist) and not external factors influencing conversion, epistemo will rather be emphasised.

<sup>34</sup> Thagard lists the following characteristics of a scientific revolution: a) it concerns fundamental transformations of conceptual and propositional systems; b) conceptual systems are originally structured by means of kind-hierarchy and part-hierarchy; c) new theoretical concepts are born through a conceptual combination, in which new concepts are derived from parts of old concepts (e.g. the notion of a sound wave, which is not observable, is the result of a combination of

a radical conceptual change; examples of such radical conceptual changes corresponding to the scientific revolution are given by Paul Thagard. The most radical, in his opinion, are changes such as the weakening or collapse of a part of the generic hierarchy by abandoning the current distinction (e.g. Newton's rejection of Aristotle's distinction between natural and forced motion), the reorganisation of a hierarchy due to changing a domain, i.e. the transfer of a concept from one branch of the hierarchical tree to another one (e.g. in the Copernican revolution, "Earth" was moved to the category of planets from its *sui generis* position) and finally, amending the tree, i.e. changing the principle according to which a hierarchical tree is organised (e.g. Darwin did not reclassify humans as animals but changed the meaning of the classification; before Darwin, the genus was a concept expressing original similarity, after Darwin, the genus became a historical concept due to the fact that there was a common ancestor) (THAGARD 1992, chap. 3). The conceptual changes described in that way lead to a radical incommensurability of the old theory and the new one.

"Faith in" has a propositional (cognitive) component and a trust (aspirational) component. Within the cognitive component, crisis can lead to the loss of current beliefs related to the image of the world or the meaning of life; within the trust component, crisis can be triggered by the loss of trust in a person who has been an authority so far (whether deontic or epistemic) or can lead to building trust in a new person, who becomes a new authority. This is usually preceded by an attempt to maintain trust as long as possible, just as one tries to maintain one's beliefs for as long as possible. That stage of crisis was described by James as an "I surrender" attitude.<sup>35</sup> Such a transition of the disciples through the crisis is well presented in the Gospel of Mark—it is a process of transformation of the apostles who, although they witness the miracles of Jesus, show little understanding of his mission (Mark 8:27–33, Mark 14:66–72). The conversion process of St Ignatius of Loyola (from reading the *Lives of the Saints* to the transformation in Manresa [KERR

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the concept of sound and the concept of a wave, which are derived from experience); d) propositional systems are essentially organised by relations of exploratory and logical coherence; e) new theoretical hypotheses are usually formed by abduction; f) transition to new conceptual and propositional systems takes place because new statements and concepts have greater explanatory coherence. The latter thesis indicates that it is the increase in the degree of explanatory coherence that determines the success of new theories developed (in the case of a revolution) independently of the old ones (THAGARD 1992; LECHNIAK 2014).

<sup>35</sup> A negative variant of such type of crisis is apostasy or abandonment of faith (according to Rambo, apostasy is one of the types of conversion).



and MULDER 1996]) can be looked at in a similar way. Sometimes it can be quite a violent process, like the conversion of St Paul (however, although Paul does not mention it clearly, the mystical meeting of Jesus on the road to Damascus must have been a consequence of a previous inner conflict, since the words of the manifesting Jesus had such a strong effect on him). When it comes to trust, the motive for radical change, apart from some form of mystical experience, may also be someone else's testimony of faith manifested in their attitude, commitment, etc (cf. cases from the Acts). On the cognitive side, radical change does not only lead, as indicated above based on Thagart, to a change in conviction but leads to a change in central concepts (the understanding of terms such as, e.g. the kingdom of God, resurrection or death changes, Phil. 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"; the indicated terms involve a domain leap, e.g. life–death or even a change in the principle organising the conceptual system: e.g. Christ as the source of life or the Holy Spirit-the mover). The radicalness of the change manifests itself in the change of the centre of life (e.g. Gal. 2:20: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me", Rom. 6:9). In that sense, *metaneo* is similar to a radical conceptual change (a change in the organising principle of the conceptual tree).

Obviously, one can indicate differences between conceptual revolution and *metaneo*. The basic difference is that, perhaps, the central feature of conversion is the volitional factor (trust). That factor does not cause a conceptual revolution or a paradigm shift, although, of course, trust in epistemic authority is an important element of a research study. That trust factor—what has to be emphasised once again, is not a permanent disposition (attitude) but requires constant support through acts of trust. Secondary to *metaneo* is *epistrophe*, i.e. turning away from the previous way of acting; the believer begins to follow a new hierarchy of values due to a change in the centre of life (the central principle organising the perception of the world).

2. Propositional faith<sup>36</sup> is a propositional attitude towards a statement concerning certain attributes of an object (God, in particular), accompanied by a positive attitude towards those attributes or the bearer of those attributes. Buchak, in turn, emphasises that the essence of doxastic propositional faith is the fact that one cannot be sure of the statement one believes based

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<sup>36</sup>Many authors argue that a basic form of faith is propositional faith treated doxastically. However, it seems that with such an approach it is difficult to draw a clear line between belief and faith. e.g. many of the analyses of faith conducted by Lara Buchak involved exclusively propositional faith (BUCHAK 2018).

on evidence alone—the evidence must leave open the possibility that the statement is false. Therefore, according to Buchak, what is essential for believing in a certain statement is the readiness to take the risks associated with that statement, with the strength of faith being measured by the degree of that willingness to take those risks; moreover, faith requires one to act in accordance with the statement in which one believes without seeking additional evidence and; furthermore, faith requires a willingness to continue to act even when evidence to the contrary arises.<sup>37</sup>

Conversion within the propositional concept of faith may consist in acquiring (maintaining) a strong assertion of the statement one believes; in fact, it is a transition from, e.g., admitting the truth of a certain sentence to taking the risk of accepting the sentence in spite of the lack of (or contrary to) evidence (e.g., acquiring belief in the innocence of a person in spite of or contrary to the evidence of their guilt).<sup>38</sup> Obviously, at that point, it is hard not to address the issue of the motive for such propositional belief, i.e. the source of the “decision” to maintain assertion towards the statement one believes. Such a motive, and perhaps the source of conversion, is an act of trust in a person, e.g. an authority propagating that statement (as it was in the case of Moses) or, in other words, a conviction of the veracity of the testimony of the person one believes.<sup>39</sup> Another source of radical change within PropF is some form of experience (presence) of God (which Judycki calls the protomystical experience), which is the “guarantor” of the truth of the statement<sup>40</sup> (JUDYCKI 2020, 1151). All in all, the power of propositional faith is often based on “faith in” (AttF); obviously, the statements that are the subject of PropF do not have to (and most often do not) be related to the subject of AttF (they may, for example, concern the nature of a man, an issue of valuable activities, etc.).

<sup>37</sup> In a more “formalised form”, the definition of faith is two-fold for Buchak:

A proposition  $p$  is a candidate for faith for a person  $S$  if  $S$  cares that  $p$  holds and is uncertain that  $p$  holds on the basis of his evidence alone.

$S$  has faith that  $p$  if and only if: (1)  $p$  is a candidate for faith for  $S$ ; (2)  $S$  is willing to take a risk on  $p$  without looking for additional evidence; and (3)  $S$  is willing to follow through on such risky actions even when he receives evidence against  $p$ . (BUCHAK 2018, 118)

<sup>38</sup> Buchak gives examples of such faith (entrustment) and indicates that the structure of such an act of faith is similar to the act of faith of Moses, who believed in the promise of leading the people to the Promised Land (BUCHAK 2018, 121).

<sup>39</sup> Here, Aquinas mentions faith in God: “faith is therefore based on God’s truthfulness as a convincing motive” *ST II–II, 1:1* (LECHNIAK 2020, 115).

<sup>40</sup> An example of such an experience is prayer, as becoming aware of God’s presence and turning to Him as someone present.

3. Creedal faith, in turn, as a set of theses that make up the doctrine of faith, is a derivative of AttF in one aspect and precedes AttF in another aspect. The consequence of the first aspect is the fact that conversion to a given doctrine is secondary (temporally and motivationally) to AttF. “The psychological situation of a believer is that the person does not accept a certain creed because of a religious hypothesis but because the individual trusts Christ or Muhammad” (WEINGARTNER 1994, 140; LECHNIAK 2020). That concept assumes that the fundamental dogma (or creed) is directly justified because of trust in the revealer (God). On the other hand, the way of understanding the subject of AttF is conditioned by the data contained in the doctrine of a given religion, with that doctrine being the subject of CreedF. In that aspect, conversion involves turning to God because of the act of believing in the doctrine (fundamental creed) of a particular religion (BOCHEŃSKI 1965, 140); this would correspond to conversion based on an intellectual motive.

In the context of CreedF, the question arises whether or not it is possible to talk about conversion, e.g. from Protestantism to Catholicism (or vice versa), using that language. If CreedF is treated as the basis for a person’s religious affiliation, there would be a positive answer to that question as the set of basic sentences for a given religion varies, which leads to different attitudes and behaviour, and thus a way of life. While at the AttF level a Catholic and a Protestant would have the same kind of faith (they believe in Christ), at the CreedF level that faith would be different and conversion would be a leap from one creed to another one; after all, the Protestant creed rejects some of the theses of the Catholic creed.<sup>41</sup> With the approach that it is the content of the creed that defines faith, and that the believer is to accept the content of the creed by an act of will despite the lack of evidence supporting the statements that are part of the creed, an active, volitional commitment to recognise the dogmas of another church is considered a conversion. If, on the other hand, it is considered that AttF is the basic understanding of faith, as long as the objective correlate of the act (attitude) of “believing in” is

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<sup>41</sup> Here, an analysis of the change in the content of the concept of heresy could be interesting—that concept refers to CreedF and assumes a certain (only correct) dogmatic system. According to Thomas, heresy occurs when someone wants to believe Christ but fails while picking and choosing the truth they are supposed to accept for Christ’s sake (the opposite of heresy is the true faith: “he that holds the Christian faith aright, assents, by his will, to Christ, in those things which truly belong to His doctrine” (*ST II-II, 11:1*) (LECHNIAK 2020, 117). Therefore, heresy is a type of disbelief.

the same, the transition from one set of dogmas to another one loses its meaning and such a transition cannot be called a conversion.

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THE CONCEPT OF CONVERSION  
IN THE LIGHT OF SOME CONCEPTS OF FAITH

Summary

The paper is devoted to an analysis of the concept of conversion in relation to the various concepts of faith distinguished by Robert Audi. The first part presents William James' analysis of the concept of conversion, the biblical roots of the concept of conversion as *epistrephō* and *metanoēō* and analyses of conversion in the social sciences. The second part of the paper analyses the various notions of faith proposed in the works of Robert Audi. Finally, in the third part, I analyse how conversion can be understood in relation to the main of the concepts of faith identified by Audi; I also relate the concept of faith to the concept of scientific revolution characterised in Thomas Kuhn's theory of the development of science.

**Keywords:** conversion; epistemology or religion; faith; Robert Audi.

## POJĘCIE NAWRÓCENIA W ODNIESIENIU DO NIEKTÓRYCH POJĘĆ WIARY

## Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie pojęcia nawrócenia w odniesieniu do różnych pojęć wiary wyróżnionych przez Roberta Audię. W pierwszej części zaprezentowane są Williama Jamesa analiza pojęcia nawrócenia, biblijne korzenie pojęcia nawrócenia jako *epistrephō metanoē* oraz analizy nawrócenia na gruncie nauk społecznych. Druga część artykułu zawiera analizę różnych pojęć wiary zaproponowanych w pracach Audię. W końcu w trzeciej części analizuję, jak można rozumieć nawrócenie w odniesieniu do głównych z pojęć wiary wskazanych przez Audię; odnoszę również pojęcie wiary do pojęcia rewolucji naukowej scharakteryzowanego w koncepcji rozwoju nauki autorstwa Thomasa Kuhna.

**Słowa kluczowe:** nawrócenie; epistemologia religii; wiara; Robert Audi.