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WITTGENSTEIN ON RELIGIOUS BELIEF

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Wittgenstein on Religious Belief

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Abstract: Wittgenstein published next to nothing on the philosophy of religion and yet his conception of religious belief has been both enormously influential and hotly contested. In the contemporary literature, Wittgenstein has variously been labelled a fideist, a non-cognitivist and a relativist of sorts. This Element shows that all of these readings are misguided and seriously at odds, not just with what Wittgenstein says about religious belief, but with his entire later philosophy. This Element also argues that Wittgenstein presents us with an important 'third way' of understanding religious belief – one that does not fall into the trap of either assimilating religious beliefs to ordinary empirical beliefs or seeking to reduce them to the expression of certain attitudes.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, religion, Christianity, science, Kierkegaard, faith, God

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