CONVERSIONS FROM ISLAM TO CHRISTIANITY
IN THE SUDAN

by

REINHOLD STRAEHLER

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SUPERVISOR: DR C SAUER

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof JNJ KRITZINGER

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Summary

Conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan

by:	R Straehler
Degree:	MTh – Master of Theology
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Supervisor:	Dr C Sauer
Co-Supervisor:	Professor J N J Kritzinger

This research project focuses on conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan. It first gives a biblical and theological understanding of conversion and then introduces the sociological and psychological understanding of such a change in religious affiliation. It discusses conversion as a spiritual decision process and develops a spiritual decision matrix for evaluating conversion processes of Muslims. The heart of the study is an analysis of the conversion processes of six converts with a Northern Sudanese background from different Muslim tribes. The interviews that were conducted with these converts are analysed in terms of five parameters: reasons for conversion; factors that led to conversion; stages in the conversion processes; problems encountered during the conversion processes; and results of the conversion. These parameters are compared with existing data from six studies of Muslims in other geographical areas who also converted to the Christian faith.

Key Terms

Conversion; Reasons for Conversion; Factors leading to conversion; Conversion process; Spiritual decision process; Spiritual decision matrix; Problems encountered during conversion process; Results of conversion process; Sudan; Northern Sudanese; Islam; Christianity; Mission; Missiology.

Statement of Authorship

I declare that

Conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Preface

The Sudan is a country that is influenced by Arab-Muslim culture in the North and diverse African cultures in the South. The majority of the population in the North are adherents of Islam whereas the different people groups in the South follow Christianity, Islam or Traditional African Religions. Even though Christians in the country are mainly from the African people groups of the South, the Christian church has spread in the North as well, due mainly to internal displacement of Southern Sudanese Christians as a result of two civil wars. This has led to a strong Christian presence in the North among the Muslim majority population. Usually Muslims do not change their religious affiliation and embrace the Christian faith. But over the past years individual Muslims have become Christians in different areas of the country. Only little information is available about how they became Christians and what their situation is now.

This study discusses conversion as a spiritual decision process and develops a spiritual decision matrix for evaluating conversion processes of Muslims. The heart of the study is the analysis of the conversion processes of six converts with a Northern Sudanese background (one lady and five men), from different Muslim tribes. Analysis of conversion processes of Muslims who decide to follow Jesus Christ reveals certain principles and trends. Different factors may influence a person to gain more information about the Christian faith (the cognitive dimension) and to experience a change of attitude towards Christ (the affective dimension). Such a change is usually either a process that may occur over several years or take place within days. Distinct stages can be determined in such a decision process. Understanding the stages in these processes is helpful for Christian change agents because they will be able to communicate with the person in search of spiritual truth in a way relevant to that particular discerned stage.

Muslims who embark on a conversion process towards a commitment to Jesus Christ will likely encounter problems with the family and society, as well as with the established church. An awareness of these problems will be helpful in better addressing and therefore limiting them. The results of conversion processes for Muslims to the Christian faith are another interest of this study. There may be a complete change, a determined transformation or a continuation of the past in regard to theological convictions, religious and cultural practices and social affiliation. In this regard this study is an example of how a particular group of people today experienced conversion as turning around in response to God's saving activity.

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Writing a research paper like the present one cannot be done without the help of other people. Therefore I am deeply grateful to all those who have helped me in one way or another to complete this task.

First of all I want to thank my supervisor, Dr Christof Sauer, for his excellent work in guiding me through the process of conducting and writing this research. His countless professional suggestions, his personal encouragement, and the speed with which he returned parts of the paper that were sent to him for correction were remarkable. Even though we communicated by Email most of the time, his supervision was very personal and helpful.

Next I want to thank my co-supervisor, Professor J N J Kritzinger, for his encouragement and guidance, particularly during my brief stay at Unisa when we discussed the way to conduct such a study. Other people without whom this work could not have been completed are Rev Colin and Mrs Brenda Salter, my faithful and most efficient language editors, who ensured that my 'German' English would be transformed into a readable British English. Thank you so much for your quick and professional work!

My thanks go also to the *Evangeliumsgemeinschaft Mittlerer Osten* (EMO), my sending organization who encouraged me to arrange my schedule in a way so as to be able to work on this research, and the *Gesellschaft für Bildung und Forschung in Europa* (GBFE) who partly sponsored my trip to South Africa. Then I want to thank my wife Marie-Luise and our three children who were a strong support to continue with this work and who bore with me when I was busy writing more and more pages. It is great to be uplifted by such a wonderful family!

As I complete this study, my sincere thanks goes to the five men and one woman from Northern Sudan who had the courage to let me share an important part of their lives. They were willing to participate in the interviews for this study. By reflecting deeply about the process of conversion through which they went, I got to know them on a much deeper level than I knew them before. They are wonderful people! With awe and thanksgiving I stand before God who is at work in their lives in a remarkable way and led them to become followers of Jesus Christ. I count it as a privilege that I am able to 'ponder' the works of God, as Psalm 111:2 aptly describes, in their lives. May it be a help and encouragement for the whole Church in the Sudan and beyond.

I want to dedicate this research paper to all those Northern Sudanese who have undergone a process of conversion similar to the ones described here. Men and women who have been searching for or who happened to come across an alternative to their former beliefs, and who have become faithful followers of Jesus Christ. They often live in isolation, but they are part of the Church of Jesus Christ in this country.

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ATR	African Traditional Religions
CPM	Church Planting Movement
DAWN	Discipling a Whole Nation
EMO	*Evangeliumsgemeinschaft Mittlerer Osten*
GBFE	*Gesellschaft für Bildung und Forschung in Europa*
LXX	Septuagint
SIM	Society for International Ministries

1. Introduction

1.1 Preamble

This research project focuses on conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan.[1] The idea to get involved in such research developed gradually during my stay in this country. Since 1991 I have been living in Khartoum and have had the opportunity to get to know the situation of the different religious communities. It is not common in the Sudan that someone from the Muslim community changes his/her religious affiliation and embraces the Christian faith. But over the past years individual Muslims have become Christians in different areas of the country (Johnstone, Mandryk & Johnstone 2001:598f; Parker 2000:115-132; SIM 2000:4). The problem is that only a little information is available about how they became Christians and what their situation is now. The need for more research in the area of conversions of Muslims to Christianity has been stressed by different authors (eg Conn 1979:107; Livingstone 1993:154), particularly in order to find out common factors in how they became believers in Christ and what motivated their conversion. This study tries to fill this gap regarding the situation in the Sudan. It will be helpful not only in understanding a particular missiological and sociological phenomenon, but also in empathizing more with those Sudanese who have undertaken this change of religious affiliation, often against great odds.

1.2 The Background of the Country

The Sudan is one of the countries in Africa in which Islam is the dominant religion. The statistics given for religious affiliation vary considerably: from 65 % Muslims, 23.19 % Christians and 10.61 % adherents of the African Traditional Religions (Johnstone, Mandryk & Johnstone 2001:596-602), to 70.3 % Muslims, 16.7 % Christians and 11.9 % Ethnoreligionists (Barrett, Kurian & Johnson 2001:699, for mid-2000) and finally to 75 % Muslims and 4 % Christians (Sudan Embassy 2004).

Table 1: Religious Affiliation in the Sudan

Source	Muslims	Christians	African Traditional Religions
Johnstone, Mandryk & Johnstone 2001	65 %	23.19 %	10.61 %
Barrett, Kurian & Johnson 2001	70.3 %	16.7 %	11.9 %
Sudan Embassy 2004	75 %	4 %	no information

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[1] Throughout this paper I use the UK-version of English.

Whereas the official government figure seems to try to downplay the significance of the Christians, the figure which Johnstone, Mandryk & Johnstone give seems to be quite high. The reality is probably closer to the figure of Barrett, Kurian & Johnson (cf Table 1). Almost all the Christians are found among the African tribes from Southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains, with a small minority of Sudanese of Egyptian origin, Ethiopians, Eritreans and other expatriates (Johnstone, Mandryk & Johnstone 2001; Barrett, Kurian & Johnson 2001).

The Sudan has undergone a long civil war in the South, in the regions of the Blue Nile and in the Nuba Mountains, first from 1956 – 1972 and then again from 1983 – 2005. It was not until January 2005 that a comprehensive peace agreement was signed which ended this longest of the civil wars in Africa (Sudan-Net News 2005a). One of the effects of this long civil war and the accompanying internal tensions has been that throughout the country claims of religious affiliation are shifting (Harris 1999:12). Conversions occur from the African Traditional Religions to both Islam and Christianity. There are also conversions from Christianity to Islam which sometimes happen through internal conviction, but at other times as a result of pressure or in the hope of obtaining physical or economic security (US Department of State 2003; Parker 2000). The more surprising development in the country is, however, that conversions also take place from Islam to Christianity, sometimes through conviction although at other times in defiance of the ruling regime (Harris 1999:12; Sudan Embassy 2004; DAWN 2004). This happens despite the fact that the Islamic law of apostasy officially does not allow Muslims to leave Islam (Gibb & Kramers 1974:413f; Michelmann 2000).

The Christian presence in the Sudan began with the Meroitic court official whose story is recorded in Acts 8 (Werner, Anderson & Wheeler 2000:24f). From the 6th until the 14th century AD the north of Sudan was home to the three Christian Kingdoms *Nobatia* (or *Nobadia*, Arabic: *an-Nubah*, sometimes also called by its Coptic name *Maris*), *Makuria* (Arabic: *al-Maqurrah*), and *Alodia* (Arabic: *Alwa*) (:27ff). After that, the Islamic influence became gradually stronger until the Christian presence almost completely disappeared (:90-120). It was only after the invasion of Muhammad Ali in 1820, when a significant number of Coptic Christians from Egypt came into the country, that there was once again a distinct Christian community in the Sudan (:123-125). Missionary work of the Catholics in the 19th century was not very successful and had to be abandoned when the Mahdi revolution swept over Northern Sudan from 1881-1898 (:187ff; cf Table 2).

After the Mahdi revolution was ended by Anglo-Egyptian conquest in 1898, Christian missionary work began, but only in the area of Southern Sudan. Lord Cromer had given a promise to the representatives of the Sudanese people on the 5th of January 1899 that there would not be any 'proselytism' in Northern Sudan (Ibrahim 1985:64). This so-called 'northern policy'

frustrated the intentions of several Christian mission organizations who wanted to begin missionary work among the Muslims of Northern Sudan (Werner, Anderson & Wheeler 2000:229f). The result of this policy of the colonial government was that Christianity spread mainly in Southern Sudan and later also in the Nuba Mountains, while the North remained predominantly Muslim. Only social services like medical care and education were allowed in the North. Churches were, however, established among the Coptic community and other expatriates (:243ff). Evangelistic activities were restricted but nevertheless some Christian witness amongst the Muslim population was always possible.

Table 2: Christian Presence in Northern Sudan

Epochs in the Sudanese History[2]	Years	Situation
Nubian Kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria and Alodia	6th – 14th Century AD	Christianity official religion of the Kingdoms
Muslim Rulers	15th Century AD – 1820	Christianity disappears, Islamization
Turco-Egyptian Period	1820 – 1881	Influx of Coptic Christians; beginning of Catholic missionary work, partly also in the North
Mahdist State	1881 – 1898	Pressure on Christian community, almost extinction
Anglo-Egyptian Condominium	1899 – 1955	Christian community of Copts and other expatriates; restrictions on Christian ministries (medical care and education allowed), some Christian witness possible among Muslims
Independent Sudan	1956 – 1980	Migration of Christians from South and Nuba Mountains to cities of North, establishing Christian churches all over the North; few converts from Muslim background
Last 25 years	1980 – 2005	New possibilities and efforts of Christian witness in North (media ministries, social and medical ministries, linguistic work, personal evangelism); more converts from Muslim background

One example of such a witness was a programme where mostly Egyptian Christian women went to the houses of Muslim ladies, sharing all sorts of lessons, including Bible lessons. These 'Bible Women' were a success in that they were able to establish good relationships with the Muslim ladies and share about their own faith (:323f). There were also evangelistic meetings held on church properties. The missionary minded Christians, largely from outside of the country, hoped that the Egyptian Christians of the Evangelical Church in Sudan would reach the Sudanese Muslims. But this did not happen. The Sudanese generally were less-educated and poorer than

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[2] Holt & Daly 1988.

the Egyptians who came to the Sudan. There were few points of contact between the two communities (:325).

Towards the end of the Second World War the migration of many Southerners and Nubas from their homelands to Khartoum and Omdurman began. They went in search of work and education, and later to escape the civil war. This had an important impact on Sudan's economic and political development with hundreds of thousands of displaced, and apparently 'misplaced', people. Yet it also resulted in the planting of the Christian Church all over the North, in every significant town – something inconceivable before 1920. The Protestant and Catholic missions reacted to this migration in the beginning by setting up clubs and hostels for the Southerners and Nubas (:329f).

The last 25 years have seen new possibilities for, and efforts of, Christian witness to Muslims in Northern Sudan. Sudanese and expatriate Christians were involved in literature distribution, film shows (particularly the "Jesus-Film" from Campus Crusade for Christ), social and medical ministries in different parts of the country, linguistic projects and personal evangelism. Whereas until the 1970s only occasionally did a Muslim become a follower of Jesus Christ, in the 1980s and 1990s more and more individual Muslims converted to the Christian faith and proclaimed faith in Jesus Christ (Johnstone, Mandryk & Johnstone 2001:598f; SIM 2000:4). The people movement within the extended family of Sheikh Abdullahi is particularly outstanding in this regard (Parker 2000:115-132).

1.3 Need for and Significance of the Study

Both Christianity and Islam are 'missionary' religions which expect that people convert to their respective faith communities. Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wa are essential religious duties in Christianity and Islam (Schumann 2000). From a theological perspective the objective of Christian mission is that individual people accept the message of the gospel, become disciples of Jesus Christ, and join together in local congregations, being salt and light in their societies. This leads to the praise of God by representatives from all people groups[3] of the earth and ultimately to his glorification (Beyerhaus 1996:268f; Dreher 2003; Piper 1993:11; Reifler 1997:122-129; Peters 1972:144f). The many unreached people groups[4] in the Sudan, particularly among the Muslim population, present a challenge from a Christian point of view (SIL 1996; Johnstone,

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[3] The Lausanne Strategic Working Group in 1982 defined a people group as "a significant large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc or a combination of these… [It is] the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance" (in Winter 1989:18).

[4] Moreau, Corwin and McGee (2004:13) define unreached peoples as "people groups that currently have no access to the gospel."

Mandryk & Johnstone 2001:599; Bethany Prayer Center 2004; Joshua-Project 2004). The commitment of Christians to the gospel of Jesus Christ encourages them to reach out even to these people groups, sharing the message of salvation, inviting them to become followers of Jesus Christ, and working towards the planting of churches (Peters 1972:11), as the Lausanne Covenant (Douglas 1990:19) states in paragraph 1. As these evangelistic activities are taking place in an environment where Christianity is a minority and Islam actively discourages Muslims from becoming followers of Jesus Christ, it is of particular interest to better understand the present situation of converts from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan. The questions this research tries to answer are therefore: How does the conversion of Muslims in Sudan to Christianity take place and what implications does this have for the ministry of the Church among Muslims?

The core of this research carries a personal note of interest because I have been living and working in the Sudan for the past 14 years. During this time I have been involved in witnessing to Muslim friends and encouraging Muslim converts to Christianity in their walk as Christians. In my teaching ministry at Gideon Theological College in Omdurman over the past seven years I have been training Christians, among other subjects, in outreach to Muslims. A variety of experiences during these years motivated me to do a Masters research in this area. On the one side there are personal encounters with converts and the positive impact they have had on my life. The evangelistic enthusiasm of Sudanese Christians has always been astonishing to me. On the other side there were some experiences which were not easy to understand, like the return to Islam of some of the converts I knew. There is also the interesting observation that some Muslims do not seem to develop any deeper interest in the Christian faith, even though the gospel is being shared with them in a variety of different ways, whereas others respond and enquire about Christianity. What is the reason for this different reaction despite similar circumstances? What factors encourage a Muslim to change his/her religious affiliation and lead to a conversion? All this calls for more research into the matter. The situation in the Sudan is therefore similar to the one in South Africa which Maurer (1999:21) describes in his research about conversions. He refers to Schreuder and Oddie (1989:500) who are convinced that "a considerable challenge has come to face scholars of religion concerned to deepen our understanding of 'conversion' in African and Asian society." This research attempts to work towards this need in regard to the Sudan.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

According to Mason (1996:14-16) it is helpful for the planning of a research to look at it as an intellectual puzzle, focusing the mind on research questions. This helps to formulate clearly what one wants to achieve. My intellectual puzzle is as follows:

I am studying conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan because I want to find out reasons for, factors in, stages of, plus problems and results of the conversion processes of Muslims. This will help Christians in the Sudan (expatriate and national) to better understand these processes and to minister more efficiently to Muslims. A good understanding of what conversion is and what the process of conversion looks like, is basic for the missionary work of the church.

Conversion can best be described as a process and not as the event of a moment (Peace 2002:9; Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994:31f; Conn 1979:101ff; Hesselgrave 1991:618ff). Understanding this process is important for several reasons. (1) For Fraser (1979:128) the fundamental issue in Christian witness to Muslims is "how Christian advocates can fairly and sensitively persuade Muslims to give their faith allegiance to Jesus Christ as Supreme Lord." This can be done if one adapts the evangelistic approach of Christian witness, so that a process of conversion is encouraged in the lives of people one would like to become followers of Christ. (2) It becomes obvious that the task of the agent of change is to accompany interested Muslims on their journey to Christ. This means that at different stages in a conversion process the Christian will emphasize different aspects of the Christian gospel, take on a different role, and use different approaches. The goal will be to move the person one step forward at a time (IL 1997:8). (3) A proper assessment of the evangelistic effort is possible, since not only the actual commitment is considered, but also the general spiritual development of the person. (4) The approach can be adapted to the particular questions and needs the person has at this particular point in their process of conversion.

Understanding conversion as a process reveals particular challenges and tasks for Christians who want to witness to Muslims. It is my objective in this research to analyse the process through which the individual converts in the Sudan went on their journeys to Christ. The results will help Christians adapt their approaches in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with Muslims, so that unnecessary obstacles will be avoided and people can freely make their choice as to which religion they want to follow. In particular I want to find out the aspects of the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as listed in Table 3, which are the research questions of my intellectual puzzle mentioned above (Mason 1996:14-16).

Table 3: Research Issues

Areas of research	Research questions
Reasons for conversion	Why have people converted? What were some of the spiritual and internal, as well as practical and external, reasons and motives?
Factors that led to conversion	Which factors have played an important role in the decision process? What was the role of literature, contacts with Christians (Southerners, Nubas, Copts, Ethiopians/Eritreans, expatriates, others), negative experiences with Islam, and supernatural experiences? What was the role of "mission without words" (von Padberg 2003:5f)?
Stages of conversion	What did the process of conversion look like? What stages did the convert go through? How long did it take to move from one stage to the next? What caused the convert to move on to the next stage? How did God move the person forward in the process of conversion?
Problems encountered during the process of conversion	What were some of the problems the convert faced on the way to Jesus Christ? What are some of the problems the convert faces today? Were there problems with society and/or the authorities?
Results of the conversion process	Where is there continuity in the life of the convert, comparing the time before the conversion to Christ with the time after the conversion? What are the aspects that have changed, in terms of social affiliation, religious conviction and practices? How did the convert experience the biblical understanding of conversion as "turning away from sin and turning to God in faith" (Erickson 1985:935, 938; Grudem 1994:713)?

1.5 Demarcation of the Study

In this research I will concentrate on conversions of Muslims from Northern Sudanese people groups to Christianity. This includes Arab people groups as well as original Sudanese people groups like the Nubian, Beja, or Fur. Common to all these tribes is the fact that officially the whole tribe is following Islam with no established church made up of members from this tribe. There are other tribes in which a significant number of converts from Islam to Christianity is known, like the Nubas or tribes from Southern Sudan, but they will not be considered. In these societies, Christianity is often the religion of a majority from the tribe and it is not uncommon to find in one extended family followers of African Traditional Religions, Muslims and Christians. Christianity is generally accepted in these tribes and so it is not a serious problem when a person converts to it. The situation of these converts from Islam differs much from the situation of converts in contexts where there is no established church.

In a preliminary survey done by the author, about 35 converts were identified by name, who fall within the scope of this research. Out of these, six people have been chosen and interviewed and the results of these interviews analysed. The criteria for selecting the interview partners are described in chapter three. It was not possible to take into consideration all the converts in Northern Sudan that are presently known nor to evaluate their spiritual journeys. Conversions in other directions (like from ATR to Christianity and to Islam, or from Christianity to Islam), also happen in the Sudan, but will not be part of this study.

The biblical-theological understanding of conversion will be dealt with briefly in the beginning of this research. Some general works on the subject of conversion will be consulted in order to build a framework within which the researched conversions can be evaluated. It was not possible, however, to engage in a detailed survey of this issue as this presents a topic on its own.

1.6 Logical Sequence and Overview of Chapters

This first chapter introduces the research topic and articulates the research question. The motivation for the study and the expected results and benefits for the ministries of churches in the Sudan are explained. The outline of the remainder of the dissertation is herewith introduced.

The second chapter builds the theoretical framework for the research by reviewing and portraying the relevant literature. In particular, the following areas are discussed: a) biblical-theological understanding of conversion; b) sociological and psychological understandings of conversion; c) the spiritual decision process; d) results of other research about the conversion of Muslims; and e) conversions and converts in the Sudan.

Chapter three explains the research design and methodology. It describes the flow of logic for the research. First, the interview partners are introduced and criteria for their selection explained. Then the parameters are given which are going to be analysed: reasons for, factors in, stages of, plus the problems and results of their conversions. Other issues which will have to be dealt with are also explained. These are the questions listed in the "Rationale for Structured Interview" under each main parameter.[5] This information needed for the research leads to the detailed questionnaire which is subsequently introduced. The questions of the structured interview are explained and general information about how the interviews were conducted is given. The way of interpreting the new data and how to analyse it on the basis of the existing data (theoretical framework) is also explained.

Chapters four and five are the heart of the research, the presentation and discussion of the results of the field work. Several parameters are of interest. Chapter four discusses reasons for conversion and factors that led to the conversion. Chapter five deals with stages in the conversion process and how they correspond to the stages in the model[6] prepared, God's working in the decision process, problems encountered during the decision process, and results of the conversion experience. These parameters are compared with existing data from other research.

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[5] See Table 5, "Rationale for Structured Interview".
[6] See Appendix 2, "A Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims".

In the final chapter conclusions are drawn for the ministry of Christians in the Sudan among Muslims. Weaknesses and errors in previous outreach methods which have come to the surface are pointed out. Factors helpful in the conversion process of those interviewed have been identified and ways are now suggested for making better use of these factors. Stages in the conversion process have become obvious and will lead to an increased understanding of the conversion of Muslims to Christianity in the Sudan.

Finally, the research is properly documented by a bibliography and appendices which contain among others the questions for the structured interviews, the transcripts of these interviews and a theory of stages in the spiritual decision processes of Muslims.

2. Conversion in Multiple Perspectives

This research about conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan relates to different areas of studies. In this chapter I am building the theoretical framework for it by reviewing and examining some of the relevant literature from these different studies. This is organized around the respective themes (Mouton 2001:93).

2.1 Biblical and Theological Understanding of Conversion

If we want to understand conversion, we need to start by defining it in a biblical and theological sense. Walls (2004:2) is right, when he emphasises that the most elemental feature of the word 'conversion' is the idea of turning, the specifically Christian understanding of the response to God's saving activity (cf Peace 1999:37; Schäfer 2003:168). The biblical concept of conversion centres around two aspects: the negative aspect of conversion being repentance from sin, and the positive aspect being faith (Erickson 1985:935, 938; Grudem 1994:713).

2.1.1 Repentance from Sin

Repentance, the abandonment of sin (Erickson 1985:935), is based upon a feeling of godly sorrow for evil done. The main Hebrew word to describe this repentance is *shuv*, "to go back again" or "to return" (Würthwein 1967:984; cf Table 4). This word is commonly used in the OT (eg 2 Chr 7:14) for a genuine repentance of people, a conscious moral separation - forsaking sin and entering into fellowship with God (Erickson 1985:936). A serious aspect of the various prophets' call to repentance is that sometimes they themselves do not see how the people can repent (eg Amos 7:8; 8:2; Hos 5:4; Jer 13:23) (Würthwein 1967:987; Burkhardt 1999:40-43). But God promises that he will finally overcome this resistance by his people and enable them to experience a true conversion, establishing a new covenant in their hearts (Jer 31:33). Ezekiel describes this as the gift of the Spirit of God (Ez 36:26f). The call to repentance has therefore two aspects, the outlook towards a future conversion as an eschatological event, and the attempt of the prophets to call the rebellious people presently listening to them to repentance (Burkhardt 1999:45). In addition the OT makes it clear that repentance is not only for the people of the covenant, but God also calls the nations to turn to him (eg Jer 12:14-17; 18:1-12) and promises to bless them (Wright 2004:14f).

In the NT there are three major Greek terms for repentance. *Metamelomai* means "to have a feeling of care, concern, or regret" (Erickson 1985:936). It stresses the emotional aspect of repentance, a feeling of regret for having done wrong. *Epistrepho*, which is often used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *shuv* (Bertram 1971:723), means "to turn toward; to return; to

convert" (Zodhiates 1996:2076). In Acts, it describes the conversion of Jews who accept Jesus as their Messiah and the conversion of Gentiles who turn from idols to faith in him. Luke also stresses the social implications (Bosch 1991:106). *Metanoeo* literally means "to think differently about something" or "to have a change of mind" (Erickson 1985:937). Together with the noun *metanoia* it expresses the idea of repentance as an alteration in the total moral attitude, a profound change in life's direction, a conversion which affects the whole of a person's conduct (Behm 1967:979, 999). Conversion implies a change from within which must be visibly demonstrated by a life of love and righteousness, in accordance with the will of God (Mt 3:8; Lk 3:10-14) (Behm 1967:1000f; cf Grudem 1994:713). Jesus makes it clear that this requirement of conversion is not met by man's own achievement, but is to be received, just like children receive something (Mt 18:3). Repentance is God's gift, and yet it is something God requires from people (Behm 1967:1003). Acts 26:18 shows how the regret over one's sin (*metanoeo*) and the turning to God (*epistrepho*) need to come together. Repentance, therefore, is a change in which the main concern is to turn to God (Bertram 1971:728) and to do all that is necessary to facilitate this. This leads to the positive aspect of conversion: faith in Christ.

Table 4: Hebrew and Greek Key Words for Conversion

Hebrew / Greek word		Basic meaning
shuv	שׁוּב	to go back again, to return
metamelomai	μεταμέλομαι	to have a feeling of care, concern, or regret
epistrepho	ἐπιστρέφω	to turn toward, to return, to convert
metanoeo	μετανοέω	to think differently, to have a change of mind
aman	אָמַן	to consider established, regard as true, or believe
batach	בָּטַח	to attach oneself, trust, confide in, to feel safe, be confident, secure
pisteuo	πιστεύω	to believe what someone says, to accept a statement as true

2.1.2 Faith in Jesus Christ

In the same way as repentance is the negative aspect of conversion, turning from one's sin, so faith is the positive aspect, trusting in the promises and the work of Christ. The Hebrews conveyed the idea of faith with verb forms, the most common one being *aman*. It means "to consider as established, regard as true, or believe" (Erickson 1985:938f). It conveys the idea of confident resting upon someone or something, or it may designate giving assent to a testimony (:938f). It is interesting to note that in the story of the Patriarchs the concept of conversion is not present, but the concept of believing is, as can be seen in the reaction of Abram to the promise of a son (Gen 15:6) (Burkhardt 1999:39; Jepsen 1977a:305).

The second Hebrew word used to describe faith is *batach*, "to attach oneself, trust, confide in, to feel safe, be confident, secure" (Zodhiates 1996:1507). It does not connote

intellectual belief as much as it suggests trust and a committing of oneself (Erickson 1985:939). To trust (*batach*) in God means to depend upon him alone, which is contrasted in the OT with the folly of relying upon any other type of security (see eg 1 Chr 5:20; Ps 22:4; 31:14; Isa 26:3) (Jepsen 1977b:93). In general one can say, that "to have faith" in the OT means to have a complete confidence and trust in God, even though the circumstances may be against it. This trust has its basis in God's promises and the display of his power.

In the NT there is one primary word, which represents the idea of faith, *pisteuo* and its cognate noun *pistis*. It means, "to believe what someone says, to accept a statement (particularly of a religious nature) as true" (Erickson 1985:939) and to have "personal trust as distinct from mere credence or belief" (:940). This meaning is usually identifiable through the use of a preposition: "believe *in* the gospel" (Mk 1:15) or "believe *in* his name" (John 1:12). To believe on or in the name of Jesus is to place one's personal trust in him. This is explicitly a saving faith, based on the cross of Jesus and his resurrection (1 Cor 15:3 - 4:1) (Michel 1975:601). Erickson (1985:940) concludes that "the type of faith necessary for salvation involves both *believing that* and *believing in*, or assenting to facts and trusting in a person." True saving faith includes knowledge, approval and personal trust, as Grudem (1994:709) explains. Regarding the relationship between repentance and faith, Behm (1967:1002f) notes that in the preaching of Jesus faith grows out of conversion: "Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk 1:15). This faith is not a second thing, which Jesus requires, but a development of the positive side of the turning to God. "Scripture puts repentance and faith together as different aspects of the one act of coming to Christ for salvation" (Grudem 1994:713). Peace (2004:8) therefore emphasizes that in a true biblical conversion, repentance and faith come together:

> Christian conversion is characterized by a decision (repentance) based on understanding (awareness, consciousness, conviction) to turn around from a life of sin (darkness, disobedience, waywardness) to the way of Jesus (light, God, holiness) with a resultant new way of living in the context of the kingdom of God.

This expresses very well how repentance and faith come together in a true biblical conversion. It is a change *away* from something old and undesirable, and it is also a change *toward* something new and desirable (Kasdorf 1980:24). We will now see what the consequences of such a conversion are.

2.1.3 Consequences of Conversion

There is a whole range of positive consequences or results of conversion, among which are forgiveness of sin, being born again (Burkhardt 1999:53), being reconciled to God (Triebel 1976:213) and having eternal life. All those who are converted are regenerated (Stott 1975:114) and justified (McGrath 1997:437-440). The experience of salvation does not only have a

'vertical' dimension, but leads to a total transformation of human life (Bosch 1991:107). New converts are included into the community of the new people of God (Wright 2004:19).

Triebel (1976:211) points out that conversion does not result in a new status, but in a new relationship, a relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course this newly won relationship to Jesus Christ implies also a new relationship to other people, and so the change of lordship is accompanied by a change of lifestyle. Step by step the life of the new Christian is being changed because the conscience now influenced by the Word of God is demanding obedience. In this sense conversion is never complete. Kasdorf (1980:25) writes that "spiritual conversion, in order to be deep and lasting in both temporal and spiritual life, means to be turned, changed, transformed, renewed, reborn, reconciled, and restored; it is a process which affects the total life-way of the convert." The result of this conversion is "that the person experiences *motion* in terms of external, directional change and *emotion* in terms of internal, attitudinal change" (:61).

The new relationship with Jesus is best described in terms of discipleship. Conversion is the answer to the demand of Jesus Christ, who, as the only Lord, wants to shape and influence the life of the individual. In the New Testament the confession that 'Jesus is the Lord' has determined the faith of believers right from the beginning. The believers followed this Lord who had shown his power in the resurrection. For Paul the confession of Jesus as the Lord was the centre of his faith (Triebel 1976:212). Accepting Jesus as Lord meant (and means) to follow him as a disciple and to learn from him. Peace (2004:8f) therefore insists that the emphasis should be on making disciples and not just converts, something that the different Christian traditions do not always do (cf Rommen 1994:150). Burkhardt (1999:25) points out that the term "disciple" is the one most commonly used by the Christians in Acts to refer to themselves and when describing the fact that people became Christians (Acts 6:1, 7; 14:7). The term means a continuous relationship with Jesus and submission to his authority. One becomes a disciple by "calling on the name of Jesus" (Acts 2:21; 22:16). This constitutes the decisive and basic step in transferring the ownership of one's life to the Lord, on whom one calls as Saviour and Lord (Burkhardt 1999:26). Peters (1972:189) mentions that discipleship is a path rather than an achievement. There are no graduated disciples. "To follow Christ means to identify ourselves daily in the totality of our life with the totality of the life of Christ" (:186). Discipleship to Jesus is at the very heart of the gospel (Willard 1998).

2.1.4 Different Models of Conversion

Conversions do not always happen in the same way. There are different patterns. This is already apparent in the NT. Peace (1999:4) shows that Mark offers a different paradigm for conversion than does Paul. What he describes in his Gospel is the process of conversion for the Twelve, by

which they gradually turned from their culturally derived understanding of Jesus as a great teacher, to the amazing discovery that he is actually the Messiah who is the Son of God. Paul's conversion, on the other hand, was a one-time event. But even at the core of Paul's conversion there are three elements: "There are *seeing* and a *turning* which together result in a *transformation*" (:25). Peace continues:

> At the core of the concept of conversion is the idea of turning. On one side of that turning are the conditions that facilitate or enable the turning to take place (insight). On the other side of the turning is the outcome or result of the turning (transformation). This is the pattern defined in Acts 26:18 (:37)

Peace uses this pattern in order to describe Paul's conversion (:37ff). *Insight*, the context of conversion, is the process by which the previous set of assumptions – about God and about oneself – is shattered by the encounter with Christ who reveals them to be faulty. The result is a new set of assumptions, a new framework that better contains reality (:53f). *Turning*, the encounter of Paul with Jesus, meant that he turned around and started living in a new direction and a new way (:56). He encountered Jesus Christ and submitted to him as the Lord, the Son of God (:99). The third phase in the conversion of Paul, *transformation*, happened because he acted upon his numinous experience (:88). His commitment was translated into a new life experience in which there was a different inner dynamic as well as a different outer lifestyle and calling. All this took place within three different spheres: It was an encounter with himself, with Jesus and with his culture. And in each of these spheres there was insight, turning, and transformation (:100).

Peace (1999:101) then goes on to search for these same movements, within these three spheres, in the experience of the Twelve. He is convinced that what happened to the Twelve can indeed be called 'conversion' in the full NT sense because it bears the same three core characteristics found in Paul's conversion. But the *dynamics* of their conversions were quite different from Paul's. What was an *event* for Paul is described by Mark as a *process* for the Twelve. Peace (:106) describes this:

> It took the Twelve a long time to see their true states before God and to understand who Jesus really was, whereas it took only one question to reveal to Paul his state before God and one response for him to understand who Jesus was. It took the Twelve a long time to turn fully to Jesus. If Paul's turning took place in a flash, theirs took place in fits and starts over the course of their years with Jesus. It took a long time for the Twelve to understand what Jesus was saying about true discipleship, whereas Paul's transformation was immediate. But what happened to the Twelve bears the same fundamental marks of NT conversion as found in the prototype of St. Paul. It just happened in a different way.

Peace's (:106) conclusion is that the conversion of the Twelve offers *another* model for how conversion can come about.

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Bryant (1999:179-181) describes Paul's conversion as a model for a sudden, dramatic, ecstatic conversion which is due to external divine intervention. This has become the main model in Christian thinking about conversion. By contrast to this model Bryant sees the conversion of Augustine as a model for a conversion that happened as a process which unfolded over his whole lifetime and reached its culmination at a particular moment (:182). Augustine himself put it in the words that he was "on the road to conversion" (:183). In Bryant's opinion, the conversion of Augustine is an archetypal account of "humans being drawn to God, often despite their own surface will, until they finally turned towards God in whom they realize the deepest object of their longing and striving" (:184). Bryant (:187) then describes the classic form of conversion in Protestant Christianity as it emerged from the reform movements in Puritan England during the 1600s and in the American colonies of the 1700s. The stages were: "(1) a conviction of sin; (2) a recognition of one's need for a redeemer; (3) an experience of redeeming love or assurance of salvation; and (4) the living of the Christian life." Somehow parallel developments emerged within the German Pietism, particularly with August Herman Franke in the 17th and 18th century, who also emphasized conversion as a necessary requirement for the life of a Christian (Burkhardt 1999:69). One result of this new emphasis was the tendency to demand a "struggle for penance" as a prerequisite for the assurance of salvation (Schmidt 1979:424), another the demand for a single conversion experience that can be dated and without one can not be sure of his or her salvation (Joest 1957:981; Schmidt 1961:370). *The Hong Kong Call to Conversion* (Adeney et al 1988:6), however, warns of the danger of too readily concluding that only one model is acceptable or appropriate: "The multiplicity of models can help us to recognize and acknowledge the richness of the process of conversion, reminding us of the mystery of the sovereign activity of God as he calls people into a personal relationship with himself."

In his theology of mission, Freytag (in Triebel 1976:65ff) tries to find out what happens when the Gospel meets a person. Therefore he describes carefully the process of conversion and shows, that this happens in three steps: (1) the impulse (*Anstoss*), (2) the struggle for a decision (*Ringen um die Entscheidung*) and (3) the breakthrough to faith (*Durchbruch zum Glauben*). This shows that conversion in the biblical understanding is really a process, however long it may take. Because conversion is a real event, its processes can be described (:209).

2.1.5 Implications for Evangelism

The way we understand conversion determines how we do evangelism (Peace 1999:286). Therefore it is necessary to look at the implications the biblical-theological understanding of conversion has for mission and evangelism.

2.1.5.1 Conversion is Both, Once and Continuous

The word *conversion* has been used in Christian history in two main ways. On one hand conversion is seen as relating to an externally recognizable adhesion to the Christian faith, an external act of a religious change. On the other hand the word is used to refer to a critical internal religious change in a person or persons within the Christian community (Walls 2004:2). Conversion is not only a one-time decision to follow Christ. It also refers to the repentance of Christians when they have done wrong, or their response when they are called to a specific ministry (Burkhardt 1999:57ff; Bloesch 1984).

The thrust of the biblical understanding of conversion as 'repentance and faith in Christ' aims, as we have seen, at a basic reorientation of one's life, a turning *from* sin and a turning *to* God. In this sense conversion is a response to evangelism (Bosch 1991:413). But faith and repentance continue throughout life as attitudes of the heart (Grudem 1994:717). Burkhardt (1999:24) points out that the expression "to believe" in the NT means that someone is experiencing a continuing change in his or her life. Willard (1998:49) rightly criticizes the tendency to perceive the gospel as simply a "gospel of sin management." The gospel is not just an arrangement to go to heaven but rather the good news that we can live in the kingdom, now and forever, through reliance on Jesus, and this involves a transformation of life and character. Such a life of faith is characterized by the tension between indicative and imperative. The justified believer finds himself in a struggle between the Spirit and the flesh (Rom 8:4ff; Gal 5:16ff), as Michel remarks (1975:602). In this sense Luther and Calvin understood the whole Christian life as a life of conversion (Bloesch 1984:273). Christians who call others to conversion need to keep in mind that conversion also concerns them! As Wright reminds us (2004:14), God's people are in continuous need of a radical conversion themselves.

2.1.5.2 Conversion – Human Decision or Divine Gift?

Triebel (1976:209) is right when he states that the proclamation of the gospel expects conversion. This is what happens worldwide and it can be recorded empirically. People enter into a new relationship with the one God and from this their whole life is being changed. Reports from different countries and psychological observations show that people need to make a decision after they have heard the Christian message. Biblically this can be seen in the fact that the call to returning, or to conversion, is often put in the imperative. It demands a decision. The place of this decision is in the conscience (:210).

In view of this definition of conversion as a human response to divine initiative, Erickson (1985:941f) reminds us that we should not forget that repentance and faith are both gifts from God. Jesus made it clear that a conviction of sin, which is presupposed by repentance, is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11; see also 6:37, 44f). Both repentance and faith are gracious

works of God in the life of the believer (Erickson 1985:942; Bloesch 1984; Hiebert 1974:4). A person is not "being converted" by someone else, but "converts" himself or herself. The process of conversion must therefore be described as a "discovery" which afterwards, once the person has found a new identity in the Gospel, appears to the person as something that has happened to him or her through a mysterious working of God in his or her life (Schäfer 2003:169). The *Hong Kong Call to Conversion* (Adeney et al 1988:3) expresses this in the following words:

> Fallen men and women have no natural ability to turn to God and it is only through the mystery of the Holy Spirit's gracious sovereign action that they become free to respond to the Gospel message by faith and to be converted.

The *Manila Manifesto* (B 5, in Douglas 1990:31) has made it clear, that mission is not a human endeavour, but the Holy Spirit works mission by preparing the hearers, convicting the sinful, enabling them to repent and to believe. God is the one active in bringing people to repentance and faith. Yet he will not do it without missionaries. Therefore the church is not only active in mission, but engaged in prayer as well, because prayer shows dependency upon God's work (Piper 1993:54). What we need to point out here is that God is already at work in the life of a person, long before conversion, and we cannot describe conversion in terms of a free human decision. Without God's saving action in Christ, conversion would not be possible and without the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, it would not be desirable (Wells 1989:21). But nevertheless there is a relationship between God's work and human responsibility plus action in conversion. For Peace (2004:8), conversion is the human experience of salvation whereas regeneration is the hidden work of God. But our actions in conversion should not be understood synergistically. We are active only on the basis of and through the power of God's grace. Bloesch (1984:273) writes: "We do not procure salvation, but we decide for salvation once our inward eyes are opened to its reality." In this sense conversion is a gift – a supernatural and instantaneous work of God (Love 2000). It is a mysterious moment within an indeterminate process!

We have to be careful to give both roles in conversion, the human as well as the divine, proper consideration, as Kasdorf (1980:134) writes, using Tippett's (1973:122) expression of a "change by *directed advocacy*". This means that there needs to be a challenge. The missionary proclamation has, like all biblical preaching, a homiletical goal. Listeners are challenged to react, to take a wilful decision. This challenge, according to Beyerhaus (1996:472f), consists of four elements: a challenge to faith, conversion, baptism and service. Peters (1972:209) writes that "the principal task of the church is to communicate intelligibly and effectively a divine message to the world in order to bring man to a living relationship with Christ by faith." (cf the Lausanne Covenant in paragraph 3 and 9 and the Manila Manifesto A 2, in Douglas 1990:20, 22, 28). At the same time we acknowledge with Packer (1961:27) that we do not have to assume

responsibility for the results of our evangelistic efforts: "While we must always remember that it is our responsibility to proclaim salvation, we must never forget that it is God who saves."

This biblical understanding of conversion will serve as a basis to evaluate conversions in the Sudan that are the focus of this study.

2.2 Sociological and Psychological Understanding of Conversion

A second aspect in the study of conversion is the sociological and psychological understanding. Insights from these areas of study are helpful in different ways for understanding religious conversion. We will begin with the definition of conversion.

2.2.1 Definition of Conversion

In his excellent book about religious conversion, Rambo (1993:xii-xviii) explains that he understands 'genuine' conversion as a total transformation of the person by the power of God. This transformation is influenced by social, cultural, personal, and religious forces. But conversion needs to be radical, which means it strikes at the root of the human predicament. He then defines conversion in the following way (:5):

> Conversion is a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations. In this book we will see that (a) conversion is a process over time, not a single event; (b) conversion is contextual and thereby influences and is influenced by a matrix of relationships, expectations, and situations; and (c) factors in the conversion process are multiple, interactive, and cumulative. There is no one cause of conversion, no one process, and no simple consequence of that process.

Bischofberger (1998) claims that there need to be four criteria checked in order to speak of a conversion: a holistic reorientation, a reinterpretation of the past life, a turning away from the past life, and a reshaping of the present and future life within a new social net of relations (religious community). However, Lienemann-Perrin (2004:222) points out that these criteria only seldom come together in a biography. The last criterion about the reshaping of social relations is of particular interest for this research about the conversion process of Muslims in the Sudan. Ideally there should be some continuity of the former social relationships as well as the establishment of new relationships with Christians, to enhance further conversion opportunities.

Conversions occur in different types. Bryant and Lamb (1999:12) note that there is something of a sliding scale regarding conversion: "From the dramatic personal and inward experience of being turned around, to a very external institutional and formal process of induction into a new religious community." Rambo (1993:12-14) portrays the nature of conversion in terms of "how far someone has to go socially and culturally in order to be considered a convert." He then describes five types of conversion: *Apostasy* or *defection*,

intensification, *affiliation*, *institutional transition*, and *tradition transition*. The type of *tradition transition* conversion seems to best describe the kind of conversions researched in this paper. For Rambo this is "the movement of an individual or group from one major religious tradition to another. Moving from one worldview, ritual system, symbolic universe, and life-style to another is a complex process that often takes place in a context of cross-cultural contact and conflict" (:14; cf Syrjänen 1984:33f).

Figure 1: Conversion Types according to Kasdorf (1980:76)
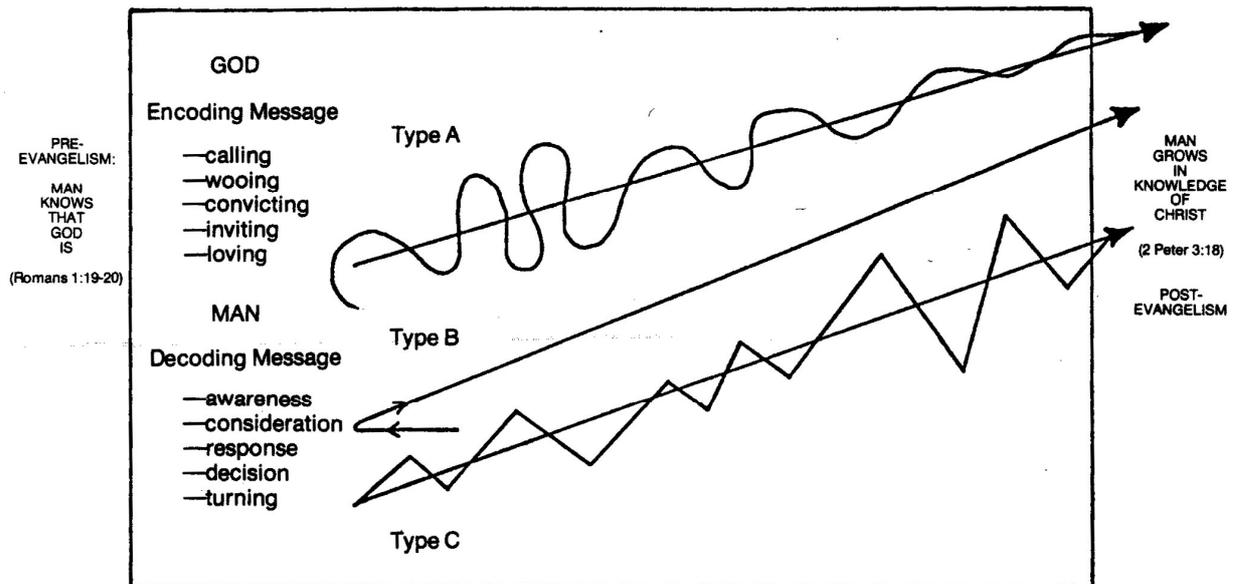
According to Kasdorf (1980:68), "conversion is an empirical happening, profoundly affecting both, the rational as well as the emotional, the relational as well as the behavioural aspects of one's lifestyle." In his study about conversion, he describes three types of conversion (:69ff; see Figure 1): (a) the volitional and gradual type, (b) the sudden self-surrender type, and (c) the peak experiences. In the sudden self-surrendering type, "the Holy Spirit seems to compress the operative psychodynamics into one short span of time with or without the accompanying phenomenon of a trance or ecstasy-experience" (:73). Whereas the experience of the self-surrender type is almost entirely unconscious, the convert of the volitional type experiences a gradual progress of maturational growth (:73). The third type of conversion, the peak experiences type, consists of a series of religious happenings which in the end lead the person to a conversion (:71). Kasdorf (:75) observes that whereas the first type of conversion often occurs in a Christian context, the third type often occurs in a totally non-Christian context. These three types correspond partly to Engel's (1979:69f; 1988:2) categories: 'Sudden', 'unconscious' and 'gradual' conversion. The 'sudden' conversion is basically the same as Kasdorf's 'sudden self-surrender' type; the 'unconscious' conversion corresponds to Kasdorf's

'volitional and gradual' type; whereas the 'gradual decision process' according to Engel is the most common way in which people with little or no prior knowledge of Christianity come to faith in Christ.

The overview of Kilbourne and Richardson (1989) provides a good introduction to conversion theory, categorizing the theories of religious conversion of over seventy sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists. They compare a climactic, passive (on the part of the converted) conversion to the more active role of converts. In the one case, converts are "caught off guard" by God. In the other, the individuals actively choose to continue to expose themselves to the new teaching (1989:4; cf Greenlee 1996:23). Both types can happen independently from other people (intra-individual) or in relation to other people (inter-individual) (Kilbourne & Richardson 1989:3). The active type of conversion is what Rambo (1993:56ff) calls the quest of human beings who continually seek to maximize meaning and purpose in life, to erase ignorance, and to resolve inconsistency. Quest is an ongoing process, but one that will greatly intensify during times of crisis. The question is, however, to what degree does a person who is exposed to new ideas respond to them. Rambo (:59) shows different modes of such a response, from active questing, through a receptive, rejecting, or apathetic response, to a passive quest. He is convinced that most converts are somehow actively involved in their own conversion process (:58).

Conversion is usually sealed by a ritual, performed by the appropriate functionary (Taylor 1999:39). Rituals help to consolidate the new belief of the convert and his or her involvement in a group (Rambo & Farhadian 1999:32). In the case of conversion to Christianity, the ritual is water baptism. Rituals connected with conversion are not meaningless (as they are sometimes looked upon in the West), but they express the significance of the decision to the community (Hiebert 1988:15-17). In an Islamic context, the step to take baptism often brings serious implications for the convert and is therefore a controversial one, as the study of Wilson (1995) shows.

2.2.2 Motives for Conversion

According to Rambo (1993:139), one of the most fascinating topics in the study of conversion and commitment is the nature of people's motivation for conversion. Maurer (1999:85) points out that in former times missionaries tended to give the impression that the spiritual motive was the only reason why people accepted the Christian faith. In recent times, however, it became clear that motivations other than the spiritual often play a significant role in the decision making process.

One motive that can be seen often in a conversion is the response to a crisis experience (Rambo 1993:44). Wohlrab-Sahr (1999) did research on conversions to Islam in Germany and in the USA and concluded that the central dynamic of a change in religion cannot be reduced to a cognitive new-orientation (Wohlrab-Sahr 2002:88ff). Rather, crisis experiences in the life of the convert, like failure of social ascent, problematic ethnic affiliation or sexual exploitation, are being put into a religious framework in which a solution is being sought. According to Wohlrab-Sahr's understanding, in such cases conversion is connected with the expectation that personal sufferings and negative experiences will be compensated. In a research on young adults from the white urban middle class who converted to orthodox Judaism, Catholicism, Hare Krishna and Bahai-Religion, Ullman (1989; cf Popp-Baier 2002:96f) comes to a similar conclusion when she writes that most of these converts went through a time of emotional problems before their conversion, which seems to have been the major reason for their conversion. Apparently cognitive factors did not play an important role. Rambo (1993:46) sees two basic types of crisis as important to the conversion process: Crises that question the fundamental orientation to life, and crises that are in themselves mild but "are the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back."

According to Ahlstrand (2003:124), studies, particularly about conversions to new religious movements, show that "very rarely do people change their religious belonging because they are intellectually convinced by the arguments of the proponents of the new religion." Usually they join because they find an attractive atmosphere in the new group and only later, through socialisation into that group, do they learn about the doctrines and give their assent to them (cf Lienemann-Perrin 2004:222). But there are other cases where conversions are motivated by an intensifying of religious affiliation, in which the convert searches for a stable religious identity which was not found in the previous religion. This is what Köse (1996:95) found in his study of British converts to Islam. In such a conversion, which usually takes place as a process over a long period, cognitive factors play an important role, as Popp-Baier (2002:99) argues. For Köse (1996:95), the stronger emphasis on the turbulent background rather than on cognitive elements in religious conversion, fits conversions to new religious movements in the West but not conversions of Westerners to Islam.

Van Butselaar (1981:112f) lists four categories of motives from people in Rwanda who embraced the Christian faith: spiritual, social, material and personal motives. He critically points out that conversion to Christianity in Africa is motivated by a mixture of spiritual, social, material, and personal factors. But motivations other than the spiritual may, on closer examination, prove to have a thoroughly biblical and Christian background. Motivations may also change over time, so that an initial motive for conversion may be superseded later on by another one, as Rambo (1993:140) observes.

The six conversion motifs[7] which Lofland and Skonovd (1981) describe are helpful to understand conversion better. They found intellectual, mystical, experimental, affectional, revivalist, and coercive conversion motifs and analysed these in terms of the degree of social pressure, temporal duration, the level of affective arousal, the affective content, and the belief-participation sequence (:375).

One of the conclusions in regard to motives for conversion which Rambo (1993:140) draws is, that each person converts when it is to his or her *perceived* advantage in the form of satisfaction, benefit, fulfilment, improvement, and/or compulsion.

2.2.3 Factors that Lead to Conversion

The motives for a conversion are in themselves influenced by different factors that work together in leading the person to accept a new faith system. The *Hong Kong Call to Conversion* (Adeney et al 1988:5) points out that whereas in the past conversions were categorized as either sudden or gradual, it is now recognized that different factors might be the major ingredients in different types of conversions. The paper mentions particularly the intellectual, social and affective factors. We want to look at some of these factors now.

The socio-political context in which the convert lives is one important factor in a conversion. Van Butselaar (1981:113) points out that "the social structure in a country plays an important role in conditioning the motives of conversion to Christianity". This view is supported by Rambo (1993:41f) who believes that "indigenous cultures that are stable, resilient, and effective will have few people receptive to conversion." It is the marginal people who are disconnected from the sources of power and support of the traditional culture, who are more receptive or vulnerable to change and are therefore prepared to accept a new system. If people live, however, in a culture which is facing a crisis, they will be more likely to convert (:41).

Rambo (1993:47) observes that "few conversions take place in areas with well-organized, literate religions supported by the economic, political, and cultural powers of the region. Christianity gains few converts from Islam." It is easier to gain converts among adherents of folk religion, because they are "less resilient in the face of the world religions – especially Christianity and Islam." In general, one can say that most human beings simply follow the religious tradition into which they are born (Bryant & Lamb 1999:14).

Rambo (1993:48) points out that stress, tension, or a crisis alone, are not enough to explain conversion, but they may be the initial catalysts of a conversion process. He then lists a

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[7] The difference between *motive* and *motif* in regard to conversions is insignificant, since both have to do with something which causes a person to change his or her religion (Maurer 1999:32).

number of catalysts for crisis which are all factors that can lead to a conversion (:48). The following are the most important for our study: Mystical experiences, near-death-experiences, illness and healing, dissatisfaction with present life, desire for transcendence, and apostasy. Köse (1996:85f) refers to the personal problems which Snow and Philips (1980:433) list as characterising the life situation prior to conversion: (1) spiritual problems (meaninglessness, lack of direction and purpose, etc); (2) interpersonal problems (marital problems, child rearing problems, parental problems); (3) character problems (drugs, alcohol, etc); (4) material problems (unemployment, job dissatisfaction, etc); and (5) physical problems (headaches, nervousness, chronic illness, etc). But Köse (:94) concludes his study of British converts to Islam with the statement, that "emotional and cognitive concerns seem to be equal in characterising the two year period preceding conversion."

Another factor that plays an important role in conversion is the role of the change agent or the advocate, as Rambo (1993:66) calls this person. For Rambo, "it can be a most remarkable event when an advocate and a potential convert come together and begin to engage in processes that will result, for some people, in conversion." In order for this to happen, it is necessary that the 'right' potential convert comes into contact, under proper circumstances at the proper time, with the 'right' advocate and religious option. (:87). Köse (1996:110f) found that the converts to Islam which he interviewed entered Islam for a variety of reasons, but the conversion seldom emerged without human contact. Ullman (1989:81) puts it this way: "Increased contact with a devout follower of the new faith increases the likelihood of conversion."

We will see later in this study how far the discussed types of conversion, the different motives and factors, and the passive or active roles of converts are reflected in the conversion stories analysed.

2.3 The Spiritual Decision Process

A third aspect of understanding conversion centres around the fact that conversion is often a process. Engel (1990) reports that "gradual conversion is the most common manner in which those with little or no prior exposure or meaningful Christian background come to faith in Christ" (cf Van Butselaar 1981:113). This process of conversion is described in different ways. One way of understanding it is to look at the different phases or stages.

2.3.1 The Conversion Process as a Model of Different Phases

Rambo and Farhadian (1999:23f; cf Rambo 1993) propose seven stages in this process: (1) Context: the overall environment in which change takes place; (2) crisis: the catalyst for change, a rupture in the 'taken-for-granted' world that triggers the next stage; (3) quest: the person

actively seeks new ways of confronting the predicament; (4) encounter: the contact between the person searching and the advocate of a new alternative; (5) interaction: an intensification of the process in which the advocates and potential converts 'negotiate' changes in thoughts, feelings and actions; (6) commitment: persons decide to devote their life to a new spiritual orientation; and (7) consequences: assessing the effects of converting.[8] However, this stage model is neither singularly unique nor universal. Stages do not occur always in the same order. The conversion sometimes takes place by a spiralling effect, a going back and forth between stages, as Rambo and Farhadian (1999:24) explain. This model is nonetheless helpful in describing and evaluating the different issues that influence and make up a conversion.

Green (1989:237f) views the process of conversion as a large number of discrete decisions, each one for or against a commitment to Christ. A more specific way to describe this process comes from Tippet (1987:75f) for whom the process of conversion includes "a period of awareness, a point of realization, a period of decision-making, a precise point of encounter and finally a period of incorporation" (cf Rommen 1994:44f). Kasdorf (1980:138-140) uses Tippet's model and adds a fourth stage which he calls 'growth of believers in Christ'. Hesselgrave (1991:618ff) describes five phases in the conversion process. The whole process is set in motion through a *discovery* of something new which leads to a time of *deliberation* in which the person considers the possibility of changing. If the result is positive, the person will *determine* to actually adopt this new way. Often the convert is next exposed to pressure to return to the old beliefs. Only when these *dissonances* are overcome will there be a complete identification with Christ and integration into the body of Christ, which can be called the submission to certain *disciplines* (Rommen 1994:101).[9]

Still another model that explains the spiritual process leading to conversion in terms of different phases or stages has become known as the *Engel Scale* (Søgaard 2000; Dayton 1981; Engel 1979; Engel 1988; Engel 1990; Engel & Dyrness 2000). The basic function of the Scale is to indicate that a decision for Christ is not just one event, but a journey or series of events that lead toward spiritual maturity. The model suggests that everyone is positioned somewhere along a continuum in terms of relationship to Christ (Fraser 1979:135). The Scale, first developed by Engel and Søgaard, was refined by Engel who follows the paradigm of a linear approach to decision making as seen in the behaviour of consumers: knowledge – belief – attitude – intention – behaviour. This unites both cognitive and affective dimensions on one linear dimension (Søgaard 2000:311). This approach is similar to the one Rogers (1983) uses in his concept of

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[8] See Appendix 3, "The Converting Process according to Rambo" (1993:168f).
[9] See Appendix 4, "Models of Stages of the Spiritual Decision Process".

'diffusion of innovations', a way of describing how new ideas and technologies are adopted by communities. The 'diffusion of innovation' approach has also been used to describe conversions (Rambo 1993:95). Rogers (1983:165) sees five stages in the innovation-decision process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Engel's and Roger's stages are similar because they both use a one-dimensional scale.

Søgaard (1986:246-263; 1993:64-69; 1996:56-61; Figure 2) moved beyond this model and developed a two-dimensional scale with a cognitive and an affective dimension, involving both knowledge and feelings. The affective dimension is primarily the person's feeling towards the gospel, the church and Christ himself. Søgaard suggests that "conversion is to a large extent the crossing of the affective line from negative to positive, and it can occur at multiple places (along the cognitive axis)" (1996:59). In other words, conversion is mainly a change of allegiance (:58).

Figure 2: The Concept of Spiritual Progress according to Søgaard (1993:65)
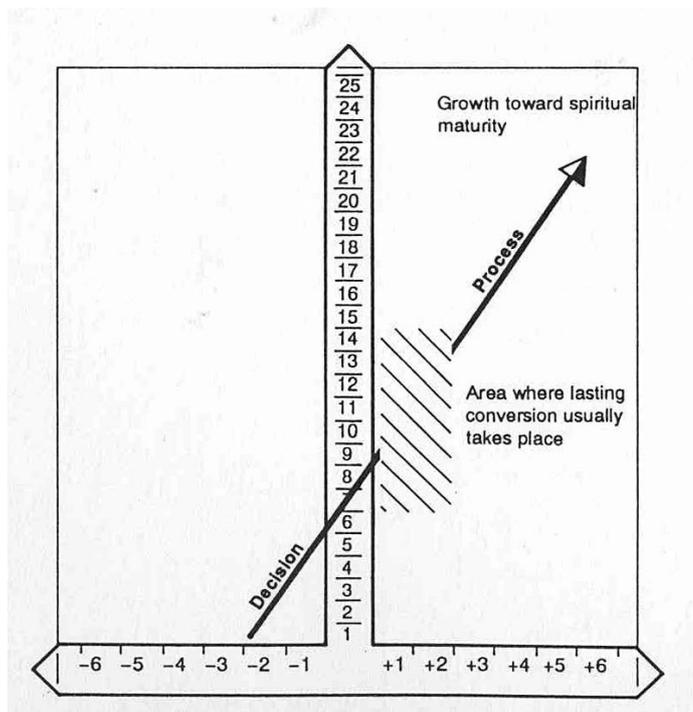
What is helpful in Søgaard's model is that it illustrates vividly that a person can make a decision for Christ even though on the vertical, cognitive axis he or she is very low, which means there is little knowledge of Christ and salvation. A person can cross the line at any point on the cognitive axis - even though Søgaard suggests an area were lasting conversions *usually* take place (:59). Søgaard (:60) uses his model to describe the positions of various audiences in communicating the gospel (Figure 3), but it can also be used to some extent to map the process of conversion for an individual. In his example there is one tribal group, (A), which does not have an awareness of

the Christian gospel, but is not really opposed to it. They are close to "0" on the affective line as well as on the cognitive line. On the other hand there is a group of young people in a Western country, (B), who have been brought up in a Christian context, but have rejected Christianity. They are close towards "- 6" on the affective line even though they are higher on the cognitive line than group A because they do have some knowledge about Christianity.

Figure 3: Various Audience Positions according to Søgaard (1993:68)
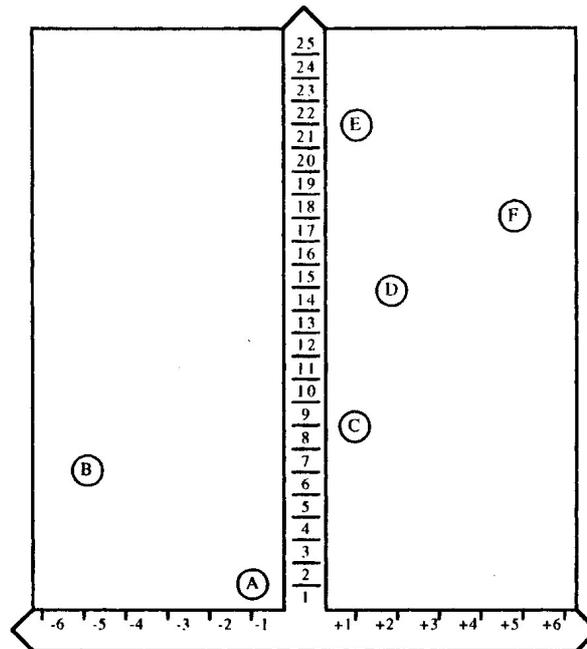
Søgaard's two-dimensional model was modified by Gray (2005; Figure 4) in whose model the vertical line actually crosses the horizontal line. It is therefore clear that the convert needs to cross a certain point on both lines, the affective as well as the cognitive. But it is not necessary to cross the line exactly at the intersection of the two axes. Neither Søgaard nor Gray defines the different points on the scales in their respective models.

Because in evangelism among Muslims the main problem is not one of ignorance but of misunderstandings of Christianity, Fraser (1979:136-138) suggested that the model should be adjusted for the context of evangelisation among Muslims. This has been done by Mirza (in Livingstone 1993:235-238), who divides the steps to conversion into four major parts: 'tilling' (identification), 'sowing' (exposure), 'sowing & watering' (investigation), and 'reaping' (harvesting). These steps were further elaborated in an article by an anonymous missionary in the Muslim world (IL 1997), adding a preliminary stage called 'casuals' (casual relationships). Based mainly on these two models, I have organized the different aspects and stages of the conversion process of Muslims from Sudan in the form of a table, enlarging it slightly and dividing it into seven columns: (1) God's role, (2) man's process, (3) stage, (4) role of change

agent, (5) ways of achieving objectives, (6) assessment, (7) further considerations.[10] This table was developed before conducting and analysing the interviews of this research project.

Figure 4: The Gray Matrix (Gray 2005)

The Gray Matrix
Relative media effectiveness

Able to teach others

Antagonistic

Enthusiastic

Knows nothing of the Gospel

Attitude

Knowledge

Copyright Frank Gray FEBC
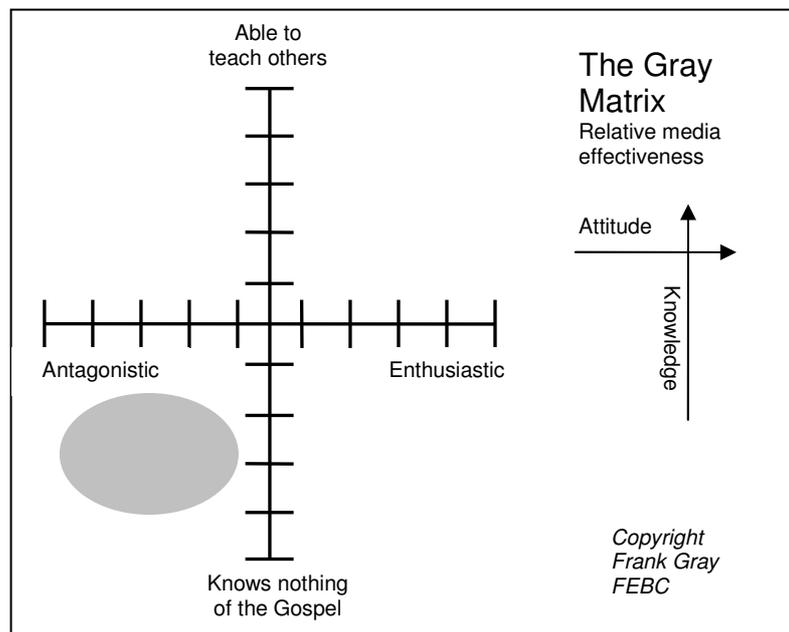
2.3.2 The Conversion Process as a Model of Centred Sets

Greenlee (1996:21) points out that Søgaard's understanding of conversion as a two-dimensional process is an improvement to the 'ordinary' Engel-scale, but still has a weakness in that it suggests a specific point at which the axis is crossed and one becomes a Christian. The point of crossing, however, is often difficult to determine. A better concept to describe conversion for him is Hiebert's 'centred sets' (Hiebert 1988; 1994:122-131). Greenlee (1996:22f) writes: "Conversion has to do with the direction or focus of one's life more than the 'distance' one is from Christ. There is a difference between the converted and the unconverted, but clear boundaries and sharply delineated distinctions between them may not be easily observed." In the concept of centred sets, Hiebert (1994:126-27) sees conversion in terms similar to the biblical expressions of turning, changing direction and heading toward the centre, Christ. Change occurs in distance from the centre as one learns more about and grows deeper in relationship to Christ.

For Hiebert (1988:3ff; cf 1994:110ff) the main issue about conversion is how to define who exactly is a Christian. This is basically a question of defining categories. There are three possible ways to create categories (Figure 5). In 'bounded-sets' there is a clear distinction

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[10] See Appendix 2, "A Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims".

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between different categories. Conversion has to do with the boundaries between them. It is to move from one category to another. This understanding requires a clear definition of what makes a person a Christian, something that is not easy to do (1988:3f). In 'fuzzy-sets' there is a continuum from being 'totally in' to being 'totally out'. But there are no sharp boundaries. In regard to conversion from another religion to Christianity it is unclear whether a person is already a Christian or not, which raises difficult theological problems (:4-6). A third way of creating categories is the 'centred or relational sets'. This way does not look at what things are in themselves (intrinsic definition), but at their relationships to something else (extrinsic definition). Conversion in this understanding is to change directions or relationships. In Christian terms it is to turn from other gods to Jesus Christ as Lord of one's life. Once a person has turned, he or she continues to move towards Christ. The main issue is one of direction, even though there are differences regarding the distance to the centre. A person may be far from Christ in understanding and life, but face Christ and move towards him. Or a person may know much about Christ and be close to him, yet be moving away from him (1988:6-7; 1994:125f).

Figure 5: Typology of Sets according to Hiebert (1994:112)
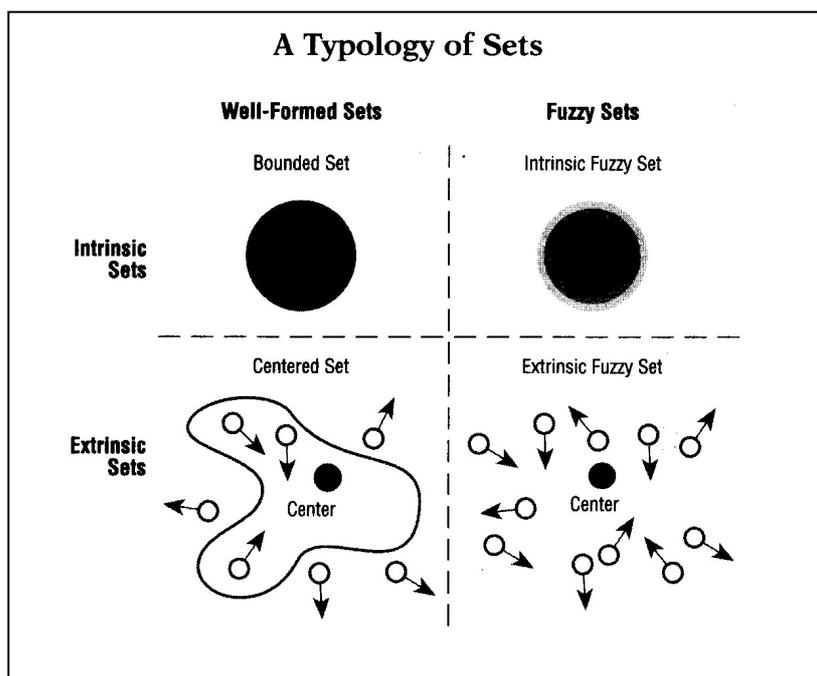
In cases where a person is not aware of a particular point at which a decision was taken to cross the line during their conversion process, Hiebert's model is helpful to describe the identity of such a convert. It does not, however, describe the process of conversion. The model assumes that there was a point in the life of the convert where a turning-around took place, where the direction of life was changed and when the person started to face towards Christ (Hiebert 1994:126). In this sense Hiebert's model is not much different from Søgaard's model. The strong

point in Hiebert's model is that it does not focus on cognitive elements, on trying to define precisely what one must believe in order to be considered a Christian. Rather, it focuses on the idea of turning and going into a new direction, something that reflects very well the biblical understanding of conversion discussed earlier (Hiebert 1994:126). Hiebert (1988:9) writes: "We need to return to a biblical view of conversion which is both a point and a process, which has simple beginnings (a person can turn wherever he or she is) but has radical, lifelong consequences". Applying the concept of centred sets in evangelism means that a person can convert – turn around – with minimal information regarding Christ, but this does involve a change in relationship to Christ, a commitment to follow him, to learn more, and to obey him. Evangelism therefore needs to be connected with follow-up and discipleship training (:10).

Concerning the relationship between conversion and cognition, Hiebert (1988:10f) sees a weakness in the Engel-Scale because the importance of knowledge is being over-emphasized. "How much", he asks, "must one know to be saved, and what knowledge can be left until later spiritual growth"? He then points out the importance of feelings (affectivity) in a decision and explains that knowledge and feelings lead to decision and response (:11f). Hiebert also highlights the experience in many conversions, of an initial conversion that is generally followed by a period of evaluation during which the new way of life is critically examined. This can either lead to a turning back or to an affirmation of the decision. The implication for evangelism is that follow-up becomes very important (1988:12f). Evangelism for Hiebert involves both a point of decision and a process of growth (1994:130).

As we are analysing conversions in Sudan during this study, we will show which concept of the spiritual decision process best describes these conversions and which stages can be identified.

2.4 Results of other Research about Conversion of Muslims

Several studies have been published[11] about the conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith which are being used as a background for this study and as a tool for interpreting the interviews.[12] Syrjänen (1984) studied the conversion of Pakistani Muslims to Christianity in which the concepts of meaning and identity play major roles. Due to the fact that Christianity in Pakistan is associated with the lowest standing social groups, any prospective convert needs to develop a strong religious commitment in order to overcome the pressure to remain in his

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[11] Other studies are available to the researcher but for security reasons they have not been published and cannot be quoted in this paper.
[12] For a detailed overview of these researches and their different approaches and emphasis, see Appendix 5 "Research Projects of Conversion of Muslims Used for Analysis."

previous community (:8). Syrjänen analyses the conversion experiences of 36 converts according to Tippett's (1977) scheme of the conversion process, which includes a period of awareness, a period of decision, and a period of incorporation (Syrjänen 1984:63-66).

Greenlee (1996), who did a doctoral thesis about urban Muslim converts to Christianity in Morocco, identifies communication (print, radio, face-to-face witness, 'Jesus' Film), the social factor (the kind of witnesses, persecution, sibling sets), the cultural factor (sense of national identity, religious practice of the family, empathy from national Christians, interaction with the theory), and the supernatural factor (dreams, power encounters) as factors which contribute to or inhibit conversion. He cannot identify a specific process through which each individual passes in conversion to Christianity, but finds similarities "in the increase of cognitive understanding, affective attraction, and evaluative commitment to Jesus in the process of conversion to Christianity" (:24). Even though the exact point of conversion may be difficult to identify, Greenlee is convinced that "there is a point before which one does not have eternal life and after which one does" (:24). Greenlee (1996:143ff) compares some of the conversion experiences he has analysed with different theories about conversion. He writes that in general the cases fit the conversion theories of Tippett (1987) and Rambo (1993). The gradual conversion which was apparent in most cases fits the theory of Engel (1990). Some cases can best be explained according to Søgaard's theory (1993) where the knowledge of Christian concept was low, but the convert crossed "the affective line from negative to positive" (1993:64) and identified himself as a Christian. Greenlee also uses Hiebert's (1994) model of a centred set in order to describe the present condition of some of the converts. Concerning the timing and synergy of the factors that led to a conversion, Greenlee (1993:145f) comes to the conclusion that the different factors are mutually dependent variables.

Maurer (1999), who did a similar doctoral thesis, presents and analyses the conversion narratives of 20 converts (10 from Islam to Christianity and 10 from Christianity to Islam) in South Africa. He analyses these narratives in terms of five key conversion motives: religious, mystical, affectional, socio-political, and material (:122-126). Maurer understands conversion as a two-way movement which is not only based on a strictly religious motive, but also on a combination of various other motives. His five motives agree with those Rambo (1993:14-16) lists, except for the experimental, revivalist and coercive motive which Maurer did not find in the conversion narratives he analysed (Maurer 1999:127). According to Maurer's analysis, there are always several motives in operation in the process of conversion which interplay with, and therefore influence, each other. He presents a helpful diagram in which he shows that initially the whole process of conversion starts with one motive, followed by a period of interplay between

several other motives. This may lead to a further and final motive which results in the commitment being made to change one's religion (:130f; Figure 6). Maurer then writes:

> Previous research confirms that conversion contains a variety of different motives which may change, be adopted or adapted over time (cf Van Butselaar 1981:113). Motives of conversion vary from person to person and are multiple, interactive and cumulative (Rambo 1993:140).

Figure 6: Interrelation of Different Conversion Motives according to Maurer (1999:130)

Motive B

Entry   1.   Motive A   Motive D   2.   Exit

Motive C

Conversion Process
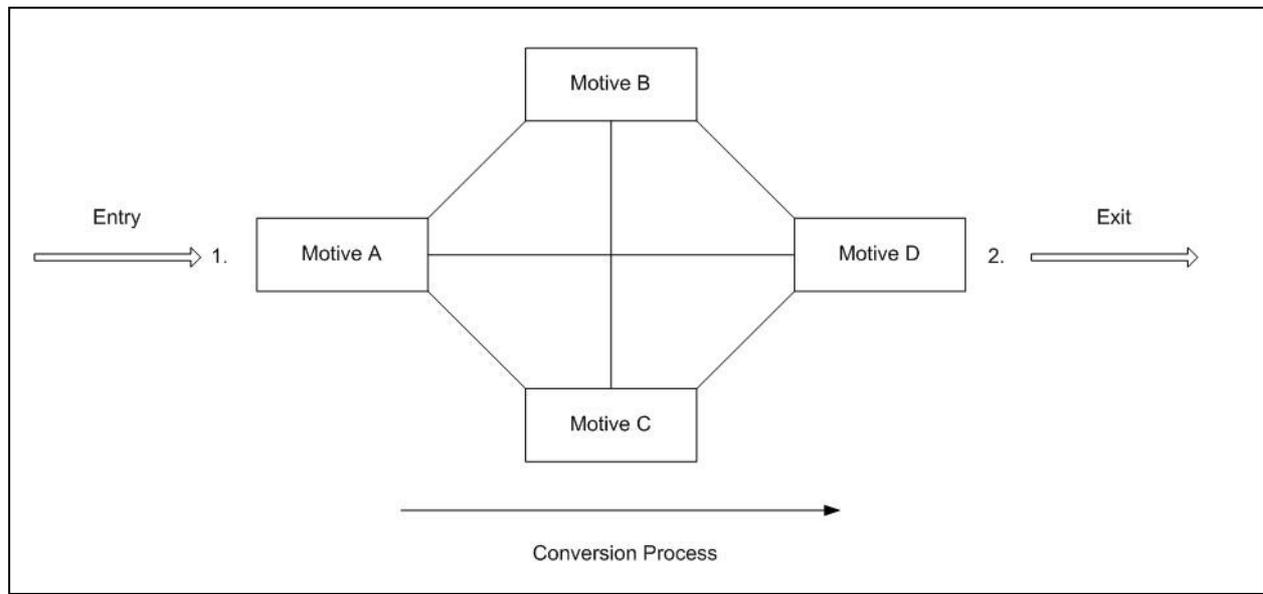
The literary research of Gaudeul (1999) is a valuable source of information about the conversion of Muslims. This research covers about one hundred written testimonies and public accounts by converts from different countries at different times (:25). Gaudeul does not want to prove the truth of Christianity, but wants to show how a 'real' call has led some Muslims to leave Islam and embrace Christianity (:11). The main categories of reasons for conversion he found out are: (1) Jesus is so attractive; (2) a thirst for truth; (3) people without a family searching for a new community; (4) the attraction of God's community – the church; (5) the need for forgiveness; (6) the thirst for God; and (7) the call from God.

Another study comes from Schmid (1999) who researched the identity development of Christians from a Turkish or Kurdish Muslim background now living in Germany. Schmid interviewed four Kurdish women and six Turkish men and tried to find out more about their family and religious background, how the converts responded to this background, which factors contributed to the conversion process, and how their identity developed after the conversion. Concerning the factors that contributed to the conversions, Schmid (:iv) observes that emotional and interpersonal aspects were dominant in the early phase of becoming open to the Christian message. At later stages it was more the rational aspects of comparing Islam and Christianity that

played a decisive role. The men had experienced different crises before their conversion which contributed to their conversion later on (:52). Since all interview partners grew up as second generation immigrants to a Western country, their life prior to conversion was characterized to some extent by hurts and tensions in various areas. The issue of experiencing healing and finding stability in a distorted life was therefore very important to these converts. Schmid (:vi) comes to the conclusion, that the experience of "a relationship to God based on confidence and inner healing through forgiveness and reconciliation, and a stable integration into a Christian environment" presents a Christian answer to the question of how migrants of the second generation can overcome difficulties with their identity development. Schmid does not engage in a discussion of the different models to describe the conversion process.

The most recent research has been done by Woodberry (2001), who has interviewed 600 converts from a Muslim background in different countries and published a preliminary analysis of 120 interviews. The main reasons which the converts gave as to why they were drawn to the Christian faith are as follows: (1) a longing for a sure salvation; (2) the attractive character of Jesus; (3) the power of the Bible as a holy book and the truth found in it; (4) the role of dreams and visions; (5) the power of love, seen in Christians and in God himself; and (6) a personal relationship with God. The results published in 2001 are only a preliminary report which concentrates on the motives for conversion. The paper does not deal with the conversion process or the result of conversion in the life of the converts.

These six detailed studies *together* present a helpful background against which the results of this present research can be evaluated. Concerning the reasons and factors for the conversion of Muslims in the Sudan, they can be compared easily with those explained in these six studies. As far as the process of conversion is concerned, Syrjänen (1984) and Greenlee (1996) refer to the models for this process, described earlier as a basis for their evaluation. None of these studies uses a model which is based on the Engel scale, for example the modified Engel scale for Muslims (Livingstone 1993; IL 1997) or the two-dimensional model of Søgaard (1993), even though Greenlee (1996) refers briefly to Engel and Søgaard. One of the tasks of this study is therefore to find out to what extent the model explained in Appendix 2 is helpful in describing the conversions analysed. Regarding the problems experienced during the process of conversion, they are mentioned only occasionally in these six studies, with no particular emphasis. The results of conversion are treated by Syrjänen (1984), mainly in terms of the issue of identity; by Greenlee (1996), who analyses the church involvement of the converts; and by Schmid (1999), who looks at the issues of identity and inner healing. This present study will go further than this and determine more precisely what the problems and the results of conversion are.

2.5 Conversion and Converts in the Sudan

Gaudeul (1999:18) calls the phenomenon of inter-religious conversions a sign of a healthy society. Christians and Muslims should stop viewing each other as rivals or a danger to the national identity. If pressure is needed to keep people within their religious community, it just shows that faith is missing. Officially the Government of the Sudan claims to offer religious freedom. For example, the Embassy of the Sudan in Washington (Sudan Embassy 2004) refers to the conversion of a Muslim Imam in 1995 as proof of religious tolerance in the country. In the same report Article 24 of the 1998 Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan is quoted:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and religion and the right to manifest and disseminate his religion or belief in teaching, practice or observance. No one shall be coerced to profess a faith in which he does not believe or perform rituals or worship that he does not voluntarily accept.

There are, however, reports of the forced Islamization of non-Muslims and the disappearance of a convert from Islam to Christianity (US Department of State 2003). The Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2002 from the US Department of State (2003) mentions:

> Under the 1991 Criminal Act, non-Muslims may convert to Islam; however, conversion by a Muslim was punishable by death. In practice converts usually were subjected to intense scrutiny, ostracization, intimidation, torture by authorities and encouraged to leave the country.

It is a general observance that for a Muslim in the Sudan, becoming a Christian leads to socially negative consequences.

The series "Faith in the Sudan" is an invaluable documentation of the history of Christianity in the Sudan, particularly volume 10, "Day of Devastation – Day of Contentment" (Werner, Anderson & Wheeler 2000). There is helpful information given on the history of Christian outreach in the Northern Sudan during the modern missionary period, for example about the first Muslim convert of the CMS in 1936 (:327f). However, the series does not contain much information about conversions from Islam to Christianity during the last 20 years. One exception is the story about the group of the extended family of Father Abdullahi (Parker 2000:115ff).

Concerning converts from the Muslim majority in Sudan, Johnstone, Mandryk and Johnstone (2001:599) claim that there are "probably some thousands of these. There are reports of whole villages turning to Christ." The DAWN Fridayfax (2004) quotes a Sudanese Episcopal Bishop who made the statement that "Muslims in the North are also finding Christ; I know of 100 Muslims who have found Christ in Khartoum alone." This research does not seek to validate such claims, but concentrates on the analysis of such conversions that can be documented. To the knowledge of the researcher, no detailed study like this has been done in the Sudan so far.

3. Researching Conversions in the Sudan

In this chapter I present an overview of the design and methodology of this study, introduce the converts from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan who were interviewed, and describe the way in which the data is processed and analysed.

3.1 Research Question and Methodology

This study examines conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan in order to find out reasons, factors, stages, problems and results of the conversion processes of Muslims. The method to achieve the objective of this research is an empirical study, using primary data gathered through semi-structured interviews with six converts. The study is conducted within the qualitative paradigm, which means that the researcher attempts to understand people in terms of their own definition of their world. The focus is on insider-perspective, on understanding the interviewed converts as much as possible from their own perspective (Mouton 2001:194). Such a study can be classified as a "case study of an ethnographic research" (:149). Spradley (1979:3) describes the essential core of ethnography as understanding "another way of life from the native point of view." Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people. This is exactly what this study attempts to do.

Concerning the study of conversions, there is an important relationship between the experience of converts (real-life problems = World 1) and the research problems (World 2), according to the distinction which Mouton (1996:7-12; 2001:137ff) makes. Phenomena from World 1 (conversion experiences) are selected and made into objects of inquiry, subjecting them to systematic and rigorous scientific research. By doing this, valid and reliable descriptions, models and theories of conversions can be formulated. This is something that the converts do not do in their everyday life, even though they may reflect on what happened to them and why it happened (Mouton 1996:9). This study, however, goes deeper and tries to find out the underlying issues in the conversion process.

The interviews with the six converts are evaluated qualitatively and compared to existing documentary sources from other geographical areas about conversions of Muslims to Christianity. In particular the following research data, which has already been introduced in chapter two, is being used: Syrjänen (1987), Greenlee (1996), Maurer (1999), Gaudeul (1999), Schmid (1999), and Woodberry (2001). The data collected in this study is documented and compared to these sources and analysed accordingly. Finally, conclusions are drawn for the ministry of Christians among Muslims in the Sudan. Weaknesses and errors in previous outreach methods that come to the surface are pointed out. Helpful factors in the conversion process of

those interviewed are identified and ways suggested for making better use of these factors. Stages in the conversion process become obvious and lead to an increased understanding of the conversion of Muslims in the Sudan.

3.2 Sampling Design and Procedures

Sampling and selection are vitally important strategic elements of qualitative research (Mason 1996:83). Since this research is concerned with the experience of a specific group of people, it is necessary to select a representative number of individuals from this group for interviews. The criteria for selecting the interview partners are as follows: (1) The interviewee is a Sudanese convert from Islam to Christianity; (2) the conversion has happened in the Sudan and the person is presently living in the Sudan; (3) the convert is from one of the Northern Sudanese people groups (either one of the Arab tribes, or one of the original African-Sudanese Muslim tribes like the Nubians, Beja, Fur, etc); (4) the conversion took place for reasons of conviction and not as a political statement; and (5) the convert is still a practicing Christian.

Since this study focuses on a representative number of people and tries to generalise the results of the study to a defined population, it can be classified as a *generalising research strategy*, according to Mouton (1996:133). The relationship between the six converts to be selected for interviews and the whole group of converts within these criteria is *representative* (Mouton 1996:136; Mason 1996:90), because these six converts (the sample) display the same characteristics in similar proportions and patterns to all the converts from Islam to Christianity among Northern Sudanese people groups (the total population about which I want to make generalisations) (Mason 1996:91). Their situation in terms of religious background, worldview and societal pressure is basically the same for all these converts.

There are more male converts known in the Sudan than female converts. This is reflected by the fact that out of the six interviewees only one is a woman. Maurer (1999:150) mentions the difficulties a researcher may encounter when selecting interview partners from among converts. In the light of restrictions like security issues, reservations to talk about the conversion experience and the relative small number of converts available, other criteria than the ones mentioned already, like social, educational or age criteria cannot be taken into consideration. The relatively small number of six interview partners is justified for a study of this scope. In comparison, Schmid (1999) interviewed 10 converts in his MA-Thesis, Greenlee (1996) analysed 14 converts in his PhD-Thesis, and Maurer in his DTh-Thesis concentrated on 20 converts. In a similar study, Klinkhammer (2000), in her doctoral dissertation about modern forms of the Islamic lifestyle of Turkish ladies in Germany, analysed seven ladies only.

The present interviews were all done by the researcher himself and documented in written form on the questionnaire. Answers to open questions and any additional information was written down during the interview. Since the researcher has a good command of Arabic, the interviews were done in English as well as in Arabic, depending on which language was easier for the interviewed person. Sometimes both languages were used in order to clarify an issue. When the interviewee communicated only in Arabic, the questions were translated orally into Arabic and the answer documented in English. An interview lasted between two and four hours. This means that there was sufficient opportunity to find out the information needed about the conversion experience and therefore the measuring instrument (the questionnaire including additional notes) is reliable and valid.

In order for the interviews to be beneficial in terms of eliciting information, it was necessary first of all to develop rapport. According to Spradley (1979:78), this refers to a harmonious relationship between the ethnographer and the informant. A basic sense of trust needed to develop that allowed for the free flow of information. It was an advantage that I knew all the interview partners personally before the interview and with some of them, I have a long personal friendship for many years. For this reason there already existed a relationship of trust which made it easy to conduct the interviews about such a sensitive issue. My experience in this regard is similar to the one of Syrjänen (1984:76), who reports that in his research he approached the interviewees in the role of a friend and a missionary. He did not feel that this was a handicap, but gave him an access to material that otherwise would have been impossible to obtain. Also Maurer (1999:139) comments on the importance of a trust-relationship between the researcher and the interviewee. For him this was the only reason he was able to talk with converts from Islam to Christianity and vice versa in South Africa. Usually the topic of conversion is avoided due to the high tension it creates between the two religious communities. In my research there was one case where a lady refused to give the interview – most probably because she did not know me and was not willing to talk to a stranger.

My 14 years of experience living in the Sudan and being in touch with different converts, encouraging them and realizing some of the challenges they face on their way with Christ, has helped me a lot to better understand the situation of these converts and to conduct the interviews in a sensitive way without offending the interview partners. Maurer (1999:141f) refers to such an experience as an important preparation for his study. As far as I was able to observe and perceive the situation during the interviews, there was no negative reactivity on behalf of the interviewees in the sense that they did not react negatively to the fact that they were the objects of inquiry (Mouton 1996:141ff). The interview partners did not resist being interviewed, nor did they modify information in order to create a better impression. In some instances I was able to verify

details that were related to me because I was familiar with parts of the conversion story. Therefore I was able to conclude safely that the details which I could not verify were also correct.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

In conducting a research like this, ethical issues need to be considered. Spradley (1979:13-16) points out, that ethnographers must consider the potential uses of their research because they have an ethical responsibility. Acquired knowledge is power and it can be misused. For him, ethnography is for understanding the human species, but also for serving the needs of humankind. An ethnographer must synchronize these two uses of research. In line with this, this study serves to understand the situation of converts from Islam to Christianity in the Sudan better and it will result in the church being better equipped to engage in a fruitful ministry to Muslims. It will also be a help in avoiding wrong behaviour from Christians towards Muslims who are on the road to an encounter with Jesus Christ.

Concerning the ethical question of publishing such sensitive material as conversion stories of Muslims, Syrjänen (1984:76f) states that "the main concern then for the researcher should be that no harm is caused to the people who are studied, i.e. the converts themselves." For him this means that the anonymity of the converts is preserved as much as possible. This is also the concern in the present study. In order to guarantee the privacy and security of the interviewed people, their names and other personal data, which may lead to an identification of the person, will be kept confidential by the researcher. Only code-names are used in this study in order to refer to the individual converts (eg Convert 1).

3.4 Introduction of the Interviewees

In order to become familiar with the converts who were interviewed and with the analysis of their conversion process, a brief introduction of each person and his or her conversion story is being presented here.

3.4.1 Convert 1

The first convert is the only lady interviewed. She comes from one of the main Arab tribes. Growing up in a traditional Muslim family from the lower-middle class in Khartoum, she did not think much about Christianity. From her father she learned a lot about foreign cultures and developed a sense of tolerance for them. She was very interested in these cultures. One day in 1990, when she was in her early twenties, she was coming from the office where she was working, on her way home, and suddenly felt being pushed into a certain street in the city centre

where she normally did not go. She ended up in a Christian Book exhibition and became involved in discussions with the Christians there. She continued to talk for hours and at the end she was convinced about the truth of the Christian faith and took a decision right there. She got married to a Muslim husband who knew that she was a Christian and who later became a Christian himself. The couple continue to live within the Muslim society. They are generally respected but occasionally face severe discrimination and troubles. She is now in her late thirties.

3.4.2 Convert 2

He is from a Sudanese Muslim tribe in Western Sudan but grew up in Omdurman in a simple illiterate family. The father had divorced the mother who refused to give her son back to him, so he grew up with his mother and a stepfather. He was educated in a traditional Muslim *Khalwa* and learned faithfully to observe the Islamic practices. At the age of 22 he got hold of an Old Testament and a simple Christian book which he read with great interest. This was the first positive impression he received about Christianity and Christ. Years later he obtained another Christian book from which he learned something about sin which worried him a lot. Again some years later he had a colleague at work who was an Ethiopian Christian. The man and his wife talked a lot with him and after some months, in 1990, he accepted the message of Christ. He was then introduced to a Christian group where he received a solid training in discipleship and Bible knowledge. Later on he was married to a Christian woman from the Nuba-Mountains who is a convert herself. The couple live mainly within the Christian community but have good social contacts to the Muslim community as well. He is now in his mid-forties.

3.4.3 Convert 3

Convert 3 is also from a Sudanese Muslim tribe in Western Sudan, from a respected family. His father married a lady from an Arab tribe and the family lived mainly in different cities in Northern Sudan. He grew up as a Muslim and was not encouraged to study other religions, but just to respect 'the heavenly books'. He faithfully observed the Islamic practices, more because he had no choice than out of conviction. He was not politically motivated. When he worked for some time in the Southern Sudan, he visited a church in 1991 for the first time, just out of curiosity. Later, when he was back to Khartoum, he met a colleague from the college, a Muslim lady who had meanwhile converted to Christianity. Initially he was shocked by her conversion, but continued to keep contact with her and talk with her. This lady invited him once to what he thought would be a party, but it turned out to be an overnight prayer-meeting. During that night an Ethiopian pastor talked with him for the whole time. In the early morning he was ready to pray a prayer accepting Jesus Christ. He continued to work in his profession and later married a

Southern Sudanese Christian lady. Today he is working within the Muslim society but at the same time feels comfortable in the Christian community. He is now in his mid-forties.

3.4.4 Convert 4

Convert 4 is now in his late thirties. He comes from one of the Arab tribes in the Eastern Sudan. He grew up in a village in the Northern part of Southern Sudan, in a strict Muslim family. He became active as a youth in political Islamic groups who were trying to Islamize the Southern Sudanese Christians in their area. During these activities he was quite hostile towards Christians. As a Muslim he was fully convinced about the truth of his religion. In 1993 he began to study the Bible in order to be able to better refute it in front of the Christians. He then compared the Bible with the Koran and the *Hadith*. After a year of intensive studies – except for the Bible he did not have any other Christian book, just Islamic books – he came to the conclusion that Christianity was the truth. During this time he did not discuss anything with Christians. Once he was convinced, he went to a church in the next town and got some books from the Christians there. Later he visited a pastor in another town and attended a Christian conference. He asked what he needed to do in order to become a Christian. The Christians prayed with him and then sent him to Khartoum, because his family had heard about his conversion and had become very angry. In Khartoum he was in touch with Christians and later attended a Bible College. Since his graduation he works as a voluntary evangelist. He is married to a Northern Sudanese lady who is a convert in the second generation.

3.4.5 Convert 5

This convert is around 30 years old and comes from one of the Non-Arab Sudanese Muslim tribes in the Northern Sudan. He grew up in Khartoum in a Muslim family in which the father was a member of a Sufi-brotherhood. Through his father he became involved in Sufism as well. For some years he was in a neighbouring country for studies and there continued to practice Sufi-Islam. At that time he was satisfied and happy with his religious experiences. Upon his return to the Sudan he left Sufism because he struggled with rationalism. For no apparent reason his conviction that he was following the right way had gone and he questioned everything in Islam, particularly the leaders of the Sufi-brotherhoods. For some years he was not interested in religion at all and did not practice anything religious. In 2001 he was introduced by a friend to a foreigner who had been in the country for only a short time. They met and talked together and the foreigner talked about spiritual issues. Even though he had no interest in religion at that time, something in this discussion touched his heart. After two weeks they met again, this time there was another foreigner present as well. They talked about truth and about the question of 'who' is

truth, not 'what' is truth. He liked these ideas and asked to be taken to a church in order to see how Christians worship. At that service which was conducted in English one of his new friends was preaching and he felt comfortable in the church at once. Since that time he couldn't resist Christ anymore and felt "how the power of Jesus drew him". He understood himself as being a Christian. Only later did he receive more teaching so that he understood more about what had happened to him. He is employed in a secular company in his profession and accepted in the Muslim society. Only few people, including his family, know about his conversion. But when challenged, he admits also to Muslims that he is a Christian.

3.4.6 Convert 6

The sixth convert is in his late twenties and comes from an African Muslim tribe that has been in the Sudan for a long time. He grew up in a normal Muslim family in Khartoum and during his time in the secondary school he often spoke with Christian neighbours and friends in order to win them over to Islam. They tried the same in reverse with him but he was never convinced by their arguments. For about one and a half year he continued his discussion with Christians and was occasionally reading the Bible in order to find some verses which contradict each other. In 1996 a good Muslim friend of his became a Christian. He was shocked and angry and tried to win him back. The friend just listened quietly but did not answer. Instead, the friend brought some Christians who talked with Convert 6. For six months they had regular meetings. One day in 1997 his friend invited him to a church conference. Even though he did not want to go, he felt compelled to go and even to enter the church and sit in the first row – all against his will. There he heard a message about John 14:6 and was convinced about the truth of this. From that day he believed the message of the Bible. When the Christians asked him how he had 'received Christ', he replied: "I don't know how I received him, I just know that I believe in him!" He is now married to a Southern Sudanese Christian wife and continues to have good relations with his family.

3.5 Data Collection

The interviews used are a mixture of structured and qualitative interviews, using cultural and topical style (Rubin and Rubin 1995:31, 195). By doing this, I was able to alternate between listening for nuanced cultural meanings and asking about events (cf Mouton 2001:197). During the process of asking the questions and listening to the answers, there was always the possibility to shift to a friendly conversation. In the interviews conducted I made use of the three most important ethnographic elements of an ethnographic interview: (1) explicit purpose, (2) ethnographic explanation, and (3) ethnographic questions (Spradley 1979:59f). The purpose for

the interview was explained carefully, during the interview explanations were given concerning specific questions and the reason for them, and different kinds of questions were asked.

The basis for the questions was the "Structured Interview".[13] The structure of the questions makes it possible to analyse, compare and categorize the collected data statistically and quantitatively. There were also open questions which led to further questions of clarification. In addition, in between the structured questions, there was room for additional explanations and details which the interviewee wanted to communicate. Wherever appropriate, questions with multiple choice answers were asked first without giving the different options for the answers. Rather, a chance was given first to the person interviewed to express his/her own experience. Only if the person did not know how to answer, were the different options given. This was to avoid putting the answer in the mouth of the person interviewed. When the person interviewed answered to open questions, I summarized what I understood and asked whether this was correct. This helped to verify the answers recorded.

A variety of questions were used in the interviews like exploratory, descriptive, causal, evaluative, and historical questions (Mouton 2001:53f). Spradley (1979:60) divides the ethnographic questions into descriptive questions, structural questions, and contrast questions. Descriptive questions are open questions and ask for the description of an event or a situation. These kinds of questions were used frequently during the interviews in this study. One kind of descriptive question is what Spradley (:86) calls a 'grand tour question'. With this he refers to a question that gives the opportunity to the interviewee to describe a particular experience, or time period or activity, in details. A typical 'grand tour question' in the interviews conducted for this study was: "Describe the process of your conversion."

The guidelines and questions of Lutz von Padberg (2003) concerning what one should ask in a research about mission have been incorporated into the structured interview. The "Rationale for Structured Interview" which is included here as Table 5, shows how the questions help to find out the different aspects of the conversion. In particular, the following parameters are of interest: (1) reasons for conversion; (2) factors that led to the conversion; (3) stages in the conversion process and how they correspond to the stages in different models of the conversion process; (4) God's working in the decision process; (5) problems encountered during the decision process; and (6) results of the conversion.

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[13] See Appendix 1, "Structured Interview for MTh-Research".

Table 5: Rationale for Structured Interview

What I want to find out	Questions in interviews
(1) Reasons for conversion:	
* Why have people converted?	21
* What were some of the:	
- spiritual and internal reasons and motives?	12, 13, 15, 27
- practical and external reasons and motives?	11, 12, 13
(2) Factors that led to conversion:	
* Which factors have played an important role in the decision process?	17, 22
* What was the role of	18,19,21
- literature	18
- contacts to Christians (Southerners, Nubas, Copts, Ethiopians/Eritreans, expatriates, others)	27
- negative experiences with Islam	12, 13, 15
- supernatural experiences?	19
* What was the role of "mission without words"?	19
* How did God move the person forward in the process of conversion?	26
(3) Stages of conversion:	
* What did the process of conversion look like?	16, 23, 20
* What stages did the convert go through?	24, 25, 30
* How long did it take to move from one stage to the next?	23, 20, 33
* What caused the convert to move on to the next stage?	26
(4) Problems encountered during the process of conversion:	
* What were some of the problems the convert faced on the way to Jesus Christ? (e.g. with church, Christians, etc)	28, 29, 30, 31, 32
* What are some of the problems the convert faces today?	37
* Were there problems with society and/or the authorities?	39, 40
(5) Results of the conversion process:	
* Where is there continuity in the life of the convert, comparing the time before the conversion to Christ with the time after the conversion?	11, 14, 41, 42
* What are the aspects that changed:	
- in terms of social affiliation	14, 40, 41
- religious conviction	41, 42, 44
- religious practices?	43
* How did the convert experience the biblical understanding of conversion as "turning away from sin and turning to God in faith"?	44, 45

3.6 Data Processing and Analysing Procedures

The qualitative data analysis of this study consists of three concurring flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman (1994:10). Data reduction is "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (:10). It is an activity that occurs continuously throughout any qualitative oriented project. "Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way, that 'final' conclusions

can be drawn and verified" (:11). Data display is "an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action" (:11). It can be done in the form of extended text, but also with the help of graphs and charts. These two activities make up the fourth and fifth chapters of this research paper, whereas the third activity, namely conclusion drawing and verification, will be the subject of the final chapter.

There are different ways of processing and analysing data from interviews like the one in this research project. Syrjänen (1984) proceeds in the chronological order of conversion, according to Tippett's three stages in the conversion process and refers to the different converts at each stage. Maurer (1999) organizes his results according to the individual cases, analysing one case after the other, and presenting the motives for each conversion. He then discusses in summary the different motives. Greenlee (1996) structures his results according to the main factors that led to conversion. Gaudeul (1999) and Woodberry (2000) have a similar approach, organizing their data according to the different reasons for conversion. Schmid (1999) works case by case, but summarizes also the main topics as they occur in the different cases. I have chosen to organize the results of the analysis of the interviews according to the five different parameters which I am looking for and as they appear in Table 5. The fourth chapter therefore deals with the reasons for conversion and the factors that led to the conversion. The fifth chapter discusses the stages in the conversion process, the problems encountered during the process of conversion, and the results of the conversion process.

The interpretation of the collected data is done by relating it within the frameworks which the above mentioned six researches have defined (Mouton 2001:109). The type of reasoning used to draw conclusions is inductive generalisation, which, according to Mouton (1996:80), is standard practice for field experiments and most other forms of quantitative research. I am drawing samples of cases rather than attempting to gather data from the population. The collected data is then generalized to the target population. This generalization is done in the final chapter.

The analysis of verbal accounts of converts is not without questions. Maurer (1999:137f) refers to the debate about this methodological and epistemological issue (eg Robbins1988:66; Snow & Machalek 1984:175). He sees, however, no reason why the statements of converts should not be treated as valid and reliable records of past events and experiences, a position which I affirm.

4. Reasons for, and Factors Leading to, Conversion

Chapters four and five document the results of the field work. The interviews are analysed and the results compared with each other. In each of the five main aspects of the research question the results of the interviews are presented first, and then validated by comparing them with other research projects. In chapter four the focus is on reasons for, and factors leading to, conversion.

4.1 Reasons for Conversion

The first aspect of this study focuses on the reasons for conversion. A number of questions need to be answered, like: Why did the converts change their faith system and adopt a religion that, according to their former belief, is defiant and inferior? What was it that brought them to the point of accepting Jesus Christ as the focus of their submission to God? In a first step the interviews will be analysed in order to answer these questions.

4.1.1 Analysis – Reasons for Conversions among Sudanese

4.1.1.1 The Main Reasons for Conversion

When comparing answers regarding the reasons for conversion, it becomes obvious that these reasons have to do mainly with spiritual issues. This could be expected because one of the criteria for selecting the interviewees was that they converted for religious reasons. Table 6, which contains several main reasons for each convert, shows that the main reason mentioned most often was "thirst for truth or God / God seen as love and light", followed by "Jesus is so attractive / Jesus drew the person".

Table 6: Main Reasons to Become a Christian (Question 21)

Main reason to become a Christian	Number of converts
Thirst for truth or God / God seen as love and light	5
Jesus was so attractive / Jesus drew the person	4
Search for assurance of salvation	2
Dissatisfaction with Islam	2
Fear of death	1

Together with "search for assurance of salvation" these reasons make up 11 out of 14 entries, (the converts usually gave several answers to the question about the main reason), which is the overwhelming majority. "Dissatisfaction with Islam" was given twice as the main reason and "fear of death" only once. When the converts identified the main reason or reasons for their conversion, it did not necessarily mean that this was also the initial factor which started their process of conversion. Other factors may have initiated their search. These initial factors will be

analysed later on. But in their process of conversion one or several reasons can be identified which were the main motivation for the conversion.

An interesting fact in this study is that none of the converts mentioned "positive experiences with Christians / church" as a main reason for conversion. As their conversion stories show, none of the converts had a personal relationship or friendship with a Christian prior to the time when he or she thought seriously about the Christian faith. However, with the exception of Convert 4, Christians *were* actively involved in explaining an alternative faith.

4.1.1.2 Islamic Religious Life and its Influence on the Conversion

"Dissatisfaction with Islam" was only given twice as a main reason for conversion, even though Table 7 shows that four of the converts were not content with Islam prior to their conversion.

Table 7: Islamic Religious Life and Level of Satisfaction with Islam (Questions 12 + 15)

Islamic religious life before conversion	Content with Islam	Practicing, but having doubts	Often in opposition	Searching for more
faithfully observing religious duties	2	1		
occasionally observing religious duties		2		
indifferent towards Islam, no practice of duties			1	
critical towards Islam				
influenced by traditional Islam		3		
influenced by mystical Islam			1	
influenced by political Islam (fundamentalist)	1			
influenced by communism (not atheism)		1		

Three were practising the religious rituals, but had doubts about the value and truth of them. Concerning Convert 5, Table 7 reflects his attitude in the immediate years before his conversion, when he was indifferent towards Islam. (The two entries under "often in opposition" represent his position.) In the years before this period he was content with Islam and did not have any doubts.

That the converts left their former religion and adopted a new faith system does not mean that they did not like their former religion at all. Rather, each convert liked certain aspects of Islam. Convert 4 liked everything, the beliefs as well as the practices of Islam. Convert 2 and Convert 3 appreciated particularly the moral and ethical principles, plus teachings like the commands not to steal and not to gossip. Convert 6 enjoyed reading the Koran and listening to it, as well as studying Islam, for example the life of the prophets (*Sirat al-Anbiya*). Convert 1 found especially the social life and customs attractive. Convert 5 was indifferent towards Islam in the years immediately preceding his conversion; but before that he appreciated the emphasis on spiritual life which he found in the Sufism he practised. All these positive aspects, however, did

not hinder these converts when giving up their previous religious affiliation and adopting a new faith system, even one that according to their former religion is 'defiant' and 'inferior'.

Among the six converts only Convert 1 had a positive attitude towards the Christian faith before her conversion; her father spoke well of the Christians and so she had some interest in this religion, but she did not understand its content. Convert 3 and Convert 4 had a distinct negative attitude towards Christians: Convert 3 was told that even looking at a church is a sin and Convert 4 hated Christians. The other converts shared the more general attitude of Muslims towards Christians, which is a mixture of indifference and misinformation. Despite this lack of a positive disposition towards Christianity these people finally accepted the teachings of the Christian faith. Why is this? What were the external and the internal reasons for this change of allegiance?

4.1.1.3 External Reasons for Conversion: Crisis Experiences

In two of the conversion stories it is obvious that external reasons played a role in the conversion process.[14] Convert 2 had a crisis experience as a child because his father divorced his mother. He grew up with his mother and stepfather, feeling rejected and not loved by his paternal extended family and tribe. He therefore felt more like a Northern Sudanese in general and not like a member of his own tribe from Western Sudan. There were also negative experiences with his stepfather who did not treat his mother well. In addition, he was not happy with life in general: he had no possibility for further studies, worried about the future, and he faced economic problems. This kind of background seems to be a fertile ground for adopting an alternative religion.

In a similar way, yet not as strongly as the first case, Convert 6 also had to face challenges with regard to his background. As a member of a tribe that originally came from outside the Sudan, he felt discriminated against by the Arab Northern Sudanese. This kind of discrimination is an interesting phenomenon in the Sudan because the Arab tribes themselves originally came from outside the Sudan, although a few centuries earlier. This discrimination which Convert 6 felt, however, did not have an apparent influence on his conversion. The main external issue that came up in relation with his change of religious affiliation was the conversion to Christianity of a close Muslim friend. This led to discussions with Christians, and eventually to his visiting a church meeting where he accepted the Christian faith.

In the other cases one does not find any apparent external reason for the conversion. Convert 1 was proud of belonging to her tribe, appreciated the cultural aspects of Islam, like the dress of the women, and had no crisis experience. Convert 3 was proud to be a member of his tribe and happy with the ethical principles of Islam. Convert 4 was completely convinced about

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[14] Based on questions 11, 12, and 14.

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the truth of Islam, proud to be a member of his tribe, and involved in political Islamic activities. It was through intensive studies of Islam and by comparison with the Christian faith that he eventually decided to adopt a new faith.

The story of Convert 5 differs from the other five converts. In the years before his conversion he gave up all religious interest and practice and became indifferent. This, however, was not caused by an apparent external reason but rather by internal issues. It was through meeting expatriate Christians that he encountered a new religious alternative which eventually he gladly accepted. However, this conversion was, at the same time, also a return to the historical religion of his tribe.

In summary, we can conclude that external reasons *alone* are not sufficient to explain the conversions of these Sudanese. This leads to a closer analysis of the internal reasons for conversion.

4.1.1.4 Internal Reasons for Conversion: Spiritual Issues

The internal reasons for conversion appear to be generally stronger than the external reasons.[15] In the case of Convert 1, the only woman interviewed, there were doubts about the truth of Islam; she had a desire for inner peace, spiritual truth, freedom from fear and for an experience of God. When she encountered an alternative faith, she saw Jesus as attractive and decided to follow him. Convert 2 also had doubts about the truth of Islam and was dissatisfied with this religion; he had feelings of guilt; felt rejected and not loved; developed a desire for inner peace, assurance of salvation, spiritual truth, and love of God; he was looking for freedom from the fear of not being able to please God; and finally the encounter with a new faith led him also to see Jesus as attractive.

Convert 3 had doubts about the issues of sin and forgiveness; he was afraid of death because he did not know whether he would go to hell or paradise; in general he had doubts about the truth of Islam. At the same time he had a thirst for truth and God, a desire for inner peace, for assurance of salvation, to be free from fear, and he wanted to experience the love of God. He stressed particularly the desire for assurance of salvation and to be free from fear as very important to him. Even though Convert 4 was completely convinced about the truth of Islam, he nevertheless studied it again and compared it with the Christian faith, in order to be able to refute the Christian faith better. He had a thirst for truth and for God; he wanted to know who God is. Due to the influence of political Islam he was not encouraged to look for "spiritual guidance" in Sufism, but stayed within the traditional formal Islam. According to his own words, it was ultimately Jesus "who drew him."

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[15] Based on questions 12, 13, 15, 22, and 26.

About four years before his conversion, Convert 5 started to doubt everything in Sufi-Islam as well as in traditional Islam. He gave up his religious practices completely, because he struggled with rationalism and saw some hypocrisy in the Sufi leaders. When he encountered a new faith, he was fascinated by Jesus and found him attractive and powerful. This encounter sparked a new desire in him to experience the love of God. Convert 6 was challenged in his religious conviction when his close friend converted to the Christian faith. This led to discussions with Christians, but these discussions did not convince him, they rather made him stronger in his Islamic convictions. He was, however, searching for assurance of salvation – an assurance that the final decision by God about his own eternal destiny would be positive, something Islam leaves open-ended. He wanted freedom from fear about the eternal future, and also wanted to have fellowship with others about spiritual matters. He missed this fellowship since his friend had become a Christian.

It is therefore obvious that internal reasons played a major role in the conversion of all six Sudanese converts researched. These internal reasons had mainly to do with spiritual issues.

4.1.2 Validation of Results

The reasons for conversion found in this study are generally in line with the motives for conversion which other researchers describe. Maurer (1999:122-127) found five key conversion motives in the research he did in South Africa: religious, mystical, affectional, socio-political, and material. These motives agree partly with those that Lofland and Skonovd (1981), Rambo (1993:14-16), and Van Butselaar (1981) mention. The other researchers of conversions of Muslims to Christianity describe similar reasons. We will now compare the motives which appear in the conversion of the Sudanese converts with the reasons or motives which other researchers found.

4.1.2.1 Spiritual - Cognitive Reasons

The *religious* motive of Maurer (1999) is the same as the one Lofland and Skonovd (1981) describe as *intellectual*. Traditionally this motive is called the *true* motive for conversion and Van Butselaar (1981:112) calls it *spiritual*. We summarize these different aspects under the term *spiritual - cognitive* reasons. Maurer (1999:123) sees this motive when "a person actively seeks knowledge about religious or spiritual issues via literature, television, lectures and other media." As will be seen, these reasons have to do with an increase in knowledge about the content of the Christian faith (*cognitive* aspect) as well as with the attitude towards Christ and the search for salvation (*spiritual* aspect). In the case of the conversions in the Sudan, most converts did not start such a search by themselves, but happened to experience some developments in their lives which encouraged, or compelled, them to seek for more information about the Christian faith.

The spiritual issues the Sudanese converts gave most often as the main reason for their conversion are in line with conversions of Muslims to the Christian faith elsewhere. In South Africa for example, Maurer (1999:204) found that out of the ten converts to Christianity he analysed, nine indicated the religious motive played a role in their conversion story. Out of these, in five conversion stories it played the initial role that set the conversion process into motion. Gaudeul (1999) found several spiritual reasons why Muslims converted: "Jesus is so attractive," "thirst for truth," "thirst for God," and "the need for forgiveness." These are exactly the same reasons which the Sudanese converts described (Table 6). Concerning the first reason, "Jesus is so attractive," Gaudeul (1999:32) explains that many Muslims find Jesus a strangely fascinating figure. Jesus attracts them, fascinates them, and speaks to them. Woodberry (2001:4) supports this explanation when he writes that "Christ's character is frequently seen by the Muslim as overwhelming attractive." Convert 2 experienced this when he read his first Christian books and realized that the Messiah in these books was different from the one he knew in the Koran. He was fascinated by this personality of Christ and began to share his newly acquired information with other Muslims. Convert 5 expressed that Jesus was so attractive and powerful and that his experience of getting to know him led him to accept the new faith.

Gaudeul (1999:185) explains the "search for God" by the fact that Islam admits no union with God, in life or in prayer, and no possibility of a personal knowledge of God. Even though mystical Islam offers a kind of alternative to this restriction, there remains a conflict within Islam. Some Muslims therefore find in Christianity the fulfilment of their desire for a union with God. For some 10 percent of Muslim-background believers, according to Woodberry (2001:7), the particular attraction of a relationship with God was the strongest apparent factor in their conversion. This "search for truth and for God" was a decisive reason for Converts 1 – 4. They had a strong awareness about the existence of God, but wanted to get to know him more closely.

Concerning the "need for forgiveness", Gaudeul (1999:153) points to the position of Muslims that Islam is not a religion of salvation, because people are not in need of salvation (cf Syrjänen 1984:141ff). Therefore it is not surprising that there are Muslims who become Christians precisely because Islam does not satisfy their need for a God who saves and who saves them just as they are. Woodberry (2001:3) points out that, according to the teachings of the Koran and the *Hadith,* a Muslim does not have a sure knowledge about salvation and this is often a reason to accept Jesus Christ. Syrjänen (1984:141) found this also in Pakistan where the conviction of converts, "that their search for salvation has found its answer in Jesus Christ," is a central theme in the conversion stories. This confirms the Sudanese situation, with the story of Convert 2 for example, who experienced guilt all the time, particularly when he did not keep the fast properly. The desire for assurance of forgiveness was one of the influences towards faith in

Christ for him. That God is love and that Jesus Christ is the only way to God was a new realization for him. Convert 3 was afraid of death, because he did not know whether he would go to hell or to paradise. He had many doubts about his salvation, and when he realized that he is not saved by his own works but by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, this was a great relief for him. Convert 6 stressed the fact that he was not looking for assurance of forgiveness, because this was something that God did every day through different ways. For him the bigger issue was salvation, something that according to his understanding God would give at the end of ones life. He was aware that even the Prophet Muhammad and his closest friends and relatives did not have assurance of salvation and this worried him a lot.

Woodberry (2001:4) also mentions "the power of the Bible and the truth found in it" as a reason for conversion. Some Muslims find the Bible compelling once they begin to read. They find a truth in it that for them is plausible. This is exactly what happened when Convert 4 started to study the Bible. His intention was to be better able to refute the 'book of the Christians', but eventually he was convinced about the truth in it and found confirmation for this truth of the Bible, even in the Koran.

Schmidt (1999:51-53) writes that in most of the conversion processes of Turkish and Kurdish Muslims living in Germany which he analysed, emotional and inter-personal factors were prominent. Theological questions did not play an important role in the initial stage of the conversion process, but for the final decision doctrinal issues did play a major role. All converts dealt with the different issues of the Christian faith in a differentiated and a critical way. They did not make their decision just out of emotional or situational circumstances, but only after a longer period of serious consideration. This intellectual struggling with theological questions and the increase in cognitive understanding is apparent in the conversion stories of Converts 1 – 4 in the Sudan. They needed to be convinced about the truth of the Christian faith first before they decided to accept this religion. The theory of Ahlstrand (2003:124), that conversions from one religious community to another one are seldom based primarily on insights into new religious truth, cannot therefore be confirmed through this research. Rather, Converts 1 – 4 did convert because they gained new insight into religious truth, because they had cognitive experiences. In the case of Convert 5 and Convert 6, however, it seems that they were mainly attracted to Jesus at the time of their conversion, but did not know much about the content of the Christian faith. In their case the affective dimension was stronger than the cognitive (Søgaard 1996:56-61).

4.1.2.2 External Reasons for Conversion

Schmidt (1999:51-53) found that among the converts he researched, all the men went through a time of crisis before they became Christians. Often there were conflicts in the families of these converts due to the tensions between the Turkish and the German cultures. Rambo (1993:44)

explains that conversion often comes as a response to a crisis experience. "The crisis may be the major force for change, or it may be simply the catalytic incident that crystallises the person's situation" (:166). Maurer (1999:128) also found different crisis situations in his research which motivated people for conversion.

We have seen already that a crisis experience can be identified in the conversion process of Convert 2 who felt rejected by his father and his extended family, and of Convert 6 who felt discriminated against because of his tribe. The case of Convert 5 is also interesting in this regard, because he gave up his Sufi-practices for several years before conversion, something that was also caused partly by a loss of trust in the Sufi leaders. Such crises, however, do not necessarily become a reason for conversion to a new religion. Maurer (1999:129) explains that among the converts he researched,

> these factors seemed to have questioned fundamentally the people's orientation of life to such an extent that they felt forced to rethink their religious allegiance. We can, however, not foresee the prospective decisions which will be made. In the same situation, one person may choose a new religion while another may become strengthened in his/her existing religious commitment. Crisis, therefore, may provide an opportunity for a new option, or it may result in reconfirming the present one.

Therefore, the crisis experiences of the Sudanese converts constitute only one part of the reasons and factors that led to conversion. This is similar to the situation in Pakistan, where Syrjänen (1984:127) found that the point of realization, when an individual has become definitely aware of another, alternative, world view or religion, came in the wake of a personal crisis situation. The crisis triggered a process, the direction of which was influenced by many factors.

Maurer (1999) lists another motive for conversion that can also be classified under external reasons. The *socio-political* motive, or the *social* motive as Van Butselaar (1981:112) calls it, relates to how the individual functions within his or her socio-political group. "In this category a person is motivated out of socio-political reasons to change his/her religious allegiance" (Maurer 1999:125). Maurer found this motive in South Africa among black people who embraced Islam because they saw Christianity as associated with the discriminating policy of the ruling white elite. This kind of reaction could have played a role in the conversion process of Convert 2, protesting against his paternal extended family, and of Convert 6, protesting against the discrimination which his tribe experienced, as well as of Convert 5, returning to the historical religion of his tribe. It could theoretically happen in Sudan, not in order to climb the social ladder by becoming a Christian, but in protest against the political form of the Islam of the present government. However, none of the converts I researched mentioned this.

4.1.3 Reasons for Conversion: Summary of Analysis

In the beginning of this section we asked why these converts adopted a religion that according to their former belief is defiant and inferior, and what it was that brought them to the point of accepting Jesus Christ as the focus of their submission to God. We have now identified the main reason for this change of religious allegiance to be a spiritual-cognitive realization through which these former Muslims have discovered a new reality in Jesus Christ. This spiritual-cognitive realization is in line with the biblical understanding of conversion as discussed in chapter 2. The two aspects of conversion, repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ, are reflected in the search by the converts for God and for truth, in their attraction to the person of Jesus, and in their own need for forgiveness. The meaning of *metanoeo*, "to think differently" or "to have a change of mind", (Erickson 1985:937) is certainly apparent in what these converts did. Even though the converts seem to put more emphasis on the aspect of having faith in Jesus Christ than on the aspect of repenting from sin, both - the regret over one's sin (*metanoeo*) and the turning to God (*epistrepho*) - come together in their conversion as Acts 26:18 describes.

None of the interviewees were actively searching for a religious alternative, but they somehow 'happened' to experience some developments in their lives which encouraged or compelled them to seek for more information about the Christian faith. Converts 1-4 struggled intellectually with theological questions and experienced a cognitive increase of understanding of the Christian faith. They needed to be convinced about the truth of this faith first, before they accepted it. Convert 5 and Convert 6, on the other hand, experienced an increase of the affective dimension, being fascinated more by Jesus than understanding fully what the Christian faith is about.

4.2 Factors Leading to Conversion

The reasons for conversion are strongly related to the factors in the conversion processes. In this research I regard the reasons as the main motive for conversion, while factors are the influences that, in one way or another, encouraged or pushed the person on his/her journey to Christ. When Rambo (1993) writes about reasons for conversion, he adopts the term 'motifs' as used by Lofland and Skonovd (1981). But Maurer (1999:100; footnote 124) argues that some of these 'motifs' have a motivational character and can therefore also be called 'motives'. Rambo (1993:15, 48), for instance, speaks about 'mystical experience' once as 'motif' and another time as 'catalyst'. Catalyst, however, comes closer to 'motivation' since it implies things that cause change. Therefore Maurer concludes rightly that both, motifs and motives, point to the reasons for conversion as well as to specific factors that lead to conversion.

4.2.1 Analysis – Factors Leading to Conversion among Sudanese

There are a number of different influences that were mentioned by the interviewees which in one way or another encouraged or pushed the person on his/her journey to Christ. We will first look at these factors in general.

4.2.1.1 The Variety of Factors Leading to Conversion among Sudanese

Some of these factors have to do with the question of what first triggered an interest in thinking about Christianity. The interviewees gave the following answers to this question[16]:

- Convert 1 was supernaturally drawn to a Bible exhibition; there she got involved in a long discussion with Christians.
- Convert 2 received a Christian book and an Old Testament in English by chance. He started reading the material and was happy about the personality of Christ.
- Convert 3 visited a church out of curiosity and as a result of a dream he had had. Later he met a former colleague from university who had converted to Christianity in the meantime. His doubts and anxiety about salvation also sparked his interest.
- Convert 4 wanted to refute the Bible and the Christian faith as a part of his Islamic propagation activities. He first started thinking particularly about Christianity when he read in Matthew 6 that Christians also pray and fast.
- Convert 5 met an expatriate Christian who talked with him about the Christian faith.
- Convert 6 was engaged in religious discussions with Christians where both sides tried to convince the other side. The conversion of his close friend to the Christian faith caused him to think seriously about this religion.

These factors started the initial interest in thinking seriously about the Christian faith. As the person then embarked on a spiritual journey – usually without being aware of this – other factors emerged which moved the person ahead in this journey and eventually led to a complete change of religious affiliation. Table 8 gives an overview of the main factors that worked towards a conversion. These factors are divided into four main categories: Media factors, witness factors, supernatural factors, and affectional factors. The factors most often mentioned as contributing much to the conversion are 'personal witness by Christians' (4 x) and 'dissatisfaction with Islam' (3 x). In the category of "media factors" only literature and reading the Bible played some role, other media were not significant. It is surprising that radio, tapes, Christian TV-programmes and videos were hardly mentioned at all, even though these media are being used in the Sudan. We will look at the different factors in the next few sections of this chapter.

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[16] Based on question 16 and 17.

Table 8: Factors that Contributed to the Conversion (Questions 18+19)

Factors contributing to conversion	Some	Much	Not at all
a) Media factors			
reading literature	1	2	3
reading Bible		2	4
Christian TV / video / audio cassettes			6
listening to Christian radio broadcasts		1	3
Bible correspondence course			6
b) Witness factors			
personal witness by Christians	2	4	
evangelistic meetings		1	5
theological debate or dialogue with Christians	2		4
attractive life-style of Christians	1	2	3
social / medical / educational programmes of Christians	1		5
c) Supernatural factors			
dreams or visions	1	2	3
healing / answered prayer / miracles		1	5
other supernatural experience		1	5
d) Affectional factors			
dissatisfaction with Islam	1	3	2
had positive attitude towards Christians	1		1
need for love		1	
attracted by Word of God		1	

4.2.1.2 Relationship between Reasons and Factors

We have pointed already to the close relationship between the 'reasons' for conversion and the 'factors' that contributed to a conversion. While the 'reasons' constitute the main motive for conversion, the 'factors' present the influences that in one way or another encouraged or pushed the person on his/her journey to Christ. Table 9 shows this relationship. The main reasons for conversion are compared with the main factors that encouraged conversion for each convert. These factors are grouped together under the categories already introduced in Table 8: Media factors, witness factors, supernatural factors, and affectional factors.

This table shows how different factors work together in a decision process. In the case of Convert 1 there was a spiritual desire, Christians were available to explain a new system of faith, a supernatural experience helped to arrange the meeting; and because she has had doubts about Islam, she accepted the new alternative. In the case of the other converts it was a similar 'cooperation'. Usually at least three of the main categories of factors were involved, the exception being the conversion process of Convert 5, where only two main categories of factors played a significant role.

Table 9: Relationship between Reasons and Factors in the Conversion Processes (Questions 12, 15, 18, 19, 21)

Converts	Main reasons for conversion	Media factors	Witness factors	Supernatural factors	Affectional factors
C-1	- thirst for truth / God - Jesus was attractive - dissatisfaction with Islam	- none	- Christians explained Gospel - attractive life-style of Christians	- felt a force which pushed her to the Bible exhibition	- dissatisfaction with Islam; practising, but having doubts - had positive attitude towards Christians
C-2	- thirst for truth / God - Jesus was attractive - God is love and light - dissatisfaction with Islam	- reading literature and Bible - listening to radio	- personal witness by Christians - attractive lifestyle of Christians	- none	- dissatisfaction with Islam; practising, but having doubts - was not happy with life
C-3	- thirst for truth / God - fear of death, assurance of salvation	- reading literature	- personal witness by Christians	- a vision which warned him about Islam	- dissatisfaction with Islam; faithfully observed religious duties, but having doubts
C-4	- thirst for truth / God - Jesus drew him	- reading literature - reading Bible (very important)	- personal witness by Christians (partly) - theological debate (some)	- a dream that encouraged him to leave Islam (some)	- faithfully observed religious duties, politically active - was content with Islam, no doubts - life was going well
C-5	- Jesus was attractive and powerful	- none	- personal witness by Christians (very important)	- none	- indifferent towards Islam - avoiding issue of religion
C-6	- search for assurance of salvation	- none	- personal witness by Christians (some) - attractive life-style of Christians - evangelistic meeting (much) - theological debate - social programs	- a dream that made him doubt Islam (much) - answered prayer (much) - was drawn into a church by a super-natural force	- faithfully observed religious duties - was content, no doubts about Islam

The affectional factors show negative aspects, like dissatisfaction with Islam (Convert 1 – 3), and positive aspects, like a positive attitude towards Christians (Convert 1). Both aspects helped to move the person towards a decision for Christ. But then there are also other factors that describe the emotional situation of the person, but which did not encourage him or her towards a decision for Christ, for example: being content with Islam (Convert 6) or that life was going well (Convert 4).

In general Table 9 shows clearly that conversion is not a single event, but a complicated interplay of different reasons and factors. Often one reason or factor alone would not result in a conversion, but it is the interplay of several reasons and factors which in the end leads to a change of religious allegiance.

4.2.1.3 Supernatural Factors in the Conversion Process

The supernatural factors in the conversion processes were shown already in Table 8. Here is the description of what exactly happened in the life of the Sudanese converts and how this influenced his or her decision for Christ:

- Convert 1 was drawn by a supernatural force to a Bible exhibition in an area of the city where she usually would not go. There she met Christians who explained the Gospel to her and she accepted the message on the same day. The supernatural factor was most decisive for her.

- Convert 3 had a vision in which a snake came out of the sleeves of a Sudanese Muslim who greeted him. Immediately he called out the name of Jesus for protection. Then the person disappeared. For him, this person symbolized Islam and the snake the Devil. Some time later he went to visit a church. At that time he did not think about the vision. But later on he saw the connection between the vision and the visit to the church: God had told him through the vision that Islam is bad and he also led him to visit the church in order to see an alternative.

- Convert 4 had two dreams in the period between his conversion and the official announcement of his conversion to Christians. In the first dream he was welcomed by an old man in a church. This was the first time for him to see a church from the inside, even though it was in a dream. The second dream, which he had several times, was about a snake from which he could not escape. Whereas this dream showed him that he could not leave his religion, the first dream encouraged him to go to the Christians. It was like an invitation.

- Convert 6 had a dream which brought him into conflict with the traditional understanding of the Prophet Muhammad. However he interpreted it, this dream caused doubts about his religion, for the first time in his life. Later on he experienced a supernatural force which drew him into the church to which his friend had invited him, even though he did not want to enter the building. During that meeting he accepted the message about Christ. He also experienced answered prayer. Before his conversion he prayed that God would unite all the good Christians and Muslims as one community, either as Muslims or as Christians. After two months the answer came to this prayer when he heard a message in the church about John 14:6. Jesus is the only way! For him, this was God's answer.

These are the supernatural factors in the conversion stories of four of the Sudanese converts. The other two converts did not report anything in this regard. So we can say that supernatural factors played a significant role in two-thirds of the converts. They occurred at crucial points in the decision process, encouraging and supporting the person to move closer to Christ.

4.2.1.4 The Role of God and the Role of Christians in the Conversion Process

After looking at the individual supernatural factors, we want to compare now the role of God in general and the role of Christians in the conversion processes. This of course has to do with the witness factors. Table 10 shows the involvement of different Christians in the conversion process. The result mirrors the diversity of the Christians in Northern Sudan. Almost all groups of Christians from different cultural backgrounds were involved in some way or another in the conversion process of the interviewees. This means that the influence of Christians in the conversion processes of Muslims in the Sudan is not limited to one particular group, but Christians from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities are actually involved in the conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith.

Table 10: Involvement of Different Christians in the Conversion Processes (Question 27)

Background of Christians	Some	Much
Same culture (Northern Sudanese MBB's)		3
Different culture, national (Nubas & Southern Sudanese)	2	2
Different culture, neighbouring countries (Arab & African)		4
Expatriate Christians (from West & Asia)		2

Table 11 compares the role of God *alone*, with the role of Christians *used by him* in the decision processes for the individual converts. In order to gain a better overview, the decision processes are divided into the seven main stages introduced in Appendix 2 ("A Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims"). The statements in *italics* are the actual statements the converts gave as their answer to question 26 about the role of God and the role of Christians. The other statements are my interpretation of the whole conversion story.

The pattern which appears is that usually Christians are involved at different stages to bring a person to conversion. In the process of one convert the Christians play an important role at the beginning of the process, or at several stages; in the process of another convert Christians play a significant role only after the actual decision to change the religion, in the follow-up stage. In the case of Convert 1, for example, Christians were the main agents who introduced the alternative faith system. In the case of Convert 2, the interest was first raised through literature, but later it was Christians who explained the Christian faith and encouraged the conversion. An interesting exception is Convert 4, where Christians did not play any significant role up to stage 3; only at stage 4 did Christians help him to pray and accept Jesus. But during the whole process of becoming aware of Christianity as an alternative faith and being persuaded about the truth of it, Christians did not play any significant role at all.

Table 11: Role of God and Role of Christians in the Conversion Processes (Question 26)

Stages in decision process	Role of God	Role of Christians
0: **No relation /** **no awareness** **indifference /** **hostility**	C-1: made her doubt Islam, helped her to get good attitude towards Christians C-2: *was seeking him*, created a spiritual hunger in him C-3: made him doubt Islam, question the issue of salvation C-4: chose him and loved him C-5: made him doubt Sufi Islam C-6: no obvious role	C-1: no obvious role C-2: no obvious role C-3: no obvious role C-4: *nothing* C-5: no obvious role C-6: no obvious role
1: Initial, **positive** **awareness**	C-1: called her, led her to exhibition C-2: *changed the way he thought about God*, let him find first Christian literature (by chance) C-3: *gave him dream that warned him about Islam, led him to visit the church, arranged meeting with colleague* C-4: *God drew him to himself*, made him study the Bible C-5: *brought Christians into his life* C-6: forced him to consider new faith through conversion of friend, gave him dream, *made him eager to see his friend and so attend church, entering the church against his will*	C-1: organized Bible exhibition C-2: gave him a Christian book (on purpose) C-3: *talked with him about their faith* C-4: *nothing*, were withstanding his attempts to convert them to Islam C-5: *were willing to witness* C-6: *discussed faith with him, even though they did not convince him, invited him to church meeting*
2: Realization **of alternative /** **positive** **attitude**	C-1: made her willing to listen C-2: *changed the way he thought about God, made him realize that he had no hope* C-3: *brought him to meeting with pastor* C-4: *convinced him from Koran that Trinity* and the deity of Christ *is true, drew him to himself* C-5: *prepared the way, made him flexible and softened his heart, made him patient* C-6: *message of meeting was exactly what he needed, used evangelist*	C-1: *helped her to understand* C-2: *shared the gospel with him*, challenged him about eternity, told him that God is love, Jesus only way to God C-3: *arranged meeting with pastor, pastor talked with him, explained gospel to him*, cleared misunderstandings C-4: *nothing* C-5: *were transparent, communicated the truth* C-6: *preached relevant message*
3: Persuasion / **fascination**	C-1: *drew her* C-2: *changed the way he thought about Christ*, made him emotionally feel overwhelmed C-3: helped him understand that salvation is by grace, not by works C-4: *drew him to himself*, created a fascination in him for Christ C-5: "the power of Jesus drew him" C-6: *answered prayer*	C-1: explained need for decision C-2: *encouraged him to accept Christ*, challenged him to take a decision, told him to buy a Bible C-3: spoke well of Jesus C-4: *nothing*, gave him some books C-5: *encouraged him*, took him to a church service C-6: *reflected close relationship with God*

Stages in decision process	Role of God	Role of Christians
4: Decision / submission	C-1: *drew her* C-2: *was compelling him to accept Christ* C-3: made him willing to accept Jesus C-4: *drew him to himself* C-5: "the power of Jesus drew him" C-6: helped him "to receive Christ"	C-1: helped her to submit to God C-2: helped him to surrender his life to God, *prayed for him and with him* C-3: helped him to pray C-4: helped him to pray and accept Jesus C-5: no obvious role C-6: no obvious role
5: Evaluation / dissonance	C-1: helped her not to doubt C-2: helped him not to doubt C-3: helped him not to doubt C-4: helped him not to doubt C-5: *prepared a good reception among Christians*, helped him to overcome doubts and pressure C-6: helped him to overcome doubts and pressure	C-1: *stood with her in times of troubles* C-2: gave him discipleship training C-3: *believers helped him* C-4: sent him to a safe place, gave him shelter C-5: received him well C-6: no obvious role
6: Growth / service	C-1: helped her to grow C-2: helped him to grow C-3: helped him to grow C-4: helped him to grow C-5: helped him to grow C-6: helped him to grow	C-1: provided fellowship C-2: provided fellowship C-3: provided fellowship and training C-4: provided fellowship only partly C-5: provided fellowship and training C-6: provided fellowship and training

What becomes clear, then, is that without the initiative of God a conversion could not happen, even with the best evangelistic methods applied. At the same time God involves Christians as witnesses to help people form an understanding of his truth and to encourage people on their way towards Christ. God's action and initiative can be seen at each one of the stages of the decision process. He seeks a person, he causes doubts about the present religion, he brings the person into contact with change agents, he changes the way the person thinks about Christ, he answers prayer, he makes the person willing to accept Christ, and he helps him or her not to doubt but to grow in their new faith.

4.2.2 Validation of Results

The factors leading to conversion found in the stories of the Sudanese converts can be validated by results of other studies. It is particularly the study of Greenlee (1996) from Morocco that discusses different factors which encourage the conversion of Muslims. The division of the factors follows the one already introduced in Table 8.

4.2.2.1 Media Factors

Greenlee (1996) calls these factors 'communication factors'. The various media used in Morocco to convey the gospel message were (1) print media, (2) radio, (3) face to face witness, and (4) the

Jesus film. The face to face witness will be discussed under the witness factors. From Table 8 it became obvious already that for the Sudanese converts, only reading literature and the Bible were media factors that influenced their decision for Christ. In Morocco it is particularly Bible correspondence courses that are influential, and most converts from Islam to Christianity get their initial contact with Christians through these courses (Greenlee 1996:70). Among the converts Greenlee studied, none reported contact with a missionary as an initiating factor in the conversion process (:78). In this regard the situation in Morocco, with no recognised native church, is much different from the one in Sudan where there is a lively church and Christian witness. Initial contacts in Sudan happened for example at a Bible exhibition, through discussions with Christians, or through the conversion of a friend.

Reading the Bible as a factor in the conversion process of Muslims seems to be a general phenomenon. In our discussion of the reasons for conversion we have already referred to Woodberry's study (2001:4) which showed that Muslims find the Bible compelling once they start to read it. The reading of the Bible, not necessarily as the main reason but as an important factor in the conversion process, is also reported by Syrjänen (1984:128) from Pakistan. He found that "one of the most decisive factors creating interest in Muslims towards Christianity has been their becoming familiar with the Bible, especially with the New Testament." Syrjänen observed this particularly during the period when a person becomes aware of the Christian faith as an alternative religion. This is what happened with two of the Sudanese converts. Convert 2 read in a book, given to him by chance, about the person of Christ and he was fascinated by this discovery. Later on he was encouraged by a Christian friend to buy a Bible for himself. Convert 4 began to read the Bible in order to refute it and in the course of reading discovered interesting facts like the one that Christians also fast and pray.

The role of mass media like radio was mentioned in the Sudanese conversion stories only by one convert. This is quite different from the situation in Morocco where many converts are influenced by listening to Christian radio broadcasts (Greenlee 1996:83-87). In conclusion, this study shows that for three converts media factors played a role in the conversion process, whereas for the three others they did not. In the case where media factors did play a role, it helped the person to become aware of an alternative world view and faith system.

4.2.2.2 Witness Factors

The witness of Christians played an important role in all six Sudanese conversion stories, as Tables 8 and 9 show. That Christians explained orally the meaning of their faith had an impact on all six converts; three also mention that the lifestyle of Christians attracted them. This high importance of the personal witness is confirmed from other geographical areas as well. In Morocco the personal contact of each Muslim with a Christian played a major role in many

conversion stories (Greenlee 1996:88-91). It provided encouragement and a personal demonstration of the gospel. The Christian witnesses were either expatriate missionaries or national Christian converts from Islam. Greenlee writes that his findings showed that in Morocco "face-to-face witness is vital at all stages of the conversion process" (:90).

Schmidt (1999:51-53) found that for the Kurdish ladies in Germany it was the positive and early contact with Christians during their childhood and adolescence that influenced them in their decision process. Through this contact it was possible to get to know the Christian faith without prejudice. The example of the Christians encouraged the girls later on to accept the Christian faith. In Pakistan, Syrjänen (1984:172) found that in most cases a Christian was involved in helping a Muslim getting initiated "into the mysteries of the Christian faith," even though the Christian witness was usually not the most important factor in the decision process. The importance of the part which Christians play in the conversion process of others has to do with the fact that God does not work alone in bringing people to himself, but usually he involves his people in achieving his objectives, as we have seen already when we discussed the role of God and the role of Christians.

4.2.2.3 Supernatural Factors

Maurer (1999) discusses the supernatural factors leading to conversion under the *mystical* motive. It is also mentioned by Lofland and Skonovd (1981) and Rambo (1993:15). According to Rambo, a mystical conversion experience "is generally a sudden and traumatic burst of insight, induced by a vision, voices, or other paranormal experiences." Maurer (1999:123) explains that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus (Acts 9) is commonly seen as the prototype for this kind of conversion. The main point is that there is a "direct intervention of the spiritual divine power" and therefore "the term 'supernatural' can also be used in this context" (:123f.).

We have already seen that supernatural factors appeared in four of the Sudanese conversion stories. Two experienced a supernatural force which directed them to a place they did not choose themselves, and three had a dream or vision which gave them some particular message at a crucial time during their conversion process. None reported anything related to a power encounter. Greenlee (1996:132-136) found that in Morocco dreams played a role in just under half the cases, whereas power encounters were only marginally observed. Greenlee (:135) refers to Musk (1988:168f) who suggests that dreams are influential in the conversion of Muslims, "something which should be considered both as an object of prayer and a subject for inclusion in evangelistic media". His own study suggests "that dreams are a significant factor, but not a universal factor, in the conversion of Muslims" (Greenlee 1996:136). He also observed that dreams tend to occur at the introductory stage of the conversion process, not at a later stage

of confirmation or validation of the decision of the convert. This is in line with the dreams or visions reported by Convert 3 and Convert 6, but not with the experience of Convert 4 who had the decisive dreams between his conversion and the announcement of his conversion to Christians. For converts to the Christian faith in South Africa supernatural encounters happened towards the end of their conversion process and constituted usually the 'final stepping stone' which convinced them to make a commitment to Christianity (Maurer 1999:220).

The content of dreams may be about Christ, but is not limited to images of Christ himself, as Greenlee found out (1996:136). None of the Sudanese converts reported a dream in which Christ appeared. Dreams seem to be exceptional and not the normal experiences.

The role of supernatural factors in the decision process of Muslims is also confirmed by Gaudeul (1999:222) who mentions as one reason for the conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith "a call from God." His explanation describes also the Sudanese situation well:

> Muslim converts to Christianity often speak of their religious experience in terms of visions, dreams, voices. Why is that so frequent? There may be two explanations. First, God's call is being repressed and pushed back into the subconscious. As a result, it has to 'raise its voice' to make itself heard. Secondly, the cultural background of most converts is very similar to that of the Bible where such phenomena are considered as normal.

Woodberry (2001) also confirms the supernatural factors in conversion of Muslims in the form of dreams and visions, as does Syrjänen (1984:129ff). In Pakistan, supernatural experiences have been the most essential factor influencing the conversion process of Muslims, besides their having found a response to their search of salvation in the Bible (:170).

4.2.2.4 Affectional Factors

The final category of factors that play a role in the conversion process are the *affectional* factors. This term refers to interpersonal bonds as the decisive factor in the conversion process (Rambo 1993:15). Van Butselaar (1981:113) calls it 'personal'. For Maurer (1999:125) this means that "a person experiences affection as being loved, nurtured and affirmed by another person or group." The affectional motive can be experienced as a positive factor, 'pulling' the convert to accept a new religion, or as a negative 'pushing' factor. Whereas in the first case it could be a good friend who first adopts a new faith, and by doing so encourages his/her friend to follow, in the second case it could be that the convert loses a close person through death or divorce. The result could constitute a crisis in his or her life and push him into a conversion process (:125). This in some sense was the case with Convert 2, whose mother was divorced and so he lost the relationship with his father and his family. Converts 3 and 6 are examples of the 'pulling' factor, because they were 'drawn' into the new religion by the conversion of good friends.

From the interview with Convert 2 it became apparent that the need for love was an important factor for him in his conversion process. Gaudeul (1999:87ff) refers to this affectional aspect when he gives as reasons for conversion, "people without a family searching for a new community," and "the attraction of God's community – the church." He explains that Islam has a high ideal of unity and equality in the community which often it does not reach. This can frustrate people and lead them to search for a new community among the Christians. Many converts declare that finding Christians in whom the grace of God was truly present, helped them most to discover God's call (:127). This is confirmed by Woodberry (2001) who writes about converts who saw "the power of love in Christians and in God himself."

Schmid (1999:51-53) found out that for the converts in Germany the affectional factors played a great role, particularly during the period of getting to know the new religion. The women converts all attended a Christian children's club which a German family arranged for German and Turkish children, and this helped them to get to know the Christian faith in a non-threatening way (:38). Some of the male converts observed the Christians carefully and were impressed by the love among them, as well as by their integrity (:47, 49).

Here again, we see how different factors work together in an interplay. Gaudeul (1999:44) observes that the search for truth can go from the Koran, to the Bible, to the witness of Christians. "Most converts say how they felt the need to ask Christians whom they met for explanations about the Bible." The contact with Christians, however, can also create tension and apprehension. Becoming associated with Christians can mean to be related to a social segment of society that is considered low, as the situation in Pakistan shows. Syrjänen (1984:107ff) writes about this tension in a country where the Christians are classified as despised 'sweepers'. And once a Muslim takes the step of identifying with this community of Christians, serious social consequences may result, as Greenlee (1996:105) writes: "To become a Christian in Morocco, and in particular to be known as a Christian, is often done at the cost of losing relationships with friend and family. The church, then, becomes a new social unit, a new people (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9)".

This is a problem which the converts in the Sudan also face. Christianity is considered by the Muslim community as the religion of the black Southern Sudanese and the white foreigners, but certainly not for the Arab Sudanese Muslims. In the case of the converts interviewed, their desire to get to know the truth they discovered in Christ, in the end proved to be stronger than their cultural and social reservations. In the section about the results of conversion we will look more deeply into the issue of how the converts were dealing with the tension between their Arab-Muslim culture and the African-Christian culture.

4.2.3 Factors Leading to Conversion: Summary of Analysis

In this section of the analysis of the conversion processes in the Sudan we have seen that conversion is not a single event, but a complicated interplay of different reasons and factors. Usually one reason or factor alone does not result in a conversion, but it is the interplay of several reasons and factors which in the end lead to a change of religious allegiance (cf Maurer 1999:159).

It has also become clear, that without the initiative of God a conversion could not happen, even with the best evangelistic methods applied. At the same time God involves Christians as his witnesses to bring people to an understanding of his truth and to help people on their way towards his Christ. On the background of a biblical understanding of conversion, as discussed earlier in this study, this is exactly as it should be. God is the one who is active in bringing people to repentance and faith (*Manila Manifesto* B5, in Douglas 1990:31). God is already at work in the life of a person, long before conversion. It is neither the work of other Christians as change agents nor is it the own free decision of the convert *alone*. But nevertheless there is a relationship between God's work and human responsibility / action in conversion. We are active only on the basis of, and through the power of, God's grace. Bloesch (1984:273) writes: "We do not procure salvation, but we decide for salvation once our inward eyes are opened to its reality."

The work of God in the conversion processes of the Sudanese converts has been identified as preparing the individuals for his salvation, opening their spiritual eyes towards his reality and convincing them about the need to personally come to him through Christ. God's role has also become obvious in the supernatural experiences that two-thirds of the converts experienced. They occurred at crucial points in the decision process, encouraging and supporting the person to move closer to Christ.

Complementary to the work of God in the conversion processes of the Sudanese converts, we identified the witness of Christians as an influential factor. Followers of Christ were involved at different stages of the conversion processes to share their faith, to explain the meaning of their beliefs, and to encourage the person to approach God through Jesus Christ. This study also shows that for three converts, media factors, such as the Bible and Christian literature, played a role in the conversion process. They helped the person become aware of an alternative world view and faith system, whereas mass media were of much less importance. And finally, there were affectional factors that played a role in leading the person towards a conversion, in a positive way pushing the person, or in a negative way pulling the convert, to accept a new religion.

5. Stages, Problems and Results of Conversion Processes

Chapter five documents the results of the field work regarding the stages in the conversion processes, the problems encountered during these processes and the results of such conversion processes.

5.1 Stages in Conversion Processes

As discussed earlier, conversions from Islam to Christianity are not one-time events but processes that develop over a shorter or longer time period. In such processes, different stages can be identified. Before the results of the interview analysis can be presented in detail regarding these stages, the model that is used as a basis for the presentation of the data will be introduced.

5.1.1 The Cognitive and the Affective Dimension of Decision Processes

Based on the information analysed from the interviews and after comparing it with existing models for describing decision processes, I came to the conclusion that it is necessary to use a two-dimensional matrix to graphically describe the stages of decision processes. Under 4.1.2.1 we have seen that cognitive and spiritual reasons played a major role in the decision processes of Sudanese converts. These reasons have to do with an increase in knowledge about the content of the Christian faith (*cognitive* aspect) as well as with the attitude towards Christ and their search for salvation (*spiritual* aspect). The *spiritual* aspect can also be called *affective* aspect and this term will be used in describing the model. The analysis of the interviews has shown that Converts 1 – 4 converted because they gained new insight into religious truth, because they had cognitive experiences. In the case of Convert 5 and Convert 6 it appeared that the affective dimension was stronger than the cognitive. But what becomes obvious from this study is, that in all conversion processes both aspects or dimensions, the *cognitive* as well as the *affective*, play an important role.

These two dimensions are described graphically in Figure 7. The vertical axis shows the knowledge dimension (*cognitive* dimension); the horizontal axis shows the attitude dimension (*affective* dimension). The general idea of the "Spiritual Decision Matrix" is based upon Søgaard's (1993; 1996; see Figure 2 + 3) and Gray's (2005; see Figure 4) two-dimensional models. The different stages on the cognitive and on the affective dimensional line come from the data of the interviews; they are stages that were actually identified. These stages constitute a revision of my original model of "A Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims"

(Appendix 2)[17]. The difference between Søgaard's model and Gray's model is that in Søgaard's model, where the vertical line begins on the horizontal one, it is not clear what the minimum belief for a biblically valid conversion is. In Gray's model, where the vertical line actually crosses the horizontal line, it is clear that the convert needs to cross a certain point on both lines. It is, however, not necessary, that the point of conversion is always at the intersection of the two lines. The main characteristic of conversion is that both lines are crossed at some stage in the decision process. Neither Søgaard nor Gray define the different points on the scales in their respective models.

Figure 7: The Spiritual Decision Matrix (Basic Form)

© R. Straehler 2005; based on Søgaard (1996) and Gray (2005)
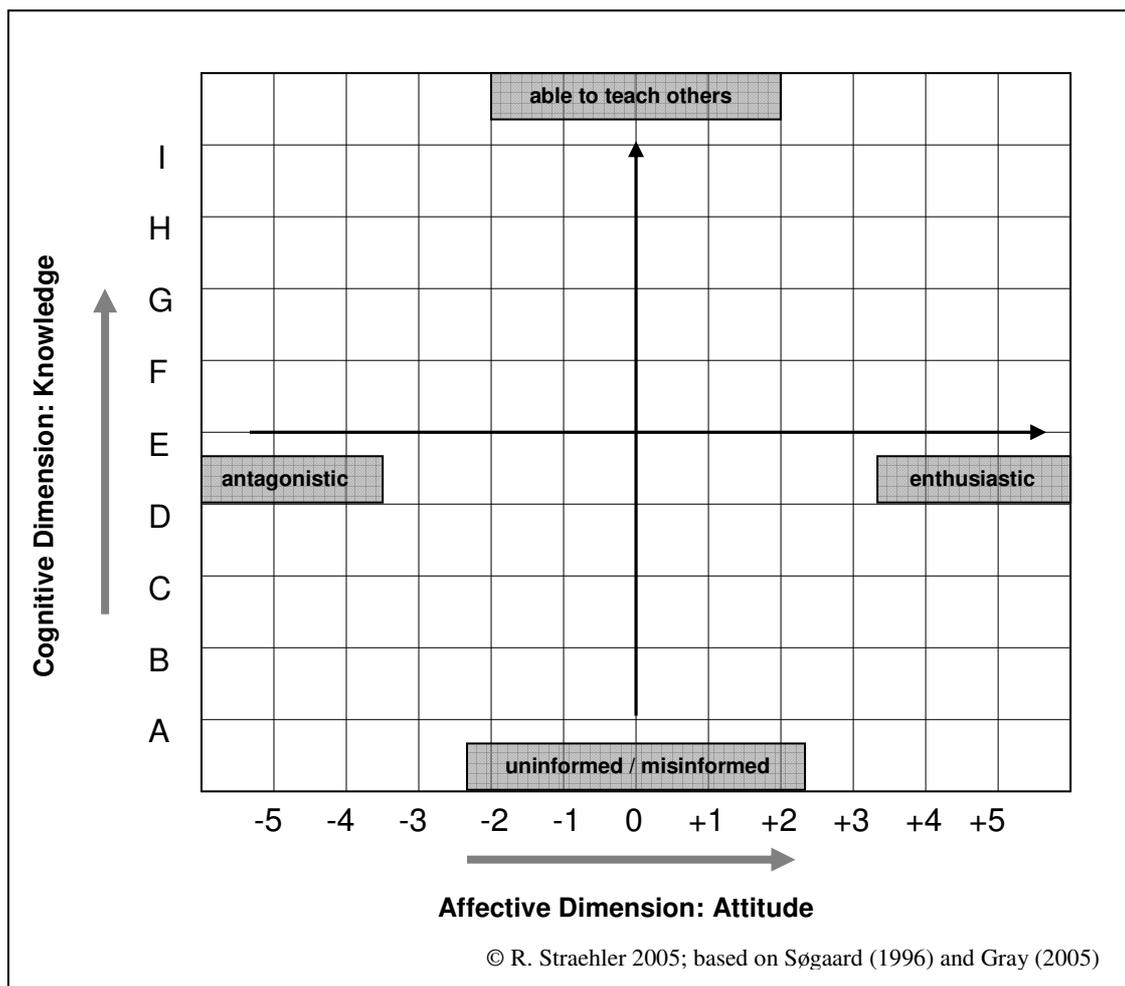
The scales on the two dimensions represent different stages. The explanation for these stages is given in Figure 8. The crucial point, for a biblical understanding of conversion as a change of direction, is "E" on the cognitive dimension and "0" on the affective dimension. This is also the point from where one is facing towards Christ, according to Hiebert's (1994) model of

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[17] This original model is based on Fraser (1979:139); Mirza (in Livingstone 1993:235-238); and IL (1997).

centred sets. Until one has crossed from the lower-left area to the upper-right area, he/she has not experienced a conversion in the biblical sense and can therefore not be called a follower of Christ. But once this crossing has been made, the person has fulfilled the biblical understanding of a true conversion, no matter where exactly in the upper-right area the person may be located.

Figure 8: The Cognitive and Affective Dimension of the Spiritual Decision Matrix

Cognitive Dimension:

uninformed / misinformed	A	misconceptions about Christianity, no knowledge about the gospel, little sense of spiritual need
	B	initial awareness of Christian faith through personal contact or media probable restudy of Koran about Christianity and Christ
	C	awareness of the gospel, grasp of the implications of the gospel
	D	realization that Jesus is more than a prophet
	E	realization that Jesus is the focus of submission to God (together with "0" equals faith in Jesus, the turning point)
	F	realization and confession of sin, repentance
	G	experience of assurance of salvation
	H	evaluation of decision, doubts, questions
able to teach others	I	growth in understanding the Word of God growth as a disciple of Christ

Affective Dimension:

antagonistic	- 5	unaware of Christianity, hostile towards Christianity
	- 4	indifferent towards the Christian faith
	- 3	positive attitude towards Christianity through personal contact or media
	- 2	positive attitude towards the gospel
	- 1	Jesus is seen as attractive
	0	decision to follow Jesus, expression of faith in him (change of allegiance)
	+ 1	experience of joy as new believer
	+ 2	experience of fellowship
	+ 3	internal doubts, external pressure from society
	+ 4	overcoming doubts and pressure
enthusiastic	+ 5	enjoying communion with God, willingness to serve

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The issue of the minimum belief in the conversion of Muslims is treated well by Green (1988:6) who asks the question: "If conversion consists of a fundamental change of allegiance in favour of Christ, what is the minimum change of belief required for the Muslim to move from being outside of Christ to being 'in Christ'?" He explains that conviction of sin is outside the normal experience of the Muslim and may therefore not operate as a motivation for turning to Christ. Therefore, he suggests that the critical cornerstone on which a Muslim's conversion will be based is his/her response to Jesus' question to his followers, "Who do you say that I am?" Usually a Muslim would answer that Jesus is a prophet, perhaps a very significant and worthy one, but no more than a prophet and certainly inferior to Muhammad. Green goes on by saying:

"Until a Muslim acknowledges Jesus as the focus of his/her submission (*islam*) to God, he/she cannot be regarded as having truly embarked upon the Christian pathway" (:8).

In Chapter Two we have seen that a biblical understanding of conversion includes the following aspects:

- acknowledging that one was approaching God in the wrong way,
- feeling sorry for the sins committed in the past,
- turning around to face God,
- accepting Jesus as God's way to approach him,
- expressing faith in Jesus.

If a Muslim realizes that Jesus is the focus of submission to God (stage "E" on the cognitive dimension) and decides to follow him, thus changing his or her religious allegiance (stage "0" on the affective dimension), he or she can then be considered to be a Christian. However, the issue of realizing one's sins and confessing them is closely connected with such a decision. A person who acknowledges Jesus but has not understood the need to confess sin will need careful instruction after the change of allegiance regarding this issue. But as Green (1988:6) noticed, for Muslims such an understanding often comes after the expression of faith in Jesus.

The progress on the spiritual journey does not necessarily follow a straight line, but can go back and forth. For example, a person may see Jesus as attractive at one point but then be convinced again about the truth of Islam, only to accept Jesus at a later point in life. Or the person may experience doubts and pressure at different times after their conversion, sometimes overcoming them, at other times still struggling with them.

Figure 9 shows how the stages of the cognitive and affective dimensions in conversion processes as used in the "Spiritual Decision Matrix" relate to the "Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims" (Appendix 2). As such it is an important key for this study. In Figure 9 the cognitive and affective dimensions are placed side by side, to the left and to the right of the more general stages used in my original model (centre column). As has been explained already, the results of this study made it necessary to distinguish between the cognitive and the affective dimension. But the original one-dimensional model (Appendix 2) is still valid because it contains helpful categories (like "God's Role", "Role of Change Agent", or "Assessment") that cannot be included in the Spiritual Decision Matrix or otherwise it would be loaded with too many details. For this reason Figure 9 combines the two models so that both can be used side by side. That the stages in the cognitive and the affective dimension are here placed side by side does not mean that they necessarily appear at the same time. One of the reasons for the process of conversion being broken down into two dimensions was the fact that progress on

the two dimensions is not necessarily equal; for example a person can progress on the cognitive line without making similar progress on the affective line or vice versa.

Figure 9: The Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Conversion Processes

Cognitive Dimension				*Affective Dimension*		
Description	*Matrix Scale*	*Knowledge about Christian Faith*	*Stage*	*Attitude towards Christian Faith*	*Matrix Scale*	*Description*
- misconceptions - no knowledge about gospel - little sense of spiritual need	**A**	**Non-Relation / Non-Awareness**	**0**	**Hostility / Indifference**	**- 5** **- 4**	- unaware - hostile - indifferent
- initial awareness through personal contact or media - restudy of Koran about Christ	**B**	**Initial Awareness**	**1**	**Positive Awareness**	**- 3**	- positive attitude towards Christianity through personal contact or media
- awareness of gospel - grasp of implications of gospel	**C**	**Realization of Alternative**	**2**	**Positive Attitude**	**- 2**	- positive attitude towards gospel
- realization that Jesus is more than a prophet	**D**	**Persuasion**	**3**	**Fascination**	**- 1**	- Jesus seen as attractive
- realization that Jesus is focus of submission to God - realization and confession of sin, repentance - experience of assurance of salvation	**E** **F** **G**	**Decision**	**4**	**Submission**	**0** **+ 1**	- decision to follow Jesus, expression of faith in him, - willingness to submit to Jesus - experience of joy as new believer
- evaluation of decision, doubts, questions	**H**	**Evaluation**	**5**	**Dissonance**	**+ 2** **+ 3**	- experience of fellowship - internal doubts - external pressure
- growth in understanding Word of God - growth as disciple of Christ	**I**	**Growth**	**6**	**Service**	**+ 4** **+ 5**	- overcoming doubts and pressure - joy in communion with God - willingness to serve

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5.1.2 Analysis – Stages in the Decision Processes among Sudanese

After having introduced the "Spiritual Decision Matrix", the results of the interview analysis regarding the stages in the decision processes among Sudanese can be presented. Tables 12 – 17 show which stages were identified in the process of conversion for each person. In addition, for each convert a Spiritual Decision Matrix is presented (Figures 10 – 15) which together with the

explanation of the stages in Tables 12 – 17 gives a good overview of the process through which each of the converts went.

5.1.2.1 Convert 1

Table 12: Stages and Factors in the Conversion Process of Convert 1

Cognitive dimension (knowledge about Christian faith)	Affective dimension (attitude towards Christian faith)	Factors that caused movement to this stage	Time frame for stage	Marker on matrix
A: misconceptions, doesn't understand Christian faith, little sense of spiritual need	-3: somehow positive attitude towards foreign cultures and Christians	Father teaches her a lot about foreign cultures, develops a sense of tolerance in her	some years	1
B: initial personal awareness of Christian faith through contact with Christians C-F: convinced about the truth of the Christian faith, wants to have it, takes a decision G: considers herself to be a Christian (assurance of salvation)	-2: positive attitude towards gospel -1: fascinated with Jesus 0: decision to follow Jesus +1: feels joy as new believer	meets Christians at a Bible exhibition, intensive talk with them about meaning of the gospel	one day	2 3 4
H: evaluation: no doubts I: growth as disciple of Christ	+2 / +3: experience of fellowship, external pressure +4 / +5: enjoying communion with God, service, involved in witnessing	Christians stand with her in times of trouble, Christians provide fellowship	till today	5 6

Figure 10: The Spiritual Decision Matrix for Convert 1

© R. Straehler 2005; based on Søgaard (1996) and Gray (2005)
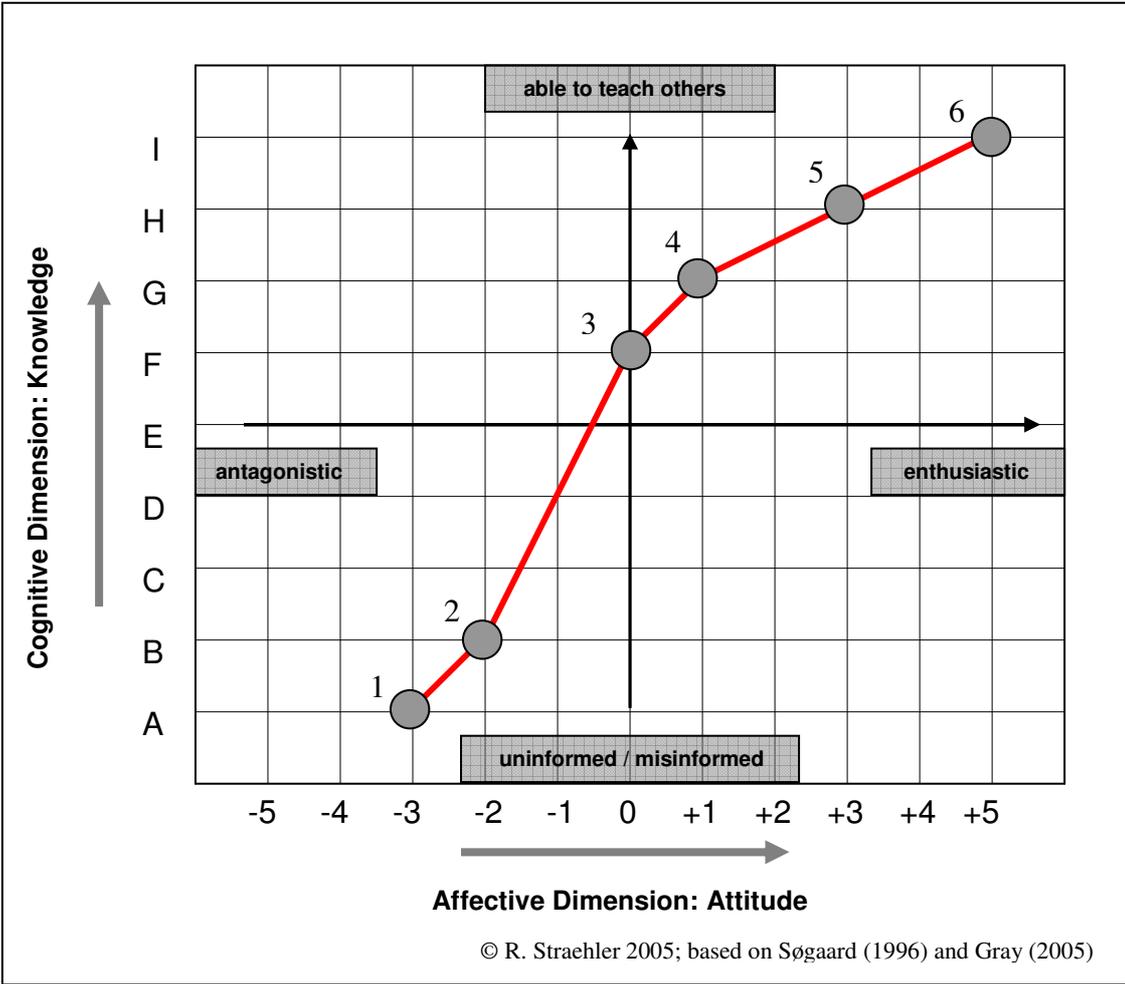
The main stages were identified by analysing the answers given to questions 16 – 25 in the interviews. Some stages were literally mentioned by the converts, other stages I inferred from other information given. The stage on the cognitive dimension and the stage on the affective dimension which are placed in the same row in each table, were present in the life of the person at the same time. Sometimes the sequence of the stages is slightly different from the one in Figure 9. The number in the right column refers to the numbered markers for each stage on the matrix for each convert. The factors that caused movement to this particular stage and the approximate time frame for this stage are also given.

The most remarkable feature in the conversion process of Convert 1 is that she moved from A/-3 to G/+4 within several hours. She was drawn into an intensive discussion about the Christian faith which caused an increase of her cognitive understanding as well as a change in attitude within a very short time. It is also interesting to note that she started her spiritual journey relatively advanced in terms of the affective dimension at -3 (positive attitude towards Christianity through personal contact or media). This somewhat untypical attitude for a Muslim, (the other converts started at A/-4 or A/-5) was due to the influence of her father.

5.1.2.2 Convert 2

Table 13: Stages and Factors in the Conversion Process of Convert 2

Cognitive dimension (knowledge about Christian faith)	Affective dimension (attitude towards Christian faith)	Factors that caused movement to this stage	Time frame for stage	Marker on matrix
A: misconceptions, doesn't understand Christian faith, little sense of spiritual need	-4: indifferent	upbringing by family and society	some years	1
B: initial awareness through media C + D: awareness of gospel, realization that Jesus is more than a prophet	-3: positive attitude through media, happy about personality of Christ -2 / -1: fascination, Jesus seen as attractive, shares his information with others	reading first Christian books and OT	some years	2 3
(F): realization of sin	is worried	a worker gives him another Christian book	some months	
E: realization that Jesus is only way to God (focus of submission to God) F: realization and confession of sin, repentance	0: submission, decision to follow Jesus, emotionally overwhelmed	Ethiopian Christian challenges him, explains gospel	one day	4
G: repentance, experience assurance of salvation	+1: experience of joy as new believer	prayer of accepting Jesus with Ethiopian friend	one day	5
H: evaluation of decision: he knows it was right, no doubts	+2: experience of fellowship +3: pressure from community	fellowship with other Christians, in-depth-teaching		6
I: growth in understanding Bible, as disciple of Christ	+5 joy in communion with God, willingness to serve		till today	7

In the process of Convert 2 there is a constant development over several years from A/-4 to F/0, gradually increasing the knowledge about the Christian faith through reading and

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discussions with Christians. As he learned more about the Christian faith, his attitude likewise changed to becoming very positive (D/-1). He is the convert with the longest process chronologically and therefore differs significantly, particularly from Convert 1, Convert 3, and Convert 6. Once the decision was taken to accept Jesus Christ as the focus of submission to God, there were no doubts about the truth of this. Continuous growth as a believer in Christ, in understanding the teaching of the Bible, and in a willingness to serve can be seen.

Figure 11: The Spiritual Decision Matrix for Convert 2

© R. Straehler 2005; based on Søgaard (1996) and Gray (2005)
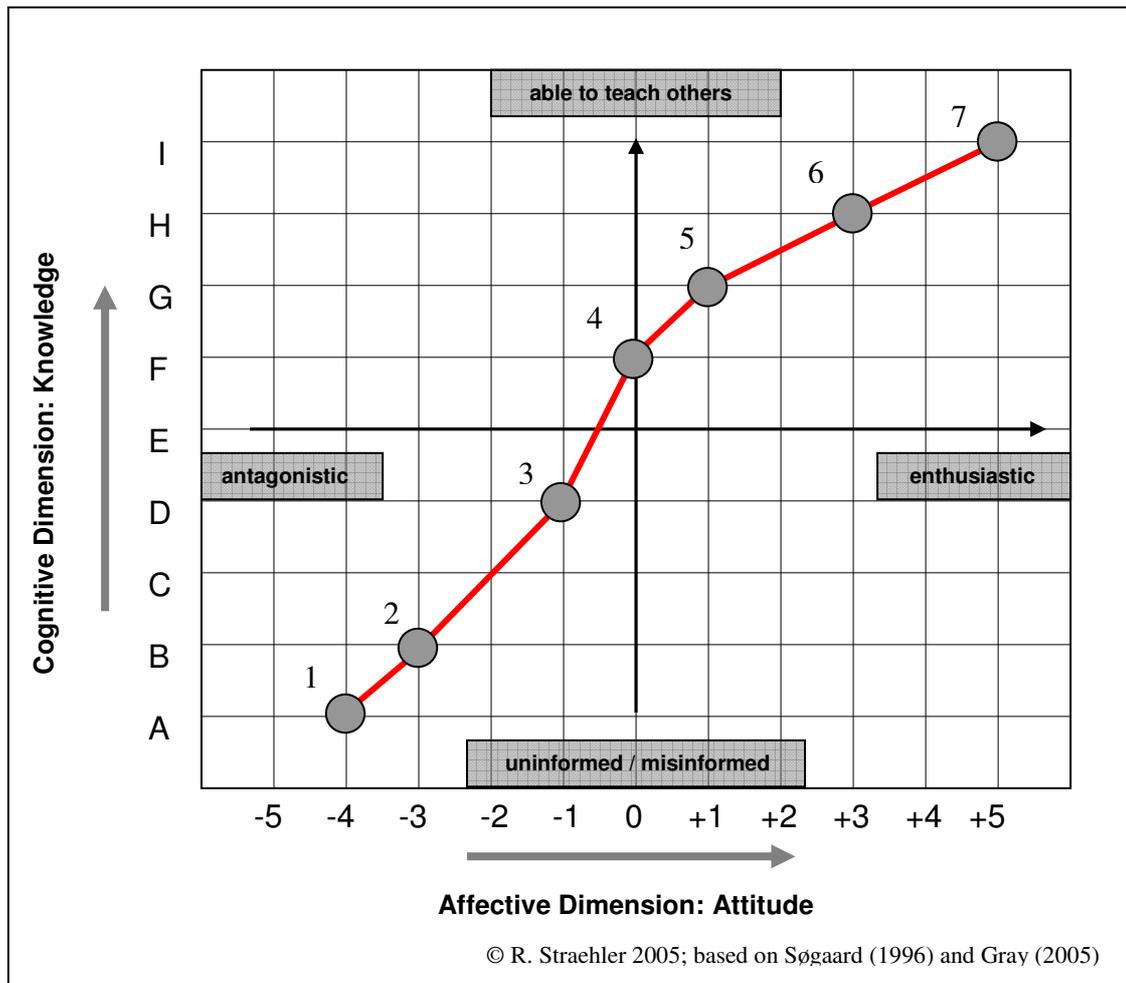
5.1.2.3 Convert 3

The first two stages in the process of Convert 3 are the same as those for Convert 2, but Convert 3 did not progress steadily over months and years towards a decision for Christ. The main jump from B/-3 to F/0 came during one night, a similar quick increase in knowledge and attitude as Convert 1 experienced. After the change of religious allegiance to Jesus Christ, the stages are no longer as clear, and therefore a long line is placed between G/+1 and I/+5 without further detailed stages.

Table 14: Stages and Factors in the Conversion Process of Convert 3

Cognitive dimension (knowledge about Christian faith)	Affective dimension (attitude towards Christian faith)	Factors that caused movement to this stage	Time frame for stage	Marker on matrix
A: lack of information, No knowledge about gospel	-4: indifferent (but does not think that e.g. Bible is corrupted)	upbringing of family, doubts about accusations against Christians	about 20 years	1
B: initial awareness	-3: begins to develop interest, positive attitude, feels happy	through dream, visit of a church, then through contact with a convert	some months	2
C – F: realization that he personally needs salvation, can not work it out for himself, repentance, faith in Jesus	-2: positive attitude towards gospel 0: decision to follow Jesus	intensive talk with a pastor	one night	3
G: assurance of salvation	+1: experience of joy as new believer	intensive talk with a pastor	several days	4
I: growth in understanding word of God, as disciple of Christ	+2: experience of fellowship +3: exposed to pressure +5: willing to serve, enjoy communion	Christians provided fellowship and teaching	till today	5

Figure 12: The Spiritual Decision Matrix for Convert 3

© R. Straehler 2005; based on Søgaard (1996) and Gray (2005)
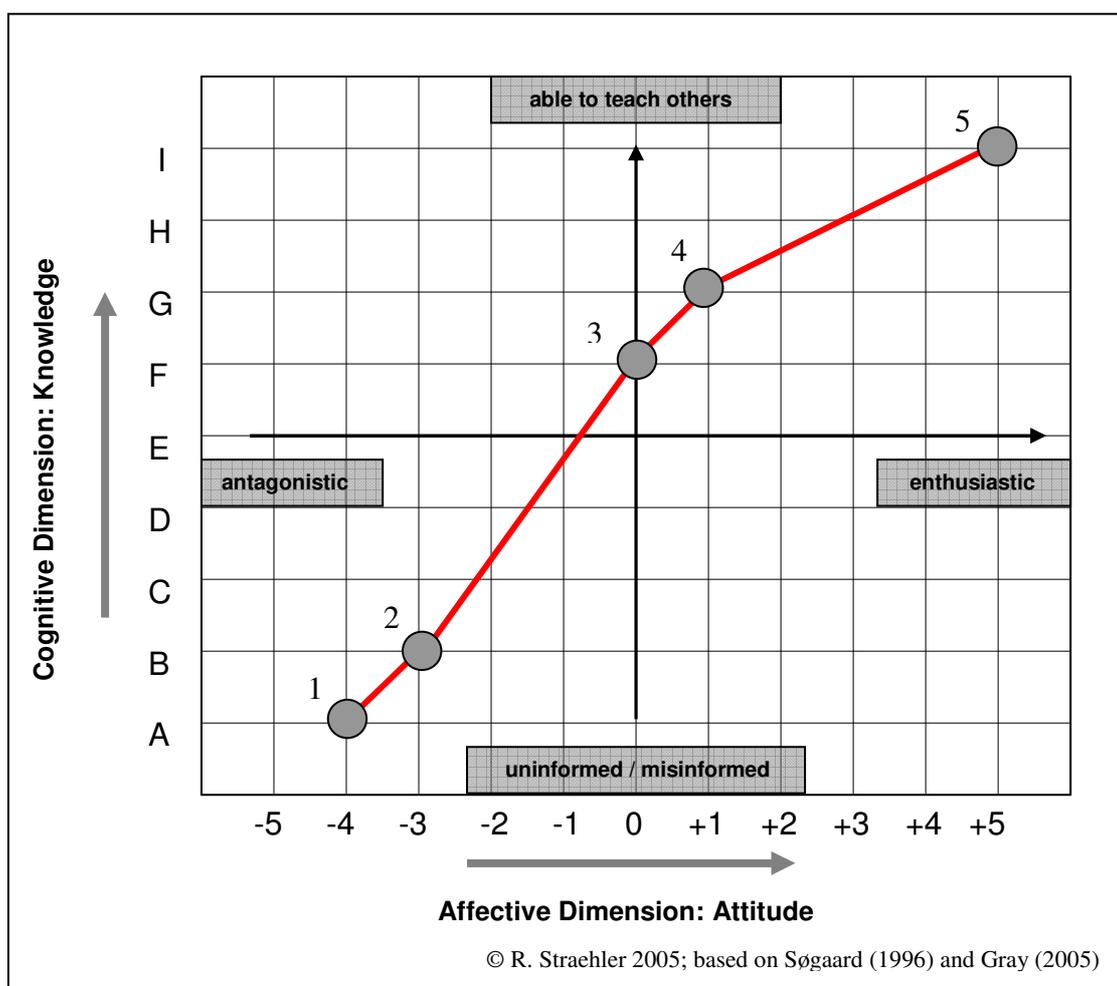
5.1.2.4 Convert 4

In the process of the conversion of Convert 4, crossing of the centre line on the affective dimension took place quite late (at G/0). His attitude towards the Christian faith remained hostile in the beginning, even after getting to know Christians personally.

Table 15: Stages and Factors in the Conversion Process of Convert 4

Cognitive dimension (knowledge about Christian faith)	Affective dimension (attitude towards Christian faith)	Factors that caused movement to this stage	Time frame for stage	Marker on matrix
A: misconceptions, no knowledge about gospel, little sense of spiritual need	-5: hostile, contempt	upbringing by family and society	first 20 years of life	1
B: initial awareness through contact with Christians (in a negative way), restudy of Koran about Jesus	-5: still hostile	Muslim activities to islamize them, discussions with Christians	some months	2
C: awareness that Christians also pray and fast	-3: more neutral attitude, Christians also pray and fast	reading Bible	some months	3
D: realization that Jesus is more than a prophet, he is God's word and spirit, judge	-1: Jesus seen as attractive	studying Koran and *Hadith*, also Bible	some weeks	4
E: realization that he personally needs salvation, that Christianity is correct	-1: Christian faith seen as attractive	studying Koran and *Hadith*, also Bible		5
F / G: Repentance, experience assurance of salvation	0: submission, decision to follow Jesus	Christians helped him to pray	some weeks	6
H: evaluation of decision: he knew it was right, no doubts	+1: experience of joy as new believer +3: external pressure +2: experience of fellowship	Christians stood with him in time of persecution, helped him	some months	7
I: Growth in understanding Bible, as disciple of Christ	+5 joy in communion with God, willingness to serve	involvement with Church	till today	8

Figure 13: The Spiritual Decision Matrix for Convert 4

© R. Straehler 2005; based on Søgaard (1996) and Gray (2005)
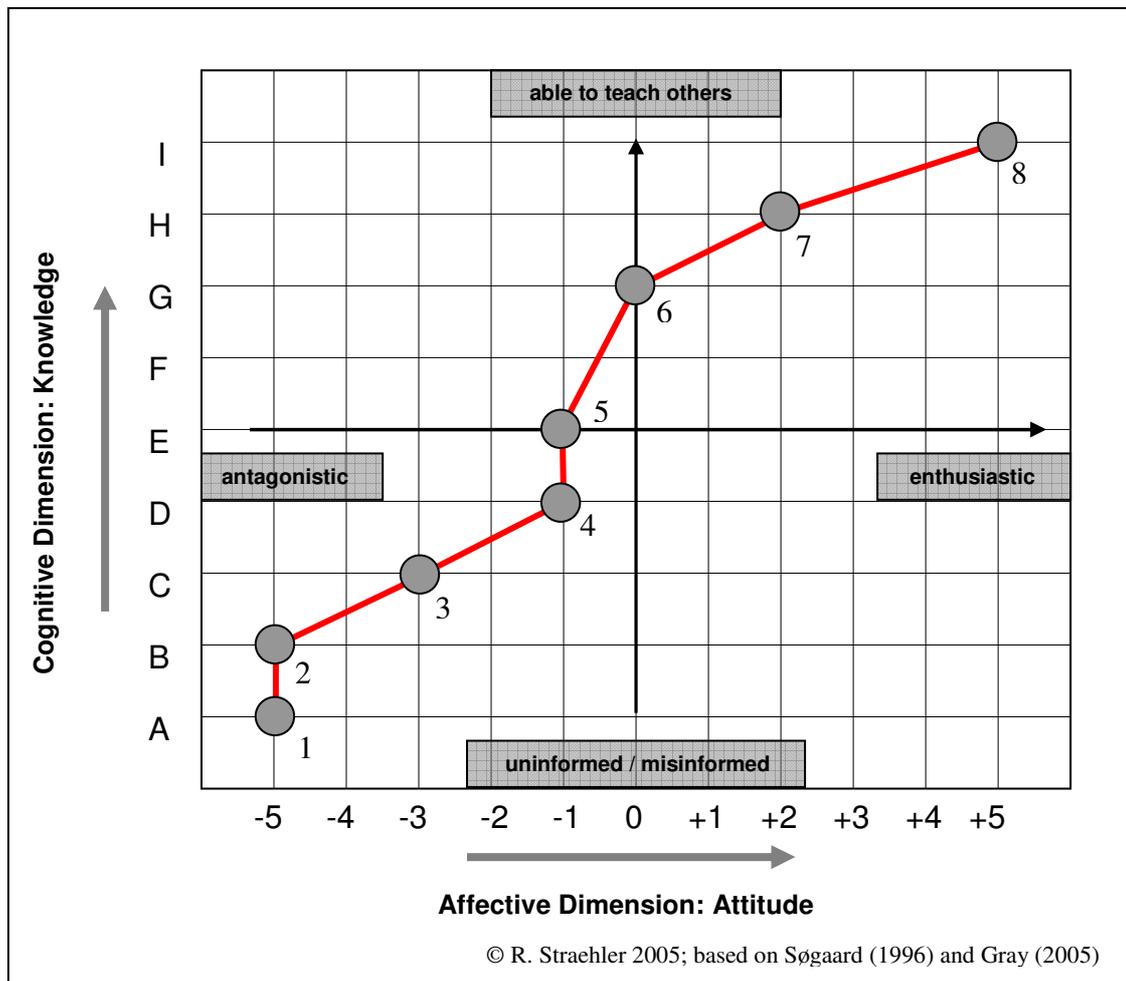
Only after he realized that Christians also pray and fast did he develop a more positive attitude (C/-3). His knowledge increased significantly through his study of the Koran and the *Hadith*, as well as the Bible, until he finally crossed the affective line and changed his allegiance towards Christ. From there on he progressed steadily and became a mature follower of Christ.

5.1.2.5 Convert 5

Table 16: Stages and Factors in the Conversion Process of Convert 5

Cognitive dimension (knowledge about Christian faith)	Affective dimension (attitude towards Christian faith)	Factors that caused movement to this stage	Time frame for stage	Marker on matrix
A: no knowledge about gospel, little sense of spiritual need	-4: indifferent	upbringing through family and society	about 20 years	1
B: initial awareness through contact with Christians	-2: positive attitude towards Jesus	discussions with Christians	some weeks	2
D: realization that Jesus is more than a prophet	-1: Jesus is seen as attractive, he realizes that God works in his life (by bringing him into contact with Christians), feels comfortable in church,	contact with Christians, visit to church service	some weeks	3
E: he "wants God" (realization that Jesus is focus of submission to God)	0: The power of Jesus "draws" him (no conscious decision) +1: experience of joy as new believer	visit to a church service	some weeks	4
F: understanding of sin and salvation G: experience of assurance of salvation	+2: experience of fellowship	Christians provided fellowship and teaching	some months	5
H+I: growth in understanding the Word of God, as a disciple of Christ	+3: pressure from society, +4: overcoming pressure, +5: enjoying communion with God, willingness to serve	fellowship with Christians	till today	6

The interesting point in the process of Convert 5 is that the change of allegiance towards Christ took place with relatively little knowledge about who this Christ really is (below E). It can be argued whether Convert 5 really realized that "Jesus is the focus of submission to God" when he moved from D/-1 to E/+1. He stated that he did not make "a conscious decision". But it is clear that after his change of allegiance, and due to solid discipleship training, he soon understood the basics of the Christian faith, the person of Christ, and particularly the issue of sin and repentance. In his case the different stages can be clearly identified till F-G /+2, but subsequently the description is not so detailed. He stated that these stages did not occur in the sequence mentioned in the questionnaire. Therefore, the development from G/+2 to I/+5 is indicated with a long line, and no further detailed stages.

Figure 14: The Spiritual Decision Matrix for Convert 5

© R. Straehler 2005; based on Søgaard (1996) and Gray (2005)
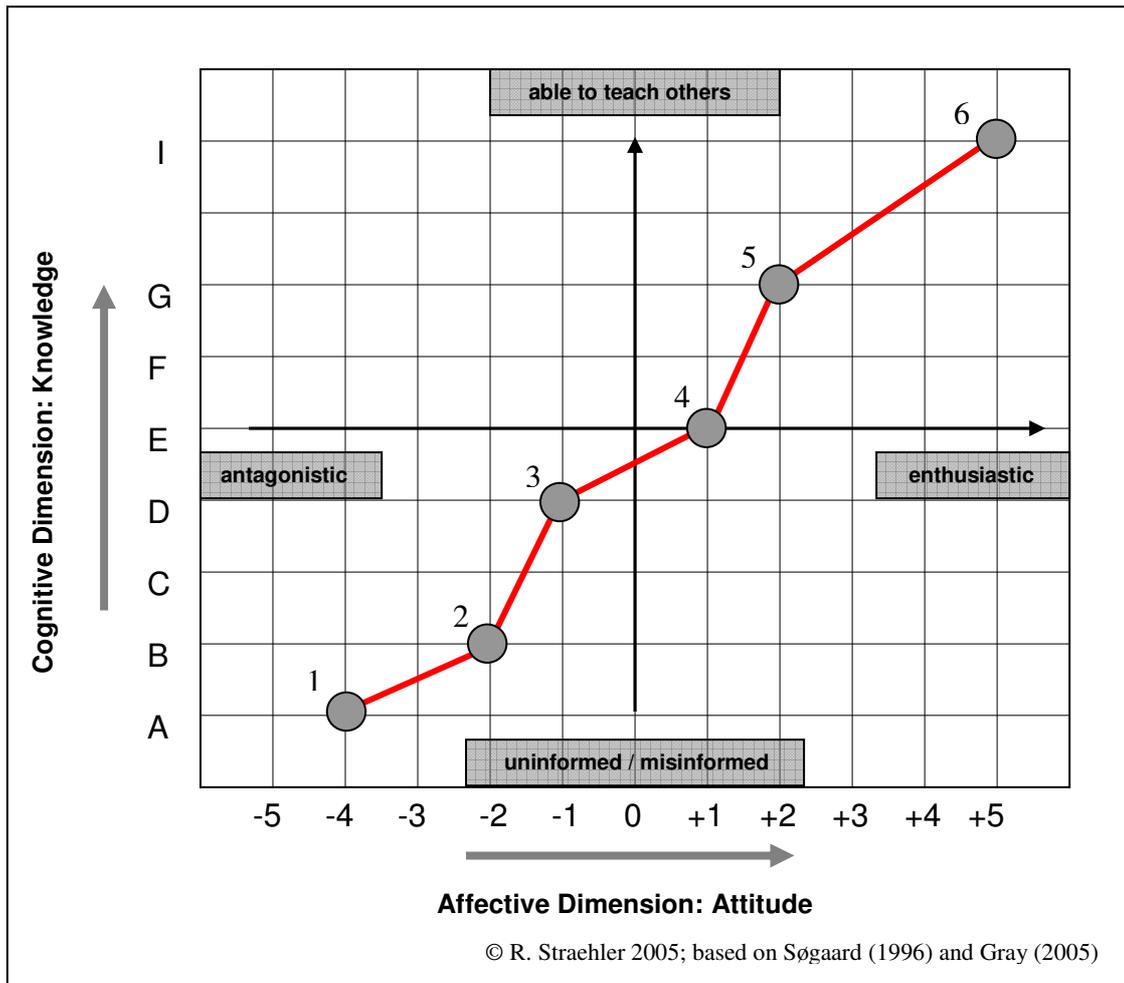
5.1.2.6 Convert 6

Convert 6 had the most difficulties in becoming convinced about the truth of the Christian faith. He moved on the cognitive axis from A/-1 through B/-1 to C/-1 without changing his negative attitude about the Christian faith at all. In this he is unique among all six Sudanese converts. Only Convert 4 went through a similar development, but not to such an extent. Then suddenly, caused by the supernatural push into a Christian meeting and the consequent message he heard there, he moved rapidly – during this one meeting – forward on the affective axis and upward on the cognitive axis. This is a similar quick increase in knowledge to the cases of Convert 1 and Convert 3. But the most remarkable jump is the one on the affective axis from C/-5 to C/-2. After his conversion he denied his faith once, only later to make up for that with a public Christian meeting in his house to which he invited his neighbours. This relapse is not indicated on the matrix.

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Table 17: Stages and Factors in the Conversion Process of Convert 6

Cognitive dimension (knowledge about Christian faith)	Affective dimension (attitude towards Christian faith)	Factors that caused movement to this stage	Time frame for stage	Marker on matrix
A: no knowledge about gospel, little sense of spiritual need, did not think about it	-4: indifference	upbringing by family and society	till he was a youth	1
B: initial awareness through contact with Christians growing awareness through reading Bible and Koran	-4: is not convinced, no interest in this faith, except want to prove that it is wrong	discussions with friends and neighbours reading Bible in order to find contradictions	1 ½ years	2
C: growing awareness of Christian faith	-4: is not convinced, thinks that it is wrong	discussions with Christians, brought by converted friend	6 months	3
C: grasp of implications of gospel D: realization that Jesus is more than a prophet E: belief in Jesus	-2: positive attitude towards gospel -1: Jesus seen as attractive 0: decision to believe in Jesus	supernaturally forced to attend a Christian meeting, hears message about John 14:6	1 day	4 5 6
F-G: repentance, experience of assurance of salvation	+1: experience of joy as new believer who has assurance of salvation		same day	7
H: evaluation of decision	+2: experience of fellowship +3: external pressure, one-time denial of new faith, then correcting it	fellowship with Christians, pressure from family and friends	some months	8
I: growth in understanding Word of God, as a disciple of Christ	+4: overcoming pressure +5: enjoying communion with God, willingness to serve	receives training	till today	9

Figure 15: The Spiritual Decision Matrix for Convert 6

© R. Straehler 2005; based on Søgaard (1996) and Gray (2005)
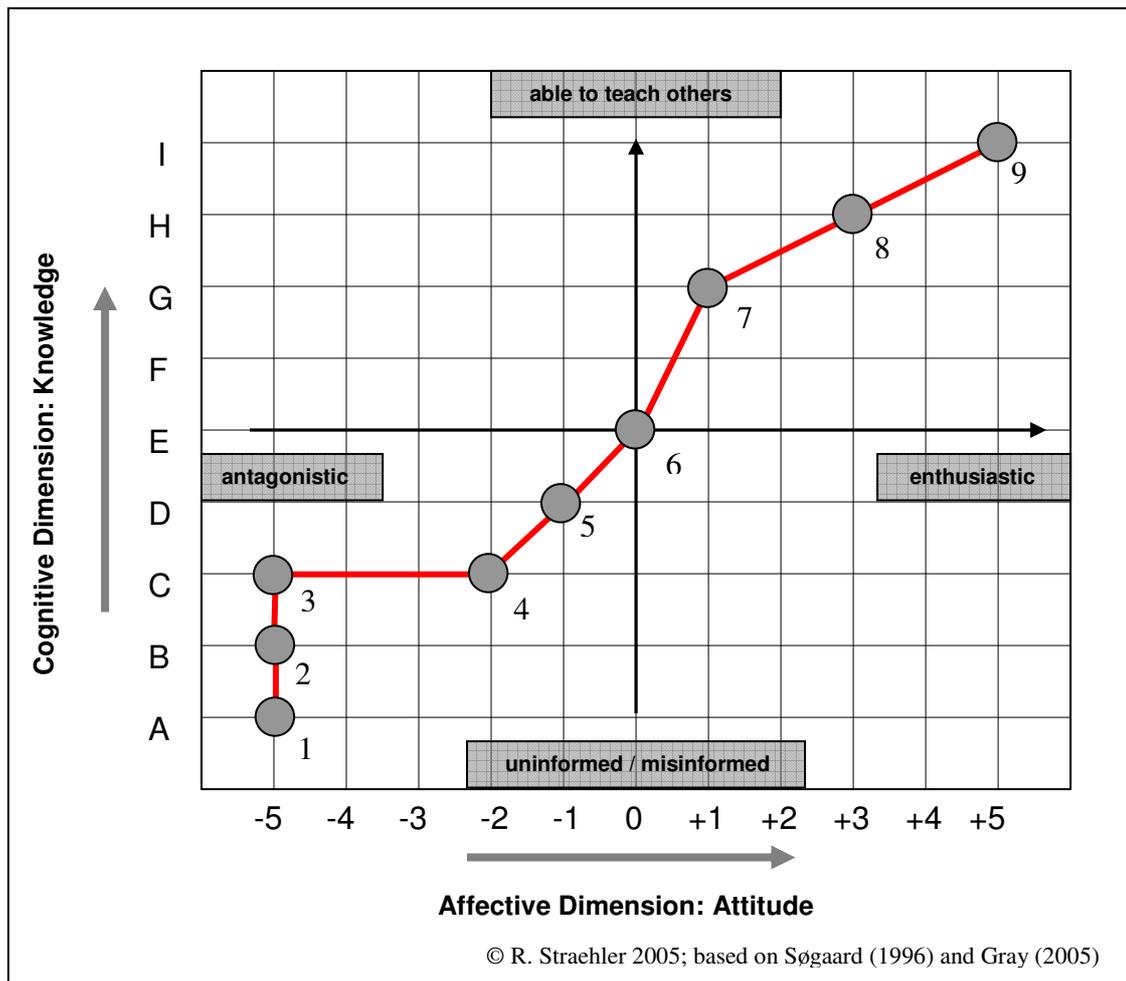
5.1.2.7 Observations of the Six Conversion Processes

Concerning the minimum belief of a convert, we have referred already to Green (1988:6), who explains that conviction of sin is outside the normal experience of the Muslim and may therefore not operate as a motivation for turning to Christ. This is confirmed by Convert 5 who clearly stated that at the point of conversion he had no conscious awareness of the issue of repentance and faith in Jesus, nor of salvation in general. He only wanted God. The issue of salvation was explained to him only after his conversion.

Convert 6 explained that for him the issue of 'salvation' was bigger than 'forgiveness'. Forgiveness in his understanding at that time is something that God does every day, salvation he gives once at the end of life. The issue of assurance of salvation played a major role in his conversion process. He was aware that even Muhammad and his closest friends and relatives did not have assurance of salvation. This worried him a lot. One can argue that in this case the person did not have an awareness of sin nor of the need for forgiveness, but wanted assurance of salvation. This agrees with Green's minimum requirement.

In comparing the different stages and the conversion processes of all six people interviewed, it is interesting to notice that the biggest differences occur in the lower/left area of the Spiritual Decision Matrix, which is the part of the process in which people move towards a change of religious allegiance. In the upper/right area of the Spiritual Decision Matrix, the part of the process that describes the development of the convert after the decisive movement, the development is little different from person to person. In the lower/left area one can distinguish between those converts where an increased knowledge also led to a similar advance on the affective axis (Convert 2 and Convert 5), and those where an increased knowledge did not result in a change of attitude immediately (Convert 4 and Convert 6). Convert 1 and Convert 3 are like Convert 2 and Convert 5 in this regard, but in their cases the movement on both axes happened within a very short time (several hours). Another observation is that most converts began their spiritual journey on A/-5 or A/-4, which means that they either were hostile towards the Christian faith or at least indifferent. Only Convert 1 began already on A/-3 with some sympathy for the Christian faith, even though she did not understand its teachings at the beginning of her spiritual journey. Certainly all six converts were in the end convinced about the truth of the Christian faith.

The development after crossing the essential line on both axes is quite similar for all converts. Convert 1 and Convert 2 went through exactly the same stages from F/0 to I/+5; Convert 3 only left out stage H/+3, and Convert 6 started at E/0 instead at F/0. Convert 4 crossed the affective axis at a higher point on the cognitive axis (G/0) than all the other converts and from there proceeded through H/+2 to I/+5. In contrast to this, Convert 5 crossed the affective

axis at the lowest point on the cognitive axis from all converts (below E) but from there moved upwards quickly through G/+2 to I/+5. All six converts are now at the stage of I/+5 which means that they are growing as disciples of Christ and enjoying communion with God. Also all are variously involved in serving God.

5.1.3 Validation of Results

Even though the process of conversion was different for each one of the Sudanese converts, they all went variously through different stages on their way to encounter Christ, as the previous section has clearly shown. Because most of these stages of progression were experienced by at least some of the converts (if not all), they can be organized as clearly defined stages in a graph as has been done in the "Spiritual Decision Matrix."

The presence of clearly distinguishable stages in the process of conversion for Muslims to the Christian faith is validated by results of other researchers. Greenlee (1996:154), in his study of converts in Morocco, even though he did not identify exact stages in the decision process, describes a basic pattern of conversion which was in some sense the 'normal' process of conversion. In this pattern a young man is introduced to a Bible correspondence programme through a friend. He eventually establishes contact with an expatriate Christian who attracts him to the gospel through his teaching and the empathy he shows. Later the young man is introduced to national Christians and they help him to overcome barriers that so far have held him back from a conversion. This pattern clearly shows different stages through which Moroccan converts usually go before they accept the Christian faith as a new religion. In Greenlee's study a number of respondents referred to a clear point of conversion, whereas others found it difficult to define a particular moment (:141f). They could not identify what Tippet (1987:75f) referred to as "a precise point of encounter". In general, emphasis was given to the process nature of conversion (Greenlee 1996:143). The gradual conversions reported fit the theory of Engel (1990) regarding those who have had little prior contact with Christianity.

An interesting observation can be taken from Köse's (1996:122-124) study of converts to Islam in Great Britain. In a similar way like Greenlee in Morocco, Köse identifies certain stages which seem to be common among the converts he researched: A person stops practising his or her former religion, encounters Islam through social relationships with a Muslim, experiments with Islamic practices in order to test out the alternative faith, at a later stage of the process the beliefs of the new religion are accepted more thoroughly and the final, official step to conversion is completed. Again, this shows that distinct stages were experienced which indicate a movement on the cognitive as well as on the affective axis, even though these stages are not defined precisely. One difference, however, to the situation of Muslims converting to the Christian faith

in the Sudan is, that these converts did not experiment with the Christian faith before they finally accepted it.

The interplay of different motives for conversion according to the study of Maurer (1999) also shows that there are clear stages on both the cognitive and affective axes in the process of conversion. For example, one Muslim lady who had married a Hindu encountered a crisis in her life when her father died and she realized that she had compromised her faith by marrying an 'unbeliever'. At that time she got in contact with Christians who shared their faith with her and her interest in this new religion grew. When her husband died the Christians provided encouragement and support for her. She then decided to follow this religion together with her children. The interplay between the affectional (pushing) motive (death of her father) with the religious motive (her interest in studying the Christian faith) and the affectional (pulling) motive (the love and care of Christians) moved her stage by stage towards Christ (:165-167).

Turkish and Kurdish converts to the Christian faith in Germany also go through different stages, as the research of Schmidt (1998) shows. Like Greenlee and Maurer, Schmidt does not define the individual stages, but as he outlines the process through which the converts he researched went, it becomes obvious that there was also a movement on the cognitive as well as on the affective axis (:51-53). In the case of the young Turkish men for example, they went through a period of crisis in their lives in regard to their identities and their relationships with their families which brought them into contact with Christians. The positive experiences of concerned care from Christians led these young men to questions about their Islamic religion and to an intellectual consideration of an alternative world view, culminating in a change of religious allegiance.

Syrjänen (1984) in his study of conversions in Pakistan also does not point out in detail the different stages through which individuals went on their way to Christ, but his whole study is based on and divided into the three main stages of Tippet (1987): a period of awareness, a period of decision, and a period of incorporation. This is a confirmation that converts actually go through different stages in their conversion processes. The different stages used in Figure 9 ("The Cognitive and Affective Dimension of Conversion Processes") actually correspond to the three periods of Tippet, but they are more detailed. I have divided the "Period of Awareness" into the stages B, C, D and -3, -2, -1. The "Period of Decision" corresponds to the stages E, F, G and 0, +1. And the "Period of Incorporation" is divided in my model into the stages H, I and +2, +3, +4, +5. This more specific division is helpful in better identifying through which stages a person moves during the process of conversion. The most detailed descriptions of different stages in the conversion process of Muslims to the Christian faith have been published by Fraser (1979:139), Mirza (in Livingstone 1993:235-238), and IL (1997). These studies were the sources

for my original "Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims" (Appendix 2). But all of these authors use a one-dimensional model only.

5.1.4 Stages in Conversion Processes: Summary of Analysis

Muslims in the Sudan and elsewhere who are in the process of converting to the Christian faith go through different stages. These stages can be identified. Even though every conversion process is different, there are certain stages that appear again and again. It is therefore possible to present a matrix on which the individual process of a convert can be graphically marked. Such a matrix consists of a cognitive dimension and an affective dimension. During the process of conversion a person will advance in both dimensions, but not necessarily at the same time or speed. Some converts will advance on these two axes more quickly, sometimes the main movement happens within hours, whereas other converts gain new knowledge and change their attitude towards the new religion only slowly over the course of many years.

To have a basic understanding of these stages in the conversion process of Muslims presents particular advantages. The change agent, in this context the Christian who encounters a Muslim, will better understand the Muslim contact. As Muslims like to discuss matters of religion openly, even with strangers they recently came to know, it will be possible to find out relatively easily where this person is on the cognitive and on the affective axis of the spiritual decision matrix at the time of encounter. This will enable the change agent to address the questions that are on the mind of the person and that matter most for him or her at that time. There may be a need for giving new information about the Christian faith, or addressing some of the accusations against the Christian faith Muslims often voice, or just showing to the Muslim that not all Christians are immoral and non-religious. This means input will be given which may cause a movement on the cognitive or on the affective axis. A meaningful discussion will be the result and the change agent can help the person in an appropriate way on the journey to Jesus Christ.

5.2 Problems Encountered during the Processes of Conversion

The conversion process for a Muslim who wants to convert to Christianity is not without problems. Islam is a religion which welcomes new converts, but which does not let anyone leave easily. The official position of Islam towards someone who wants to leave Islam is to regard the person as an apostate who needs to be prevented from such a step by all means, including the use of physical violence. But in addition to problems with the society and authorities, converts may encounter other problems as well. What is the experience of the Sudanese converts analysed in this regard? That is the topic of this section.

5.2.1 Analysis – Problems which Converts Encountered in the Sudan

First the problems which the converts encountered in the Sudan will be presented, and later on these will be compared with problems converts in other geographical areas experience. One set of problems has to do with the family, with society at large, and with authorities. To this we will turn first.

5.2.1.1 Problems with the Family, Society and Authorities

The issue of apostasy (Gibb & Kramers 1974:413f; Greenlee 1996:27ff; Michelmann 2000) and the attitude of the Islamic society to prevent any person from leaving Islam is a serious problem which many converts face as they move from Islam to the Christian faith. Table 18 gives an overview of the different problems with society and the authorities which converts indicated in the questionnaire. Most converts reported problems with their family. Convert 1 made a distinction between her parents, who were at first angry, but later the mother also accepted Christ before she died, and her extended family which reacted angrily, with threats and hostilities, including her brother who physically beat her. The answers of other converts regarding their families are listed in the second category under "family (nuclear or extended)". For each category several entries were possible (for example "angry" and "violent").

Table 18: Problems with Society and Authorities (Question 39)

Categories of people	Reaction				
	understanding	indifferent	angry	threatening	violent
parents	1		1		
family (nuclear or extended)		1	4	4	4
friends		2	4		
colleagues		2	5		
neighbours		2	5	1	
religious leaders		1	5	3	1
government		1	4	4	4

Friends usually reacted angrily. All converts stated angry reactions from colleagues, neighbours, and religious leaders. Religious leaders sometimes even threatened the converts or acted violently. But some of the people in the community were also indifferent to the conversion. Other problematic experiences include the following:

- Convert 1 experienced physical violence by a close family member soon after conversion. Some years later she experienced severe physical abuse and violence from the authorities.
- Convert 3 lost his job with the government.

- Convert 4 was completely rejected by the family and is not allowed to have contact with them till today. He was once in prison for a short time and beaten twice by the authorities.
- Convert 6 was in prison for two weeks and beaten with fists and sticks. His family also beat him in the same way.

This shows that converting to Christianity can lead to serious difficulties with the authorities, but not necessarily in every case. Convert 2 reported that once officials from the authorities asked his neighbours about him, but the neighbours told them that "this is a good man." Since then the authorities have left him in peace.

From the six converts, only Convert 4 does not have any contact with his family. The others still are in contact with their family, even living with them (Convert 5). Convert 5 mentioned that his family tolerates his decision now, but have asked him not to talk about it with anyone else. Convert 3 reported that he had lost his job as a result of his conversion. No one else mentioned this. Convert 4 has a difficult time finding a job – but he would prefer to work officially with the church as an evangelist.

What then is the current relationship of the Sudanese converts with the Muslim community? The answer to this question (question 40) depends on what extent the community knows about the convert's Christian belief. Here are the different replies:

- Convert 1: Is fully integrated and respected, some neighbours are hostile, therefore she had to move house several times; it is known that she and her husband are believers in Christ.
- Convert 2: Is fully integrated and respected, he tries to come close to the people, wants to reflect God's holiness; it is known that he is a Christian and attends church.
- Convert 3: People treat him with suspicion; it is known that he is a Christian; he is married to a Southern Sudanese Christian wife.
- Convert 4: He feels "75 % integrated and respected" since a full integration can only be if one is a Muslim. His family rejects him completely, the authorities leave him in peace; it is known that he is a Christian.
- Convert 5: He is fully integrated and respected, but some people treat him with suspicion; usually he does not identify himself as a Christian, only a few people outside the immediate family know about it, but if pressured he admits that he is a believer in Christ.
- Convert 6: People treat him with suspicion, he says that as a convert he can never be fully integrated and respected; he has a good relationship with his family; the immediate family knows that he is a Christian, also many neighbours.

It is interesting to notice that all six converts managed to continue to live a relatively normal life as a convert, despite the harassment and the problems they faced. Even though according to the legislation, conversion from Islam to Christianity is punishable by death in the Sudan (Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2002, quoted in US Department of State 2003); there are hardly any known cases where this has been applied in recent years. The US Department of State (2003) mentions one case where such a convert disappeared. The converts interviewed did not mention any such case of which they would be aware. It seems that the law of apostasy is not applied rigorously up to the actual point of killing, in the Sudan. This is what Troeger (2000:155) calls a "grey zone" between written law and factual treatment of converts. We can therefore conclude that it is possible for Muslims in the Sudan to convert to the Christian faith, even though it may be difficult.

5.2.1.2 Problematic Relationship with the Church

In addition to the problems with the family, society and authorities, the converts also found that their relationship with the established church was sometimes problematic. Table 19 shows this relationship as experienced by the six converts.

Table 19: Relationship with the Established Church (Questions 28 + 29)

First contact with the established church	Quality of relationship with established church				
	rejected by church	welcomed with reservations	welcomed, but did not take root	feels completely at home	prefers to worship in own culture
at beginning of spiritual journey to Christ		2	3	1	
after acceptance of Christ	1	1		2	3

Table 19 indicates that the relationship with the established church is not without problems, but that it is possible for some converts from a Northern Sudanese background to find a home in a Christian church that is mainly influenced by Southern Sudanese culture. For other converts, however, it is necessary to help them to worship in ways according to their own culture, which means to encourage the formation of house-churches for Northern Sudanese converts.

Convert 3 came into contact with the church at the beginning of his spiritual journey to Christ. He indicated that he is somewhere between "welcomed, but did not take root" and "feels at home" (with the omission of the word "completely"). Convert 4, who also came into contact with the church at the beginning of his spiritual journey to Christ, mentioned that he experienced all three: "rejected by the church," "welcomed with reservations," and "feels completely at home." Each statement refers to a particular time in his life since his conversion.

Regarding the question of what the Christians or the church could have done differently in order to support the journey of the converts (question 32), the answers were as follows:

- Convert 1: To stand with converts from a Muslim background, also in their problems. Not to be afraid of the person and stay away when problems come.
- Convert 2: He has had only positive experiences, felt accepted as brother.
- Convert 3: That people would not suspect him to be a spy or a deceiver, but accept him as a brother. There should be more social involvement and interaction, for instance to visit a convert at home.
- Convert 4: To disciple and train converts properly, to give them an opportunity to get involved in the ministry by giving them a chance to speak or preach if they have the gift. Not to wait too long with the baptism. Consider converts also for official jobs like the one of an evangelist.
- Convert 5: The Christians should not treat converts from an Islamic background in a special way, as if they would need more care than others.
- Convert 6: Christians should not be shy to speak openly in discussions with Muslims, explaining clearly the uniqueness of Christ, answering the questions Muslims have.

These answers contain a number of valuable suggestions for the churches and individual Christians in their relationship with converts from a Muslim background. Some of these suggestions will be taken up in the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 6.

5.2.1.3 Problems Faced Presently

Some of the problems the converts encountered happened in the past and were eventually overcome. But the converts also face some problems presently, which are due to their conversion years ago. In particular their relationship to the Muslim community often remains an issue that cannot easily be resolved. Under 5.2.1.1 we have seen that the relationship with the immediate family in most cases has been restored after a stormy time. However Convert 4 is not able to have contact with his family till today. Convert 1 still experiences hostility from some neighbours; Convert 3 and Convert 5 are treated with suspicion by some people; and Convert 4 and Convert 6 claim that as converts they can never be accepted fully by the Muslim society. This shows that a certain tension will always remain in the life of a convert from Islam in regard to the society around.

As far as the relationship with the established church is concerned, half of the converts indicated that they were satisfied with their spiritual home right now, whereas the other half is missing something. From the ones who are content, one mentioned the desire for more biblical training, another misses other believers from his own tribe. The ones who expressed

dissatisfaction with their spiritual home, complained about the general problems in the churches like rigid leadership structures, conflicts, and lack of faithfulness. In addition to these problems, (which also Christians from a traditional Christian background face!), two converts expressed problems that they as converts feel particularly: the lack of deeper social and spiritual relationships (because there is some kind of mistrust towards them) and the fear that one day the church would cause trouble (by reporting them to the authorities). These issues will be taken up in chapter six in the conclusions.

5.2.2 Validation of Results

The difficulties which Muslims who convert to the Christian faith encounter in the Sudan with regard to their families, the society and authorities, are in line with the experience of converts in other geographical areas. In Greenlee's (1996:106ff) study of Moroccan converts half of the people interviewed reported persecution or the potential of persecution. Some experienced severe pressure during their search for a new faith, others got into problems after their family and friends discovered that they had become Christians. Among the difficulties encountered were verbal threats, psychological pressure to return to Islam, expulsion from the house and disownment by the father. Greenlee (:153) found that those who have a high level of Islamic religious practice before conversion will most likely be persecuted, whereas for those who have not practised Islam seriously, persecution is usually milder or does not occur. This pattern validates the experience of Convert 4 in the Sudan who was a strong Muslim, involved in activities to islamise Christians, and who after his conversion faced many difficulties, the worst being that his family refuses any contact with him till today.

Converts from Islam to the Christian faith in South Africa also faced opposition and persecution, as Maurer (1999:233ff) found in his study. Some were beaten up; others were offered material help if they return to Islam, or were simply shunned in public. Persecution is also reported from different areas of the Muslim world by Woodberry (2001:8f). Those who decided to follow Jesus Christ experience rejection, physical violence and even killing, traumatic experiences during arrest and interrogations, and other forms of opposition and persecution. Yet the positive result of such persecution is often spiritual growth on the side of the convert, if not numerical growth, according to Woodberry (:9). In some cases in Pakistan, converts were separated from their families in a single blow and in a final way (Syrjänen 1984:177). But more often the families tried to win the "lost sheep" back through different means, such as discussions with Muslim teachers, or through marriage arrangements.

In addition to the actual opposition and persecution which converts face during their spiritual search or after their acceptance of the Christian faith, there is also the issue of fear: how

the community will react. Syrjänen (1984:165-167) describes how this fear troubles especially younger and single people who are still living with and dependent on their family. As people get older and less dependent, they have more freedom to choose their own way. This observation supports the case of Convert 2 in the Sudan who grew up separated from his father and who therefore did not experience opposition from him.

The fear of persecution sometimes influences converts even after they have taken the decisive step to put their faith in Jesus Christ and therefore they do not let others around them know about their faith (cf Eenigenburg 2001). Syrjänen (1984:175) sees this as a problem because he feels that if there is no clear 'separation' one can not talk of a proper 'incorporation'. For him, such converts seem to be in no-man's land, and it is impossible to say whether they have a Christian or Muslim identity. This is what happened to some of the Kurdish and Turkish converts in Germany. Being in a European country, they did not experience physical violence and persecution, but encountered opposition from the family (Schmid 1999:61-63). There was a strong concern from the family about their honour and a kind of fear to lose the child to a different culture and religion. In some cases this opposition faded away after some years but in other cases this fear led to keeping the faith secret or not attending Christian meetings any more in order to avoid conflicts. From the analysis of the interviews it is obvious that with regard to their families, all six converts in the Sudan have made it clear that they are Christians, even though they may not speak about this in public and so the wider community may not be aware of their new faith. Even Convert 5 who probably has the lowest publicly Christian profile, made it clear that when people press him about his faith he will stand up for his new convictions. Therefore the issue of being in a religious no-man's land is no problem for these converts.

All these reports show that the experience of converts in the Sudan is not unique, but is in line with what Muslims elsewhere face as they leave Islam and follow Jesus Christ. The difference from convert to convert lies in the intensity of the opposition and persecution, which may range from anger and rejection to verbal threats, material enticements and even physical violence. The problems are mainly with the nuclear and extended families, seldom with authorities. Greenlee (1996:214f) sums this up rightly when he observes that "persecution is a fact of Christian life in much of the Muslim world." He argues therefore that it is necessary to tell potential converts clearly of the expectations Jesus Christ has for his followers. Although there is no basis to seek persecution, it is something to be expected (John 15:20). And when the pressure comes, the church must be a strong support for converts. But this is not what the church automatically is, which leads us to the second area of problems converts encounter.

For many Muslims it is difficult to imagine becoming a Christian. But when they actually get into contact with someone already following this faith, it is a tangible demonstration that

such a conversion is reasonable and possible (Greenlee 1996:147). As the converts then make the decision and accept the new faith, there is a need for a reference group against which they can measure themselves and by whom they are encouraged by example into the new way. Kilbourne & Richardson (1989:15-19) call this a "social audience reaction". In Morocco, this was sometimes a group of converts (Greenlee 1996:148, 163). In Sudan, this reference group was usually first provided by individual Christians and later by small Christian fellowship groups or a local church.

In countries like Morocco there is no officially recognized church and therefore no tension between the 'official' church and new converts from a Muslim background (Greenlee 1996:163), like in Sudan. Also in South Africa most converts had no difficulty in being accepted by the Christian community (Maurer 1999:241ff). But the transition into the new faith community does not always happen so smoothly. Gaudeul (1999:268) notes that "contrary to what one might imagine, Christian communities in general are far from welcoming to new converts." This seems to be a particularly big problem in Pakistan (Syrjänen 1984:180). The different ethnic and social background between traditional Christians and converts from an Islamic background cause avoidance and feelings of superiority. The converts have a feeling of superiority because Christians belong to the lowest social class in Pakistani society. They therefore do not understand why they are not given a reasonable niche in the Christian community (:181). Particular problems arose when a convert wanted to become a pastor and asked his church to send him to theological training (:182). This is similar to a problem which Convert 4 encountered in the Sudan. He was able to do theological studies, but till now has not been given a proper job as an evangelist in one of the denominations (as is usually the case with other graduates). But in general it seems that the ethnic differences between the converts and the established churches in the Sudan do not lead to such a marked discrimination as in Pakistan. It is not so much that the mainly African Christians would not trust the converts from a Northern-Sudanese background, but that the converts do not feel at home in the African culture of the Christians. Converts also feel that the Christians do not relate to them so well, due to the cultural differences between them.

The relationship with the established church does not always have to be problematic. Schmid (1999:69ff) reports that the female converts in Germany experienced the contact with Christians as a positive factor that helped them to get to know the Christian faith without pressure. But in order not to anger their parents, some do not attend Christian meetings any more. In their case the problem clearly does not come from the Christians, but from the Muslim family. In the case of the male converts, they experienced the Christian community and the church as a place where they felt accepted and were able to find healing for the many

psychological wounds they had experienced in their childhood (:71-74). In a similar way, two of the Sudanese converts expressed that they now feel completely at home in their church, which shows that even though problems have occurred, they can also be overcome.

5.2.3 Problems Encountered during the Process of Conversion: Summary of Analysis

Muslims, who decide to leave their Islamic religious convictions behind and want to follow Jesus Christ, will most likely encounter difficulties in two main areas, as did the six converts analysed in this study. The first area of problems is conflict with the family, society and authorities. The family is often the first who build up opposition and try to prevent the person seeking a new religious alternative and leave Islam. Different means may be employed, from discussions, verbal threats, psychological and emotional pressure, to physical violence and complete rejection. Depending on how much the society around the family knows about the case, neighbours, colleagues, former friends and also community leaders may be involved in opposing the 'apostate' as he or she will be considered. Problems with authorities will usually only come up if the family or someone from the community files a complaint against the person, or the authorities otherwise get to know about the conversion. However, the strongest pressure which a convert faces, is the pressure from the family and particularly from the parents, because it carries with it a strong emotional aspect. All these problems are real, they can involve danger to life and health, but they do not necessarily lead to physical harm or death. For many converts it is possible to live a normal life. But still, converts need to be prepared to expect difficulties and to be ready to suffer for the sake of their new Lord, Jesus Christ.

The second area of problems that a Muslim convert is most likely to encounter is conflicts with the established church. Due to the precarious situation of the church in many Muslim countries, the Christian community may not be eager to welcome converts from Islam because they may fear a spy or otherwise feel uncomfortable towards someone coming from the Muslim community. Other problems often arise when the Christians belong to a different ethnic group than the one from which the new convert comes. In addition to this there are the general problems that all Christians may face in their particular congregation, like lack of spiritual zeal, leadership problems, disunity and others. Again, it is important that converts are prepared in advance for the possibility of such problems so that they are not overly disappointed if people do not heartily welcome them. On the other side, as new converts need a new spiritual home and friends that encourage them, it is a great challenge for any congregation which a convert joins, to receive such a person with unconditional love and provide the kind of fellowship and nurture that are needed.

5.3 Results of Conversion Processes

The final aspect of this study is to find out what the results of the conversion processes in the lives of the six converts are. Which aspects of their lives were changed and where is there continuity? First we want to get an overview of the results of the conversion processes in the lives of the interviewees as they appeared in the study and analyse them. Then we will validate this analysis with reports from other geographical areas.

5.3.1 Analysis – Results of Conversion Processes in the Sudan

The conversion process has an effect upon different aspects of the life of the person who is on a spiritual journey. To begin with, we will look at continuity and change in relation to the identity of the convert.

5.3.1.1 Confirmation of the Identity of the Convert

Table 20 shows the degrees of continuity and of change in the areas of national, tribal, and cultural identity for the Sudanese converts. As can be seen, in all three areas the patriotic identity of the converts remained positively as it was before the conversion or it became even stronger. Only Convert 5 mentioned that his national identity is weaker since his conversion. This is because through his conversion he became aware of the Christian roots of his tribe and therefore his tribal identity plays a higher role now than his national identity. As a result, the tribal identity became stronger after conversion. It is therefore obvious, that the conversion of these six Sudanese from Islam to the Christian faith did not result in a loss of their national, tribal and cultural identities, but served as a confirmation or even strengthening of them. This is interesting, because often the Muslim community will oppose a conversion on the ground that this is seen as treason in regard to the community, as if the convert would give up his national, tribal and cultural identity. This was clearly not the case with the converts interviewed. They are all still proud of being Sudanese and a member of their particular tribe.

Table 20: Changes Concerning Identity after Conversion (Questions 11, 42, 43, 45)

Area of change	Remains positive, no change	Stronger after conversion	Weaker after conversion
national identity	4	1	1
tribal identity	4	2	
cultural identity (Northern Sudanese Muslim culture)	6		

Concerning the cultural identity of the Northern Sudanese Muslim, none of the converts stated directly that this had changed in any way. But from the conversion stories it is clear that some change did indeed happen, for instance Convert 2 and Convert 6 who both married a

Christian wife from Southern Sudan now feel at home in the respective culture of their wives as well. This does not mean that they feel less Northern Sudanese, but rather, they now experience a wider horizon of culture.

5.3.1.2 Changes in the Religious Convictions

Another aspect of life on which conversion has an effect is religious convictions. In the case of the Sudanese converts, clear changes can be identified as a result of their conversion process. Table 21 shows some of the changes regarding these convictions. The first kind of conviction has to do with the understanding of Islam as a religion. This has definitely become weaker after conversion for all six converts. All of them clearly indicated that they changed their religious allegiance. They do not regard Islam any longer as 'the' truth. This does not mean that they reject all Islam teaches, but that for them the authoritative source of truth is found in the Christian faith.

Table 21: Changes Concerning Religious Convictions after Conversion (Questions 42 – 45)

Kind of convictions	Stronger after conversion	Weaker after conversion
understanding of Islam as religion		6
practising Muslim rituals		6
theological convictions influenced by Christian faith	6	
understanding of certain habits as sin, consequently abandoned	6	

This new evaluation of Islam naturally leads to a weakening in practising Islamic rituals, the second kind of conviction analysed. As Table 21 shows, all six converts no longer practise these rituals as they did before their conversions. Table 22 gives more details about the participation of the converts regarding different rituals.

Table 22: Participation in Different Muslim Practices (Question 43)

Participation in different practices	Number of converts
five daily prayers	0
attending the mosque	0
keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting	1
giving alms	2
observing Muslim feasts in the family	4
wearing typical Muslim dress (occasionally or regularly	5
keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, no pork, etc)	6

None of the converts does the five daily prayers or attends the mosque any more. Regarding the keeping of the month of Ramadan in fasting, only Convert 5 said he once did this after his conversion. The behaviour of the converts in these three areas of public religious observance

makes it clear that they have separated from general Muslim practice to a significant extent. Convert 4 said that he is giving alms – but in the form of the Christian tithing and this means he gives 10 % instead of the Muslim 2.5 %. Convert 5 mentioned that he occasionally gives money to the poor. The last three aspects of Table 22 will be analysed in the next section.

The third kind of conviction which changed through conversion are theological convictions which are now influenced by the Christian faith (see Table 21). All of the converts indicated that this has been a result of their conversion. When the converts were asked in which areas they experienced a significant change after their conversion (question 44), they indicated a change in most of these areas. It would require more detailed questions to find out exactly what had changed, but some converts gave a few comments which show the general tendency. They all indicated a change in the understanding of sin, that it is not only directed against people, but also (and primarily) against God. One mentioned that he no longer sees the family only as a social issue, but as a picture of the relationship of believers with Christ. Another mentioned that he understands marriage now as a unity between husband and wife, something Islam does not teach.

Table 23: Relationship between Level of Satisfaction with Islam before Conversion and Change in Convictions and Practices after Conversion (Questions 15, 43, 45)

Level of satisfaction with Islam before conversion	Theological convictions now			Cultural practices now		
	Practice of Islamic rituals	Belief in the same God	Koran has spiritual value	Observation of Muslim feasts in family	Wearing Islamic dress	Keeping Muslim dietary regulations
content with Islam, no doubts	2 no	2 no	1 no 1 yes	1 no 1 yes	1 no 1 yes	2 yes
practising, but often having doubts	3 no	3 no	2 no 1 yes	1 no 2 yes	3 yes	3 yes
often in opposition to religious system and society	1 no	1 no	1 no	1 yes	1 yes	1 yes

In Table 23 a number of theological convictions are shown which have changed drastically since the converts adopted the Christian faith. Each column reflects the attitude of all six converts. The table also indicates that there is no relationship between the level of satisfaction with Islam before conversion and the change in theological convictions afterwards. None of the converts practises the Islamic rituals any more except for some observance of giving alms and observing Muslim festivals within the family (see Table 22). All indicated that their understanding of God has changed to the point where they regard the God they believe in now, as being different from the one they believed in previously. This should not imply that there are no aspects of Islamic teaching about God which do not agree with Christian teaching, but that the

emphasis on who God is and how he acts with humans is very different between Islam and Christianity. Convert 1 put it in these words: "God is the same, but my understanding now is completely different." The attitude towards the Koran has also changed drastically, it is no longer considered to be the book that gives spiritual guidance. The two people who mentioned that the Koran still has some spiritual value (Convert 2 and Convert 4) also explained that this is only true to a limited extent.

The fourth kind of conviction that has changed is ethical behaviour (see Table 21). In general converts indicated that they are now more sensitive about moral issues such as lying, adultery, envy, stealing or anger. They realize that God is holy and does not tolerate sin. Some habits are now understood as sinful and consequently left, for example occasional lying. One said that he is not often getting angry any more. Another commented that anger is still a problem for him, but now he has a new spiritual force to counter it. This shows how the converts experienced the biblical understanding of conversion as "turning away from sin and turning to God in faith." As a result of their conversion, all six Sudanese are now involved in different ministries, for example in witnessing to non-Christians.

An interesting question in this connection is how the converts identify themselves in religious terms after their conversion. Table 24 shows that four out of the six converts use the term 'Christian' and two the expression 'Believer in Christ'. Some converts gave several terms as an answer. But none uses contextualized terms like 'Follower of *Isa'* or 'Jesus Muslim'.

Table 24: Religious Identification after Conversion (Question 41)

Religious description used	Number of converts
Christian	4
Believer in Christ	2
Masihiya Mu'mina (Christian believer)	1
I belong to Christ	1
I love God	1

Some, however, prefer to use descriptions like 'I belong to Christ' or 'I love God' or 'Christian believer.' Convert 6 uses the term 'Christian', but he said that if he had not used this term from the beginning, he would prefer to identify himself as 'a Muslim who believes in Christ'. But now he is already known as a 'Christian' and cannot change this anymore. Convert 2 uses the term 'Christian' in contacts with Christians, but in contact with Muslims he prefers the description 'I love God.' In general it can be said that the converts changed significantly in terms of their religious identification and they all identify themselves in one way or another with the Christians.

5.3.1.3 Continuity and Change in Regard to Social and Cultural Behaviour

Conversion also had an effect on a third aspect of the life of the converts, on their social and cultural behaviour. Table 25 shows that in this area there is partly continuation and partly change. As far as changes in cultural behaviour are concerned, Convert 6 explained that some things did not change, like the kind of food he eats and the clothing he wears. But other things changed, mainly issues related with ethics, for example swearing, a common habit in Sudanese society. But in general the cultural behaviour of converts did not change, which means that outwardly, in their daily life, they do not differ from other Northern Sudanese.

Table 25: Changes Regarding Social and Cultural Behaviour (Questions 11, 40, 43, 45)

Area of continuity or change	Positive, no change	Stronger after conversion	Weaker after conversion
cultural behaviour	5	1	
relationship with Muslim society	2	1	3
observing Muslim feasts	4		2

The question about changes in marital relationship (question 45) proved not to be helpful, since all the converts were single at the time of their conversion. Obviously there was no change in marital relationship. But most of them mentioned that their understanding of marriage had changed and is influenced now by the Christian understanding.

The second area which Table 25 shows is the relationship with Muslim society. Two indicated no change; they are still fully integrated, despite occasional problems. Convert 5 expressed that he is now more Sudanese and a member of his tribe than before his conversion, which indicates a stronger relationship with Muslim society. Three converts expressed that due to suspicion they encountered after their conversion, their relationship with Muslim society is now weaker. In this connection it is worth mentioning that Converts 2, 3 and 6 each married a wife from Southern Sudan or from the Nuba Mountains, which means from a different cultural background. As a result of their marriages they now associate also with people from this social-cultural background, which indicates a broadening of their social affiliation.

The issue of the social and cultural identification can also be seen in the participation of different practices, as Table 22 shows. Four converts indicated that they observe Muslim feasts in the family. However, they do this more as a social occasion and not in obedience to religious requirements, in a similar way to some Christians congratulating their Muslim friends on the occasion of their feasts.

The wearing of Muslim dress is also a practice in which most of the converts still participate. They do this as identification with the Northern Sudanese culture in general or just

because they are used to doing it and like it. Convert 3 mentioned that he wears the typical Sudanese *Jellabiya* only in the evenings. Even before his conversion he did not like to wear it during the day or in public, a practice which many of the Sudanese men, who for example work in offices, follow. Convert 6 (who is not from an Arab background) does not wear a *Jellabiya*, but added that even his father does not like to wear this clothing which is considered to be typical Arab dress.

Concerning keeping Muslim dietary laws, it needs to be mentioned that in Sudan alcohol is officially outlawed, even though it is available unofficially, and pork is not available on the market in the North of the country at all. This means that most people do not consume these items, even the Christians and followers of the Traditional African Religions. It is therefore no surprise that all six converts still adhere to these regulations. One convert mentioned that he keeps the Muslim dietary regulations just for health reasons, not for religious ones. Another convert said that he keeps these regulations out of obedience to God, out of love.

We need to look at Table 23 again which shows that there is no relationship between the level of satisfaction with Islam before conversion and the theological convictions and cultural practices today. For all converts their theological convictions have changed drastically since their conversion, whereas their cultural behaviour, in general, has not. As the table shows, cultural practices are mostly in line with general Northern Sudanese Muslim culture, with a few exceptions. In the case of Convert 4, who said that he does not observe Muslim feasts in the family, one needs to remember that he does not have any contact with his family and so is in no position to visit them on the occasion of these feasts, as the other converts may do.

5.3.2 Validation of Results

The word 'conversion' has to do with 'change' and therefore 'results' are to be expected in the life of someone who claims to have converted. The Greek word *metanoia* expresses the idea of repentance as an alteration in the total moral attitude, a profound change in life's direction, a conversion which affects the whole of a person's conduct (Behm 1967:979, 999; see 2.1.1). For Peace (2004:8), conversion results in a "new way of living in the context of the kingdom of God." The biblical understanding of conversion therefore implies a clear change. But questions are in which areas of life do these changes occur and how do they manifest themselves? The analysis of the interviews has shown three areas of importance: The identity of the converts, their religious convictions, and social and cultural changes in their lifestyle.

The difference between an identity as Christians in terms of belonging to the same Lord, and an identity as Christians in terms of belonging to the same ethnic or social community is not easy to determine. It is a challenge for all converts to the Christian faith in societies where most

Christians belong to a different ethnic or social community. In the case of these six Sudanese it seems that they did not have a problem having fellowship with Christians. But because Christian culture in the Sudan is mostly shaped by the African culture of Southern Sudanese and Nubas, some of the converts from Northern Sudanese tribes did not want to identify completely with it. Three indicated that they prefer to worship according to their own culture and all of the converts kept their tribal and cultural identity as Northern Sudanese. The culture of Northern Sudanese converts is from the leading segment of Sudanese society, whereas the African Christians feel that they are on the lower end of the social strata. This is a similar situation to the one in Pakistan (Syrjänen 1984:183-185) where the Christians expect that a convert from a Muslim background becomes 'a sweeper' like them, but converts certainly *do not want* to take on that identity. This of course makes it difficult for converts to develop a healthy identity as a Christian. Such a tension does not exist in a country like Morocco, because the national Christians are all from the same cultural background (Greenlee 1996:163). But whenever there is a choice for the convert, in which cultural setting he or she wants to practice the new faith, there should be freedom to choose. For example, some of the Turkish converts in Germany prefer to attend a Turkish church, others feel at home in a German congregation (Schmid 1999:76f).

Another issue that has to do with the identity of the convert is the level of contentment with nationality and cultural background. Greenlee (1996:182) found that the more content a person is with his or her culture or setting in life, the more likely one is to participate well in church activities. In such a case the convert has no problems to identify with Christians. Also members of the Christian community who identify well with their general cultural context will more naturally evangelise that community (:200). In Morocco some converts developed a stronger national identity as a result of their conversion, whereas others continued to have a negative or neutral attitude which was not changed by conversion (:117f). Dissatisfaction with one's country and culture may be a positive factor influencing a person towards a change of religion, but later on it may have a negative impact on the convert (Greenlee 1996:130f). Greenlee observes that the Holy Spirit also works in the hearts of those who are satisfied with their culture and leads them to a conversion. The six Sudanese converts are an example of this, they were content with their culture and still gave up their religious allegiance in order to follow Christ. As a result, their national, tribal and cultural identity was confirmed or even strengthened. They did not give up being Sudanese or being members of their particular tribe.

Conversion to the Christian faith can also lead to reconciliation with the culture of the convert. Turkish male converts in Germany experienced inner healing after most of them went through a severe crisis in their lives and found a new identity between the Turkish and German cultures (Schmid 1999:64). The development of such a secure identity has much to do with the

reception the convert receives in church. If there is no such welcoming community for the convert, his or her identity will become insecure (Syrjänen 1984:190). This shows that conversion can lead to a strengthening of the identity of the convert, something the Sudanese converts experienced as well.

The second area of life onto which conversion has an effect is religious conviction. Conversion affects the total life-style. Kasdorf (1980:68; cf 2.2.1) writes that "conversion is an empirical happening, profoundly affecting both, the rational as well as the emotional, the relational as well as the behavioural aspects of one's lifestyle." This shows that there will be definite changes in the life of a convert: attitudes and convictions will change (religious convictions), the allegiance changes from Muhammad to Christ, ethical behaviour changes (in accordance with biblical standards). These changes are mainly seen in the religious convictions of converts and they constitute the 'core' of conversion. Analysis of the interviews has shown that the Sudanese converts experienced the greatest changes in this area.

Concerning the religious convictions of the converts, Syrjänen (:1984:194f) shows that change from 'the old' to 'the new' has taken place in terms of grasping a new meaning, that means certain cognitive changes have taken place. An important area in this respect is the understanding of God. A number of converts in Pakistan continued to uphold their belief in God as they did as Muslims, but the particular new point was their understanding of Christ, the acknowledgement of his sacrifice. One convert put it this way:

> And what is good in Islam, I am still acting on it, and I will be, because a good thing we cannot call bad. But that thing which I never left was that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sacrifice for our sins and that thing was not in Islam (:195f).

Not all converts will emphasize the continuity of their belief in God like this Pakistani, but rather emphasize the discontinuity. The Kurdish and Turkish converts in Germany experienced a re-shaping of their religious understanding which led to a more positive view of God (Schmid 1999:64). Previously their view of God was shaped by a lack of understanding and fear, but now they perceive God as personal and near. In a similar way, the converts in the Sudan expressed that their understanding of God has changed so much that they regard the God they believe in now as being different from the one they knew as Muslims. This shows the cognitive change that took place during their conversion processes.

The question now arises in how far this cognitive change also has an effect on the actual behaviour of the convert. Syrjänen (1984:31) comes to the conclusion that converts from Islam find it hard to live out the new values which they have found in the Christian faith, mainly because the Christians themselves do not live them out. 'The old' in terms of cultural values, appear quite strong in the life of the Pakistani Christian community (:192f). Maurer (1999:230), on the other hand, identified a strong desire to witness to family and friends of the former

religion as a significant feature in the conversion stories from South Africa. Converts in the Sudan reflect a similar positive result in their life because they are also involved in witnessing to non-Christians.

Changes in the behavioural pattern are also reported from Germany. As part of their new life in Christ, some of the Turkish converts experienced healing from emotional hurts they had experienced in their childhood like inferiority feelings, rejection and physical violence by their parents, or not being loved (Schmid 1999:72). Another experienced how he had the strength to give up drugs and overcome depression and be able to deal with the hatred for his father in a positive way (:72). But others still struggle with negative experience in their family and have difficulties to forgive their parents (:73). One of them expressed that after his conversion he has learned to love the Kurds which is an astonishing change, because as a member of the youth movement "Grey Wolves" he had learned to hate Kurds (:80). The change in theological convictions led Sudanese converts to give up participation in Muslim rituals and encouraged them to be more sensitive towards certain moral issues they now consider as sin. Unfortunately neither Maurer (1999) nor Syrjänen (1984) explain to what extent the converts in their countries still participate in Muslim rituals or how they have changed their cultural behaviour.

The third area where new faith will have an effect upon and cause changes, is in the area of social and cultural patterns of life-style. How do new religious convictions manifest themselves in the daily life-style of the convert? Christian faith does not only want to change the personal religious life of the convert, but to have an effect upon the whole life. We have referred already to the study of Schmid (1999) about Kurdish and Turkish converts in Germany and how their conversion has helped them overcome difficulties with their identity problems as second generation migrants. This shows that the religious conversion of these young people had a positive effect on a healthy development of their identity. Before their conversion these young people struggled with the tension between the cultures of their parents and the country in which they live. Now they see their cultural heritage as something positive and rich. They also discovered an affinity between their parental culture and the biblical world (:vif).

A different experience is being reported from South Africa. The society of South Africa is divided into religious and cultural communities (Maurer 1999:2-4). A change in religion involves usually a change of social and cultural community. Maurer does not elaborate on this, but the conversion stories in his study point to the tendency that some converts (not all) experienced a change in their social and cultural belonging. For example, one lady left her Muslim and Hindu relatives and joined the Christians (:166), and one man went back to the church "where they spoke English and Afrikaans" and not Arabic (:176). In these cases conversion resulted in a change of association in regard to community.

The issue of cultural changes after conversion is also an interesting one regarding converts to Islam in Europe. Köse (1996:134f) mentions that some British converts to Islam have changed their names, the way they dress, their attitudes and values, while others have not. Some still keep a residue of their former habits and values. Köse emphasizes that converting to Islam does not necessarily mean excluding being British. Elements of Christian traditions can be found in the life-style of a convert unless they absolutely contradict Islam (:135). This is the same issue with which the Sudanese converts also struggle and the principle guiding this process can be applied accordingly: Elements of former religious tradition can remain part of the life-style of a convert unless they absolutely contradict the new faith. This is why Sudanese converts do not have any problems in continuing to wear Islamic dress or follow Islamic dietary regulations. These matters do not contradict Christian teaching.

Conversion in the Christian understanding results in a new relationship, first of all to Jesus Christ (Triebel 1976:211), but then also in a new relationship to the followers of Christ, the Christians. The Sudanese converts indicated that they now have fellowship with other Christians and in this sense their social relationships changed. Even though they remained a part of the Northern Sudanese society and most of them are in close connection with their families, their social relationships have changed. With some of their former friends, those who reacted angrily to their conversion, they no longer have contact. On the other side they established new relationships within the Christian community. Particularly the ones who married a Christian wife widened their social contacts significantly by associating with new Christian relatives. Changes in social relationships are not something that only Muslim converts to the Christian faith experience. Köse (1996:137f) writes from Great Britain that "converting to Islam in a non-Muslim society may mean social suicide and boycott for some converts." But there are also families that react indifferently to the conversion of their son / daughter, or even welcome it. Convert 4 experienced this 'boycott' when he lost his whole family because they refuse to have any contact with him till now.

5.3.3 Results of Conversion Processes: Summary of Analysis

In the final part of this research the question discussed was about the results of the conversion processes in the lives of the six converts. I wanted to find out in which ways the change from the 'old' to the 'new' manifested itself in their lives. In the first area of their lives, their national, tribal and cultural identity, it is obvious that this identity has been confirmed or even strengthened through their conversion. These converts did not find it necessary to give up their national, tribal or cultural identity in order to be able to follow Jesus Christ. This is to be counted as a positive result because, as studies from other geographical areas show, sometimes the

Christian community puts pressure on new converts to also change in their cultural identity and become a part of the background cultural community of Christians.

The second area on which conversion has an effect is religious conviction and identification. In this area Sudanese converts changed significantly, they all identify themselves now in one way or another as Christians. This means that according to the expression of Syrjänen (1984:175) these people are not in a religious 'no-man's land', but they belong to a group. They were properly 'incorporated' into the community of Christians, but not in a way that they would lose their cultural identity as Northern Sudanese. Their conversion brought about changes in their religious convictions, particularly in their understanding of God and in how they deal with moral issues and sin in their lives. In regard to their understanding of God they have a very different view now compared with what they knew as Muslims before. They know God as a personal God who cares for them and is near. They are also more sensitive towards moral issues because they regard certain habits as sin and try to avoid them. In this whole area the biblical meaning of conversion as a complete change of life, a turning away from sin and a turning in faith to God, manifests itself strongly in the lives of the Sudanese converts.

Finally, as far as the social and cultural behaviour of the converts is concerned, there is a mixture of continuity and change. Some issues that are considered 'cultural' in Sudanese society are abandoned, like swearing or 'white' lies. Some also no longer observe Muslim feasts in the family, which is more a cultural issue than a religious one. But others continue to observe these feasts, while most wear the typical dress of Northern Sudanese men and women, and all still keep Muslim dietary regulations concerning drinking alcohol and eating pork. The principle which these converts follow seems to be that everything that does not contradict their new faith can be continued. This is a good principle and shows that the result of the conversion processes in the lives of these six converts is in line with the experience of other converts elsewhere. And what is even more important, the results of their conversion processes are in line with the biblical understanding of conversion.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of this study, a number of issues have come to the surface which are important for the present and future ministry of the church in the Sudan. I want to summarize these issues and formulate some recommendations for Christians who are concerned about ministering to Muslims in this country.

6.1 No Simple Standard Formulas

Eldredge (2001:210) reminds us that for God there are no simple formulas. He is a person and not a doctrine. He does not function like a system – but acts in an original and incalculable way like any free and living personality. There are many examples in the Bible of unique ways and miracles through which God helped his people, for example the conquest of Jericho (Joshua 6) and Gideon's victory over the Midianites (Judges 7). These miracles and many others were never repeated. Jesus healed people in different ways, using a variety of approaches. From this observation Eldredge draws the conclusion that there always remains a mystery around the activities of God. He quotes Chambers (1989:171): "Never make a principle out of your experience; let God be as original with other people as He is with you."

This means that we need to be careful what principles we draw from the experiences of the Sudanese converts. If God has acted in a particular way once, it does not mean that he will always act like this. Even among the small number of only six converts no conversion process was exactly like the other. That God deals in a very special way with each one who seeks him, is particularly true for supernatural experiences. As we noticed, dreams and other supernatural experiences are the exception and not the rule. We should not therefore expect that God will deal with other Muslims necessarily in the same way as he did with these six converts. He may act and involve his church in other unique ways. But despite the realization that there are no simple standard formulas, there are still several lessons to be learned from this study.

6.2 The Need to Communicate the Gospel

We noticed that none of the six interviewees was actively searching for a religious alternative, but somehow they 'happened' to experience some developments in their lives which encouraged or compelled them to seek for more information about the Christian faith. As Table 11 shows, Christians were involved at different stages of these conversion processes to communicate issues related to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, helping the Muslims to advance on the cognitive as well as on the affective axis. Christians actually constituted an important part of these experiences of the converts, which 'happened' and which encouraged the Muslims to seek more information about

the Christian faith. This highlights the need for a clear communication of Christians with Muslims in regard to the Christian faith. From the perspective of Christian conviction, Muslims like everyone else need to be confronted with an alternative to their religion. To witness about one's religious experiences and to invite others to consider the claims of Christ is basic to the understanding of a Christian perspective in every situation (Mt 28:18-20; Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8; Rom 10:13-15; cf Bosch 1991:420). To give people the opportunity to become acquainted with the Christian message is what Figure 9 describes as the 'realization of an alternative'. Some Muslims will not respond positively, exercising their freedom of choice. Others will be willing to probe into something new because they are not content with their present religious situation and they should equally have the choice to do so. With regard to those who are content with their present religious outlook, it is still part of Christian responsibility to acquaint them with the offer of salvation that is in Christ.

Christians in the Sudan should therefore use every opportunity to establish contacts with Muslims, discuss religious matters with them, get involved in dialogue with them, share about their own faith in Christ and simply be witnesses for Christ. The responsibility of Christians is not to criticize the religious convictions of Muslims, but to help them become aware of an alternative faith system. Without a period of awareness there will be no conversion. People need to realize that they do not have to continue as they are. An educated Sudanese Muslim lady mentioned that "other people have a chance to choose, but we as Muslims do not have this chance, we were just born into this religion."[18] This kind of thinking needs to be challenged because every person should decide for himself/herself which religion he/she wants to follow.

Often Christians give up sharing their faith any more with a Muslim friend who seems to be strongly convinced of Islam and rejects Christian truth. But one never knows what goes on in the heart of such a Muslim. A Christian witness does not need to worry if he or she is ridiculed or rejected. The rigid religious outward appearance of the contact person may not be backed up by any inner conviction and the person may indeed ponder the new alternative. As the Spiritual Decision Matrix shows, convictions are changed in stages and every input in terms of new information and any deepening of a personal relationship may lead to a movement on either one of the axes towards an encounter with Christ.

On one hand it is not necessary to be an expert in Islam or well versed in the language of the people one wants to witness to. As the experience of Convert 5 shows, expatriate Christians made a valuable contribution, even though they had been in the country only for a short period and did not know the national language well. On the other hand, Muslims want to hear a clear

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[18] Personal information shared with the author in Khartoum, April 2005.

presentation of the Christian faith in a way which addresses their Islamic concepts of God and religion. Such an approach requires a good knowledge of Islam. Convert 6 expressed his disappointment with the attempts of his Christian colleagues in school who were not able to explain their faith in a sensible way and who were not open enough to show clearly that Christ is the only way to God. So both are needed, boldness to witness even if one is not an expert *and* wisdom to speak in an appropriate way in order to address the questions Muslims have. Some of the Christians who explained the Gospel to the Sudanese converts seem to have combined these two qualities in an excellent way.

Understanding conversion as a process with different stages and with two dimensions helps the Christian change agents to use an appropriate approach for the stage on which the contact person finds him or herself. My "Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims" (Appendix 2) gives various suggestions as to which subjects are appropriate for discussion at each stage and what kind of activities can be done in order to stimulate the contact person to experience a change in the cognitive direction or in the affective direction.

The communication of the Gospel is also a challenge for an appropriate use of media. There is a need in the Sudan for a wider use of different media (print, audio and visual; cf LCWE 1996:7f). Christians need to develop material that raises the interest of Muslims who know little or nothing about the gospel and are antagonistic towards Christianity (lower left corner of the Spiritual Decision Matrix), as well as material for people who have more knowledge about the Christian faith and have a more positive attitude towards this faith already.

In an urban setting, evangelism must consider not just orthodox Islam and folk Islam but modernity as well (Greenlee 1996:209). Some Muslims may be more influenced by secularism than by Islam. This was for example the case of Convert 5 in the Sudan who was not practising any religion prior to his conversion. The Church needs to reflect on how to reach such people who are struggling with the issues of rationality (:212-214).

Whereas in the West most people become Christians in their teens (Poston 1990:24), the six Sudanese converts were between their early twenties and early thirties at the time of their conversions. It seems that in the Sudan people do make the most important decisions about their future and life-style only after they are older than 20 years. Before that age they probably do not have enough independence to pursue an alternative faith system. This means the church needs to focus on this particular age group and develop ministries that aim at giving these young adults an opportunity to get to know an alternative faith. The same can be said about Muslim women in general. It seems that most communication between Christians and Muslims takes place with men, but the church should not forget that Muslim women also need to hear about an alternative faith.

6.3 The Role of Non-Verbal Ministries of the Church

It is interesting that only one convert mentioned social, medical or educational ministries of the church as a factor which influenced him on his journey to Christ. Even though the church has a responsibility for holistic ministries, one should not overemphasize the effect these ministries have on the willingness of people to convert. One convert in Sudan (not from these six interviewees) shared that in his home area people appreciate the excellent medical help some expatriate Christians offer. Yet the people do not speak about "the Christians" who are doing such good things, but "the people from that particular country" who are doing this. They associate the good services of these people not with their faith, but with their nationality. Apparently none of his own people would consider changing his or her religion because of the excellent ministry of these people.[19]

It is true that holistic ministries or non-verbal ministries alone will not communicate to the Muslim that an alternative world-view is possible for him or her. There needs to be some verbal communication or communication via media (audio, visual or print) as well. In the cases of all six Sudanese converts except for Convert 4 there was clear verbal communication by Christians who explained in detail what the Christian message is all about. There was also a challenge to change. But Gray (2005) reminds us that effective evangelism not only requires people to obtain more knowledge, they must also move from a position of antagonism/indifference to a more positive viewpoint. Until they view Christianity positively, they are not motivated to find out more. In order to achieve this, Gray writes, "anything which moves people from left to right across the scale is 'evangelistic'." And here holistic ministries have an important role to play. Acts of service and friendship, social, medical or development work, are all activities that minister to the felt needs of people and can cause a movement on the affective axis. In a holistic understanding of mission, social services and social actions are as natural as the evangelistic proclamation of the gospel (CRESR 1982:43-57; Bosch 1991:408). The church needs to have a great concern for the people and for all socio-political issues (Engel & Dyrness 2000:80f; Mugambi 2003:39-53). Even if it is not possible in a given situation to witness verbally about ones faith in Christ, Christians can still witness by their lives and deeds.

Non-verbal ministries also include supernatural factors. This study has shown that the supernatural action of God in the lives of the converts played an important role in their conversion stories. This, of course, is not a strategy or method that is at the service of Christians

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[19] Personal information shared with the author in Khartoum, June 2005.

as they wish, God acts in a sovereign way however and whenever he wants to. But Christians can pray for this to happen on a wider scale (Musk 1988:168f).

6.4 Putting Faith and Practice in Context

It is a basic missiological understanding that the Christian faith needs to express itself in forms and language appropriate to the cultural context of those who follow Christ (eg Bosch 1991:421ff, 455; Walls 1996:7-9). But efforts at contextualization in the Sudan should not push seekers and converts into being more Northern Sudanese than they actually are (cf Greenlee 1996:213). Seekers and converts should be free to choose which of their traditional practices they want to continue and which not, except specific practices which clearly contradict Christian values. Some of the converts mentioned that they prefer to worship in ways appropriate to their culture. But they did not seem to be in favour of highly contextualized forms of religious practices like the continuation of the five daily prayer times, fasting during Ramadan or attending the mosque.

Such contextualized forms of practising the Christian faith for converts from a Muslim background are promoted and practised in different countries. They reflect the positions C4 or C5 on the helpful 'C1 to C6 Spectrum' formulated by Travis (Travis 1998; cf Parshall 1998:404). The two main reasons for a higher level of contextualization are to "become a Muslim to Muslims in order to win Muslims to Christ" (quoted by Parshall 1998:404) and to prevent expulsion from the family and community (Maurer 1999:237). Teeter (1990) has proposed the model 'Muslim followers of Jesus' because conversion to 'Christianity' is understood in the Middle East not as a change in beliefs but as a change from one religious community to another one with legal and public consequences. Teeter (:307) explains:

> Such a Muslim coming to Christ does not convert to Christianity. He remains within his family in the Muslim community and works to maintain their support and respect in spite of his slightly 'heretical' ideas about Jesus. The objective is for whole families to come into Christ together.

Teeter (:308-311) calls such Muslims who believe secretly in Jesus, 'tentative believers'. In a similar way Syrjänen (1984:168) mentions the concept of a 'Muslim-Christian', meaning a Muslim who professes the Christian faith in secret. Such a convert remains culturally in the Islamic community, continuing to practise daily prayers and fasting for example, but who believes in Jesus Christ as the one who brings salvation. But Green (1989:239, 246) cautions about efforts to use contextualization to prevent persecution. This may harm growth as a disciple. To continue to appear as a Muslim, even though a nominal one, may bring negative consequences for the spiritual growth of the convert, a danger which Greenlee (1996:110) also points out.

Where do the six Sudanese converts fit into this discussion? They can be classified between C3 and C4 on the 'C1 to C6 spectrum'. C3 refers to "contextualized Christ-centred communities using insider language and religiously neutral insider cultural forms" whereas C4 includes also "biblically permissible cultural and Islamic forms" (Travis 1998:407f). Continuing with Islamic rituals and following Jesus Christ only in secret, while still declaring to be a Muslim as C5-practicioners do, is not the preferred way of these Sudanese converts.

In the discussion about the extent of contextualization, we should not forget that the Christian faith expresses itself in forms and language native to a society, while at the same time challenging every society with universal Gospel values (Walls 1996:7-9). Parshall (1998), one of the pioneers of contextualized approaches to Muslims, is critical about church planting movements where converts are encouraged to stay within their culture and continue to live outwardly as Muslims with no apparent change. Whereas such an approach will make it easier for Muslims to follow Jesus Christ, there is a danger of syncretism (:406). Does participating in Muslim rituals like the daily prayer actually mean affirming Islamic beliefs which are contrary to the Christian faith? In addition, Christian participants in such rituals are open to the charge of deceit. Parshall (:410) gives some helpful guidelines in order to avoid syncretism, calling for a constant monitoring and analysis of the contextualization approach. It is important to ask what people are really thinking, what the contextualized communication conveys, what specific forms trigger in the mind of a new convert, and whether there is progress in the grasp of biblical truth.

The challenge for the church in the Sudan is how she can present the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that is meaningful for Muslims. As we have seen already, there is a need to communicate the essence of the Christian faith in such a way that Muslims can move forward on the cognitive, as well as on the affective, axis towards a full understanding of who Jesus Christ is and towards a decision to follow him. The two axes refer to the two main aspects of contextualization: contextualization of the message (cognitive axis) and contextualization of the approach (affective axis). As far as the contextualization of the message is concerned, Christian vocabulary should be avoided and spiritual truth expressed in terminology familiar to the Muslim. Subjects of interest to the Muslim should be the topic of discussion (eg Parshall 1980:127-155; Marsh 1980). One recent approach is the 'Camel Method' (Greeson 2004) which uses Surat *Al-Imran* 3:42-55 to show Muslims that *Isa Al-Masieh* is holy, has power over death, and knows the way to heaven. But whatever approach is used, there is nothing like a 'golden key' which would automatically work, as Wakely (2004) reminds us. God works with variety and unpredictability. We should learn all we can from how God is using different methods in other parts of the globe, but at the same time be assured that what God is doing in our area will be absolutely appropriate (:22).

Concerning the contextualization approach used by Christian change agents, adapting the life-style of Muslims will help overcome a negative attitude from the person seeking spiritual truth and so help the person consider a change of allegiance to Jesus Christ (eg Parshall 1980:102-125; 1989:256-263).

6.5 Incorporation into the Body of Christ

The incorporation of converts into the local body of Christ, the visible church, needs careful consideration, as this study has shown. The challenge is threefold: incorporating converts into established churches, forming culturally appropriate churches, and encouraging church planting movements.

6.5.1 Incorporating Converts into Established Churches

The issues that can cause problems when converts from a Muslim background want to become a part of an established church are a lack of trust and non-acceptance by the Christians, weak social interaction, help, or support, and hesitancy of involving converts in church ministries like teaching and preaching. Converts from a Muslim background should not be treated as special people, they are not more (or less) important than converts from a traditional Christian background or from traditional African religions. They should be welcomed with love and accepted as members of the body of Christ as everyone else. They need fellowship, discipleship training, social interaction, and opportunities to practise their gifts, just as any other Christian. In addition, because they may have problems with their family and community, the church should be there to provide a new family and to help them as much as possible (Greenlee 1996:215; Maurer 1999:278; Pietzsch 2004). The identity of the Christian is woven together using their relationship with God (personal aspect) and their belonging to the body of Christ (social aspect), as Schmid emphasizes very well (1999:91).

A church that exists within a society where the majority are Muslims, like in the Sudan, is open to harassment from the authorities and from other groups who would like to hinder Christian activities. Therefore it is possible that someone who claims to be a convert *later on* turns out to be working against the church. Leaders of the church need wisdom in discerning the motives of a person who wants to become a Christian. But unless there are obvious signs that the person is not a genuine seeker or convert, Christians should extend their trust and welcome such a person.

An important issue related to the incorporation into the body of Christ is the question of baptism. Wilson (1995:78) sees the stigma of baptism in the evangelization of Muslim as one of the biggest problems because by Islamic terms, Christian "baptism does constitute a public

rejection of Islam." Muslims see it as a break with the family and the community. Different solutions have been suggested (cf Zwemer 1923:109), one being a delay of baptism (:141). But as the experience of Convert 4 shows, it is not good to delay baptism for a long period. The convert will view this as a sign that the Christians do not trust him or her, which is not helpful for the spiritual growth of the new believer. The NT practice shows that it was more natural to baptize a new believer soon after conversion (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 9:18; 16:33). In addition, delayed baptism reduces it "from the sign and seal of our entrance into the Kingdom of God and the beginning of a life-long training as Kingdom disciples and makes it the last stage of incorporation in our rite of passage from Islam to Christianity," as Conn (1979:102f) rightly comments. Other suggested solutions include baptizing whole families (Livingstone 1993:173) or private baptism without it being absolutely secret (Wilson 1995:171). For Livingstone (1993:14) the solution seems to be to wait until several members of a personal network can be baptized at the same time, "thus creating an immediate support group". Wilson (:178f) concludes that the stigma of baptism will probably never be removed from the baptism of Muslim converts, nor should it be, because baptism is a sign that the old person is crucified and this will always cause some kind of negative reaction.

Maurer (1999:241ff) writes about a "ritual of commitment" as "a final break with the past and as an outward confession of embracing a new faith… It reveals the depth and seriousness of the convert's intentions." In order to maintain one's self-identity as a believer in Christ, one needs a 'plausibility structure', a social environment which confirms this identity (Syrjänen 1984:173). Therefore the association with the church is important. Syrjänen (:178f) is convinced that if converts are not willing to give a concrete expression of their conversion and face its consequences, they will not have a secure identity as Christians. This approach is quite different from proponents of C5-contextualization where converts are encouraged not to leave their Muslim community. For the situation in the Sudan it will be good to baptize converts from a Muslim background soon after their conversion and after they have completed some basic discipleship training. The baptism will not be in public so as not to provoke the Muslim community unnecessarily. Some Christians will be present as witnesses. The form will be in a way that it is neither seen as an expression of Islam nor as an expression of Western culture (Wilson 1995:173), but as identification with Jesus Christ and with his body on earth.

6.5.2 Forming Culturally Appropriate Churches

This study has shown that it is possible for some converts from a Northern Sudanese background to find a home in a Christian church that is mainly influenced by Southern Sudanese culture (Table 19), even though problems do occur. We have also seen that other converts want to

worship in ways according to their own culture. This means that the church should work towards the formation of house-churches for Northern Sudanese converts who choose this. New converts should be advised to find their own style, helping them to understand different possible ways of living their new faith. They need to understand that they do not have to leave their culture when they become followers of Jesus Christ.

Regardless of the preference of the convert either for incorporation into one of the established churches or for joining a group of believers made up of people from the same cultural background, converts should be encouraged to stay as much in touch with their family and community as possible. The six converts interviewed in this study have had different experiences in this regard. Convert 4 has no contact with his family because they reacted with hostility to his conversion and expelled him from their family. On the other side, in some cases more family members followed the decision of the convert. The mothers of both Convert 1 and Convert 2 also believed in Jesus Christ before they died. The other converts are more or less tolerated by their families. Identifying too closely with the culturally different Christian community may have a negative effect on the relationship of converts with their family and friends. This is also a reason why the formation of culturally appropriate congregations for converts from a Muslim background should be encouraged. Conversions from Islam to Christianity do not necessarily lead to social ostracism, even though in some cases it may be the result (eg Inniger 1963:124f; Syrjänen 1984:172ff).

Culturally appropriate congregations for believers from a Muslim background are a reality in many different geographical areas of the Muslim world. Livingstone (1993:169-187) describes such churches and gives some case studies (:189ff). Parshall (1980:157-180, 200-219) also describes certain features of a "Muslim-convert church". Outwardly the congregation should try to develop forms that are similar to elements of the mosque, such as having no chairs or pictures in the meeting room, meeting on Fridays, and having no full-time paid leaders. Religious practices can include prayer forms similar to the ones Muslims use, reciting Bible verses together, a distinct praxis of fasting, and an appropriate observance of festivals. Each group of believers is free to decide which of these suggestions they want to apply and how they express them, but in general converts in the Sudan should be encouraged to move forward in this direction.

The formation of such congregations, however, will not happen on its own. Church planting among Muslim people groups needs conscious planning, as Livingstone (1993:13) emphasizes. In Sudan there has not been a specific effort to plant churches among Northern Sudanese Muslims in the same way as there has been huge effort to plant churches among the African Southern Sudanese population. This is typical of the situation in most Muslim countries

(:29f). A deliberate change in the attitude of the church in the Sudan is therefore required. Christians ministering to the Muslims of Northern Sudan need to "think church" themselves and also help the converts to do so as well (:13).

One question in regard to such congregations of believers in Jesus from a Muslim background is whether the members of such a congregation understand themselves as seekers, as 'tentative believers' (Teeter 1990), or as followers of Jesus Christ. The Spiritual Decision Matrix introduced in this study can be a helpful tool in evaluating the identity of the people. Only people who have crossed the middle line on the cognitive as well as on the affective axis should be regarded as members. But others who are seeking for spiritual truth will be welcome to participate with the others and learn how believers in Christ worship.

6.5.3 Encouraging Church Planting Movements

In recent years the emphasis in Christian outreach among Muslims has shifted from just establishing individual culturally appropriate congregations to encouraging whole 'Church Planting Movements' (CPM). Garrison (2004) presents a surprising study of such movements in different parts of the world, including Islamic countries. He defines a CPM as "a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment" (:21). In such a movement churches do not simply add new churches, but they multiply. Virtually every church is engaged in starting multiple new churches. Such movements occur within people groups or interrelated population segments (:22f).

Whereas the reports about such movements are astonishing, the question arises immediately whether such a movement is actually a divine miracle, an act of the sovereign God, for which humans can do little or nothing. Garrison (2004:26) clearly states that this is not the case. The truth, as he sees it, is that God has given Christians vital roles to play in the success or failure of these movements. Such a view is in line with the results of this research where we also have stressed that God uses his children in helping Muslims understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ and become followers of Jesus themselves (see 4.2.1.4). We can therefore safely conclude, that Church Planting Movements will only begin to emerge in the Sudan if the Christians align themselves with what God is doing (Garrison 2004:28). Garrison (:239) suggests not to ask "How do you start a Church Planting Movement?" but rather "What is preventing a Church Planting Movement from happening here?" He then gives a list of "seven deadly sins for CPM's", among which the first is 'blurred vision'. If one does not have a vision for a CPM, he or she is not likely to achieve one. "Vision is vitally important, because you can't hit what you can't see" (:241).

Some of the Sudanese converts interviewed expressed that they miss other believers in Jesus Christ from their particular people group. They would enjoy worshipping with others from their own cultural background. Surely that is a worthy goal for the whole church in the Sudan to pursue! What would be required for the church in the Sudan to achieve such a goal? I suggest "cooperative efforts of scores of passionate believers with different talents and temperaments who set aside their differences to achieve God's perfect plan for an unreached people group" (Garrison 2004:240). This would give many Northern Sudanese Muslims the opportunity to become aware of an alternative to their present religious outlook and give them the freedom to choose.

6.6 A Place for Converts in a Multi-Cultural and Multi-Religious Society

In 5.2.3 we have seen that Muslims who become followers of Christ are likely to face problems with their family and society, but that these problems do not necessarily lead to physical harm or death. For many converts it is possible to live a normal life. They find a place in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society like Northern Sudan. But such a place will not be given to converts naturally and easily. They will have to stand up for their convictions and be prepared to bear certain difficulties. The experience of the six Sudanese converts, however, shows that if they are prepared to do so they will eventually be relatively accepted and respected for their convictions. Therefore converts need to be encouraged to be bold in the expression of their convictions, while at the same time the Muslim community also needs to be challenged to accept that some of their people may decide to follow another faith.

Inter-conversion is a sign of a healthy society, according to Gaudeul (1999:18). This means that each religious community should give freedom to its members to also consider following another religion. Despite this ideal, Gaudeul observed that often this is not the case when a Muslim decides to follow Jesus Christ. The hostile reaction of the Muslim community betrays its deep insecurity. The community feels threatened, not so much by the single defector, but by the wider trend which he or she represents (:251). The situation in our present-day world is changing rapidly. From South Africa Maurer (1999:237) reports that growing religious pluralism in the country has forced people to realise that some members of their own faith community may convert to another religion. This realization causes anxiety that some family members may be cut off from them by converting to another religion. But hostile reaction may prove to be counterproductive and people may be encouraged even more to adopt another religion, possibly out of protest against the restrictions of their formal religion. Maurer (:280) is convinced there will be times when a community will disagree with certain aspects of the

perspective of a convert, but as long as there is mutual respect there is hope for future communication and understanding.

As the Sudan enters a period of peace after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005 (Sudan-Net News 2005a), which is marked among other features by a stronger participation of the Southern Sudanese population in the government (Sudan-Net News 2005b), it is to be hoped that the general climate in society will lead to improved communication and understanding between different religious communities and to a growing acceptance of converts who want to follow Christ.

6.7 Recommendations for Further Research

In this research I have concentrated on the conversion processes of Northern Sudanese Muslims to the Christian faith. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, I had to limit myself to some extent. There are a number of issues, however, which would prove to be valuable for further research. One area of research regards conversions from a Muslim background to the Christian faith in ethnic communities other than the ones described in this study. Muslims from the different Nuba tribes in Southern Kordofan who decide to follow Jesus Christ, and also converts among Southern Sudanese Muslims find themselves in a different situation from the converts with a Northern Sudanese background. Their culture differs significantly. Also the fact that in their own people groups there are already strong segments of Christians puts them in a different position. It would be worthwhile to engage in a similar study to the present one in regard to such converts and find out similarities and differences.

Equally interesting and important would be a quantitative research on believers in Christ from a Muslim background in the Sudan. Since this study was done as qualitative research, the number of conversion stories was limited. No study exists that tries to find out how many converts there are in the country who have changed their religious allegiance from a Muslim perspective towards Christ.

The change in religious convictions was only briefly touched in this study, but it would be valuable to find out in a more detailed and in-depth research what exactly changed, how this change was encouraged and to what results such changes led. In a similar way it would be a fascinating study to do more detailed research about the decision process. Which stages exactly do individual converts go through, how do they define these stages, what precisely moved them to the next stage, what is the role of God and what is the role of human change agents? In order to achieve such a study it would be necessary to analyse more conversion stories, possibly not only from the Sudan but from different areas of the Muslim world. Common patterns could then

be described in much more detail than was possible in this study and a better understanding of conversion processes for Muslims would result.

Of course another area of research would be the reverse direction of conversion, namely from a Christian or traditional background to Islam. The Sudan has experienced the effects of government policies in regard to Arabization and Islamization during the past years. To my knowledge no detailed research exists about the motives for and factors leading to such conversions, nor about the process such converts go through or the results such conversions precipitate.

6.8 Epilogue

A study like the present one tries to look beneath the surface of processes that took place in the lives of people. It tries to gain a better understanding about the change in religious allegiance. As the six Sudanese converts whose conversion processes were analysed in this study experienced it, such a conversion is the result of the working of God in the lives of human beings. God has guided these Muslims to give up their former religious convictions and follow a new Lord, Jesus Christ. This is how they express it themselves. As such, conversion processes are something deeply mysterious and difficult to explain. At the same time one can find out certain reasons for such conversions, factors that led to conversions, different stages in the conversion processes, problems encountered during these processes and observable changes that appeared as results of such conversion processes. Whereas many issues can not be adequately explained about the conversion of these five men and one woman, we have found out a number of principles and trends that provide a helpful start in understanding conversion processes of Muslims to the Christian faith in general. To achieve this was the academic objective of this study. As a Christian I also present it to the wider church in the Sudan and to all Christians who are concerned about ministering to Muslims in the north of Sudan. It is my desire that it may prove to be a help for the extension of God's Kingdom in this part of the world.

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Appendix 1

Structured Interview for MTh-Research

Remarks

This structured interview will be done with 6 people only. The open questions can lead into further questions. For the structured questions, more explanations and details can be asked.

Personal Data

The following questions are general questions.

1. Name (or codename): _____

2. Gender: ___ male ___ female

3. Age: ___ 18-25 ___ 26-35 ___36-49 ___ 50 and more

4. Tribe: _____

5. Marital status: ___ single ___ married ___ divorced ___ widowed

6. Children: ___ no children ___ 1-3 children ___ 4 and more children

7. Main place of growing up: ___ in city
   ___ in town
   ___ in village

8. Present place of living: ___ in city
   ___ in town
   ___ in village

9. Educational background: ___ Basic School
   ___ Secondary School
   ___ University degree

10. Profession (current employment): _____

11. What does it mean for you to be a Sudanese and a _____ (fill in name of tribe)?

Conversion Experience

The following questions are related to your journey into Christianity.

12. What was your Islamic religious life before conversion like?
    __ faithful observance of religious duties (prayer, fasting, etc.)
    __ occasional observance of religious duties
    __ indifference towards Islam, no practice of duties
    __ critical towards Islam
    __ other: _____

13. What did you like about Islam before your conversion?

14. What was your position/role in society before your conversion?

15. How happy/content with your life and religion had you been before your conversion?
    ___ content, no questions or doubts about the truth of Islam, life was going well
    ___ practicing Islam, but often having doubts about the truth of it
    ___ often in opposition to the religious system and the community
    ___ searching for more than what Islam offered
    ___ other: _____

16. When did you first think seriously about Christianity? (Approximate year)

17. What triggered this question?

18. Did any of the following contribute to the conversion?

	some	much	not at all
reading literature	___	___	___
reading Bible	___	___	___
TV or Video	___	___	___
audio cassettes	___	___	___
listening to Christian radio broadcasts	___	___	___
Bible correspondence course	___	___	___
personal witness by Christians	___	___	___
evangelistic meetings	___	___	___
theological debate or dialogue with Christians	___	___	___

19. Did any of the following factors influence the decision for Christ?

	some	much	not at all
attractive life-style of Christians	___	___	___
social / medical programs of Christians	___	___	___
educational programs of Christians	___	___	___
dreams or visions	___	___	___

healing from illness	___	___	___
answered prayer	___	___	___
miracles or observing the power of			
Christ in a certain situation	___	___	___
dissatisfaction with practice of Islam	___	___	___

20. Describe the process through which you went until you finally accepted Christ as your personal saviour.

21. What was the main reason for you to become a Christian?
    ___ thirst for truth / God
    ___ positive experiences with Christians / church
    ___ Jesus was so attractive
    ___ dissatisfaction with Islam
    ___ others: _____

22. What where other experiences which influenced you towards faith in Christ?
    ___ desire for inner peace
    ___ desire for assurance of forgiveness
    ___ desire for guidance to spiritual truth
    ___ freedom from fear
    ___ release from demonic or spirit oppression
    ___ release from sorrow and loneliness
    ___ desire to experience the love of God
    ___ desire to have fellowship with others in spiritual matters

23. How long did it take from the first serious thought about Christianity to conversion?
    ___ less than 1 year
    ___ 1 – 2 years
    ___ 3-5 years
    ___ 6-9 years
    ___ 10 years and more

24. Which of the following stages can you identify in the process that led to your conversion? (Tick the appropriate stages and number them in the order of their occurrence in your experience.)
    ___ indifference towards Christianity
    ___ many misconceptions about Christianity
    ___ little sense of spiritual need
    ___ no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
    ___ initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian
    ___ restudy of Koran about Jesus and Christianity
    ___ awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through reading the Bible
    ___ grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life)
    ___ positive attitude towards the Gospel (wanted to have it)
    ___ realization that you personally need salvation because you can not work it out for
        yourself

    ___ decision to act
    ___ repentance and faith in Jesus Christ
    ___ evaluating the decision
    ___ exposed to pressure from community
    ___ doubts about the decision
    ___ overcoming pressure and doubts
    ___ joining a group of other believers in Jesus Christ
    ___ growth in understanding and living as a believer
    ___ communion with God on a daily basis
    ___ involved in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.)
    ___ other stages: _____

                               _____

                               _____

25. From what point in your journey to Christ did you consider yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ?

26. In your process of conversion:
    a) What do you consider was the role of God to move you towards a decision for Christ?

    b) What was the role of other Christians to move you towards a decision for Christ?

27. Who was involved in sharing the gospel with you and to what extent?

	some	much	not at all
Southern Sudanese Christian	___	___	___
Nuba Christian	___	___	___
Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background	___	___	___
Northern Sudanese MBB	___	___	___
Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian	___	___	___
other African Christian	___	___	___
expatriate Christian from West / Asia	___	___	___

Contact with the Church

The following questions are related to the contact with the established church.

28. When did you first come into contact with the established church?
    ___ at the beginning of my spiritual journey to Christ
    ___ during my spiritual journey to Christ
    ___ after I had accepted Christ

29. Which statement best describes your contact with the established church?
    ___ I was rejected by the church
    ___ I was welcomed by the church with reservations
    ___ I was welcomed by the church, but did not take roots
    ___ I feel completely at home in the Christian community
    ___ I prefer to worship in ways according to my culture

30. When were you baptized?
    ___ within 5 months after declaration of faith
    ___ within 5 – 12 months after declaration of faith
    ___ several years after conversion
    ___ not yet

31. How did the baptism take place?
    ___ in a public church service
    ___ secretly with only a few people attending
    ___ other: _____

32. When you look back at your journey to Christ, what could the Christians / the Church have done different in order to support your journey?

Christian Life

The questions in the following section are related to the development in your Christian life.

33. For how many years have you been a Christian?
    ___ less than a year
    ___ 1-2 years
    ___ 3-5 years
    ___ 6-9 years
    ___ 10 years and more

34. Did you receive any of the following forms of Christian training:
    ___ discipleship training
    ___ baptismal course
    ___ personal Bible studies
    ___ Bible studies in group
    ___ none
    ___ other: _____

35. Who discipled you?
    ___ Southern Sudanese Christian
    ___ Nuba Christian
    ___ Christian from Egyptian or other
            Middle Eastern background
    ___ Northern Sudanese MBB
    ___ Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian
    ___ other African Christian
    ___ expatriate Christian from West / Asia

36. What is your spiritual home at the moment? (church, fellowship group, etc.)

37. Are you content with your spiritual home? If not, what are you missing?

38. In what kind of Christian ministry are you involved presently?
    ___ witnessing to non-Christians
    ___ teaching other believers
    ___ social or educational ministries related with a Christian institution or church
    ___ other: _____

Relationship with Muslim Community

This question relates to the reaction of the Muslim community after conversion and the relationship you have presently with this community.

39. What was the attitude and reaction of the following people in regard to your conversion?

	understanding	indifferent	angry	threatening	violent
your family	___	___	___	___	___
friends	___	___	___	___	___
colleagues	___	___	___	___	___
neighbours	___	___	___	___	___
religious leaders	___	___	___	___	___
government	___	___	___	___	___

40. What is your current relationship with the Muslim community?
    ___ fully integrated and respected
    ___ people treat me with suspicion
    ___ people despise me and reject me
    ___ hardly any contact with the Muslim community
    ___ other: _____

Continuity and Change

The questions in this section are related to where you see continuity with your attitude before you believed in Christ and where you see change.

41. How do you describe yourself in religious terms?
    ___ Christian
    ___ Believer in Jesus Christ
    ___ Follower of Isa
    ___ Jesus Muslim
    ___ other: _____

42. Which of the following statements do you affirm?
    ___ I believe in the same God now as I did before my conversion to Christ.
    ___ The Koran is useful to read because it contains God's truth.
    ___ I feel peace when I read or hear the Koran.
    ___ Muhammad is a prophet of God.

___ Islam is the way God has prescribed for some people.
___ Islam leads people away from God.
___ The study of Islam has prepared me for the truth of the Gospel of Christ.
___ Muslims will be saved and enter paradise because they believe in God.

43. Which of the following practices do you participate in?
    ___ five daily prayer times
    ___ attending the mosque
    ___ keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting
    ___ giving alms
    ___ observing Muslim feasts in the family
    ___ wearing typical Muslim dress (occasionally or regularly)
    ___ keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, no pork, etc)

44. In which of the following issues do you have a different attitude today than you held before your conversion?

___ future	___ family
___ marriage	___ work
___ lying	___ stealing
___ adultery	___ anger
___ envy	___ sin

45. In which areas did you experience a significant change after your conversion?
    ___ social relationships
    ___ certain habits were seen as sin and abandoned
    ___ theological convictions
    ___ marital relationship
    ___ changes in cultural behaviour

Appendix 2: A Theory of Stages in the Conversion Processes of Muslims[1]

GOD'S ROLE	PROCESS OF CONTACT PERSON	STAGE	ROLE OF CHANGE AGENT	WAYS OF ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES	ASSESS-MENT	FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS
Acts in general revelation Removes initial hostilities	• Misconceptions about Christianity • Little sense of spiritual need • Awareness of God but no effective knowledge of Gospel	**Stage 0:** **No Relation / No Awareness** **Indifference / Hostility**	Removes obstacles and objections concerning: • accuracy of Bible • Jesus as Son of God • Trinity • What is a Christian? • Why not their prophet?	• Use of stimulating questions with "conversation starters" • Use of parables, stories, riddles	Should a deeper relationship be sought? [2]	To have as many contacts as possible so as to find out those with a spiritual interest
Sends a messenger / change agent	• Initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian • Restudy of Koran about Jesus, clarification of misconceptions	**Stage 1:** **Initial, Positive Awareness**	• Gets acquainted • Gains acceptance • Earns freedom to speak openly • Establishes a relationship of trust	Asking "why"- questions: • Why do you believe this? • Why do you feel that way?	Has the relationship developed into a friendship?	To drop contacts which don't develop well, to concentrate on those who are interested
Creates a sense of need Begins to convict of sin Intervenes directly and supernaturally (dreams, visions)	• Awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through the Scriptures • Grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life) • Positive attitude towards Gospel (wants to have benefits of it)	**Stage 2:** **Realization of Alternative** **Positive Attitude**	• Creates a sense of spiritual need • Shows that to be a Christian means to have a personal living relationship with God • Shows benefits of a life according to God's standard	• Clarification of the concept of a Christian • Contact person needs to realize that change agent is a committed Christian, not a cultural one • Introduction to other Christians • Sharing of personal testimony • Contact person needs to see relationship of change agent with God • Challenge for the need for a change of belief and the absoluteness of the Gospel	Is there a growing interest in spiritual matters?	• Introduction to believers from Christian background first, contacts with converts at this stage may be risky • Contact to expatriate Christians should be limited, so as not to encourage dependency • Contact person is encouraged to seek others of similar interest from within existing relationships (spread of the Good News along the lines of natural relationships)
Conviction of Sin	• Realization that he/she personally needs salvation: can not achieve salvation on his/her own	**Stage 3:** **Persuasion** **Fascination**	• Explains tragedy of sin and the personal need for a saviour • Makes sure that contact person understands that the Bible is basis of Christian faith • Communicates accurate picture of Jesus	• Invitation to a short series of studies about Genesis 1-3 • Contextualized Bible Study like "One God-One Way" • Discussion and challenge of possible occult activities • Discussion about Christian novels	• Does he/she have a Bible and study it? • Does he/she have an accurate picture of Jesus?	• It is a big step from stage 2 to stage 3. One has to move from "knowing and understanding the truth" to "actively and personally applying acknowledged truth." • Opposition to truth may now be stronger.

			• Identifies key to responsiveness of contact person:
			    What motivates him/her?
			    What disturbs him/her?
			    What is aim in life?
				• Use of "Marsh-approach" (What do you think about Jesus' miracles, prayer life, speech etc.?)
				• Use of Christian and Muslim festivals and birthdays as discussion starters
				• For contacts gone cold: "I've been here a long time, but I have not shared what is important to me."
					• Is the core of the Gospel message known and understood?	• Initiative of change agent is particularly needed at this stage
						• Chronological approach to teaching the Bible is helpful at this stage

Regeneration, giving new life	• Decision to act • Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ • New Creature	**Stage 4:** **Decision** **Submission**	• Challenges to turn around • Helps to surrender life to Christ	• Check whether contact person knows the Gospel and the implications of accepting it. • Challenge to make a decicion. Possible hindrances? • Reminder that one can not stay in both camps for ever.	• Has a personal decision been faced? • Has a personal decision been made?	• Change agents tend to think someone has become a believer up to 2 years before the individual would say the same thing. • Working too slowly and thoroughly will never bring someone to a decision.
Giving assurance	• Evaluates his decision • Exposed to pressure • Overcomes pressure and doubts	**Stage 5:** **Evaluation** **Dissonance**	• Helps to understand what happened, talks about assurance of salvation etc. • Encourages through time of pressure	• Regular meetings • To bring person in contact with other Christians from same background	• Is present position in Christ understood? • Faithful under pressure?	• Convert is encouraged to remain inside his/her community, extraction should be avoided if possible

Sanctifies
 	
Giving gifts
 	
Sending
	• Joins a group/church
	• Grows in understanding and living as a believer
	• Communion with God
	• Involvement in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.
	• Many more steps as a maturing disciple
		Stage 6:
		
		Growth
		
		Service
			• Teaches about the need for fellowship
			• Teaches to live a holy life
			• Coaches in the first steps of ministry
				• Continuous relationship
				• Discipleship training
				• Giving assignments:
				    Witnessing
				    Serving
				    Helping
					• Is there an involvement with a Christian group?	

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(1) Based on Fraser (1979:139); Mirza (in Livingstone 1993:235-238); and IL (1997).
(2) Depends on spiritual interest, natural common interest, similar social class, ministry priorities as to the target group, times of special need like sickness or death, receptivity.

Appendix 3: The Converting Process according to Rambo[20]

STAGE 1 CONTEXT	STAGE 2 CRISIS	STAGE 3 QUEST	STAGE 4 ENCOUNTER	STAGE 5 INTERACTION	STAGE 6 COMMITMENT	STAGE 7 CONSEQUENCES

Macrocontext
• Systems of access and control
 	
Microcontext
• Degree of integration and conflict
 	
Contours of context
• Culture
• Social
• Personal
• Religious
  Valence of dimension
 	
Contextual influences
• Resistance and rejection
• Enclaves
• Paths of conversion
• Congruence
• Types of conversion
  Tradition transition
  Institutional transition
  Affiliation
  Intensification
  Apostasy
• Motifs of conversion
  Intellectual
  Mystical
  Experimental
  Affectional
  Revivalism
  Coercive
 	
Normative: proscriptions and prescriptions
	Nature of crisis
	• Intensity
	• Duration
	• Scope
	• Source: internal/ external
	
	Catalysts for conversion
	• Mystical experiences
	• Near-death experience
	• Illness and healing
	• Is that all there is?
	• Desire for transcendence
	• Altered states of consciousness
	• Protean selfhood
	• Pathology
	• Apostasy
	• Externally stimulated crises
		Response style
		• Active
		• Passive
		
		Structural availability
		• Emotional
		• Intellectual
		• Religious
		
		Motivational structures
		• Experience pleasure and avoid pain
		• Conceptual system
		• Enhance self-esteem
		• Establish and maintain relationships
		• Power
		• Transcendence
			Advocate
			• Secular attributes
			• Theory of conversion
			• Inducements to conversion
			
			Advocate's strategy
			• Strategic style
			  Diffuse
			  Concentrated
			• Modes of contact
			  Public/private
			  Personal/ impersonal
			
			Benefits of conversion
			• System of meaning
			• Emotional gratification
			• Techniques for living
			• Leadership
			• Power
			
			Advocate and Convert
			• Initial response
			• Resistance
			• Diffusion of innovation
			• Differential motivation and experiences
			
			Missionary adaptations
			
			Convert adaptations
				Encapsulation
				Sphere of Change
				• Physical
				• Social
				• Ideological
				
				Relationships
				• Kinship
				• Friendship
				• Leadership
				• Disciple/teacher
				
				Rituals–choreography of the soul
				• Deconstruction
				• Reconstruction
				
				Rhetoric–systems of interpretation
				• Attribution
				• Modes of understanding
				
				Roles–reciprocal expectations and conduct
				• Self and God
				• Self and others
					Decision making
					Rituals
					• Separation
					• Transition
					• Incorporation
					
					Surrender
					• Desire
					• Conflict
					• "Giving In": relief and liberation
					• Sustaining surrender
					
					Testimony: biographical reconstruction integrating personal and community story
					
					Motivational reformulation
					• Multiple
					• Malleable
					• Interactive
					• Cumulative
						Personal bias in assessment
						
						Nature of consequences
						• Affective
						• Intellectual
						• Ethical
						• Religious
						• Social/political
						
						Sociocultural and historical consequences of conversion
						
						Religious landscapes
						
						Unintended socio-cultural consequences
						• Nationalism
						• Preservation of the vernacular
						• Secularization
						
						Psychological consequences
						• Progression
						• Regression
						• Stasis
						
						Stories of conversion
						
						Theological consequences

[20] Rambo 1993:168f.

Appendix 4: Models of Stages in the Spiritual Decision Process

Green[1]	Rogers[2]	Tippett and Kasdorf[3]	Hesselgrave[4]	Engel Scale (adapted)[5]	Spiritual Decision Process for Muslims[6]
▲ D ▼ ▲ D ▼ ▲ D ▼ ▲ D ▼ ▲ D ▼ ▲ D ▼ ("D" = decision for or against commitment to Christ)	Knowledge	1. Realization (awareness of abundant life)	1. Discovery	- 10 Awareness of Supreme Being but no effective knowledge of Gospel - 9 Established positive rapport with Christian communicator - 8 Restudy of Koran on Jesus and clarification of misconceptions - 7 Initial awareness of Gospel through life of Christian communicator	Stage 0: Casual Contacts • many misconceptions Stage 1: Establishing Relationships • awareness of Christianity through contact with Christian • clarifying misconceptions
	Persuasion	➢ Point of realization of an option	2. Deliberation	- 6 Awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through the Scriptures - 5 Grasp of implications of Gospel - 4 Positive attitude toward Gospel	Stage 2: Sowing • awareness of gospel • positive attitude to gospel
				- 3 Personal problem recognition	Stage 3: Watering • applying acknowledged truth personally • systematic study of Bible
	Decision	2. Making positive decisions	3. Determination	- 2 DECISION TO ACT	Stage 4: Reaping • challenge to take a decision
	Implemen-tation	➢ Point of encounter and commitment		- 1 Repentance and faith in Christ 0 Regeneration - new creature	
	Confirmation	3. Incorporation of believers ➢ Experiencing of fellowship and belongingness	4. Dissonance	+ 1 Post decision evaluation	Stage 5: Growing as a Disciple • communion with God • joining a group/church • involvement in God's work • many more steps as a maturing disciple
				+ 2 Incorporation into body	
		4. Growth as a disciple of Christ ➢ Internalization and maturation	5. Discipline	+ 3 Conceptual and behavioural growth • Communion with God • Stewardship • Reproduction: internally (gifts, etc) externally (witness, social action, etc)	

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Material taken from: (1) Green (1989:237); (2) Rogers 1983; (3) Tippett (in Rommen 1994:44f), Kasdorf (1980:138-140); (4) Hesselgrave (1991:618ff);
(5) Engel scale, adapted as response to paper presented by Fraser (1979:139); (6) based on Fraser (1979:139), Mirza (in Livingstone 1993:235-238), and IL (1997).

Appendix 5: Research Projects on Conversion of Muslims Used for Analysis

Areas of Study	Syrjänen 1984	Greenlee 1996	Maurer 1999	Schmid 1999	Gaudeul 1999	Woodberry 2001
Title of Study	"In search of meaning and identity: Conversion to Christianity in Pakistani Muslim culture"	"Christian conversion from Islam: ... factors in the process of conversion and faithful church participation"	"In search of a new life: Conversion motives of Christians and Muslims"	"Identity development of Christians from Muslim background living in Germany"	"Called from Islam to Christ"	"Muslims tell: 'Why I chose Jesus'"
Geographical area	Pakistan	Morocco	South Africa	Germany	international	39 countries
Number	36 Pakistanis	14 Arabs and Arabized Berbers	2 x 10 South Africans	10 Turks and Kurds	100	120 from 50 ethnic groups
Conversion to	Christianity	Christianity	Christianity / Islam	Christianity	Christianity	Christianity
General approach	personal interviews	personal interviews	personal interviews	personal interviews	published testimonies	questionnaires
Main emphasis of research	the process of conversion	factors of conversion	motives of conversion	identity development of converts	reasons for conversion	reasons for conversion
Reasons for conversion	discussed as part of the conversion process	discussed as part of the factors	religious, mystical, affectional, socio-political, material	discussed as part of the family and religious background	Jesus is attractive, thirst for truth, search for new community, need for forgiveness, thirst for God, call from God	longing for salvation, Jesus attractive, power of Bible, dreams/ visions, power of love, relationship with God
Factors that led to conversion	discussed as part of the conversion process	social, cultural, communication, supernatural	discussed as part of the reasons / motives	discussed as part of the background and the way to Christ	discussed as part of the reasons	discussed as part of the reasons
Process of conversion	use of Tippett's model: 3 periods identified	no specific process identified, but refers to models of Tippett, Rambo, Engel, and Søgaard	no particular emphasis on the process of conversion	discussed, but no engagement in a discussion with the available models	no particular emphasis on the process of conversion, but occasional reference	no particular emphasis on the process of conversion, but occasional reference
Problems during conversion process	discussed mainly in relation to identity problems	occasional reference, no particular focus	occasional reference, no particular focus	discussed as part of the description of the identity development	occasional reference, no particular focus	occasional reference, no particular focus
Results of conversion	discussed mainly in relation to identity problems	discussed in terms of church involvement after conversion	occasional reference, no particular focus	presents the heart of the study, in terms of identity development	occasional reference, no particular focus	occasional reference, no particular focus

Shaded cells represent heart of the respective study.

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Appendix 6: Transcript of Interviews

Symbols used:

- ✓ = present, I affirm
- ❖ = present with modification, I partly affirm
- ○ = not present, I don't affirm

Interview with Convert 1

The first convert is the only lady interviewed. She comes from one of the main Arab tribes. She is now between 36 – 49 (in her late thirties), is married and has three children. Growing up in a traditional Muslim family from the lower-middle class in Khartoum, still lives in Khartoum. Secondary school education, worked as secretary, now a house-wife.

11) What does it mean for you to be a Sudanese and a member of your tribe?
She loves the traditions and culture of her tribe, wears Sudanese clothes (*Tob*), and is happy as such. People respect her for this. She has no particular feelings of superiority for her own tribe, is married to a man from an African tribe from Western Sudan.

12) What was your Islamic religious life before your conversion like?
Her Islamic religious life before conversion consisted of occasional observance of religious duties. She fasted in Ramadan regularly, but prayed irregularly. Sometimes she attended mosque. Was communist, but not atheist.

13) What did you like about Islam before your conversion?
She liked the social life and the customs of Islam.

14) What was your position/role in society before your conversion?
She was part of a normal Sudanese Muslim family.

15) How happy/content with your life and religion had you been before your conversion?
She was practising Islam, but had often doubts about the truth of it, since the age of 12.

16) When did you first think seriously about Christianity?
She did not think much about Christianity. From her father she learned a lot about foreign cultures and developed a sense of tolerance towards them. From the age of 15 she was very interested in these cultures. First serious thought about Christianity was in 1990, the day she became a Christian.

17) What triggered this question?
One day in 1990, when she was in her early twenties, she was coming from the office in which she was working as a secretary, on her way home. Suddenly she felt a strange presence, being pushed by an unseen force into a certain street in the city centre which she normally did not walk. She ended up in a Christian Book exhibition and got involved in discussions with the Christians there. There were Southern Sudanese, Ethiopians and some Asian Christians. She continued to talk for hours and at the end she was convinced about the truth of the Christian faith. She wanted this for herself and took a decision right there. She was afraid of what she did.

18) Did any of the following contribute to the conversion?
The only factor from the list that contributed to her conversion was the personal witness of the Christians at the exhibition, no literature or other media, etc.

19) Did any of the following factors influence the decision for Christ?
        attractive life-style of Christians: some
        dissatisfaction with practice of Islam: much
        others: father spoke well of Christians
                she knew about the Trinity, but did not understand it
                she felt a power, force, that pushed her to the exhibition

20) Describe the process through which you went until you finally accepted Christ as your personal saviour:
The process of conversion is described already under 17). Some additions: She was encouraged that her decision was right, when the Christians prayed for her that she would find transportation to go home (because she talked for such a long time, it was getting late and public transportation was a problem). She experienced God's answer to the prayers of the Christians immediately when she found transportation.
In the week after her conversion, she felt great changes:
        a desire to visit people
        a love for people

acceptance of political enemies

She had a particularly difficult relationship with her brother. He did not like her to be politically involved with her father. After her conversion he did not treat her well.

21) What was the main reason for you to become a Christian?
        thirst for God
        Jesus was so attractive, he came for all the world, for all tribes and people, he forgives
        dissatisfaction with Islam

22) What were other experiences which influenced you towards faith in Christ?
        desire for inner peace
        desire for guidance to spiritual truth
        freedom from fear
        general desire to experience God

23) How long did it take from the first encounter with the Christian gospel to your final conversion?
It took her only one day from first serious thought to conversion.

24) Stages identified in the process that led to conversion:
- ✓ indifference towards Christianity
- ✓ many misconceptions about Christianity
- ✓ little sense of spiritual need
- ✓ no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ✓ initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian (within one day only!)
- ○ restudy of Koran about Jesus and Christianity (she didn't pay attention to it!)
  (The next 6 happened all in one day! Indicated by ①)
- ① awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through reading the Bible
- ① grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life)
- ① positive attitude towards the Gospel (wanted to have it)
- ① realization that you personally need salvation because you cannot work it out for yourself
- ① decision to act
- ① repentance and faith in Jesus Christ
- ✓ evaluating the decision
- ✓ exposed to pressure from community
- ○ doubts about the decision (no, never!)
- ✓ overcoming pressure and doubts (God was always with her, she felt this, knew it.)
- ✓ joining a group of other believers in Jesus Christ
- ✓ growth in understanding and living as a believer (in the midst of difficulties)
- ✓ communion with God on a daily basis (she felt close to him in troubles)
- ✓ involved in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.)
- ○ other stages: _____

25) From what point in your journey to Christ did you consider yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ?
She considered herself a follower of Christ from the first day.

26) In your process of conversion:
        a) What was the role of God? He called her!
        b) What was the role of other Christians in moving you closer towards a decision for Christ?
            They helped her to understand
            They stood with her in troubles later on

27) Who was involved in sharing the gospel with you and to what extent?

	some	much	not at all
Southern Sudanese Christian	○	✓	○
Nuba Christian	○	○	✓
Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background	○	✓	○
Northern Sudanese MBB	○	✓	○
Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian	○	✓	○
other African Christian	○	○	✓
expatriate Christian from West / Asia	○	✓	○

28) When did you first come into contact with the established church?
She came in contact only after her conversion. In the beginning it was a Protestant Church, for about three years. She attended also a smaller fellowship group.

29) Which statement best describes your contact with the established church?
She was welcomed by the church, but did not take root. The reasons were her problems, they did not come from the church. She wanted to have fellowship with all Christians, not only with one particular ethnic group (like the Southern Sudanese). She prefers to worship in ways according to her own culture, or more international.

30) When were you baptized?
Baptism took place several years after conversion.

31) How did the baptism take place?
Secretly, with only a few people attending.

32) When you look back at your journey to Christ, what could the Christians / the Church have done different in order to support your journey?
To stand with MBB's, also in their problems. Not to be afraid of the person and stay away when problems come.

33) For how many years have you been a Christian?
She has been a Christian for more than ten years.

34) Did you receive any of the following forms of Christian training?
She received personal Bible studies and Bible studies in groups.

35) Who discipled you?
She was discipled by:
- ✓ Southern Sudanese Christian
- ✓ Nuba Christian
- ✓ Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background
- ✓ Northern Sudanese MBB
- ✓ Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian
- ○ other African Christian
- ✓ expatriate Christian from West / Asia

36) What is your spiritual home at the moment? (Church, fellowship group, etc.)
Her spiritual home at the moment is a house-fellowship group with another couple (Catholics).

37) Are you content with your spiritual home? If not, what are you missing?
She is content with her spiritual home, but would like to have more training in the Bible.

38) In what kind of Christian ministry are you involved presently?
She is involved in: witnessing to non-Christians
praying for people, also for Muslims

39) What was the attitude and reaction of the following people in regard to your conversion?
extended family and brother: angry, threatening, violent
(after her marriage the couple lived for some time with the family, but later moved out)
parents: angry, but mother accepted Jesus before she died
communist colleagues: angry
neighbours: angry (some of these former neighbours come to her now and ask for prayer)
religious leaders: angry, threatening, violent
government: angry, threatening, violent

40) What is your current relationship with the Muslim community?
Fully integrated and respected. She was faithful to her new faith and straight for all these years. She got married to a Muslim husband who knew that she was a Christian and who later became a Christian himself. The couple continues to live within the Muslim society. They are generally respected but occasionally face severe discrimination and troubles from some neighbours. Several times they had to move house because of hostilities.

41) How do you describe yourself in religious terms?
She calls herself a "Christian believer" (*masihiyya mu'mina*).

42) Which of the following statements do you affirm?
- ❖ I believe in the same God now as I did before my conversion to Christ.
  (God is the same, but my understanding now is completely different.)
- ○ The Koran is useful to read because it contains God's truth.
  (She did not feel that anything in the Koran was right.)
- ○ I feel peace when I read or hear the Koran.
- ○ Muhammad is a prophet of God.
- ○ Islam is the way God has prescribed for some people.
- ✓ Islam leads people away from God.
- ❖ The study of Islam has prepared me for the truth of the Gospel of Christ.
  (In the sense that the doubt I had prepared me!)
- ○ Muslims will be saved and enter paradise because they believe in God.

43) She participates in the following practices:
- ○ five daily prayer times
- ○ attending the mosque
- ○ keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting
- ○ giving alms
- ✓ observing Muslim feasts in the family (with extended family)
- ✓ wearing typical Muslim dress (occasionally or regularly)
- ✓ keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, no pork, etc)

44) In which of the following issues do you have a different attitude today than you held before your conversion?
In all the issues mentioned!

45) In which areas did you experience a significant change after your conversion?
> social relationships
> certain habits were seen as sin and abandoned
> theological convictions

She married after her conversion, so the marital relationship did not change.
No changes in cultural behaviour.

Interview with Convert 2

The second convert is from a Sudanese Muslim tribe in Western Sudan but grew up in Omdurman, in a simple illiterate family. The father divorced the mother and she refused to give her son back to the father, so he grew up with his mother and a stepfather. He still lives in the Three-Cities (Khartoum, Khartoum-North, Omdurman). After his conversion he married a Christian woman from the Nuba-Mountains, who is a convert herself. The couple have four children and the husband is now in his mid-forties. Concerning his education, he finished secondary school, but did not sit for the exams. He has a Diploma in English and works as a teacher.

11) What does it mean for you to be a Sudanese and a member of your tribe?
He is proud to be a Sudanese. After he became a believer, he realized it was God's will for him to be a Sudanese and to do something for God. Among his tribe there are hardly any believers in Christ. He does not feel strongly a member of his tribe, because he was brought up in Omdurman. He generally feels more like a Northern Sudanese and less a member of his particular tribe.

12) What was your Islamic religious life before your conversion like?
He grew up in Omdurman, did not live with his father, because he had divorced his mother. As a religious man the father thought that it is good to marry many times. Education received in Omdurman. His mother refused to return him to his father. The other sons were with the father. When he was eight years he started to attend the *Khalwa*, learned the Koran, memorized a lot. The mother did daily prayers. But no one was forcing him to pray, he did it by himself. Was interested, wanted to know more, wanted to be a perfect Muslim. In secondary school he started to seek more information. Sometimes he fasted in Ramadan, sometimes not because he did not see any sense in it. But then he felt guilty. Guilt was behind him all this time.

13) What did you like about Islam before your conversion?
The moral principles and teachings.

14) What was your position/role in society before your conversion?
Normal, from simple illiterate family. He felt rejected and not loved.

15) How happy/content with your life and religion had you been before your conversion?

He was not content with his Muslim faith, he had doubts and did not practise the pillars regularly. All this came from his readings. With life in general he was not happy. Studies had stopped, no possibility to continue, worries about future. There were always economic struggles. He wanted to help his mother. Stepfather was illiterate, drunkard, from a neighbour-tribe, did not treat mother well.

16) When did you first think seriously about Christianity?

When he received book about "Evangelism for everyday" in 1981.

17) What triggered this question?

See story under # 20.

18) Did any of the following contribute to the conversion?

reading literature:	much
reading Bible:	much
listening to Christian radio broadcasts:	much
personal witness by Christians:	much

19) Did any of the following factors influence the decision for Christ?

attractive life-style of Christians:	much	(only Ethiopian Christians)
dissatisfaction with practice of Islam:	much	

He also expressed the following factors:

    doubt about truth of Islam

    hunger for spiritual truth

    need for love (very important, it seems to me!)

    life was meaningless for him.

Concerning the role of non-verbal factors like supernatural experiences, dreams, the life witness of Christians, social ministries of the church, etc. he answered:

    no supernatural experiences

    attracted by Word of God

    attracted by godly lifestyle of Ethiopian colleague. In Sudan Christianity is associated with the Southerners and Coptic people. But here was a foreigner, an Ethiopian, who cared for him, talked with him. Many things that were missing in his own life he saw in the life of his friend. He was full of peace, had hope, was not worried.

20) Describe the process through which you went until you finally accepted Christ as your personal saviour:

His stepfather was an old man, illiterate, working as driver for a lorry. One day (when Convert 2 was about 22 years old), some Southerners rented his stepfather's lorry for work in a Secondary School. They asked him to throw away many English books outside the city. The stepfather took a few books with him to give to his stepson: A book on geography and a Bible where the NT was cut off. There was also a booklet "From fishermen to disciples" in easy English. Convert 2 read the OT and the booklet. This was a confirmation for him because he had a hunger. This was first information about Christianity. He was very happy. He realized that the Messiah in the Koran and the Messiah in the booklet were different. In Koran only limited information, in booklet lots of information. Was happy about the personality of Christ.

He started to give this information about Christ to others who did not have a good grasp of Christianity. He did not have intention to convert. But was happy to have more information about Christianity. When he was working with a British company (he was about 30 years old), a worker gave him a book "Evangelism for everyday." He read but did not understand much. But the thought of sin struck him. He was glad to learn more about these things. But he did not think about conversion, did not have relationships with Christians.

In 1985, around the time of the end of Numeiri's rule, he finished work with the British company. In 1987 he worked with another company as a house-guard. There he met an Ethiopian couple who were working in the same house, members of a Protestant Ethiopian church in Khartoum. This man brought Convert 2 to Christ. During night-shifts they talked a lot. The Ethiopian challenged him about where he would spend eternity. Convert 2 told him that one can not know what will happen. When the man told him that he had no hope, Convert 2 realized that this was true, he had no hope. This was a new realization. Now he heard for the first time that God was love (John 3:16), that Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6).

He was not shocked by the new things he heard. It sounded as good news to him. He does not know what really attracted him to this news. He did not argue with the Ethiopian. After some days of talking the Ethiopian told him, he needed to take a decision. The man made things very clear to him. He also gave him tapes with English Christian songs. He sent Convert 2 to the Bible Society to buy a Bible in English. Convert 2 told the people there that he wanted to become a new Christian and needed a Bible!

All this was in April 1990, in Ramadan. They started to read the Bible together at night. It took several months. His friend asked him again and again what he would do. Then Convert 2 heard a song in English: "Lay down your life". He was emotionally so overwhelmed that he was ready to give his life to Jesus. But how? He did not know.

The Ethiopians had a house-meeting in the house of the expatriate where they worked. They prayed separately for Convert 2. The Ethiopian couple and Convert 2 were in the hall of the house. The Ethiopian prayed and Convert 2 repeated the prayer. He felt a great joy and strength coming over him. It was a strange thing to be asked "to pray" and not do it in the Muslim way! Convert 2 experienced a new feeling.

After his conversion, Convert 2 heard a lot about the Christian message, he forgot about his Muslim teaching. The Ethiopian did not talk about Islam in a bad way. Even about Muhammad he said this was a "good person."

21) What was the main reason for you to become a Christian?

        thirst for truth / God
        Jesus was so attractive
        dissatisfaction with Islam
        God is love and light

In his own words: He discovered that God loves him. Through Jesus Christ this gift can be received. No other way to please God. It was an interplay between these different issues.

22) What were other experiences which influenced you towards faith in Christ?

        desire for inner peace
        desire for assurance of forgiveness
        desire for guidance to spiritual truth
        freedom from fear (he felt often guilty in the sight of the *Sharia*, now he realized that what he needed to do, God did for him already)
        release from sorrow and loneliness (he felt rejected, especially by his father, had no relatives in Khartoum)
        desire to experience the love of God
        desire to have fellowship with others in spiritual matters (he wanted to discuss with others matters of religion, but was not happy with the answers in Islam)

23) How long did it take from the first encounter with the Christian gospel and your final conversion?
6-9 years. In 1981 first Christian books, conversion in May 1990.

24) Stages identified in the process that led to conversion:
- ✓ indifference towards Christianity
- ✓ many misconceptions about Christianity
- ✓ little sense of spiritual need
- ✓ no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ○ initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian (no, this came through his reading)
- ✓ restudy of Koran about Jesus and Christianity (he realized that Jesus is great!)
- ✓ awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through reading the Bible (particularly by reading the stories of the prophets)
- ✓ grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life)
- ✓ positive attitude towards the Gospel (wanted to have it)
- ✓ realization that you personally need salvation because you cannot work it out for yourself
- ✓ decision to act
- ✓ repentance and faith in Jesus Christ
- ✓ evaluating the decision (he felt very happy)
- ○ exposed to pressure from community
- ○ doubts about the decision (no, never!)
- ○ overcoming pressure and doubts
- ✓ joining a group of other believers in Jesus Christ
- ✓ growth in understanding and living as a believer
- ✓ communion with God on a daily basis
- ✓ involved in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.)
- ○ other stages: _____

25) From what point in your journey to Christ did you consider yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ?
After the prayer with the Ethiopian Christian, in 1990.

26) In your process of conversion:
    a) What was the role of God? He played a great role. He was seeking him. He changed the way he thought about God. Something was compelling him to accept Christ.
    b) What was the role of other Christians in moving you closer towards a decision for Christ? They encouraged him to accept Jesus, shared the gospel with him, explained, prayed for him.
    But both roles – God's and Christian's – happened together.

27) Who was involved in sharing the gospel with you and to what extent?

	some	much	not at all
Southern Sudanese Christian	○	○	✓
Nuba Christian	○	○	✓
Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background	○	○	✓
Northern Sudanese MBB	○	○	✓
Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian	○	✓	○
other African Christian	○	○	✓
expatriate Christian from West / Asia	○	○	✓

28) When did you first come into contact with the established church?
After he had accepted Christ. His Ethiopian friend introduced him to an Arabic church for follow up. This was one week after conversion. The leader asked him to share his experience, but Convert 2 did not know how to talk about his experience, he did not know what a "testimony" or "*shihada*" was. He was surprised to be asked about how he became a Christian, because in Islam no one asks how one became a Muslim.

29) Which statement best describes your contact with the established church?
"I feel completely at home in the Christian community."
The leader of the Arabic church helped him a lot to understand spiritual things better, issues about the nature of man and the Christian life. Even though they only talked 15 minutes together, it was a good experience. In the end the leader said, "Let us pray together!" This was the second time Convert 2 heard someone invite him to prayer without the proper Muslim preparations and washings. He thought that this is not prayer, but "*du'a*".

30) When were you baptized?
Two years after conversion.

31) How did the baptism take place?
Publicly at the beach, two buses full of people went with him.

32) When you look back at your journey to Christ, what could the Christians / the Church have done differently in order to support your journey?
He had only positive experiences, he felt accepted as a brother.

33) For how many years have you been a Christian?
10 years and more.

34) Did you receive any of the following forms of Christian training?
He received discipleship training, Bible studies in groups, intensive courses about systematic theology and the book of Ephesians.

35) Who discipled you?
✓ Southern Sudanese Christians
✓ Christians from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background

36) What is your spiritual home at the moment? (church, fellowship group, etc.)
A church in one of the suburbs of the three cities. Mainly people from South.

37) Are you content with your spiritual home? If not, what are you missing?
Not content. Many things missing. Many problems and conflicts in church. Many people lack faithfulness in their following of Christ. People fight for leadership positions. But he is not interested in contextualized forms of worship. He enjoys new ways of worship as a Christian, does not want to continue in the previous Islamic forms.

38) In what kind of Christian ministry are you involved presently?
    witnessing to non-Christians (and nominal Christians)
    teaching other believers, preaching
    visit Christian homes, pray for people

39) What was the attitude and reaction of the following people in regard to your conversion?
    family: indifferent
    friends: indifferent
    colleagues: indifferent
    neighbours: indifferent

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| religious leaders: | angry |
| government: | indifferent |

Further explanations:

His family: no problems. Ethiopian encouraged him, not to talk about his new faith as long as he did not understand things well. Daily he read in the Bible, but since this was in English people did not notice. Through discussions people later realized that he was a Christian. He admitted that he believed all that the Gospel told about Jesus. First he told his mother that he had become a Christian. She also accepted Jesus, after 2 months she died.

His friends: When he married in a Christian way all his friends realized his new faith (1995). His relatives did not attend the wedding. But they did not make problems for him. They thought that he is a good person, they wondered why he chose this way.

Government: The Security followed him, asked the neighbours. But the people told them that "he is a good man". Then they left him in peace.

40) What is your current relationship with the Muslim community?
He is fully integrated and respected. He tries to come close to them, wants to reflect God's holiness.

41) How do you describe yourself in religious terms?
In relation to Christians he says that he is a Christian.
In relation to Muslims he says that "I love God!"

42) Which of the following statements do you affirm?
- ○ I believe in the same God now as I did before my conversion to Christ. (Islam has a wrong picture of God)
- ✓ The Koran is useful to read because it contains God's truth. (To some extent only.)
- ○ I feel peace when I read or hear the Koran.
- ○ Muhammad is a prophet of God.
- ○ Islam is the way God has prescribed for some people.
- ✓ Islam leads people away from God.
- ✓ The study of Islam has prepared me for the truth of the Gospel of Christ.
- ○ Muslims will be saved and enter paradise because they believe in God.

43) He participates in the following practices:
- ○ five daily prayer times
- ○ attending the mosque
- ○ keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting
- ○ giving alms
- ✓ observing Muslim feasts in the family (visit family and friends)
- ✓ wearing typical Muslim dress (occasionally)
- ✓ keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, ate pork)

44) In which of the following issues do you have a different attitude today than you held before your conversion?
In all.
a. Future: Became full of hope, he expected good things. Fear disappeared, especially fear of second death, guilt feelings disappeared. He expected that many people will come to Christ.
b. Government: God uses the government, to build his kingdom.
c. Islam: It is a Jewish sect. But it had been developed.
d. Koran (inspired?): Telling many things to man how he can please God. But Jesus is the end of any law.
e. Mohammed: He has heard things about Christianity, but he misunderstood the truth from early Christians.
f. Mosque: Stopped going even before he became a Christian
g. Feast (Ramadan, Eid Al Adha): Not participating
h. Prayer (5 times?): No longer participating
i. Family: Before he understood it as a social issue. Now he sees it as a picture for our relationship with Christ.
j. Marriage: Things changed a lot. Marriage is a picture for God's relationship with his people. Many interferences in marriages from family, this is not good. Also monogamy, no divorce, etc.
k. Work: Now means to care for other people, to extend the ministry of God. The Bible says that man should work. In Islam it is a part of worship. But he did not think of working in order to help with the ministry.
l. Lying: Is a sin against God. Before he did not take this seriously.
m. Adultery: Now he sees it as a great sin because it is against God. Before he did not think about God's holiness.
n. Envy: He does not have this feeling now. But he had it before.
o. Stealing: Is seen as sin against God. Before one expected automatically God's forgiveness.
p. Anger: Sometimes he still gets angry. But he is more sensitive about the issue.
q. Sin: Sin is directed against God, not only against man. Before he did not understand God's character. Sin had no effect upon God, it was only seen as breaking the Law.

45) In which areas did you experience a significant change after your conversion?
- ✓ social relationships
- ✓ certain habits were seen as sin and abandoned
- ✓ theological convictions
- ❖ marital relationship (he was not married at point of conversion, before he tried five times to get married)
- ○ changes in cultural behaviour

Interview with Convert 3

The third convert is from a Sudanese Muslim tribe in Western Sudan. The grandfather had a high social position with the Muslims in Darfur during the time of the British-Egyptian conquest and therefore fled to the Southern Sudan. The father later married an Arab lady. Convert 3 grew up in several of the bigger cities in Sudan as a traditional Muslim and was not encouraged to study other religions. But as a Muslim he was encouraged to believe in the heavenly books.

In terms of education, Convert 3 has a university degree and works in his profession. At one point he was engaged to a Muslim girl, the contract for the wedding was already made, but due to his conversion it was not completed. He is now married to a Christian Southern Sudanese wife and the couple have children.

11) What does it mean for you to be a Sudanese and a member of your tribe?
He does not emphasize tribalism. But the present situation in the Sudan forces people back to their tribe for protection. He is proud that he is a member of one of the Western Sudanese tribes and feels more like that than an Arab, even though he is half-and-half. He is accepted in the society.

12) What was your Islamic religious life before your conversion like?
He faithfully observed the religious duties, was not politically motivated.

13) What did you like about Islam before your conversion?
Islam is good in theory, but does not work out in practice. But he was happy and content with the ethical principles (eg not to steal, not to gossip etc). However, he had doubts about sin and forgiveness: May be his good deeds would not outweigh his bad ones? What then? He was afraid of death, because he did not know whether he would go to hell or to paradise.

14) What was your position/role in society before your conversion?
He had a high position in a government body and was respected.

15) How happy/content with your life and religion had you been before your conversion?
He was practising Islam, but often having doubts about the truth of it.

16) When did you first think seriously about Christianity?
In 1991.

17) What triggered this question?
He was in a town in the South in his government position. He lived near a church, heard the people pray. Out of inquisitiveness he entered the church once, for the first time in his life. He participated in the prayers, not knowing what he did. Later he was sent back to Khartoum and was sent on pension. He got into contact with a lady who had been a colleague at university. This lady had converted to Christianity in the meantime. She brought him into contact with Christians which eventually led to his conversion.

He was saved by grace, not by works. This has helped him a lot, because this was his problem before, the question whether his works would be enough.

What triggered his interest in Christianity?
his doubts, fears about salvation
the visit to the church in the South
the contact with his colleague who had converted

18) Did any of the following contribute to the conversion?
reading literature:	some
reading Bible:	not at all
personal witness by Christians:	in general some, but one time much

19) Did any of the following factors influence the decision for Christ?
dreams or visions:	much (in the South a vision led him to the church)
dissatisfaction with practice of Islam:	much

20) Describe the process through which you went until you finally accepted Christ as your personal saviour:

He grew up in a Muslim environment. He was forced to do certain things and to believe certain things. "You must pray, otherwise you will be beaten!" He did not have a choice. He was encouraged not to think about other religions, not to mix with followers of other religions. Even looking at a church building was considered to be a sin. All this he didn't like. The call "Kill the unbelievers!" sounded strange to him. He had doubts, whether this was really from God.

As a child he didn't like problems and tensions, people quarrelling with each other. He was afraid to go out from the system of Islam because this was considered to be bad. So he just practiced Islam, with doubts about its validity. One issue with which he was struggling was that he was not sure whether his sins were forgiven or not. He had serious doubts about this.

When he was in the South in his job, he had the first contact with a church and with Christians. While there, he had a vision: A person in a white *Jallabiya* and *Imma* (traditional Muslim dress for Sudanese Muslims) greeted him. From one of his sleeves of his *Jallabiya* came a green snake. Convert 3 called out immediately: "Jesus!" Then the person disappeared. For him, this person symbolized Islam and the snake the Devil. The interesting point is that Convert 3 called out "Jesus!" in English, even though his usual language is Arabic.

One month after this vision he went to a church nearby. At that time this visit had no relation for him with the vision, he just went out of curiosity. That was in 1991. He sat down on the last bench at the back of the church, it was a strange feeling. He became joyful and later went out happy.

After some time, still in 1991, he went back to Khartoum. There he met a lady, a former colleague from the university. This lady had become a follower of Jesus in the meantime. They met by accident. She talked about her conversion to him and he was shocked. But since they had a good relationship, he did not leave her but continued to meet her several times. Then this lady arranged a meeting with an Ethiopian pastor. Convert 3 thought that this was an invitation to a party, but it turned out that it was an overnight prayer meeting of Sudanese and Ethiopian Christians! The Ethiopian pastor took Convert 3 to the side and talked with him, sharing the Gospel. They continued to talk for the whole night. They discussed many issues, like the Trinity, the death of Jesus and others. At about 5 am Convert 3 was almost convinced. The pastor invited him to pray and then Convert 3 prayed a prayer of accepting Jesus.

21) What was the main reason for you to become a Christian?
       thirst for truth / God
       fear of death, assurance of salvation

22) What were other experiences which influenced you towards faith in Christ?
       desire for inner peace
       desire for assurance of forgiveness (very much!)
       desire for guidance to spiritual truth
       freedom from fear (very much!)
       desire to experience the love of God
       desire to have fellowship with others in spiritual matters

23) How long did it take from the first encounter with the Christian gospel to your final conversion?
Less than a year, actually only one night. But the doubts started much earlier.

24) Stages identified in the process that led to conversion:
- ✓ indifference towards Christianity
- ○ many misconceptions about Christianity (no, eg he did not believe that the Bible was corrupted.)
- ○ little sense of spiritual need
- ✓ no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ○ initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian
- ○ restudy of Koran about Jesus and Christianity
- ○ awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through reading the Bible
- ○ grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life)
- ✓ positive attitude towards the Gospel (wanted to have it)
- ✓ realization that you personally need salvation because you cannot work it out for yourself
    (this came within one night)
- ✓ decision to act
- ✓ repentance and faith in Jesus Christ
- ○ evaluating the decision
- ✓ exposed to pressure from community
- ○ doubts about the decision
- ○ overcoming pressure and doubts
- ✓ joining a group of other believers in Jesus Christ
- ✓ growth in understanding and living as a believer
- ✓ communion with God on a daily basis
- ✓ involved in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.)
- ○ other stages: _____

25) From what point in your journey to Christ did you consider yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ?
From the point of conversion that very night in 1991.

26) In your process of conversion:
      a) What was the role of God?
      God gave him the dream/vision about the man with the snake, this told him that Islam was bad. God also led him to visit the church, arranged the meeting with his former colleague, and brought him to the meeting with the Ethiopian pastor.

      b) What was the role of other Christians in moving you closer towards a decision for Christ?
      His former colleague talked with him about her conversion, arranged the meeting with the pastor, the Ethiopian pastor talked a lot with him and explained the Gospel to him, other believers later on helped him.

27) Who was involved in sharing the gospel with you and to what extent?

	some	much	not at all
Southern Sudanese Christian	○	○	✓
Nuba Christian	○	○	✓
Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background	○	○	✓
Northern Sudanese MBB (Nubas)	○	✓	○
Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian	○	✓	○
other African Christian	○	○	✓
expatriate Christian from West / Asia	○	○	✓

28) When did you first come into contact with the established church?
At the beginning of his spiritual journey to Christ.

29) Which statement best describes your contact with the established church?
"I was welcomed by the church, but did not take root."
"I feel (completely) at home in the Christian community."
He is somewhere between these two statements, he is not completely feeling at home. He did not express himself very clearly about this issue, also it was unclear whether he prefers to worship in ways according to his own culture.

30) When were you baptized?
Within 5 months after declaration of faith.

31) How did the baptism take place?
In a public church service.

32) When you look back at your journey to Christ, what could the Christians / the Church have done different in order to support your journey?
That people would not suspect him to be a spy or a deceiver, but accept him as a brother. More social involvement, like visiting him etc.

33) For how many years have you been a Christian?
10 years and more.

34) Did you receive any of the following forms of Christian training?
- ✓ discipleship training
- ✓ baptismal course
- ✓ personal Bible studies
- ✓ Bible studies in groups
- ✓ courses at an evening Bible School

35) Who discipled you?
- ✓ Southern Sudanese Christians
- ✓ Northern Sudanese MBB
- ✓ Ethiopian / Eritrean Christians
- ✓ expatriate Christian from West / Asia

36) What is your spiritual home at the moment? (church, fellowship group, etc.)
A congregation of one of the main Protestant churches, but he visits also other groups.

37) Are you content with your spiritual home? If not, what are you missing?
Not really, he longs for more spiritual and social relationships.

38) In what kind of Christian ministry are you involved presently?
- ✓ witnessing to non-Christians
- ✓ teaching other believers, preaching
- ✓ discussion groups for political / legal / social issues eg for MBB's

39) What was the attitude and reaction of the following people in regard to your conversion?

family:	angry, threatening, violent
friends:	angry
colleagues:	angry
neighbours:	angry
religious leaders:	angry, threatening
government:	angry, threatening, violent (he lost his job)

40) What is your current relationship with the Muslim community?
People treat him with suspicion.

41) How do you describe yourself in religious terms?
Christian
Believer in Jesus Christ

42) Which of the following statements do you affirm?
- ○ I believe in the same God now as I did before my conversion to Christ.
- ○ The Koran is useful to read because it contains God's truth.
- ○ I feel peace when I read or hear the Koran.
- ○ Muhammad is a prophet of God.
- ○ Islam is the way God has prescribed for some people.
- ✓ Islam leads people away from God.
- ✓ The study of Islam has prepared me for the truth of the Gospel of Christ. (In a negative way, because something was missing)
- ○ Muslims will be saved and enter paradise because they believe in God.

43) He participates in the following practices:
- ○ five daily prayer times
- ○ attending the mosque
- ○ keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting
- ○ giving alms
- ○ observing Muslim feasts in the family
- ✓ typical Muslim dress (only in the evening at home, he didn't like that even before his conversion)
- ✓ keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, no pork)

44) In which of the following issues do you have a different attitude today than you held before your conversion?
In all except stealing.

45) In which areas did you experience a significant change after your conversion?
- ✓ social relationships
- ✓ certain habits were seen as sin and abandoned
- ✓ theological convictions
- ❖ marital relationship (he was not married at point of conversion)
- ✓ changes in cultural behaviour (eg going to meetings, etc)

Interview with Convert 4

The fourth convert is now in his late thirties. He comes from one of the Arab tribes in Eastern Sudan. He grew up in a village in the Northern part of Southern Sudan, in a strict Muslim family. He became active as a youth in political Islamic groups who were trying to Islamize the Southern Sudanese Christians in their area. During these activities he was quite hostile towards Christians. In 1993, after a period of intensive studies, he came to the conclusion that Christianity was the truth. He made contact with Christians and became a Christian himself. The Christians then sent him to Khartoum, because his family had heard about his conversion and had become very angry. In Khartoum he was in touch with Christians and later attended a Bible College. Since his graduation he works as a voluntary evangelist. He is married to a Northern Sudanese lady who is a second generation convert. The couple have children.

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11) What does it mean for you to be a Sudanese and a member of your tribe?
He is proud to be both!

12) What was your Islamic religious life before your conversion like?
He faithfully observed the religious duties.
He was active in political groups, like the *Da'wah Islamiyya* and others. They were involved in closing churches in their area and generally he was fanatical.

13) What did you like about Islam before your conversion?
He liked everything, the beliefs and the practices. He was 100 % convinced about the truth of Islam.

14) What was your position/role in society before your conversion?
He belonged to a respected family, worked for the *Da'wah Islamiyya* which is a well-known Muslim organisation in Sudan.

15) How happy/content with your life and religion had you been before your conversion?
He was content, no questions or doubts about the truth of Islam, life was going well. He had no feeling of inner peace. Islam does not talk about "inner feelings and peace" at all; there are no books about such subjects.

16) When did you first think seriously about Christianity?
In 1993 during the time he worked with the *Da'wah Islamiyya*.

17) What triggered this question?
As part of the work for the *Da'wah Islamiyya* he wanted to close churches in the area around a town in the northern part of Southern Sudan. He was hostile towards Christianity. No one ever thought that he would become a Christian; he also did never expect this. In his tribe, which has about 1.5 to 2 Million people, there are only two Christians known, he and another one who is now outside the country. He wonders today, why God has particularly called just him!

In 1993 he went with a team to work among children, both Christians and 'pagans', as the followers of the African Traditional Religions were called. He began to preach and teach in schools and *Khalwas*, gave courses during the summer in religious education. Some of the people accepted Islam. After some months he targeted pastors and evangelists. He talked with them, prayed often in his house with a loud voice so that the neighbours would hear it.

He discussed the matter of religion particularly with one voluntary evangelist. In order to better refute the Bible he began to study it. He read from Genesis to Matthew 6 in two months. When he came to the passage about fasting and prayer he wondered: "Do Christians pray and fast?" This made him think. Because so far he had only heard "that Christians were unbelievers."

18) Did any of the following contribute to the conversion?
reading literature:	much
reading Bible:	much (was most important!)
personal witness by Christians:	only one particular evangelist
theological debate with Christians:	some

19) Did any of the following factors influence the decision for Christ?
dreams or visions:	some

Explanation: After his conversion, but before he officially announced it to the Christians, he had a dream. He saw an old man in church, behind the pulpit. This man asked Convert 4: "Did you come, (here he added his name)?" To which Convert 4 replied: "Yes, I came!" This was the first time for him to see a church from the inside, even though it was in a dream. This served as an encouragement to search more.

Another dream he had several times was about a snake of which he was much afraid. He could not leave the area but was closed in, with the snake present. This showed him that he was caught by Islam; he could not leave this religion.

Both dreams came after he believed in Jesus already. He did not know how he should ever leave Islam. The dream about the church then encouraged him to go to the Christians and the church in the nearby city. It was like an invitation.

20) Describe the process through which you went until you finally accepted Christ as your personal saviour:
(Continuation from # 17)
When he started thinking about the Christian faith, he compared the Koran and the *Sunna* with the Bible. From his study of the Koran he was led to believe in the Trinity and the deity of Christ. One verse in particular led him to this belief, that Christ is "God's word and a spirit from him." But also other verses led him to this belief. One *Hadith* was also important for his development, a tradition that says that "Christ will judge in a just way." How can he do this, judge Muslims? This was his question.

He studied for one year. During that time he no longer worked for the *Da'wah Islamiyye*, but stayed at home with his family. He had no discussions with other Christians. On 9.8.1994 he came to the conclusion that Christianity is

correct! He came to this conclusion only on the basis of studying the Bible, he did not have any other Christian books, all his other books were Islamic books.

15 days after he was convinced, he went to a Catholic church. There he got some books, and talked with the Christians about the three Mary's in the Bible. When the Father heard that his son was interested in the Christian faith he became angry. On 9.10.1994 he went to another pastor in the town nearby. He attended a conference which was led by the voluntary evangelist with whom he had talked a year earlier. He asked what he needed to do in order to become a Christian. The Christians went with him to a private house and prayed with him. Then he heard from a friend that his father had learned about his conversion. So the church sent him to Khartoum. There he stayed with a pastor from the same denomination as the one in the town in which he had converted.

21) What was the main reason for you to become a Christian?
        thirst for truth / God
        Jesus drew him!

22) What were other experiences which influenced you towards faith in Christ?
        he wanted to know who God is

Other issues like "desire for inner peace", or "desire for assurance of forgiveness" are issues that are not taught in Islam and therefore one does not think about them. Concerning a "desire for guidance to spiritual truth", he was influenced by the political Islam of the Sudanese government at that time. The *Jebha Islamiyya* are against mystical Islam and therefore did not encourage the issue of spiritual guidance.

23) How long did it take from the first encounter with the Christian gospel to your final conversion?
Between one and two years.

24) Stages identified in the process that led to conversion:
- ✓ indifference towards Christianity
- ✓ many misconceptions about Christianity
- ✓ little sense of spiritual need
- ✓ no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ❖ initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian (in a negative way!)
- ✓ restudy of Koran about Jesus and Christianity (this eventually convinced him!)
- ○ awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through reading the Bible (he was reading the Bible only to refute it, not to learn from it)
- ✓ grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life)
- ✓ positive attitude towards the Gospel (wanted to have it)
- ✓ realization that you personally need salvation because you can not work it out for yourself (this came within one night)
- ✓ decision to act
- ✓ repentance and faith in Jesus Christ
- ✓ evaluating the decision (yes, but only in a positive way, he did not have doubts)
- ✓ exposed to pressure from community (and church)
- ○ doubts about the decision
- ✓ overcoming pressure (not doubts!)
- ✓ joining a group of other believers in Jesus Christ
- ✓ growth in understanding and living as a believer
- ✓ communion with God on a daily basis
- ✓ involved in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.)
- ○ other stages: _____

25) From what point in your journey to Christ did you consider yourself a follower of Jesus Christ?
When he confessed before the Christians in the church in the town near his home, 9.10.1994.

26) In your process of conversion:
        a) What was the role of God?
        God did it all! Eg he convinced Convert 4 from the Koran (!) that the Trinity is true. God drew him all this time to himself.
        b) What was the role of other Christians in moving you closer towards a decision for Christ?
        Nothing, it was a matter between him and God. Only in the final stage did he come to the Christians.

27) Who was involved in sharing the gospel with you and to what extent?

	some	much	not at all
Southern Sudanese Christian	✓	○	○
Nuba Christian	○	○	✓
Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background	○	○	✓
Northern Sudanese MBB (Nubas)	○	○	✓
Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian	○	○	✓
other African Christian	○	○	✓
expatriate Christian from West / Asia	○	○	✓

28) When did you first come into contact with the established church?
After he had accepted Christ.

29) Which statement best describes your contact with the established church?
Several responses were valid at different stages:
"I was rejected by the church."
"I was welcomed by the church with reservations."
"I feel completely at home in the Christian community."

He rejected once the formation of a particular Arab church. When he came to Khartoum, he stayed for some time with a pastor. For 1 ½ years he requested baptism, but the church refused it. Then a pastor of another denomination baptized him. In 1999 he graduated from a Bible College and wanted to work with the church with which he first had had contact in Khartoum. He had always felt that this was "his church". But the church did not respond positively. After he realized that there was no future for him in that church, he joined another church. Now he feels more at home in the denomination in which he was baptized. He also married in this church.

30) When were you baptized?
Several years after conversion.

31) How did the baptism take place?
In a public church service.

32) When you look back at your journey to Christ, what could the Christians / the Church have done different in order to support your journey?
In the beginning the church did not disciple him properly. People talked with him nicely, but they did not invite him to talk in a meeting. The church refused to baptize him. The church did not give him a job as an evangelist.

33) For how many years have you been a Christian?
10 years and more.

34) Did you receive any of the following forms of Christian training?
   ✓   Bible studies in groups
   ✓   corresponding courses with a Christian centre in Khartoum

35) Who discipled you?
No one!

36) What is your spiritual home at the moment? (church, fellowship group, etc.)
A congregation of one of the main Protestant churches.

37) Are you content with your spiritual home? If not, what are you missing?
Not so much. The church is led in a kind of dictatorial way. Still he is a bit afraid that eventually the church might cause some problems for him.

38) In what kind of Christian ministry are you involved presently?
   ✓   witnessing to non-Christians
   ✓   teaching other believers
   ✓   teaching young people in outreach to the majority people

39) What was the attitude and reaction of the following people in regard to your conversion?

family:	angry, threatening (complete rejection, threats)
friends:	angry (they cut the relationship)
colleagues:	angry
neighbours:	angry (to colleagues and neighbours he no longer has any relation)
religious leaders:	angry
government:	angry, threatening, violent (he was in prison once, twice he was beaten)

Before his conversion he talked with some religious leaders. But they could not convince him. After his conversion he did not have any contact with them.

40) What is your current relationship with the Muslim community?
(fully) integrated and respected (about 75 % integrated, fully integrated is only possible if one is a Muslim)
family rejects him completely, security leaves him in peace

41) How do you describe yourself in religious terms?
Christian (his wedding certificate and the birth certificate of his sons all state as religion "Christian")

42) Which of the following statements do you affirm?
- ○ I believe in the same God now as I did before my conversion to Christ.
- ✓ The Koran is useful to read because it contains God's truth. (some truth)
- ○ I feel peace when I read or hear the Koran.
- ○ Muhammad is a prophet of God.
- ○ Islam is the way God has prescribed for some people.
- ✓ Islam leads people away from God.
- ✓ The study of Islam has prepared me for the truth of the Gospel of Christ.
- ○ Muslims will be saved and enter paradise because they believe in God.

Concerning the belief in God: A God who does not give assurance for the life of his people is not his God!

43) He participates in the following practices:
- ○ five daily prayer times
- ○ attending the mosque
- ○ keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting
- ✓ giving alms (he gives 10 % as tithing, compared to 2.5 % *Zakat*!)
- ○ observing Muslim feasts in the family
- ✓ wearing typical Muslim dress
- ✓ keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, no pork) (only for health reasons)

44) In which of the following issues do you have a different attitude today than you held before your conversion?
In all except stealing.
Some comments:
- future: God builds his future, not he himself.
- marriage: big changes. The wife is not less than the man, but equal. Unity is important. In Islam marriage is only for procreation, the wife is serving the husband. But marriage is not for unity between the two.
- lying: the definition of what is a lie has changed.
- family: In Islam it can be neglected, eg when the husband marries another wife. This is not possible in Christianity.
- anger: he was often angry. Now he is much more patient.
- sin: *Khatiya* in Islam is the lowest possible fault, in Christianity it is serious.
- work: there is more understanding of responsibility and trust
- adultery: the understanding in Christianity goes deeper.

45) In which areas did you experience a significant change after your conversion?
- ✓ social relationships
- ✓ certain habits were seen as sin and abandoned
- ✓ theological convictions
- ○ marital relationship (he was not married at point of conversion)
- ○ changes in cultural behaviour

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Interview with Convert 5

Convert 5 is around 30 years old and comes from one of the Non-Arab Sudanese Muslim tribes in the Northern Sudan. He grew up in Khartoum in a Muslim family in which the father was a member of a Sufi-brotherhood. Through his father he became involved in Sufism as well. After some years of practising Sufism, he began to doubt the value of this and stopped practising religion altogether. In 2001 he was introduced by a friend to two foreigners who talked with him about spiritual issues. Through these discussions he became interested in the Christian faith. They talked about truth and about the question of "who" is truth, not "what" is truth. He liked these ideas and went to a church with his new friends. Since that time he couldn't resist Christ anymore and felt "how the power of Jesus drew him". So he became a Christian.

He is employed in a secular company in his profession (he holds an university degree) and accepted in Muslim society. He is single. Only few people, including his family, know about his conversion. But when challenged, he admits also to Muslims that he is a Christian.

11) What does it mean for you to be a Sudanese and a member of your tribe?
Some years ago it did not mean anything to him, he had an identity crisis. Then he realized that the tribe from which he comes is distinct, they have their own language besides Arabic, their own heritage. Now he is proud to be a member of his tribe. He feels satisfied, "re-Sudanized" as he put it.

12) What was your Islamic religious life before your conversion like?
He faithfully observed the religious duties, was a member in one of the Sufi-brotherhoods for several years. That was some years before his conversion.
The immediate four years before his conversion he was indifferent towards Islam, no practice of duties.

13) What did you like about Islam before your conversion?
During the time he was involved in Sufism, he did not like the formal and dry Islam. But in Sufism he found an emphasis on spiritual life. Visiting the tombs of the *Sheikhs* was for him more important than going to Meccah. He used the *Sibha* (beads), did the daily Sufi readings, the *Dhikr* and other things.

14) What was your position/role in society before your conversion?
Most of his time as a Sufi he was in a neighbouring country for studies. There he was fully integrated into the society. After he had left Sufism and also after his return to the Sudan he was a normal member of the society.

15) How happy/content with your life and religion had you been before your conversion?
Till 1997 he was content, no questions or doubts about the truth of Islam, life was going well.
From 1997 – 2001 he was in opposition to the religious system and the community, avoiding religious issues.

16) When did you first think seriously about Christianity?
At around 2001. Before he had never thought that one day he would become a Christian.

17) What triggered this question?
An expatriate Christian talked with him about the Christian faith.

18) Did any of the following contribute to the conversion?
personal witness by Christians: much

19) Did any of the following factors influence the decision for Christ?
dissatisfaction with Islam: not really, because at that time he wasn't even thinking about Islam, he
                                     was completely irreligious.

20) Describe the process through which you went until you finally accepted Christ as your personal saviour:
He grew up in a traditional Muslim family. The father was a Sufi and through him he became involved in Sufism as well. In 1995 he went to a neighbouring country to study and there he also practised Sufism. During that time he was satisfied in a religious sense.

Some time after he returned to the Sudan, when he had completed his studies, he gave up practising the Sufi Islam. At that time he struggled with rationalism, he was reading a lot, had many questions. He began to perceive other Muslims as hypocrites and lost his trust in the Sufi leaders. He began to see all this as a fraud. He distrusted everything in Sufi-Islam, and Sufi-Islam was the only form of Islam he knew. He had not been exposed to the political fundamentalist Islam.

In 2001 he went often to a club run by people of his tribe in Khartoum. He was interested in the culture of his tribe. A Sudanese friend of his introduced him one day to a foreigner at the club, "just to talk a bit". When they talked about fasting, the foreigner realized that Convert 5 did not practise Islam. He began to talk about spiritual issues, but Convert 5 was not interested. But somehow the words of the foreigner touched the heart of Convert 5, it was different from what he knew about religion. After 2 weeks there was another meeting, this time the foreigner brought another foreigner with

him. The second foreigner talked a lot, particularly about "truth". But the issue was not so much "What is truth?" but rather "Who is truth?" Convert 5 liked these ideas. He realized that God was working in his life, arranging things, bringing people like these two foreigners into his life. The two foreigners had only been in the country for a short while and were not very fluent in Arabic. The conversation took place mainly in English.

Convert 5 compared the study of the woman caught in adultery in the Gospel of John with Islam, where such women are being stoned. At his office he had an expatriate colleague who was also a Christian. All these things influenced him.

Eventually Convert 5 asked his two expatriate friends to take him to a church service so that he would be able to see how Christians worship. He liked that meeting immediately and felt at home. One of his friends was preaching that day which helped a lot to feel comfortable. Since that time Convert 5 could not resist Christ any more, "the power of Jesus drew him", as he expressed it. One of the foreigners started to teach him the Bible, studying the Gospel of Matthew together.

21) What was the main reason for you to become a Christian?
      Jesus was so attractive and powerful!

22) What were other experiences which influenced you towards faith in Christ?
      desire to experience the love of God

23) How long did it take from the first encounter with the Christian gospel to your final conversion?
Less than a year.

24) Stages identified in the process that led to conversion:
- ✓ indifference towards Christianity
- ○ many misconceptions about Christianity (he didn't think about it at all)
- ✓ little sense of spiritual need (in the four years before his conversion)
- ✓ no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ✓ initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian
- ○ restudy of Koran about Jesus and Christianity
- ○ awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through reading the Bible
- ○ grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life)
- ✓ positive attitude towards (the Gospel) Jesus (wanted to have it)
- ○ realization that you personally need salvation because you cannot work it out for yourself (he wasn't thinking about salvation, only about wanting God. The issue of salvation he only understood after he became a believer)
- ○ decision to act (he did not make a conscious decision)
- ○ repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (no conscious awareness of this, it "just happened!")
- ✓ evaluating the decision (the next four steps did not happen in this sequence)
- ✓ exposed to pressure from community
- ✓ doubts about the decision
- ✓ overcoming pressure and doubts
- ✓ joining a group of other believers in Jesus Christ
- ✓ growth in understanding and living as a believer
- ✓ communion with God on a daily basis
- ✓ involved in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.)
- ○ other stages: _____

25) From what point in your journey to Christ did you consider yourself a follower of Jesus Christ?
About 2-3 months after meeting the first Christian foreigner, beginning of 2002.

26) In your process of conversion:
      a) What was the role of God?
      He has done everything! He brought the Christian people into his life, he made Convert 5 flexible and softened his heart, he made him patient, prepared the way, he prepared a good reception among the Christians.
      b) What was the role of other Christians to move you closer towards a decision for Christ?
      They encouraged him, were willing to witness, were transparent, communicated the truth.

27) Who was involved in sharing the gospel with you and to what extent?

	some	much	not at all
Southern Sudanese Christian	○	○	✓
Nuba Christian	○	○	✓
Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background	○	○	✓
Northern Sudanese MBB (Nubas)	○	○	✓
Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian	○	○	✓

other African Christian	○	○	✓
expatriate Christian from West / Asia	○	✓	○

28) When did you first come into contact with the established church?
At the beginning of his spiritual journey to Christ.

29) Which statement best describes your contact with the established church?
"I was welcomed by the church, but did not take roots."
"I prefer to worship in ways according to my culture."

30) When were you baptized?
Within 5-12 months after declaration of faith.

31) How did the baptism take place?
Secretly with only few people attending.

32) When you look back at your journey to Christ, what could the Christians / the Church have done different in order to support your journey?
Don't treat MBB's in a special way, as if they would need more care than others.

33) For how many years have you been a Christian?
Between 3-5 years.

34) Did you receive any of the following forms of Christian training?
   ✓ discipleship training
   ✓ personal Bible studies
   ✓ Bible studies in group

35) Who discipled you?
   ✓ Nuba Christian (at a later stage)
   ✓ expatriate Christians from West / Asia (initially)

36) What is your spiritual home at the moment? (church, fellowship group, etc.)
An English-speaking congregation in one of the Protestant churches.

37) Are you content with your spiritual home? If not, what are you missing?
Yes, but he is missing more people from his own tribe!

38) In what kind of Christian ministry are you involved presently?
      witnessing to non-Christians

39) What was the attitude and reaction of the following people in regard to your conversion?
family:	threatening, violent
friends:	angry
colleagues:	indifferent, angry
neighbours:	indifferent, angry
religious leaders:	indifferent
government:	threatening

40) What is your current relationship with the Muslim community?
      fully integrated and respected
      people treat him with suspicion

Usually he does not identify himself as a Christian, but appears to the people around him as a Muslim. But at his work colleagues know that he does not practice Islam, nor pray, nor fast. He is known as "anti-Muslim". Some are suspicious. They test him, invite him to come with them to prayer. He tries to avoid the topic of religion, if possible. His colleagues do not know that he is a Christian. However, when he is pressed, he admits that he is a Christian and one colleague knows about his faith, another he took once with him to a Christian meeting.

His family accepts him, but tell him to keep his new faith a secret. Sometimes they are still angry. The family pressure is the strongest pressure for a MBB, especially the pressure from the parents. This is much stronger than the pressure from security.

41) How do you describe yourself in religious terms?
    Believer in Christ
    "I belong to Christ"

42) Which of the following statements do you affirm?
    - ○ I believe in the same God now as I did before my conversion to Christ. (He never knew God!)
    - ○ The Koran is useful to read because it contains God's truth.
    - ○ I feel peace when I read or hear the Koran.
    - ○ Muhammad is a prophet of God.
    - ○ Islam is the way God has prescribed for some people.
    - ✓ Islam leads people away from God.
    - ✓ The study of Sufi-Islam has prepared me for the truth of the Gospel of Christ.
    - ○ Muslims will be saved and enter paradise because they believe in God.

Koran: It encourages good deeds, but is influenced by the Bedouin culture. Therefore it does not fit (eg the culture of his tribe which is a settled tribe). The Koran contains no truth.
Sufism: There are special *Hadith* which are similar to verses from the Gospel of John: "God was hidden in the dark, then he created, and people knew God through his new creation." This is similar to John 1:1. Sufis believe that Muhammad was in the beginning of creation.

43) He participates in the following practices:
    - ○ five daily prayer times
    - ○ attending the mosque
    - ❖ keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting (he did it once after his conversion)
    - ✓ giving alms (occasionally gives money to poor people)
    - ✓ observing Muslim feasts in the family
    - ✓ wearing typical Muslim dress (occasionally or regularly)
    - ✓ keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, no pork) (out of obedience to God, of love)
Before his conversion he was westernized, eg in terms of clothing. Now he goes back more to his culture and language.

44) In which of the following issues do you have a different attitude today than you held before your conversion?
    - ✓ future: he is concerned about his community / tribe
    - ✓ work
    - ✓ anger: has been and still is a problem. But now he has a new force in him   to counter it.
    - ✓ sin: yes
    - ○ stealing: he did not do it before
    - ✓ marriage: He lost his girl-friend due to his conversion. Now he prays for a Christian   wife from his tribe.
    - ○ lying: He always knew that this is bad.
    - ○ adultery: He has never tended to this.
    - ○ envy: Is there if you lack something in your heart

45) In which areas did you experience a significant change after your conversion?
    - ✓ certain habits were seen as sin and abandoned (to some extent)
    - ✓ theological convictions
    - ○ marital relationship (he was not married at point of conversion)
    - ✓ changes in cultural behaviour: he is now going back to his culture!

Interview with Convert 6

The sixth convert is in his late twenties and comes from an African Muslim tribe that has been here in the Sudan for a long time. He grew up in a normal Muslim family in Khartoum. During his time in the secondary school he often spoke with Christians in order to win them over to Islam. They tried the same with him but he was never convinced by their arguments. In 1996 a good Muslim friend of his became a Christian. He was shocked and angry and tried to win him back. The friend introduced him to some Christians with whom he met for the next six months. One day in 1997 his friend invited him to a church conference. Even though he did not want to go, he felt compelled to go entered the church. There he heard a message about John 14:6 and was convinced about the truth of this. From that day he believed the message of the Bible. When the Christians asked him how he had "received Christ", he replied: "I don't know how I received him, I just know that I believe in him!"

He is now married to a Southern Sudanese Christian wife and continues to have good relations with his family. The couple have children. He has secondary school education and works as a teacher.

11) What does it mean for you to be a Sudanese and a member of your tribe?
He is proud to be a Sudanese and a member of his tribe. Unfortunately, for some people the people of his tribe are not considered to be Sudanese, even though they have been in the country for many generations. Often in the past he thought that it would have been better if he had been born in the area of Africa from where his tribe originally came. In the Sudan he feels that his people are being discriminated against. For him to be a member of his tribe is more important than to be Sudanese.

12) What was your Islamic religious life before your conversion like?
He faithfully observed the religious duties.
He was not involved in political Islam.

13) What did you like about Islam before your conversion?
He liked the Koran, to read it and to listen to it. He also liked studying Islam, read the *Sirat* of the prophets etc.

14) What was your position/role in society before your conversion?
Normal citizen, student.

15) How happy/content with your life and religion had you been before your conversion?
Content, no questions or doubts about the truth of Islam, life was going well.

16) When did you first think seriously about Christianity?
1995

17) What triggered this question?
He used to speak with Christians (neighbours and friends), mainly Nubas, about Islam and tried to win them for Islam. They did the same with him and tried to win him for the Christian faith.

18) Did any of the following contribute to the conversion?
personal witness by Christians: some
evangelistic meeting: much (only once, but that was the meeting in which he decided to follow Jesus!)
theological debate or dialogue with Christians: some (the discussions with the Christians helped him more to become strong in Islam!)

19) Did any of the following factors influence the decision for Christ?
attractive life-style of Christians: much
social / medical programmes of Christians: some
dreams or visions: much (one dream was important)
answered prayer: much

About the dream: One day he had a dream about himself and his friend (the one who became a Christian earlier, see # 20). In the dream a light appeared. He understood this to be the Prophet Muhammad. When Muhammad entered the room, together with Abu Bakr, the first *Khalifa*, they hugged each other. Then the light disappeared. He understood the dream in a way that Muhammad is not the real light, because in the dream the light disappeared. This raised some doubts in his mind about the truth of Islam. Later he found more contradictions in Islam. For example, in the *Hadith* it says that no one can imitate Muhammad, but in his dream he had experienced that he mistook this appearance as Muhammad. Had it really been Muhammad, then the light would not have gone out.

This dream happened two months before his conversion. It was the first time that he had doubts about Islam. The result of this experience, however, was that he did not tell anyone about it, but kept on even more eager as a Muslim, he prayed more often.

About answered prayer: Before his conversion he prayed that God would unite all the serious good Christians and the serious good Muslims, either as Muslims or as Christians, but as one community. After two months the answer came to this prayer when he heard the message in the church about John 14:6 (see # 20). Jesus is the only way! For him, this was God's answer.

There is also one *Hadith qudsi* (coming directly from God) which says that if one loves God, God loves him. Then God will be his eyes with which he will see, his ears and his hands. As Convert 6 found himself in the church against his will, he saw this as a proof that it was God who brought him there! God had given him God's eyes, his ears, his legs.

20) Describe the process through which you went until you finally accepted Christ as your personal saviour:
In his talks with Christians, none could convince him about Christianity. Until he visited a church and heard a message about Jesus Christ being the Way, the Truth and the Life. At that day he accepted Jesus.

The talks with the Christians lasted for about 1 ½ years during his secondary school years. He had no particular interest to study Christianity. But he was trying to find some verses in the Bible which would contradict each other. So he compared the Gospel of Matthew with the Gospel of John to find out something that is mentioned in one gospel but

not in the other. That would be a proof that something is wrong. He thought that each gospel is just a human product, eg that John had written only for his friends, but it is not from God.

A good friend of his, himself from an Arab tribe, became a believer in Jesus in 1996. (In 2000 he left to Egypt and died there.) Convert 6 was shocked and very angry. He thought that his friend had done something terrible. So he was trying to win him back. His friend listened quietly to his arguments, but did not answer back. Instead, he brought people from the church who talked with Convert 6. For six months they met regularly.

One day his friend invited Convert 6 to a conference in a church. The church was a typical church of Southern Sudanese Christians in one of the displaced areas around the capital city. Even though he did not want to go in, he found himself forced inside the church and even into the first row. That for him was a miracle in itself; that he got inside the church. Someone was preaching about John 14:6 and Convert 6 listened intensely to the message and he believed it.

After the message guests were welcomed and invited to say a few words. So Convert 6 got up and greeted the congregation. He told them that he believed in Jesus from today. After the meeting the people asked him, how he "received" him. He told them: "I don't know how I received him, but I believe in him!" At that time he did not understand the meaning of "receiving Jesus".

21) What was the main reason for you to become a Christian?
- ✓ others: assurance of salvation in Jesus.

22) What were other experiences which influence you towards faith in Christ?
- ✓ freedom from fear about eternal future
- ○ desire to experience the love of God: No! He was not aware that God loves him!
- ✓ desire to have fellowship with others in spiritual matters

He was looking for assurance of salvation, not for assurance of forgiveness, because the understanding of forgiveness is different. One needs to have more good deeds than bad ones, then he can enter paradise. Salvation is both – according to the deeds, and in other verses of the Koran, it is by God's mercy. Islam knows 10 different ways of going to heaven:
> good deeds
> by God's grace
> by luck
> as a martyr
> by faith in God
> by saying the *Shahada*
> others

For him, 'salvation' was the bigger concept, bigger than 'forgiveness'. Forgiveness is something that God does every day, salvation he gives once at the end of life. The issue of assurance of salvation played a major role in his conversion process. He was aware that even Muhammad and his closest friends and relatives did not have assurance of salvation. This worried him a lot!

About the desire to have spiritual fellowship: Islam values the friendship of two people who discuss only religious matters, who have fellowship "in God". He was looking for that, he had it with his friend, but when his friend converted to Christianity, he felt that he had left him.

23) How long did it take from the first encounter with the Christian gospel to your final conversion?
One to two years.

24) Stages identified in the process that led to conversion:
- ✓ indifference towards Christianity
- ✓ many misconceptions about Christianity (he didn't think about it at all)
- ✓ little sense of spiritual need (in the four years before his conversion)
- ✓ no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ✓ initial awareness of Christianity through contact with a Christian
- ✓ restudy of Koran about Jesus and Christianity
- ○ awareness of fundamentals of Gospel through reading the Bible
  (The next 5 happened all in one day! Indicated by ①)
- ① grasp of implications of the Gospel (standards of a Christian life)
- ① positive attitude towards the Gospel Jesus (wanted to have it)
- ① realization that you personally need salvation because you cannot work it out for yourself
- ① decision to act
- ① repentance and faith in Jesus Christ
- ✓ evaluating the decision
- ✓ exposed to pressure from community
- ✓ doubts about the decision
- ✓ overcoming pressure and doubts
- ✓ joining a group of other believers in Jesus Christ

- ✓ growth in understanding and living as a believer
- ✓ communion with God on a daily basis
- ✓ involved in God's work (using gifts, witnessing, social action, etc.)
- ✓ other stages: he once denied Jesus publicly, after one month he realized that this was wrong. Then he held a Jesus-film show in his house for three days and told the people that he is a Christian.

25) From what point in your journey to Christ did you consider yourself a follower of Jesus Christ?
From the time of the meeting in the church, in April 1997.

26) In your process of conversion:
a) What was the role of God?
To make me eager to see my friend – this led to his attendance of the meeting in the church. Entering the church against his will. The message that day was exactly what he needed.
b) What was the role of other Christians to move you closer towards a decision for Christ?
They tried their best, but did not succeed to convince him. His friend invited him to the church meeting. The evangelist that day preached the message he needed. God used this evangelist, I saw that he had a close relationship with God.

27) Who was involved in sharing the gospel with you and to what extent?

	some	much	not at all
Southern Sudanese Christian	○	✓	○
Nuba Christian	✓	○	○
Christian from Egyptian or other Middle Eastern background	○	○	✓
Northern Sudanese MBB (Nubas)	○	✓	○
Ethiopian / Eritrean Christian	○	○	✓
other African Christian	○	○	✓
expatriate Christian from West / Asia	○	○	✓

28) When did you first come into contact with the established church?
At the beginning of his spiritual journey to Christ.

29) Which statement best describes your contact with the established church?
"I was welcomed by the church with reservations."
"I prefer to worship in ways according to my culture."

30) When were you baptized?
Within 5 months after declaration of faith.

31) How did the baptism take place?
In a public church service.

32) When you look back at your journey to Christ, what could the Christians / the Church have done different in order to support your journey?
When Christians talked with me before my conversion, they were not open enough about the uniqueness of Christ as the only way. But that would have been the message I needed at that time. They were not able to answer my questions, eg about the relationship and nature of the Gospels.

33) For how many years have you been a Christian?
Between 6-9 years.

34) Did you receive any of the following forms of Christian training?
- ✓ discipleship training
- ✓ baptismal course
- ✓ personal Bible studies
- ✓ Bible studies in group

35) Who discipled you?
- ✓ Southern Sudanese Christian
- ✓ Nuba Christian
- ✓ Northern Sudanese MBB

36) What is your spiritual home at the moment? (church, fellowship group, etc.)
An English-speaking congregation in one of the Protestant churches.

Before that he was part of a fellowship group made up of Northerners, Southerners, and people from Western Sudan.

37) Are you content with your spiritual home? If not, what are you missing?
Yes

38) In what kind of Christian ministry are you involved presently?
- ✓ witnessing to non-Christians
- ✓ teaching other believers (teaching Sunday School teachers, preaching)
- ✓ educational ministry related with a Christian institution or church

39) What was the attitude and reaction of the following people in regard to your conversion?

family:	angry, violent (beating with hands and sticks)
friends:	angry
colleagues:	angry
neighbours:	angry, threatening
religious leaders:	angry, threatening
government:	angry, violent (he was two weeks in prison, was beaten with hands and sticks)

40) What is your current relationship with the Muslim community?
- ○ fully integrated and respected (no, a convert cannot be respected)
- ✓ people treat him with suspicion (but with his family he has a good relationship)

41) How do you describe yourself in religious terms?
Christian. He did this from the beginning, so he cannot change it now. If possible, he would say that he is "a Muslim who believes in Christ".

42) Which of the following statements do you affirm?
- ○ I believe in the same God now as I did before my conversion to Christ.
- ○ The Koran is useful to read because it contains God's truth.
- ○ I feel peace when I read or hear the Koran.
- ○ Muhammad is a prophet of God.
- ○ Islam is the way God has prescribed for some people.
- ✓ Islam leads people away from God.
- ○ The study of Islam has prepared me for the truth of the Gospel of Christ.
- ○ Muslims will be saved and enter paradise because they believe in God.

43) He participates in the following practices:
- ○ five daily prayer times
- ○ attending the mosque
- ○ keeping the month of Ramadan in fasting
- ○ giving alms
- ✓ observing Muslim feasts in the family
- ○ wearing typical Muslim dress (he did not like to wear a *Jellabiya* when he was a Muslim, neither does his father)
- ✓ keeping Muslim dietary regulations (no alcohol, no pork)

44) In which of the following issues do you have a different attitude today than you held before your conversion?
- ✓ future: before it was not guaranteed, now it is granted in Jesus
- ✓ marriage: in Islam one can marry and divorce the wife again, in Christianity marriage is for ever
- ○ lying: he does not see a difference, but the understanding in Islam is that sometimes one has to lie and then it is okay
- ✓ envy: in Islam envy is no sin, in Christianity one needs to love others as oneself which leaves no room for envy
- ✓ family: in Islam one marries and still continues to live with his family, in Christianity one marries and leaves his family

45) In which areas did you experience a significant change after your conversion?
- ✓ social relationships, he found new friends among the Christians
- ✓ certain habits were seen as sin and abandoned (eg in prayer, before sometimes I wished that non-Muslims would die)
- ✓ theological convictions
- ○ marital relationship (he was not married at point of conversion)
- ❖ changes in cultural behaviour: some things did not change, eg food and clothing, but other things changed, in relation to ethics (eg not mentioning the name of God in sayings, not swearing)