

Paper Proposal for IAMS-2016 Overall Conference Topic

Submitted by:

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Title:

How Much “Jesus Knowledge” Is Necessary for Salvation? Towards an Alternative Understanding of Conversion and Transformation.

Abstract:

Conversion and transformation are indelibly linked. It is commonly understood by many in the Christian tradition that real transformation—and thus religious change—cannot occur until after some form of “conversion” has taken place in the life of the believer. This view, however, begs the question: How much knowledge of Jesus is essential for an individual to understand prior to his/her conversion experience before transformation can occur? In other words, How much “Jesus knowledge” is enough salvation knowledge both for conversion to happen and transformation to begin? In the past, conversion theory examined transformation primarily as an outcome of conversion, rather than as an integral part of what conversion itself is all about. This paper, in contrast, will examine conversion on the front end as it were, arguing that transformation and religious change often occur in multiple events in the individual’s life over time, viewing conversion as essentially a series of transformations that eventually lead to conversion. This alternative view will be examined in three parts. Part 1 will examine current views on the basic “Jesus knowledge” that is considered necessary for conversion. Part 2 will examine conversion and the question of “Jesus Knowledge” as found in the book of Acts. Part 3 will examine conversion as point and/or process and implications of this for the question of “Jesus Knowledge,” conversion, and transformation, especially in light of the challenges that new religious movements, emerging churches, and insider movements are bringing today to some parts of Christendom.

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