

RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AND GROUP DYNAMICS

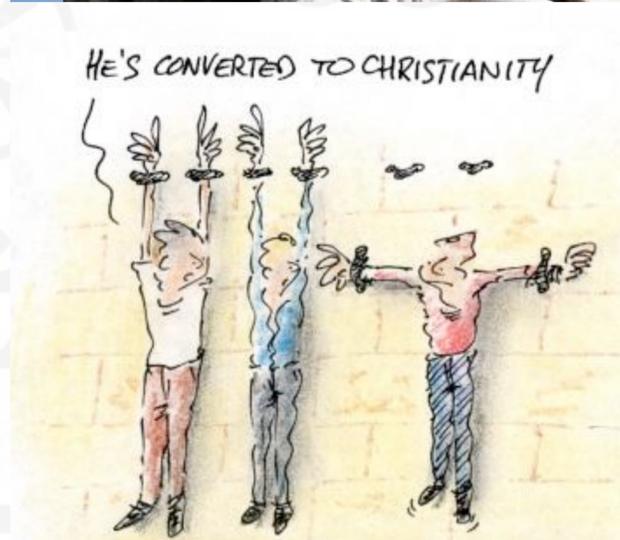
Jakub Cigán - Study of religion



Religious conversion is a traditional topic in Religious studies. Most of the scholars who have studied conversion approach it as something from the past, that should be studied retrospectively, through conversion accounts – a set of autobiographical memories in the form of a narrative.

I argue, on the other hand, that these constructed conversion memories are aimed at one's present and future prospects and interests, opened to collectively shared representations and general implicit theories, and are relevant only in particular situations and contexts.

Religious conversion is a sort of narrative schema that works in a particular group and is ritually publicly displayed (e.g. in a conversion story-telling practice, witnessing etc.). This may be taken as an affiliation strategy (among others) to the group and a commitment signal to other members that one is willing to participate and cooperate.



Research questions:

What is the connection between religious conversion narrative and group dynamics?

What role does this narrative schema play in mutual trust, in-group cooperation (and/or competition)?

Methodology:

In teasing out these questions I will use ethnographic research and experimental paradigms from social and cognitive psychology.