

The term RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE conjures up a wide and diverse range of images.

It can mean anything from saying a prayer to attending a service to hearing the voice of God.

A religious experience is a non-empirical (non-sensory) occurrence, and may be perceived as supernatural.

It can be described as a mental event which is undergone by an individual, and of which the person is aware.

Such an experience can be spontaneous or it may be brought about as a result of intensive training and self discipline.

Recipients of religious experiences usually say that what has happened to them has drawn them into a deeper knowledge or awareness of God.

The experience that each individual has is absolutely unique and cannot be shared with anyone.

There is an infinite number of religious experiences; the main classifications are:

- visions
- conversion
- mythical experiences

## Visions

A religious vision occurs when an individual believes that they have seen or heard something supernatural.

Three ways that an individual may experience a vision:

- An intellectual vision brings knowledge or understanding from God.
- An imaginary vision where something that strengthens faith is seen in the mind's eye
- A corporeal vision is where the figure is externally present

Sometimes dreams are considered to be visions.

## Numinosity

NUMINOUS *the feeling of the holy; includes awe, fascination, religious awareness and the smallness of self.*

Some people consider numinosity to be a mystical experience, and some people consider it to be another religious experience.

## **Conversion**

A vision often results in a conversion.

A conversion is when the effects of a religious experience are life changing.

Conversion usually results in people better understanding faith.

Religious conversion is the process that leads to the adoption of a religious attitude or way of life.

The above effects can be either permanent or temporary.

### **Types of conversion**

A conscious and voluntary experience - volitional type.

An involuntary and unconscious experience - self-surrender type.

### **Features of conversion**

The present wrongness in their life - their sins, for example - that they want to change.

The positive changes that they wish to make.

### **Examples of conversions**

Religious conversion includes a change in belief on religious topics. This leads to changes in a person's social behaviour within the social environment.

People speak of intellectual, moral or social conversions.

People that have a sudden conversion feel it to be a miracle rather than a natural process.

Sudden conversion is very real to those who have experienced it; God causes the conversion.

## **Mystical Experiences**

Mystical experiences are experiences where the recipient feels a sense of union with the divine.