TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATIONAL CONVERSION

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The conversion experience has been one of the central issues of Christian faith throughout Christian history because it was considered as the starting point of the faith life/spiritual life. From the Christian education perspective this issue of conversion plays a crucial point in defining one's spiritual life and spiritual maturity. Furthermore, since the purpose of Christian education is to help people to reach maturity in their faith and knowledge of the Son of God, the conversion issue needs to be examined and understood. This article, therefore, will focus on how Christian education can help people to understand conversion and how to grow after their conversion experience by reviewing literature related to conversion issues. In an attempt to accomplish this desire, this article will examine biblical, theological, psychological, and educational aspects of conversion. This article is not an empirical study, but a historical one. It is a literature review. Under the guidelines of literature review, this article will not try to provide answers for possible questions or develop any particular theory of conversion.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSION

Conversion is defined as, "to turn," "to turn around," or "to move" in a new direction. The idea "to turn" may be a turn. All three uses of the term describe a process of change from one condition/state to another. This study will first consider the biblical uses of the term followed by the theological, psychological, and Christian educational uses.

Biblical References of Conversion

According to *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Vol. 1* (1986), the concept of Christian conversion can find many Hebrew and Greek words used within the Bible to describe the

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experience of conversion: *shub, epistrephein, neophuutos, proselutos, aparche, metanoia.* The Hebrew word *shub* is used nearly 1100 times, and implies a turning around, or returning to something (i.e., turning away from idols and back toward God). *Shub* also implies an action accompanying a decision or on attitude and is often used in conjunction with another verb in order to communicate the idea of "again" or "back to."

There are many Greek words for conversion, also. The most frequently used Greek word in the New Testament is *epistrephe*, which implies a turning around (Luke 1:16-17), turning one's back on someone who strayed from God (James 5:19-20), physically returning (Mark 13:16; Matthew 10:3; Matthew 24:18; Luke 8:55), or a spiritual turn (Acts 3:19). *Epistrephein* is used in reference to those outside of the Christian community (e.g., in Acts 6:18, Paul speaks of going to the people to "open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God") and to refer to those who are already in the church and are in need of changing a specific act or attitude that is hindering their faith (e.g., in Luke 22:32, Christ tells Peter that when he has turned again he should strengthen his brethren).

The related word *strephein* is also used frequently in the New Testament and implies: (1) to return something to someone (Matt 5:39); (2) to change something into something else (e.g., water into wine); (3) to turn away; (4) to turn, or change inwardly (i.e., to turn to something positive) (Arndt & Gingrich, 1957). Less common words that have also been translated into the English word "conversion" are: *neophutos* (e.g., in 1 Tim 3:6, Paul refers to Timothy as a *neophutos*); *aproselyte* (Acts 2:10, 6:5, 13, and 43); and *aparche* (Romans 16:5 and 1 Cor 16:15). The word *metanoia* is often translated as "repentance," but also implies a change of mind or attitude after reflection. It also may indicate a cognitive change and relinquishing of former ideas or beliefs.

The biblical concept of conversion implies that the believer is physically and mentally to turn away from one direction in life towards a new way of being and behaving. A follower is to return to that which is fundamentally available within him or his immediate awareness. The conversion in the biblical sense represents a change, a turning around, or return to the principles of God.

Theological Uses of Conversion

Theologians define conversion as turning to God. "Conversion is a single entity which has two distinguishable but inseparable aspects: repentance and faith" (Thiessen, 1949, p. 352; Erikson, M. J., 1983, p. 934). Thiessen goes on to point out that both repentance and faith must be initial works of God through grace and not of man. Barclay (1964) sees conversion as a turning of a man's mind and heart and life in the direction of God. Much literature on conversion reflects the self-reports of the converts and thus lacks empirical bases. Some converts report that conversions may occur either suddenly or gradually, and may effect intellectual, moral and social beliefs (Thousless, 1923). Starbuck (1912) views conversion as a process of "unselfing"--a process of struggling away from sin rather than of striving toward righteousness. Gavernta (1992) distinguishes three forms of biblical conversion in his article: (1) alternation, (2) pendulum-like conversion, and (3) transformation. Meanwhile, Allan Tippet (1977) indicates that the process of conversion has five stages: period of awareness, point of realization, period of decision, point of encounter, and period of incorporation.

Psychological Understanding of Conversion

Psychologists have also studied conversion experience and have derived many theories pertaining to it. William James' study in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1963) became the first step in psychological research on conversion. Generally, studies of conversion focus on pre-existent personality and environmental factors (Clark, 1929; Coe, 1916; Starbuck, 1912), the processes or dynamic factors involved (Allison, 1966; Ducasse, 1953; Freud, 1959; Salzman, 1953; Sargent, 1957), and the resultant attitudinal and behavioral aspects of conversion (Boisen, 1936; James, 1963; Pratt, 1926; Starbuck, 1912).

Lofland and Stark presented the first sociological study of conversion in 1965. Many of the following studies focused on proving or disproving the "process model" which Lofland and Stark had proposed. Lofland and Stark identified a number of predispositional and situational factors which functioned sequentially to funnel. In 1981, Lofland and Skonovd (1981) proposed six distinct "conversion motifs"

or types of conversion experiences, differentiated by five comparative elements. They reported that certain types of conversion were more or less prevalent in different social contexts or historical periods. In contrast, Long and Hadden (1983) suggested conversion as a process of socialization which can account for the discrepancy between a brainwashing model and a "social drift" perspective. Greil and Ruddy (1984) used a different method to make sense of the diverse findings concerning conversion. First of all, they compared ten conversion case studies in order to test Lofland and Stark's process model. Secondly, they tried to ascertain whether there was any single distinct process by which conversion took place. Their finding concluded that there "is no such thing as the conversion process, rather there are as many conversion processes as there are organizational contexts in which conversions take place" (Lofland and Stark, 1984, pp. 318-19). They also suggested that the search for an ideal type of conversion process was incorrect and fruitless because there is no ideal type.

Richardson (1985) asserted that the paradigm by which conversion is understood was changing. He suggested that, due to a number of shifting factors in conversion studies, researchers were beginning to view a meaningful system. This perspective differed radically from what was seen as the "traditional" paradigm which positioned the convert as a passive victim of the psychological drives within or the external social forces of the religious group. In 1989, Kilbourne and Richardson added to the discussion of how to make sense of the conflicting conversion findings and theories. Johnson and Malony (1982) provide insight into conversion experience by distinguishing converts into three categories: (1) The *responding person* is described in the biblical terms of repentance and faith. These are behaviors that can be observed by the social scientist. (2) The *thinking person* responds to the divine call. Cognitive processes are evident as the person has a change of mind toward God, self, and sin. These can be observed and evaluated by the psychologists. (3) The *feeling person* responds to the divine call. Repentance sometimes involves strong feelings of grief and conflict. These feelings may come during a crisis of identity in adolescence. The identity crisis and conversion experience are two different factors of the same stage of the person's salvation in conversion (Gillespie, 1991). Furthermore, in describing the conversion process, three models have been proposed. Salzman (1966) postulated that conversion can be explained most

adequately in terms of the psycho-dynamics of the change process of human adaptation. In this model, the change process is comprised of four stages: (1) an incubation period, (2) a struggle characterized by hostile, destructive attitudes and resulting from unresolved conflicts with the father, (3) the occurrence of a precipitating event which results in (4) a sudden, dramatic, observable change, and love for the Heavenly Father.

Another conflict theorist, E. Stanley Jones (1959), postulated that conversion results from (1) mental conflict followed by (2) emotional crisis, and (3) resolution of the conflict. Sargent (1957) suggests a model which is similar to an approach to thought reform developed by Frank (1961).

EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETATION
OF CONVERSION

Based on the biblical concept of conversion, Orlando Costas (1989) lists the following observations: (1) Conversion means a turning from sin and self to God. (2) This act involves a change of mind, which implies the abandonment of an old world view and the adoption of a new one. (3) Conversion entails a new allegiance, a new trust, and a new life commitment. (4) Conversion is the beginning of a new journey and carries implicitly the seed of new turns. (5) Conversion is surrounded by the redemptive love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and witnessed by the Holy Spirit (Pazmino, 1991). This stance also affirms the need of Christian educators to assess their efforts in relation to the radical demands of Christian conversion, demands which are to embrace all of life. To address this challenge, educators must name and claim a vision that embraces a comprehensive understanding of conversion and hold forth the possibility of new turnings in Christian education.

Educational Understanding
of Conversion

Building upon a biblical concept of conversion, Christian educators must be able to conceptualize Christian education in a way that relates theory to practice as the primary task of the church. Without such a relation, discussion of conversion will remain only as

theories. In order to be effective in this relation of theory and practise, many scholars have attempted to relate conversion to Christian education.

Thus, Christian education can be defined as the process of shaping the distinctives of the Christian truth (information), Christian values, attitudes, and lifestyle (formation). It also fosters the conversion of persons, communities, societies, and structures (transformation) by the power of the Holy Spirit to a fuller expression of God's reign in Jesus Christ. This process requires the partnership of God with persons who are called and gifted to teach and the openness of persons to the possibility of conversion or transformation.

CONVERSION AS TRANSFORMING MOMENT

James Loder (1981) views conversion experience as "transforming moment" and growth as "process of transformation." Loder views the ego undergoing restructuring in a developmental process as *crises of discontinuity*. In order to grow and develop, people are called to address the discontinuities of their existence and to encounter the emptiness arising from the inadequacies of their previous integrative structures, which Loder describes as the experience of the void. It is, in fact, the very abandonment of previous formulations and data which brings about the possibility of creative insight from beyond and within the self in what Loder refers to as the "creativity paradigm." Here, the Holy is met, gratuitously, as the source of new meaning and redemptive transformation.

CONVERSION AS FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION

According to Fowler (1983), "Becoming Christian" involves a real change in the believer. The process of change is understood as formation and transformation for Fowler. Johnson, however, would argue that changes in a person are called developmental stages and transitions in the educational field (Johnson, 1989). Formation is understood as the continuous becoming of a Christian, whereas transformation is understood as the discontinuities, or the "big event." Formation and transformation, or process and events are woven together in the lifelong process of conversion, the process of a becoming Christian, and the process of shaping Christian character.

Formation was understood as the guiding image for Christian educational ministry (Johnson, 1989). Karl Barth described Christian education as *Building* (formation), in other words, an ongoing shaping process. Barth insisted that formation does not refer to certain practices or programs, rather the lifelong process of being conformed to the "Imago Dei" as revealed in Jesus Christ (Johnson, 1989, p. 104).

CONVERSION AS A PROCESS
OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Rambo (1989) views conversion as a process of religious change that places a dynamic force in people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and experiences. Rambo assumes that (1) conversion is a process, rather than a single event; (2) conversion is contextual and cannot be extricated from the fabric of relationships, processes, and ideologies which provide the matrix of religious change; and (3) factors involved in the conversion process are multiple, interactive, and cumulative. Conversion is a complex, multifaceted process in a dynamic force-field engaging people, events, ideas, and institutions (Rambo, 1989).

CONVERSION AS A PROCESS
OF SELF-TRANSFORMATION

Staple and Mauss (1987) emphasizes that it is essential to view conversion as a process of change. Similar to what Turner (1976) has referred to as the "real self," Staple and Mauss view self-transformation as a "change in" or "the creation of self." Thus, they capitalized on Turner's distinction between the "real self" and the "spurious self" by viewing conversion as a self-transformation--the creation of a new vision of who we really believe we are when all of our social roles and self-presentations are stripped away (Staple and Mauss, 1987, p. 137).

CONVERSION AS A WAY OF
RESOLVING CONFLICT

Conflict theorists (Jones, 1959; Salzman, 1966; Morentz, 1987) thought that conversion could be the most interesting way of resolving psychological conflicts and confusions. Stanley Jones (1959) presumed that conversion results from (1) mental conflict followed by (2) emotional crisis, and (3) resolution of the conflict.

Most general literature describes sudden converts as individuals who are in a state of emotional collapse which can be

artificially aroused (Sargent, 1957), or may only be genuine due to persistent, overwhelming inner conflicts (Boisen, 1936; Clark, 1958; Ducasse, 1953; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Freud, 1959; Gillespie, 1971; Jones, 1959; Salzman, 1966; Thouless, 1923). Therefore, the assurance or more complete understanding of conversion is the needed and essential solution. Indeed, this literature is replete with self-reports of converts who had manifested the behavioral characteristics associated with inner conflicts prior to their conversion experience. Such persons, while in a state of conflict, are highly susceptible to suggestion (Coe, 1916; Gibbons and Dejarnett, 1972), perhaps in order to resolve their inner conflict.

Process of Conversion

The developmentalists provided helpful insights into the nature of the conversion experience. Jean Piaget outlined the stages of cognitive growth, the various symbolic functions that emerge in early childhood, the growth of concrete operational thinking in later childhood, and the final emergence of formal operations in adolescence. His concepts suggest that there are some structural dynamic processes in persons that strive for renewal and growth.

Scholars such as James Fowler, Lawrence Kohlberg, and James Loder provide additional insights into conversion. Conversion for them is viewed from the perspective of structure rather than content or dynamics. Moreover, in the vocabulary of the developmentalists, conversion is called a movement that is "vertical" in nature, rather than "horizontal," where radically new questions creatively restructure old and new content into a totally new horizon. James Fowler's analysis of faith development suggests that somewhere between Stage 3 (Conventional-Synthetic) and Stage 4 (Intuitive-Projective) the individual begins to make a cognitive shift to a more critical, personal view of one's own authority in religious decisions (Gillespie, 1991, pp. 55).

Griffin (1980) also describes the religious conversion process as having a dialect--the argumentative or reasoning stage of conversion; a struggle--the tension that exists in sensing one's distance from God; and a surrender--that aspect of giving in. All are described as aspects of the process of religious change itself.

Rambo (1993) identifies six stages which precede transformation. His stages include (1) "ordinary life," in which the routine activities might encourage turmoil, (2) "breakdown," which is the awareness of the inability to cope with that turmoil or dissatisfaction; (3) "quest," which involves looking for new options; (4) "commitment," in which the decision is made to make some move from the old and to internalize the new; (5) "postconversion depression," which comes naturally when the new is perceived in reality; and (6) "pilgrimage," in which the growth and maturity comes from a longer affiliation with the new.

Religious conversion has traditionally been divided into three phases: (1) preconversion stage, (2) conversion experience, and (3) postconversion stage.

THE PROCESS OF THE
PRECONVERSION STAGE

The process of preparation is not the conversion but preconversion. Long before a person comes to his or her conversion moment there is a period of incubation--a process that prepares for the turning to God. In the preconversion stage, such feelings as intense intrapsychic conflict, a distinctive sense of unrest, dissatisfaction with self, a vague lack in the life of some kind, a general feeling of discontent, or a feeling of wanting something or wanting to be something that is not yet clear to oneself, is evident. (Gillespie, 1991)

The preparatory call occurs when the person senses the divine power in the order in the universe. General revelation is not sufficient for the salvation of the person. There is still a need for the special revelation (the Word of God) to address people at the point of their need, i.e., the effectual call. The general call takes place when the good news of salvation in Christ is proclaimed. It is the message that urges people to accept God's verdict regarding their sinful condition and to respond to His free offering of salvation. Horne (1971) claims that "the effectual call is efficacious; that is, it always results in salvation. This is a creative calling which accompanies the external proclamation of the gospel" (p. 48).

The Word of God is necessary in the process of preparation because the call of God is not a contentless mystical experience. The Holy Spirit is God's means of causing the Word to have its saving impact on the person. Without the Holy Spirit the Scriptures do not

come alive to the person and/or speak directly to his/her need. The human mind cannot grasp the truth of the Bible and translate it into action unless the Spirit of God works in the person.

THE PROCESS OF THE CONVERSION STAGE

In general, conversion is a process that brings a person to a point to surrender to the Savior, Jesus Christ. As a result of this surrender, the person is incorporated into a group that calls itself the church. Conversion has a moment in which the person turns in repentance and faith. The process of conversion that includes a crisis of faith is evident in the following stages:

(a) The first stage is a period of growing awareness in which persons find themselves in divided allegiance and dissatisfied with life. In the light of this tension they often assume something is missing in their lives and move into a problem-solving mode motivated by the tension.

(b) The second stage is a period of consideration in which focus or commitment to Christian faith becomes possible. This may arise out of association with advocates from other faiths, preachers, or significant others who espouse that belief structure or experience. The climax of the period is at the point of encounter when the person surrenders to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

(c) The final stage is a period of incorporation where the convert actually changes lifestyle practice and allegiance. Often in this final stage, we find new orientation in life rather than change of personality (Gillespie, 1991).

THE PROCESS OF THE POSTCONVERSION STAGE

Morentz (1987) raises very important issues in the "life after conversion experience" by observation and analysis of the mechanism of conversion. People define their own progress through the conversion process. They may skip or telescope them to meet their own needs.

(a) Stage one is the "noisy" stage--i.e., the exciting period. When people solve their conflict or confusions, there is a feeling of release and relief. They want to tell everybody so that everybody can share the same experience. Morentz (1987) calls this period the "noisy" stage because it is a very active stage. People are eager to do things.

They are generous and giving. They see their present state as a new life that will go on forever. If all goes well, they will continue to mature and move on to the next stage. Sometimes people tell about their original experience so often that they become emotionally attached to it, and they cannot move on. This becomes the only life they know.

(b) Stage two is the "quiet" stage--i.e., the confusion period. When people get through the first stage successfully, they move on to the "quiet" stage. In this stage the person is no longer eager to tell everybody. The original conflict which was apparently resolved by the conversion reappears. So do many of the other problems that the person thought were solved or left behind. The reason for the return of the problems is simple--the problems were not solved. The psychological and character structure which originally created the problems has not changed. Conversion is definitely a new life, but it must start at birth and continue to develop.

(c) Stage three is the "radiant" stage--i.e., adjusting period. Persons who continue to progress in their development gradually recover the assurance they felt in stage one. They are again willing to talk about this new life to other people; but the pressure to do so, which was present in the first stage, is absent. They tend to tell more by their lives rather than by their words, hence the name--the "radiant" stage. It is important to recognize that these people are still in the process of growth.

Types of Change as Conversion Process

There are two types of conversions in the literature: sudden and gradual (Ames, 1910; James, 1963; Starbuck, 1912). Sudden conversions are usually characterized by a sudden change in attitudes and beliefs, a change which often occurs during a crisis, and are accompanied by strong emotional feelings and/or excitement (Ames, 1910; James, 1963; Starbuck, 1912). This type of conversion is best illustrated in the conversion stories of Augustine and the Apostle Paul. On the other hand, the gradual conversion is characterized by a gradual awakening or growth process. The convert cannot name a definite time or place of conversion, and usually lacks the emotional overtures which accompany sudden conversions (de Sanctis, 1927; Hall, 1904; Johnson, C. B., 1978; Pratt, 1926; Strunk, 1962).

SUDDEN CONVERSION

By far the most common type of conversion is not the sudden conversion experience but, rather, the gradual conversion. Argyle (1959), however, found that about 15-30 % of all Americans have experienced a sudden conversion. Based on interviews with 1,736 converts (drawn largely from religious college groups), Elmer Clark (1929) identified two types of sudden converts: those who were converted while experiencing a definite crisis, and those who were converted while experiencing an emotional crisis. Allport's survey of college students (1950) supports Clark's findings: 14% of those surveyed reporting the definite crisis type of conversion, 15% reporting an emotional stimulus type of conversion, and 71% reporting a gradual awakening.

Starbuck (1912) found that sudden converts could also be broken into those reporting a spontaneous awakening with a sense of the divine, and those reporting elements of self-surrender. After collecting 1,265 questionnaires, Starbuck concluded that conversion is characterized by "more or less sudden changes of character from evil to goodness, from sinfulness to righteousness, and from indifference to spiritual insight and activity" (p. 21). He also reported that feelings played a major role in conversion, though many of those reporting were unable to define their feelings.

GRADUAL CONVERSION

Gradual conversion is most often described as a stage in the maturation process (Coe, 1916; de Sanctis, 1927; Hall, 1904; Pratt, 1926; Strunk, 1962). Some of the proponents of the gradualistic conversion theory suggest that gradual conversion is a normal developmental stage, while sudden conversion is pathological (Pratt, 1926) or at least less constructive (Coe, 1916). Under the influence of biology and the "recapitulation theory," Hall (1904) defined conversion as a fundamental redirection of life--a process as necessary to maturity as any other developmental stage. According to the "recapitulation theory," each individual recapitulates the history and advance of man, beginning with animal-like behaviors and progressing to more civilized, moral behaviors. Hall concluded that adolescence is the typical age for conversion experiences, which are interpreted as being merely one more developmental phase. The adolescent's general impressionability and sexual maturity are reflected in the conversion experience.

Another gradual conversion theory, proposed by Strunk (1962), suggests that conversion is a part of man's tendency toward actualization (i.e., the process by which man seeks to attain his highest potential). This approach emphasizes the perceptual or phenomenological approach of psychology with regard to religious behavior. In essence, Strunk defines conversion in terms of its organization and completion of man's actualizing dimension. Moreover, Strunk defines conversion in terms of its end product or effect, rather than its cause or process.

INTEGRATED STAGES OF CHANGE

Sudden and gradual conversions may be integral parts of the same process among other scholars (Loder, 1981). The gradual element could well represent the process (period of incubation or preparation), whereas the sudden element can represent the crisis point of encounter, as in Tippett's (1977) model which has five stages in the conversion process. The sudden change that comes with the crisis must be seen as the end product of a process that included a period of incubation.

Individuals seem to undergo change through some order of integrated stages of change. It has been argued that this process has developmental stages or steps which predispose the convert to change. The first step, as Emilie Griffin (1980) suggests, moves a person toward God. The statements of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 reflect this same concern. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What is often understood here is that the first step in finding God is knowing that you have a need. Getting in touch with the distance between you and God is the essence of the religious conversional motivation--a personal sense of spiritual poverty. After the moment of encounter with God, which can be interpreted as sudden conversion, then there will be gradual growth, usually assisted by pastoral and educational ministry with the converts.

Developmental Categories
of Conversion

Certain belief suggests that the previous consideration of the last four crises of Erikson's life cycle will provide a context for suggesting in outline form some of the relationships between development and conversion. First, Erikson's psychosocial interpretation of the *identity* crisis in terms of a commitment of fidelity to value specifies an intrinsically moral dimension in adolescent conversion. Second, the psychosocial crisis of *intimacy* in the young adult raises the question of a further conversion possibility of the person. Once secure in his or her own identity, one risks that identity by falling in love. Third, Erikson's specification--at the adult crisis of *generativity*--of a fully ethical orientation of care and responsibility, in contrast to the ideological orientation to value in adolescence, points to a properly adult moral conversion beyond the possibilities of youth. Finally, adult development suggests that the years after mid-life might be the occasion for a transformation of life radical enough truly to be called religious. Taking these four psychosocial clues from the stages of Erikson's life cycle, we might now consider the possibility of the following fundamental conversions: (1) moral conversion, (2) affective conversion, (3) cognitive or critical moral conversion, and (4) religious conversion. Each of these conversions may occur in an explicitly religious context, but not necessarily in such context. When they do occur in a Christian context, they have dimensions of a full Christian conversion.

INTELLECTUAL CONVERSION

Lonergan (1972) interprets intellectual conversion as a turning from the idolatry of easy answers and certitude. Intellectual conversion is a deep commitment to knowing--experiencing, understanding, integrating, differentiating, and believing. Intellectual conversion helps one live with the uncertainty of ambiguity and not be frozen and stopped by it. Former intellectual or ideological concepts weaken under the pressure of an ever-expanding experience of God; and, eventually, old views are discarded, according to Lonergan. As Boys aptly says, "Intellectual conversion asks that we believe in a God who is not threatened by our doubts and questions. It enables us to pray, as does Elie Wiesel: 'I no longer ask you to resolve my questions, only to receive them and make them part of you'" (Gillespie, 1991, p. 58).

AFFECTIVE CONVERSION

Affective conversion is also equally difficult to understand. This change involves at least three aspects of "attachment and detachment." It requires (a) a "recentering in the patterns of the subject from detached scrutiny or irony to attachment; (b) a shift in the object toward which the subject's affections are drawn (from self-interest to concern for others--family, society, nation, world); and (c) the location of the appropriate aesthetic symbol to express one's affective meanings." Like all conversion, it can occur gradually or rapidly in a single place or piecemeal in many situations.

MORAL AND BEHAVIORAL CONVERSION

Moral and behavioral conversion implies a shift in the basis for moral and ethical choice for a person's action. It draws out the person to be what he should be. This moral shift of horizon provides a substantial change in the criterion of choices. There is movement from satisfaction to values in decision-making. This has, of course, developed the moral reasoning to a fine edge when he suggests that our ethical values later in life determine our moral choices late in life. Lonergan's view implies much the same thing but with somewhat less clarity.

Lawrence Kohlberg is widely known for his six stages of moral reasoning development, which he divides into three levels with two stages in each level: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. Kohlberg gives no attention to conversion, but carefully reflects on the nature of structural stages indicating that stage transition (especially between major levels) is a form of conversion. Kohlberg claims that this transition occurs, at the earliest, in the young adolescent, occasioned in part by the emergence of Piagetian formal cognitive operations (Gillespie, 1991).

SPIRITUAL CONVERSION

Spiritual conversion, as a process of change, involves a total and permanent self-surrender without any reservations. In a sense it is the feeling of being grasped by God, in which we recognize the joy of returning home to God. In spiritual conversion the radical change is initiated not by ourselves; but it is in response to the experience of being approached, somewhat like the messianic presence for the apostle

Paul on the Damascus road. Walter Conn (1986) builds on Lonergan's views in his book, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender*, and uses the same categories to understand conversional change. His discussion of the religious dimension of conversion is especially helpful as we come to understand Christian conversion as essentially an "*invitation* to a life not only dedicated to the love of neighbor but focused and empowered by the mysterious presence of God at its vital center" (Gillespie, 1991, pp. 58-59).

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES
WITHIN CONVERSION

Even though the conversion discussed above helps us to a better understanding toward educational conversion, they do not solve all possible questions. There are many factors and variables which can affect the conversion process--for example, developmental factors (personality, gender differences, and ages); cultural and social factors (social pressures, peer pressure, and revivalism in certain societies); and ecclesiological variables (denominational background, experiences in church life, types of pastors and teachers, and the living area--church location, experience of revivalism). Also, the settings of revivalism-- the revivalistic approach based on the premise that all experience of God is the same and each person must come the same way--affect the conversion process.

Due to the perception of conversion as process and growth, Schaeffer (1971) says that true spirituality (Christian life) is not about one being born again, but that it must begin there. Obviously, conversion is not the end of the Christian life but the starting point of becoming a mature Christian. Then, pastors and Christian educators need to nurture these new converts so that they will grow in faith toward maturity. In order to accomplish this educational and pastoral mandate, pastors and Christian educators need to face at least five educational issues.

Manipulation of Conflict
and Crisis

Glenn Jent (1998) raises the issue of the manipulation of the conversion of children by pastors, Christian educators, revivalists, and parents. According to Jent's observation of his denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention (in the USA), the average age of baptism is getting lower. This phenomenon reflects the manipulation of children into conversion in their church environments. Smith also (1994) raises the same issue of manipulation of conversion and crisis in his article, "Teaching Toward Conversion." Smith suggests that there is a way of teaching to promote conflict because educational theory can offer some of our best clues for nonmanipulative conversion. Smith argues against the famous team of Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia plotting a taxonomy classifying the desired outcomes of learning in the affective domain. Smith argues that they organized the continuum according to the degree of interrogation, the degree to which the experience becomes more and more central to a person's identity. The educators, on the other hand, focused on the behaviors by which the depth of affect could be recognized. The behaviors are receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and characterization. Even though, introducing conflict into our own or another's life is always risky business, teaching can have aims other than the promotion of conflict toward conversion by adapting the taxonomy. The acquisition of a skill, clarification of a concept, and explanation of a procedure are frequently the featured aims of a teaching/learning session. There is a sense in which we are always teaching towards conversion.

Conversion and Nurture

Conversion, and its relationship to nurture, has been a historical and central theme in Christian education for a long time. The current debate in the Christian context should be dated to Horace Bushnell. Bushnell (1967) rejected the revivalistic perspective on conversion and opted instead for a process of slow and gentle nurture. Bushnell's position against the revivalistic perspective on conversion is well addressed in his book, *Christian Nurture*.

> What is the true idea of Christian education? . . . That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise. In other words, the aim, effort, and expectation should be, not, as is commonly assumed, that the child is to

grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to a mature age; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience (1967, p. 4).

Groome (1981), in his article, "Conversion, Nurture and Education," raises the "readiness question" to deal with the conversion and nurture issue: "when are students ready to be nurtured and/or converted to what" (p. 483). This issue also has many questions of cultural and social, developmental, psychological, theological, and denominational dimensions.

Resolving Conflict and Confusion

The term conflict refers to the psychodynamic process of emotional turmoil that individuals experience prior to conversion. The term confusion refers to the intellectual uncertainty or volitional hesitation in the judgment process and decision process. The terms are used broadly so as to encompass a wide range of theoretical positions that relate to the inner religious experiences of an individual. Probably the most quoted psychological and educational description of how conflict relates to Christian conversion is this statement by William James (1957):

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities (p.157).

The idea that inner conflict sets the stage for the possibility of conversion is well-documented in literature (Blake, 1962; Boisen, 1936; Clark, 1958; Davenport, 1905; Ducasse, 1953; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Freud, 1959; Gillespie, 1991; Jones, 1959; Salzman, 1966; Thouless, 1923). Descriptions of converts prior to the conversion experience support the hypothesis that conversion may be the solution to inner conflicts. The preconversion state is characterized by

depression, pensive sadness, anxiety, uncertainty, loss of sleep or appetite, sense of sin, feelings of estrangement, helplessness, weeping, nervousness (Starbuck, 1912), fear of death, feelings of moral failure, or some nameless dread (Clark, 1929). Other authors suggest that conversion is the solution to general "nervous instability" (Davenport, 1905), stresses and strains of life (Blake, 1962), intra-psychic conflict (Ducasse, 1953), and the need to attain "wholeness" (James, 1963; Ferm, 1959). Clark (1958) postulated that conversion is the solution to adolescent sexual conflicts, "by supplying a sense of purpose" (p. 177). Gillespie (1991), Erikson (1963, 1968), Jones (1959) and Johnson (1959) all point to conversion as a means of solving the identity crises of adolescence. The resolution of these conflicts reduces the dissonance within the convert, as explained by Festinger's popular theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

O'Rourke (1987) notes that the moment of dis-equilibrium, dis-ease, conflict , or struggle is central to all theories of conversion, all kinds of conversion and all patterns of conversion. The moment can arise from the simple task of living, and it can be induced by ourselves and/or others. But the experience of conflict does not guarantee conversion, not even resolution of the conflict (Smith, 1994). Nonetheless, there may still remain questions about the resolution of conflict, confusion, and dis-equilibrium.

The Demands for a Response
from the Convert

The evangelists and revivalists expect people to respond to their message of salvation by calling their audiences to repentance, faith, and baptism. Repentance and faith were a specific part and an expression of their conversion, and it also served as a sign that the person had been incorporated into the body of believers.

Repentance and faith were the crucial demands for a potential convert. These two demands were required for the process of the conversion experience. Three expected components of faith that should be evident in the life of the person experiencing conversion are knowledge, assent, and trust. Knowledge has to do with facts about Christ, e.g., His death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3-4). This knowledge may come over a period of time as the person is instructed in the Word. The person does not have to arrive at a full understanding of all the

facts before he/she is converted. The next stage beyond knowledge is assent. It is important that the person not only know the truth but also accept it as true. In assenting to the truth, the person also sees a one-to-one correspondence between the truth and his/her need. The final stage of faith is trust in God. Faith is not a cold intellectual adherence to certain doctrines, but it involves a warm personal trust in a living Savior. Faith can never be divorced from the object of its attention, Jesus Christ. It is a person-to-person encounter in which a self-commitment is made to Christ.

In the early church and some contemporary denominations, baptism was required right after the conversion experience. Holiness, fellowship, and obedience are also seen as consequences of a conversion experience. Because of the major educational issue, pastors and educators need to teach more about the postconversion life.

Conversion and Development

Walter Conn (1986) raises the question, "What is the relationship between development and conversion?" Then, Conn insists that conversion and development are closely linked. He suggests that "conversion requires previous development. Radical cognitive conversion requires the fullest degree of cognitive development." Moral conversion demands cognitive and affective development. "Critical moral conversion is not an end but a beginning, conversion requires not only previous but also consequent development, especially in the affective dimension, whose own conversion is finally necessary for moral conversion to be lived effectively"(pp. 156-57). Conn says that "conversion and development, then, though clearly distinct realities, are intimately connected" (p. 157). Then, we can raise issues such as how we can help to develop the cognitive, affective, volitional, and moral aspects of conversion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Robert W. Pazmino (1988) suggests that Christian education is the process of sharing information through Christian story and truth. He also suggests that Christian values,

attitudes, and lifestyles are formed, and that transformation is fostered by the conversion of persons, communities, societies, and structures through the power of the Holy. This process still requires the partnership of God with persons who are called and gifted to teach and the openness of persons to the possibility of conversion or transformation.

As pastors and Christian educators, we need to be concerned with how to interpret the conversion experience correctly for our ministry. This paper has attempted to outline the basis of conversion without suggesting or attempting to answer all questions. Here below are some thoughts to further develop in the future.

1. Can we ever in a nonmanipulative way bring about the conflict which can be an occasion of conversion? Can we manipulate the conflict and confusion for the conversion experience?

2. How can we promote conversion toward growth of faith? How can we promote, if it is possible, a conflict situation or crisis situation for conversion? Is it ethically right for Christian educators and pastors to promote any conflict or crisis situation? Can we resolve the conflict or confusion completely through conversion?

3. What is the process of nurture? And, how do we promote conflict? How and when can we help people to convert? Can we really teach conversion? If, yes, then, how? Can we promote conversion?

4. How can we correctly understand the crises of death, separation, bankruptcy, broken family, health, children, friends in relation to conversion?

5. What are some positive ways of manipulation to bring youth and/or adult congregations into revival or retreat settings?

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