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from direct apprehension of Jesus Christ as both God and human. Against Arius, the fourth century theologians argued for the concept of *homoousios*—that, concerning his deity, Jesus was of the same essence as the Father. The Trinity, then, as T. F. Torrance argues, becomes the very "ground and grammar" of theology (1980, pp. 40; 84; 155; 158-9). Through the incarnation, God creates a structure of revelation and reconciliation such that human thought forms and human language can be grounded in the reality of God without having to be deflected out of time and space, or to be deflected back upon the speaker or hearer so as to only "picture" God in terms of human experience.

Thirdly, what is at stake is the subjective distinction between the human spirit and the Spirit of God, with a corresponding confusion between faith and divine revelation. When God himself is perceived as undifferentiated Spirit, experienced as a subjective expression of our own life under the power of "divine inspiration," revelation as the truth of God becomes virtually identical with existential faith as the authentic human embodiment of that revelation. The danger of a Spirit Christology is particularly critical at this point. Disconnected from the historical Jesus, the Holy Spirit becomes incarnate in the spirit of every age, with a corresponding confusion between saving faith and religious experience, between divine Word and human interpretation, and finally, between the Kingdom of God and the church as a social and political entity.

It is worth noting at this point that a proper theology of the Holy Spirit must take account of Jesus' own warning: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority. . . . He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13, 14). Any attempt to work out a theology of the Spirit will no doubt come to grief unless it is founded on a theology of the incarnation. If it is this that the *filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed as used by the Western Church seeks to protect, it may have arisen out of appropriate theological instincts.

This is still to lament the absence of good theological works on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. What we have reviewed in this article may be considered to be helpful, but must also be read critically and thoughtfully in terms of what is at stake. Students of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit can still be helped by Michael Green's biblical and perceptive book (1975). For a penetrating theological critique of the importance of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, one can find help in the essay written by T. F. Torrance, "Come, Creator Spirit, for the Renewal of Worship and Witness" (1966, pp. 240-258).

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ACADEME

(Reports from seminary classroom special events, and TSF chapters)

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CONVERSION

By Lewis R. Rambo, Assistant of Pastoral Psychology, San Francisco Theological Seminary.

I have benefitted from syllabic, classnotes, and persor conversations with Lewis Rambo for several years. TSFers v recall his article about us in the February 14, 1980 issue of T Christian Century. *His classes in San Anselmo and Berkel indicate thoughtful integration of theology, psychology, a pastoral concerns. This article, from the Spring, 1980 issue* Pacific Theological Review *(published by San Francis Theological Seminary), gives a summary of Rambo's thou and teaching. A more thorough presentation will be publish as* Conversion: Tradition, Transformation, and Transcenden — MLB

The subject of conversion has attracted a great deal of inte est during the last decade. In no small measure this intere has been generated by the resurgence of "born again" religi among Evangelicals and by the emergence of the new religio movements with their special appeal to the youth generatio

Discussions of the conversion experience are sometim difficult because many people often believe that those involv in new religious movements must either be crazy to begin wi or were brainwashed.[1] Conversations with Evangelicals abc conversion are also fraught with problems because the co mitted person insists that the "born again" experience normative and that since he/she has had that experience it is mark of superiority over those who have not. Needless to sa those not in the "born again" camp resent such insinuatior and, as a result, both sides fail to understand each other.

The purpose of this article is to explore the psychologic dimensions of the conversion process. Before tackling th theme, it should be clearly understood that conversion is complex phenomenon. For one thing, in some church circl the emphasis has been upon nurturing the person in the fam of God. Hence *continuity* is stressed, and the view is that pe ple change gradually as they grow in their walk with Chri Other elements of the Christian tradition focus on the impo ance of *discontinuity*, the rupture between the old life of sin a the new life of the spirit. The fact is, of course, that both p spectives are important. For a person to be in Christ, there both family nurture and the liberating break which, par doxically, is made possible by the solid foundation of nurture My own bias is that each point of view needs to appreciate th contributions of the other and that both are biblically based

Another preliminary problem in the study of conversion is th definition of the term. While it is beyond the scope of this ar cle, note that the biblical meaning of conversion is derived frc several words: *epistrephein, strephein, shubh,* and the mc familiar, *metanoia.* These terms mean "to turn," "turn agair or "return." In their original languages, these words have specifically religious connotations. However, within the Bib they are sometimes used to assert the importance of alteri one's life, turning from idols to the living God, or opening one mind to God.

Present-day definitions of conversion can mean the transf of membership of a person from one denomination to anothe or the shift of loyalty from a major religious tradition to a vas different one, such as from Buddhism to Christianity. For som conversion is a traumatic, emotional reorientation of life. F

purposes of this article, conversion will be seen as a sig-
cant, sudden transformation of a person's loyalties, pattern
ife, and focus of energy. Lack of space prevents presenta-
ı of case materials. However, I have discerned the following
mes, patterns, and stages in the lives of persons who have
nd new life in Jesus Christ.[3]

My own study of conversion has involved interviews with
ıverts from a number of different contexts; for instance, con-
ts within mainline Protestantism, various Evangelical
ırches, Jews for Jesus, and, for comparative purposes, con-
ts from the new religious movements, especially the Unifica-
ı Church. In addition, I have sought to read the literature on
ıversion within the fields of psychology, sociology, anthro-
logy, theology, and history. Emerging from my own research
d reading is the view that conversion is a multifaceted
ocess.

My own model for a multidisciplinary and, hopefully, holistic
int of view is the interaction between tradition, transforma-
n, and transcendence. *Tradition* implies the social and cul-
al context which encompasses symbols, models, churches,
ıders, groups, and other aspects of the circumstances in
ıich a person lives. A strong view of the incarnation leads me
believe that God works through the so-called natural world to
fill God's purposes. In other words, God can reach a person
ough a friendship, a worship service, and so on. *Transforma-
n* is the process of individual change. I will focus on this
nension at a later portion of this article. *Transcendence*, from
heological point of view, is that dimension of God's creative
tivity which serves as both the source and goal of the conver-
on process. Theology thus informs our understanding of the
ınscendent dimension of the conversion event. The discip-
es of sociology, anthropology, and history inform our under-
anding of tradition. Transformation is viewed largely from the
scipline of psychology. Although one can gain important in-
ghts from each of the disciplines, it is when they are all util-
ed that one can appreciate the complexity of conversion and
ıderstand it holistically.[4]

For the remainder of this article, I want to focus on the pro-
ess of transformation experienced by the individual. Through
terviews, the reading of biographies, and the literature on
onversion, I have formulated a seven stage process which
eems to typify many people's conversion experience.

The first stage is the relatively stable *conventional* or *ordi-
ary* life. One experiences the routine activities and normal
cissitudes of life without significant problems. Ordinary life
ay begin to erode for many different reasons. A crisis, such
s a severe illness or the loss of a loved one, may force a per-
on to see that his/her life is banal, destructive, or useless. It is
so possible that a person may come into contact with a per-
on or a group which proposes a new diagnosis of one's life
nd the individual sees the validity of the interpretation.

Whatever the cause, the person is forced into the second
age: *breakdown*. A person experiences the breakdown as a
vid and painful awareness that he/she is unable to live on
is/her own resources or that life is intolerable as it has been
ved. In Christian terms, the person sees that his/her life has
een a life of selfishness, violence, or merely indifference to
piritual things. Dissolution of old ways of coping lead the per-
on to seek out new possibilities.

The third stage is the *quest*. The person is actively attempt-
ng to discover new ways of thinking, feeling, and being. Many
f the converts I have interviewed have sought a new life in est,
ncounter groups, TM, astrology, education, politics, etc. The
seeker" is on the alert for something new that will relieve the
uffering or aridity of his/her life.

The fourth stage is the *encounter*. The seeker contacts some-
ne who has a message which offers a new or rediscovered
ay of salvation. New horizons are opened up by the new per-
on or group, and a relationship is established.

The fifth stage is the period of *interaction*. The amount of
me varies from person to person, but the interaction is crucial
because it enables the seeker to discover that the group has something to offer which fulfills his/her needs. There are three basic categories of these needs. The first is the need for a cognitive or intellectual system of meaning. In our secularized world many people feel adrift, without a frame of reference that provides a sense of order, direction, and coherence. The second need is the emotional sense of belonging. Converts speak of finding a group of people who give them a sense of family relationship. The third need is a technique for living. Some people have such a paucity of structure in their lives that they are delighted to find a religious group which gives structure and directions for life. By "technique for living" I include many different things. One of the central needs among many of the younger converts is a sense of the moral fabric of life. They want and feel the need for prohibitions and prescriptions concerning sexual morality, finances, etc. Others want to know religious methods, such as how to pray, how to read the Bible, and how to worship.

The sixth stage is *commitment*. At a particular point the individual recognizes the importance of a decision to give his/her life a new loyalty. In the case of Christian groups, there is the decision to "submit one's life to Jesus Christ," to "accept Jesus as one's personal savior." The person decides that the new way of life is superior to the old way of life and makes a break with the past. For some, baptism is a powerful symbol of the end of the old life and the beginning of the new. For some the "testimony" is a crucial part of the commitment process, because it provides the person with an opportunity to see his/her life from a new perspective. One can reinterpret his/her life in terms of the new system of meaning, community, and action. A sense of joy and freedom permeates the person as he/she begins the new life. For the Christian, the previous stages of the journey are evidence of the grace of God leading the person into new paths to receive the gift of salvation.

The seventh stage is the *pilgrimage*. Strictly speaking, this stage is not part of the conversion experience. However, if a person does not reach this point, there is the possibility of leaving the faith. After the initial zeal and enthusiasm, the person sometimes experiences what I have come to call "post conversion depression." The high hopes, the intense joy, and the sense of certainty has diminished. Without proper pastoral care, the person may begin to question the validity of his/her new life in Christ. Through the assistance of wise Christian friends or ministers, the person can be taught that the Christian life requires discipline, growth, and hard work. Conversion is the *beginning* of the journey, not the end. Preoccupation with the initial conversion experience may point to a lack of maturation in the faith. As a person matures in the faith there is a sense that the whole of one's life is a pilgrimage. Difficulties will arise, doubts will emerge, and struggles will constantly accompany the disciple of Jesus Christ.

One of the most important recent shifts in the theological understanding of conversion is that conversion is not merely a one time event, but a constant process of turning to God. Point-

1981 INTERNATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CONFERENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

This year's conference of the Presbyterian Charismatic Communion will be held May 27-31 at the PCUS Conference Center in Montreat, North Carolina. Plenary speakers include Juan Carlos Ortiz, Howard Rice, Earl W. Morley, Jr., and Robert L. Wise. In addition to the plenary speakers and times for praise, prayer, and sharing, there will be six or more major curricula areas to choose from, including Introduction to Spirit-Filled Life, Deeper Life in the Spirit, Spirit Directed Service, Social Issues Facing Christians, Discipline of Prayer, and Church Renewal Concepts for Leaders. For more information, write the Presbyterian Charismatic Communion, 2245 N.W. 39th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73112.

ing to the biblical concept of conversion, various authors have argued that the entire Christian pilgrimage is one of turning and/or returning to God.[5] Moreover, conversion is not merely an emotional experience which benefits the individual alone, but is a process in which God makes us vulnerable to the transcendent which constantly makes us break out of comfortable situations. Conversion is thus seen as a lifelong process of breaking away from selfishness and pride and turning to the Living God and to the needs of our fellow human beings.[6]

These seven stages of the conversion process characterize many of the people I have interviewed over the last year of research. Another way of viewing the process is the five themes of patterns discovered by Theodore Sarbin and Nathan Adler in their studies of radical personality change.[7] These are not a sequence of events like my stages, but rather a cluster of processes which take place in the dramatic change of an individual. The core of their understanding is the modification of a person's view of the self. The answers to the questions "Who am I?" and "What am I?" are significantly different after a person has experienced a conversion. The first theme is that of *symbolic death and rebirth*. The old self may be seen as part of the dark and evil world, and the new self as transferred into the kingdom of light. The second theme is the relationship of the self to a group. The social dimension is crucial in providing a new interpretation of life, new models for behavior, and new sources of affirmation and support. The third and fourth themes are closely related. They involve ritual and what Sarbin and Adler call "proprioceptive stimuli." In other words, a significant learning takes place in ways other than the merely intellectual. Physical alterations, such as fasting, elimination of drug consumption, etc., intensify the learning that the *self* is being transformed. Sarbin and Adler's fifth theme is that of "triggers." Their research demonstrates, and mine would agree, that there are critical events which the convert sees as the turning point of his/her life. In an intense moment, the person perceives that new life is an option and a break with the old life in imperative. Some may express it as "meeting the Lord Jesus and surrendering to his will," while others may sense that they have been forced by circumstances to acknowledge the sovereignty and mercy of God. One person I interviewed had such an experience after many days in solitary confinement in a prison. These five themes and patterns interact at many points in the seven stage process outlined previously.

Conversion is ultimately the encounter of the person with God in Christ. This happens in many different ways for many different people. The above stages are not to be seen as normative, but as a model for assimilating the data from many converts whose experiences have been rather dramatic and sudden.

Although the focus has been on the individual, the conversion experience is not for the pleasure of the individual. Rather, conversion is the radical alteration of a person's life: from self to God and from self to the service of others. The validity of a conversion must be questioned if it is merely a spiritual trip for a private individual. Transformation is made possible through the gift of God's transcendent grace which is mediated through the multifarious forms of the Christian tradition.

REFERENCES

[1]Issues involving the cults and their alleged "coercive" persuasion are very complex. For an extensive annotated bibliography on the topic, see Thomas Robbins, "Civil Liberties, 'Brainwashing,' and 'Cults.'" This document may be purchased for $3.00 from the Program for the Study of New Religious Movements in America. Graduate Theological Union, 2465 Le Conte Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709.

[2]The relationship of nurture and conversion is explored by Rosemary Haughton in *The Transformation of Man: A Study of Conversion and Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 1967).

[3]For a good study of some of the problems involved in the study of conversion see James R. Scroggs and William G. T. Douglas, "Issues in the Psychology of Religious Conversion," *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1967), 204-216.

[4]Obviously this brief article cannot provide full coverage of each of the dimensions of the conversion process. Indeed, even the psychological aspect of the process cannot be completely explicated. Currently I am working on a manuscript, with the tentative title of *Conversion: Tradition, Transformation, and Transcendence*, which will attempt adequate study of each dimension and the interaction between them.

[5]This theme is developed well in Walter E. Conn (Editor), *Conversion* (Staten Island, NY: , House, 1978). I highly recommend this book because it contains a fine selection of article conversion from people such as Karl Barth, William James, Karl Rahner, A.D. Nock, etc

[6]This point is powerfully made by Sallie McFague, "Conversion: Life on the Edge of the R *Interpretation*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (July, 1978), 255-268.

[7]Theodore R. Sarbin and Nathan Adler, "Self-Reconstitution Processes," *The Psychoana Review*, Vol. 57, No. 44 (Winter, 1970), 599-616.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS NEEDED

Each year TSF accepts student applications for Contributors to *TSF Bulletin*. For 1981-82, the job description includes, (1) monitoring two periodicals in your academic field and keeping the Editor informed of the most worthwhile articles and reviews in that publication, and (2) submitting at least one book review as arranged in cooperation with an Associate Editor.

Letters of application must include current degree program, area of concentration, a sample of your writing, and summer and fall addresses. All applications should be received by May 30, 1981. Send to Editor, TSF Bulletin, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703.

INQUIRY

(Questions, proposals, discussions, ar research reports on theological ar biblical issues)

AN EVALUATION OF AN EVALUATION: RESPONSE TO JOHN WOODBRIDGE

By Donald K. McKim, Lecturer at Westminster College.

This is the final article in a series by TSF Bulletin. *In Nover ber, 1980, we published two reviews of* The Authority and Inte pretation of the Bible *by Jack Rogers and Donald McKim (Ha per and Row, 1980). In the March, 1981 issue, an extensi summary of a critical work by John Woodbridge was publishe (The original 80 page article in the* Trinity Journal *will be e panded for a Zondervan book for 1982). We asked McKim if I would write a response, thus this article.*

TSF members can benefit not only from the particulars this dialogue, but also from methodological concerns. Studen and graduates seek to improve their skills as readers of histo and commentators on contemporary issues. Guidelines ar examples in these articles can improve such interpretive pu suits.

Thanks go to authors Jack Rogers and Don McKim, r viewers Robert Johnston and Gerald Shepperd, and artic writers John Woodbridge and, again, Don McKim.

In the "Preface" to our *The Authority and Interpretation the Bible: An Historical Approach (AIB)*, Jack Rogers and stated that we have "no illusions that we have provided a defi itive statement" of our subject. We intended not to close but open dialogue. Professor John Woodbridge has now honore us by taking our proposal seriously. He has produced the mo extensive examination to date of our work. While he does n agree with us (nor we with him), he has set some questions sharp perspective. The differences between us can be instru tive for all engaged in scholarly tasks.

By questioning our way of "doing history," and our the logical judgments, Professor Woodbridge himself has provide a clear example of one of the reasons Jack Rogers and I fe our book had to be written. Namely, in the recent debates ov the nature of biblical authority, with Harold Lindsell and othe