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A Study in the Psychology of Conversion

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A STUDY IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONVERSION

BY

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in
Loyola University

1932

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in the psychological aspects of conversion was first aroused in a course in Religious Psychology. Investigation of the writings of non-Catholic psychologists in the field of conversion was first made while a member of this class. This material was used in part in the preparation of this thesis.

The argument has been offered that psychology cannot legitimately enter into the study of conversion. The opinion has also been offered that the study of conversion is a field for theologians. Yet is it not legitimate for psychology to be interested in and examine the psychic forces in conversion? Ultimately, a genuine Catholic conversion is attributable to grace. But working hand-in-hand with grace are these psychic forces. If grace were the only force in conversion, well could the study of conversion be limited to theologians.

Many writers in the field of religious psychology have contributed their ideas on conversion. It did not seem amiss that a Catholic layman, interested in psychology and having a Catholic background and education, should attempt to examine the nature of the psychic states that are concomitant with grace in a Catholic conversion.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	iii
PART I. SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE BY NON-CATHOLIC AUTHORS....	1
CHAPTER I. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND TECHNIC.....	1
Sub-title of Thesis.....	1
Type and Technic of Thesis.....	1
Non-Catholic Authorities: Conklin, De Sanctis, James, Starbuck.....	2
Purpose of Part II.....	2
Statement of Problem.....	3
CHAPTER II. DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CONVERSION....	4
De Sanctis.....	4
Theological Definition.....	4
Philosophico-moral Conversion.....	5
Counter-conversions.....	5
Meaning of Conversion in Religious Psycholo- gy.....	5
"Development".....	6
Conklin.....	7
Starbuck.....	7
James.....	9
Enumeration of Religious Phenomena in Con- version.....	9
Psychological Explanation: Habitual Centre of Personal Energy.....	9

	SUMMARY.....	10
CHAPTER III.	TYPES OF CONVERSION.....	12
	Sudden.....	12
	Gradual.....	12
	Revival and Non-Revival Conversions.....	14
	SUMMARY.....	14
CHAPTER IV.	CAUSES OF CONVERSION.....	15
	Predisposing Causes.....	15
	Physiological.....	15
	External Psychic.....	18
	Autoimitation.....	20
	Exciting Causes.....	21
	Conscious Internal Psychic.....	21
	SUMMARY.....	25
CHAPTER V.	CONVERSION.....	26
	Pre-Conversion.....	26
	Characteristics.....	26
	Differences between Men and Women.....	27
	Conversion Process Proper.....	27
	Coe's Comparison of Men and Women.....	30
	James' Theory of the Subconscious.....	30
	Post-Conversion.....	31
	Characteristics.....	31
	Resulting Types of Behavior.....	32

	Mannix's Classification of Converts..	45
CHAPTER VII.	HOWLEY'S THEORY OF INTEGRAL CONVERSION.....	46
	Analysis of Psychic Process of Conversion.....	46
	Interpretation and Criticism of James' Theory of the Subconscious as Applied to Conversion.	49
CHAPTER VIII.	GRACE.....	53
	Not Denied by Non-Catholic Psychologists.....	53
	James, Conklin, De Sanctis, Starbuck.....	53
	Affirmed by Catholic Psychologists.....	54
	Mainage, Bruehl.....	54
	Howley.....	55
	Farges, Marechal.....	56
	SUMMARY.....	57
CHAPTER IX..	CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY.....	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	vii

PART I
SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE
BY
NON-CATHOLIC AUTHORS

CHAPTER I
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND
TECHNIC

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND TECHNIC

The title of this thesis is: "A Study in the Psychology of Conversion". Its sub-title might be: A study of the psychic forces in conversion as developed by non-Catholic psychologists with a view to seeing if and to what extent these principles may be applied to a genuine Catholic conversion. The purpose of the thesis then resolves itself into an attempt to determine if these psychological principles are an adequate explanation of a genuine Catholic conversion. If these principles are adequate, then they could be applied to a true conversion in their entirety. If they are not adequate, what do Catholic psychologists offer to explain the phenomena which non-Catholic psychologists leave unexplained?

The thesis may be classed with the survey-philosophic type. The technic or method of treatment used will become apparent as the type is discussed. The first part of the thesis is a survey of the literature of non-Catholic psychologists in the field of religious conversion. Upon examination, it will be found that the material used in the first part has been based, though not entirely, on four outstanding psychologists. These four were found to offer the greatest variety of opinions among the non-Catholic authors. A striking simi-

larity of opinion was found to exist quite generally in this field. Quotations from more sources would have resulted in duplication of material. A critical appreciation of the sources used will be found in the bibliography. Of the authors themselves, the following may be said:

Edmund S. Conklin, the author of The Psychology of Religious Adjustment (22), is a professor of psychology at the University of Oregon;

Sante de Sanctis, author of Religious Conversion (23), is a professor of psychology at the University of Rome;

William James, author of The Varieties of Religious Experience (30), was professor of psychology at Harvard University; he died in 1910;

Edwin Diller Starbuck, author of The Psychology of Religion (45), is known also for his published work in the field of character education; he was assistant professor of education at Leland Stanford Junior College and is more recently a faculty member at the University of Iowa.

Part II might be classed as the philosophic type. It is an attempt at criticism of the non-Catholic literature in the field of religious conversion in the light of principles

enunciated by Catholic psychologists; an attempt to determine how far these principles of non-Catholic psychologists can be admitted in a Catholic conversion. In using Catholic literature, sources will be found which corroborate the material in Part I, sources which are in violent disagreement with the opinions of non-Catholic authors, as well as supplementary material, and sources which meet the new problems that arise.

It has been found that the non-Catholic explanation of conversion is defective -- nowhere can these psychologists find an adequate explanation of the unity and indefectibility of a genuine conversion to Roman Catholicism from non-Catholicism or infidelity. By the indefectibility of a genuine conversion to Roman Catholicism is meant a subjective firmness of assent to Catholicism; an assent so firm that every other alternative of belief is excluded forever. Non-Catholic psychologists are willing to admit that there is an explanation over and above the natural. But here their explanation stops.

The Catholic psychologist knows from revelation as explained by the Church, that there is grace. In the thesis, it is hoped to determine from mere experience, from psychology, the factors that it seems impossible to explain on a mere natural basis. It is also hoped to indicate a possible explanation of these factors, though the giving of this explanation in its entirety would probably be outside the field of psychology and therefore without the limits of this thesis.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CONVERSION

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DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CONVERSION

Although this is a study of conversion from the viewpoint of psychology, it is interesting to note the definitions of the term conversion given by those other than psychologists. Webster defines conversion as

"a spiritual and moral change attending a change of belief with conviction; a change of heart; a change from worldliness to godliness; a change of the ruling disposition of the soul, involving a transformation of the outward life" (48:492).

De Sanctis holds that contrary to common opinion, the meaning of conversion in religious psychology differs from the meaning of the same term in theology. In theology, for example in the Acts of the Apostles, conversion means not only a sense of repentance but also faith in Christ. Further, he says, theology defines conversion in terms of the two elements in which theologic conversion is supposed to consist, grace and aspiration. From the fourth to the seventh centuries, conversion as a term was applied to the 'renunciation of the life of this world', for the purpose of devoting oneself to the sacred orders or a life of monasticism. Today Catholic ecclesiastical writers interpret conversion as meaning a passage from either unbelief or some non-Catholic religion to Roman Catholicism; likewise the term may cover a reversion or 're-

turn' to Roman Catholicism after a period of wandering from its tenets. Cases of 'acknowledgment' or 'recognition' of Catholicism after a period of religious indifference may be included in the term conversion when it is used by theologians.

De Sanctis very briefly treats of philosophico-moral conversions which have elements in common with religious conversions but which must be kept distinct. This type of conversion, the philosophico-moral, was particularly predominant after the breakdown of Roman power when nobler souls, in the period of revulsion against the corruption of manners, turned towards philosophy, hoping for immediate peace or at least death without fear. Although some examples of philosophico-moral conversions comprise both the theory and practice of a higher ideal, they do not properly belong in the field of religious psychology since religion, whether a specific sect or the generic spirit of religiousness, implies values which are universal, transcendent and everlasting.

De Sanctis would likewise distinguish counter-conversions from true conversions as does Starbuck. Counter-conversions indicate a passage from some religious creed to free-thought.

The meaning of the term conversion in religious psychology implies a 'mutation' or change of conscience as well as cult, regarding the sentiment and practice of a religion. This mutation must be complete -- that is, there must be a

change of intellectual attitude, of sentiments, and of morals. There is difficulty in distinguishing the true and genuine conversion -- an overturning of values -- from what is in reality merely 'recognitions' and 'returns'. The more ordinary cases of conversion De Sanctis would call mere 'conscious returns' to the belief and habits of childhood in defense of threatened personal values.

Conversion is to be distinguished also from mere physical and moral development. Some writers use the phrase 'conversion by development' and mean that the phenomenon of conversion is the final step in the 'typical' evolution of the mind or soul. True development will always imply less than a complete overturning of values. The case of Goethe's Marguerite might be mentioned here. Marguerite suffered her brother's curses, and life in prison; she resisted Faust and finally Mephisto; and, purified, resumed the ways of her childhood. Here is an example of development by suffering, not conversion but reversion.

De Sanctis would limit his considerations to conversions that are genuine, complete and lasting, which he says may be found in other religions besides the Catholic. Here (23:34), De Sanctis offers his definition that a true moral conversion is a mutation of "life under the impulse of an ultra-terrestrial ideal". Only facts may be offered as evidence however and the Catholic religion offers the richest (23:28-34).

In his work, The Psychology of Religious Adjustment (22:103-4), Conklin will admit the application of any of four meanings to the term, conversion: 1, conversion may imply a change in beliefs, attitudes, habits and ideals accompanied by an overwhelming emotion, all of which is attributed by the convert to divine intervention. Obviously, if these conversions could be completely accounted for by divine intervention, they would lie partially outside the field of psychology; 2, conversion may also designate changes of belief and conduct due to change of devotion to one religion, to acceptance of another as a result of due consideration and conviction. A case in question would be a conversion from Mohammedanism to Christianity, without implying divine intervention, or a conversion from a Protestant sect to Roman Catholicism; 3, Roman Catholic authors may use the term to indicate a return to the sacraments and the habits of a practical Catholic after neglect or indifference; 4, conversion may indicate a change from a self-centered, irreligious, anti- or a-social life to an altruistic and acceptable mode of living socially and religiously. Although the last three definitions differ from each other, since they represent profound changes in behavior which involve religious beliefs and practices, Conklin would term them conversion phenomena and subject them to psychological examination.

Starbuck, in his Psychology of Religion (45), would compare conversion to confirmation in the Greek, Roman Catholic,

English, and other churches. It is a question whether or not the comparison would hold in the case of the Roman Catholic Church since the effects of confirmation are not always manifest in individual cases; while in conversion, no conclusion as to the existence of conversion can be reached unless effects are observable. Starbuck does not logically define conversion and he attempts to justify his lack of precision by saying that it "is better in exploring a relatively unorganised field, to avoid letting fineness of definition outstrip adequacy of knowledge" (45:21). He however describes conversion as a "more or less sudden change of character from evil to goodness, from sinfulness to righteousness, and from indifference to spiritual insight and activity". The term is used to indicate the "whole series of manifestations just preceding, accompanying and immediately following the" sudden character changes mentioned above (45:21).

William James in his preface to Starbuck's book says that Starbuck reached the conclusion that conversion is not a unique experience but that it corresponds to the common events of moral and religious development; this conclusion, James holds, is the result of the statistical comparison of different types of personal evolution in some of which "conversion technically so called, was present, whilst it was absent in others". This broad generalization could logically flow from the correspondingly broad description of conversion given by Starbuck.

In the following words, William James, in his Varieties of Religious Experience, describes the phenomenon of conversion:

"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. This at least is what conversion signifies in general terms, whether or not we believe that a direct divine operation is needed to bring such a moral change about" (30:189).

As is apparent James does not treat of the need of a creed or belief around which to centralize these various phenomena comprising conversion.

The above is an enumeration of the religious phenomena; James' psychological explanation is novel: that group of ideas to which a man devotes himself and from which he works may be called the habitual centre of his personal energy.

When it is said that a man is converted, by that phrase is meant that religious ideas which were formerly peripheral, that is on the edge of his consciousness, now take a central place in his consciousness; and as a result, religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy, that is, the psychic mass that most influences his thinking and acting. The psychological interpretation of these phenomena can be made readily enough but James admits that when it becomes necessary to explain HOW and WHY these phenomena occur, psychology is unable

to give an account (30:196).

It may be noted here while discussing definitions of conversion, that men like Ames (1) (2), Coe (19) (20) (21), Pratt (43), and Thouless (47) have done notable writing in the field of religious psychology. Yet their contributions do not differ from those of the psychologists discussed.

SUMMARY:

In summarizing, the following facts may be noted:

De Sanctis distinguishes between the term "conversion" as used in religious psychology and the term "conversion" as used in theology. Theology, he says as has been noted, defines conversion in terms of grace and aspiration. Philosophico-moral conversions are discussed; they must be kept distinct from religious conversions. Counter-conversions, as opposed to true conversions, are noted.

De Sanctis' definition of the term "conversion" as used in religious psychology centers around what he calls the "mutation" or change of conscience and cult. True conversion is to be distinguished from returns to former religious beliefs and practices, as well as from mere psychic and moral development.

Conklin will admit any of four meanings to the term conversion: a change in beliefs and morals accompanied by

emotion all of which the convert attributes to divine power; change in belief and conduct due to change in religion; a return to the habits of a practical Roman Catholic after neglect or indifference; a change to an acceptable mode of social and religious life after an anti- or a-social, or irreligious life.

Starbuck does not define conversion. He compares conversion with other religious phenomena; and he describes conversion as a sudden character change "from evil to goodness", etc., and uses the term to indicate the manifestations before, during and after these character changes.

William James says conversion indicates the process by which a consciously wrong, unhappy and previously divided self becomes consciously right, happy and unified as a result of a firmer hold on religious truths. James offers the theory of "the habitual centre of personal energy" as a psychological explanation of these conversion changes: religious ideas which were formerly on the edge of consciousness take a central place in consciousness and form the psychic mass that exerts the greatest influence on thinking and acting.

CHAPTER III
TYPES OF CONVERSION

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TYPES OF CONVERSION

The common division of conversions is into sudden and gradual types. The sudden type of conversion may be defined as that in which the mutation or overturning of values is the process apparently of an instant; the psychological explanation of this type will often, of course, call upon the unconscious mind. Other names for sudden conversion are the fulminant or lightning type as treated by De Sanctis (23), and the impulsive type as treated by Starbuck (45). The differences as noted by each author are slight, as will be seen presently.

Gradual conversion is that process of mutation which extends over a somewhat longer period of time. As treated by De Sanctis, it is called the progressive type; and as treated by Starbuck, the volitional type.

Although James regarded instantaneous conversion as the true type and although this theory may find support in many conversions, it is possible, says De Sanctis, that James overestimated the value of the instant of, let us call it, the crisis of conversion but that is in reality the least significant moment. What really determines the conversion is the conscious reflection immediately following, for in many cases the will must be overcome. James in interpreting sudden conversion was liable to attribute them to the unconscious alone and thereby

exclude the conscious, as will be seen in the discussion of conversion as a process (23:65).

Because conversion is of the lightning type, it cannot be said that the convert has never consciously experienced the beginnings of the change or mutation. Indeed his distaste for the old habits of pleasure, his doubts as to his final decision, his need for a fixed aim and a settled conscience are conscious preliminary symptoms of conversion (23:67). On the other hand, the unconscious factor in conversion may refer not to the actual event but to the moment of description, at which time, the convert does not recall many of the circumstances preceding the conversion proper; in that case, the circumstances should be termed forgotten rather than unconscious (23:79).

In comparing the progressive type of conversion with the instantaneous or unconscious type, De Sanctis holds that consciousness plays a much greater part than psychologists are willing to admit. Impersonal examination of the testimony and actions of converts proves that the process of conversion develops with the aid of volitional acts, that is voluntary acts, those performed by the will. And undeniably the will is a fact of consciousness. The convert is aware of a determining tendency which enables him to prepare and select the means by which he ascends in the process of conversion; and by the process of reflection he experiences these decisions and choice of motives (23:84-5).

"Moreover, in both types of conversion, the interjection of the personality of the subject plays no inconsiderable part; and further, the convert recognizes his mutation however it has occurred, and adheres to his conversion with strong and successively repeated efforts of will and makes it the visible standard of his new life. It is clear, therefore, that the difference between the two types ultimately becomes so attenuated as almost to vanish altogether" (23:85-6).

The other usual classification of conversion phenomena is into revival and non-revival types. The terms are self-explanatory. Revival conversions are more commonly sudden or fulminant; non-revival conversions may be either gradual or sudden.

SUMMARY:

In summarizing the types of conversion, it is noted that the classification, generally speaking, resolves itself into two basic types: gradual conversion and sudden conversion. Other names for gradual conversion are the progressive type, the term used by De Sanctis, and the volitional type, the term used by Starbuck. James calls sudden conversion the instantaneous type, or the unconscious type; Starbuck, the impulsive type; De Sanctis, the fulminant or lightning type.

A classification of conversions from another point of view results in the revival type, generally sudden conversions, and the non-revival type which may be either sudden or gradual.

CHAPTER IV
CAUSES OF CONVERSION

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CAUSES OF CONVERSION

The causes of conversion as discussed by religious psychologists can be classified according to the aetiology of De Sanctis in nearly all cases. He discusses (23:34-51) the causes ascribed by other writers and places them under the following three general heads: the physiological causes of conversion, the external psychic causes of conversion, and the internal psychic causes. The following is a summary:

PREDISPOSING CAUSES:

PHYSIOLOGICAL:

The positivists, who will accept only natural and observable properties as knowable, insist upon the physiological causes and mention mental or nervous disorders; diseases, for example tuberculosis; special conditions of life, instances of which are senility and puberty, with the unavoidable mental disabilities peculiar to the former period. De Sanctis in his discussion finds that where a physiological factor is ment, a psychic factor was required in antecedent circumstances for effective development of the physiological factor. An example of this is heightened suggestibility, a mental condition, which accompanies organic exhaustion, a physiological condition. It can be seen logically however that as far as relationship goes,

there is no essential connection between conversion and disease; and although a disorder may exist as an antecedent, it is not a necessary antecedent or cause.

Many attribute conversion to old age but the so-called conversions among the senile have been found rarely to be typical according to De Sanctis' standards -- they are usually returns to the faith or regressions.

American psychologists, among them Starbuck (45) and Stanley Hall (26), have given prominence to puberty as a cause of conversion which they hold is a natural phenomenon of adolescence. The statistics advanced are many and varied. Starbuck, an authority, holds that conversion occurs almost exclusively between the ages of ten and twenty-five years, parallel with the greatest development of the organism and of the mind. He says (23:37) that the first two rises in the frequency curve for conversions "seem then, from the psychological standpoint, to correspond to the decline of the sensory elements in consciousness, and the birth of rational insight" -- namely, at about the age of fourteen years. He further postulates that if conversion has not begun before the twentieth year, it is improbable that it will occur later. He has shown by statistics that in the cases of women, the maximum frequency of conversion was observable at the ages of thirteen, sixteen and eighteen years; in men, at the ages of twelve, sixteen and nineteen years. Starbuck concludes therefore that there must

be a physiological cause for the process of conversion because of the coincidence of conversion with the period of rapid bodily development. However, he agrees that the most conspicuous phenomena of puberty do not coincide with the most frequent conversions. Rather, he says, conversion and puberty tend to supplement each other in time "than to coincide; in this, bearing just the opposite relation to that of conversion and bodily growth (23:41)...but they may, nevertheless, be mutually conditioned" (23:45). Philosophically, however, concomitant phenomena do not of necessity have a causal connection. It is an undoubted fact that during puberty many youths undergo a crisis of religious indecision, actual unbelief or criminality. Also, counter-conversions are frequent during this period. It is agreed that from fifteen to twenty-five is the age when the greatest changes occur in the human personality and it would be therefore the most suitable for the occurrence of decisive events.

Speaking in summary of puberty as a cause of conversion, De Sanctis holds that

"we are here dealing with an extrinsic or indirect cause, neither essential nor sufficient; in other words, with a provocative stimulus to an intellectual and ethical transformation which becomes effective only in certain individuals, and only under determined psychic and environmental conditions" (23:39).

Starbuck puts his law in general terms when he says

"There is a normal period, somewhere between the innocence of childhood and the fixed habits of

maturity, while the person is yet impressionable and has already capacity for spiritual insight, when conversions most frequently occur" (23:35-6).

EXTERNAL PSYCHIC CAUSES:

In the discussion of the external psychic causes of conversion, it must be remembered that these external causes would have been ineffective without the occurrence of internal psychic causes either preceding, simultaneous with, or subsequent to the external. As in every psychic process, so with conversion. The initial stimulus is outside consciousness; when it penetrates consciousness, that is, when the subject becomes aware of the stimulus, the stimulus becomes elaborated within consciousness.

This elaboration may be partially conscious and partially unconscious. The subject may be aware that the stimulus is being elaborated upon; in this case, we should say that the elaboration is a conscious process. The subject may wish not to attend to the stimulus yet its force may be such that it cannot be absolutely forgotten; if the stimulus becomes elaborated in this case, we should say the process of elaboration is unconscious. But without interior elaboration, the process of conversion would never develop.

The external psychic causes are therefore stimuli to be elaborated upon and thereby provoke conversion. They may be many and varied: suggestions from sermons, missions, or reading; aesthetic stimulation; misfortunes; the example of

saints and martyrs; prophecies and miracles; propaganda; occult practices -- all may be external psychic causes made effective by elaboration in the individual consciousness.

The example set by St. Francis as a guest in a home for one night was the stimulus for the mutation of the convert who later became Friar Bernard, the first companion of St. Francis. The conversion of Blessed Giovanni Colombini, a fourteenth century mystic, was caused by reading the biography of St. Mary of Egypt. All are external psychic causes. The external elements causing the conversion of St. Augustine have been named as the words of St. Ambrose, St. Augustine's retreat into solitude, and reading.

Physical and moral suffering have been found to be the greatest external condition for religious conversion. Robert Hugh Benson found in the death of his father the impulse determining his entrance into the Catholic Church (3). St. Francis of Assissi witnessed a change in his attitude toward God in one serious illness and complete conversion in the second illness. Testimony bears out the fact that the adult in most cases must have undergone the experience of suffering before he turns towards religious faith.

"It is indisputable that every true conversion has suffering for its antecedent. It may even be that suffering is the one indispensable factor, although suffering alone is not sufficient" (23:46).

It frequently is the case that lofty and sensitive minds, who

do not suffer through personal misfortunes, appreciate and are saddened by the sorrows of others and turn to religious belief. Papini, who claims he was thus affected, found his solution in the Gospels and was converted (40).

AUTOIMITATION:

"Autoimitation" deserves a place among the causes of religious conversion. By autoimitation is meant the performance by oneself of acts before conversion that would be the logical results of the conversion process. Pascal recommends this practice and De Sanctis says that "By acquiring the habit of attending divine service, without any explicit purpose, faith is gradually acquired" (23:43). The fact that faith may be acquired by this method is open to question but the principle of autoimitation has a psychological foundation: if one wishes to induce a certain state of mind, let him act as if that state of mind were already present. An objection has been raised by De Sanctis against the principle of autoimitation: it is held that faith is presupposed, therefore reason is put to sleep, leaving not a cause for conversion but conversion itself. It is the testimony of many converts from Anglicanism that the conversion process was begun not by this habit but by the pleasure resulting from the habit.

EXCITING CAUSES:

CONSCIOUS INTERNAL PSYCHIC:

Of all the causes of conversion, the conscious internal psychic cause is the most powerful. This immediate and exciting cause of conversion always appears uppermost in fulminant types. By examining the records left by converts of their conversions, one always finds certain predisposing conditions which comprise the physiological and the external psychic causes. But the moment when conversion is completed is "suddenly ushered in by a complete alteration of character, or else by the appearance of some urgent moral need, in short, with new psychic dispositions of the subject" (23:47).

There may be a need for intellectual calmness, emotional serenity, for superior guidance; there may be a desire for an outlet for one's activity, a feeling of repugnance toward pleasures that are physical, a need for love. Any one of these or any combination of them may constitute an internal psychic cause. Newman craved mental order and was thus drawn toward the church with its logical dogmatic system (38). De Sanctis mentions a scientist who "unable to discover in science a foundation on which to base a strong conviction, was happy to find such a foundation in revealed truth, and in the authority of the Church" (23:48).

Among the classic examples of conversion for intellectual reasons, such as Newman (38), Benson (3), Kinsman (32),

we find expressions of an intensely emotional attitude exemplified in their passionate devotion to the Roman Catholic Church. Though an intellectual moment is certainly a stage in the process of conversion, it is undeniable according to De Sanctis that, whether conscious or unconscious, conversion is always begun in an affective, that is, an emotional moment. Most converts testify that an emotional upset immediately preceded their change of attitude. The following are characteristics of the psychic states preceding conversion: the soul becomes excited but is incapable of satisfaction, questions are propounded which the soul is incapable of answering. But because the conflicting forces are resolved after conversion, the convert is happy after the crisis. Kinsman remarks that after conversion, his only sentiment was contentment (32:293).

Among the lesser internal causes not so often expressed but by their fundamental nature quite frequently present may be mentioned the desire for salvation and therefore, implicitly, the fear of damnation. The wish for immortal happiness after death and the fear of everlasting punishment are probably the most basic among the internal psychic causes of conversion.

The causes of conversion become concrete and clear when applied, as Conklin applied them (22:120-5), to a revival. An evangelist will try to arouse by examples and pictures (external psychic causes) a feeling of inferiority and a sense

of guilt and thus bring about conflicts (internal psychic causes); for the resolution of these conflicts, he urges confession, a feeling of forgiveness and the initiation of a new method of life (the conversion process) resulting in joy and peace.

The temperament of the individual comprising his individual peculiarities will determine or at least condition, that is limit or restrict, the type of adjustments he makes to the various steps in the conversion process. The person of serene temperament will react calmly; extreme types are more likely to suffer intense emotional conflicts. Environment will also assist in determining or conditioning the type of conversion. Clark in his Psychology of Religious Awakening (18:Chaps. IV and V) shows that either a lack of religious training or training in the stern doctrines of hell and damnation prepare for a conversion of the crisis variety.

Starbuck has classified the motives and forces impelling to conversion in eight groups showing their relative percentages among men and women converts, and among revival and non-revival conversions (45:52,54). The groups are:

Motives and Forces	Female	Male	Revival	Non-revival
1 Fears (hell, death, punishment)	14	14	14	13
2 Other self-regarding motives, approval of others, desire to meet dead relatives	5	7	6	5
3 Altruistic motives, do good in the world, influence over others	6	4	5	7
4 Following out a moral ideal	15	20	15	19
5 Remorse and conviction for sin	15	18	14	18
6 Response to teaching	11	8	8	13
7 Example and imitation	14	12	15	11
8 Urging and social pleasure	20	17	23	14

The following are the highlights of the above classification: in the case of women, urging and social pleasure ranked highest, 20% being thus affected; following out a moral ideal, and remorse and conviction for sin ranked next -- each claiming 15% among women; fears claimed 14%. Among men, 20% were impelled by the desire to follow out a moral ideal; 18%, by remorse and conviction for sin; 17%, by urging and social pleasure. Among revival conversions, the largest group, 23%, was impelled by urging and social pleasure; among non-revival converts, 19% were impelled by the desire to follow out a moral ideal, and 18% by remorse and conviction for sin.

SUMMARY:

The causes of conversion may be grouped under these headings:

1, The physiological causes, particularly mental and physical disorders, upon which the positivists lay the most emphasis. Although disease and conversion may co-exist, there is not of necessity a causal connection between them.

G. Stanley Hall and Starbuck among American psychologists have given prominence to the theory that adolescence, particularly the period of puberty, is the most favorable time for conversions.

2, The external psychic causes, among which the most important are physical and moral suffering. Autoimitation deserves and holds a place here. By autoimitation is meant the performance before conversion of acts which would be the result of the conversion process.

3, The internal psychic cause which may be constituted by any one of, or any combination of, several conditions: a need for emotional or intellectual calmness, a desire for guidance by a superior power, craving for an omniscient love, or a desire for eternal salvation or the fear of hell.

CHAPTER V
CONVERSION

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CONVERSION

The study of conversion proper aside from type or cause is divided for the sake of precision -- insofar as precision can be a characteristic of something so intangible and non-concrete, so complex, as the psychology of a religious conversion -- into a study of Pre-conversion, Conversion Process Proper, and Post-conversion.

PRECONVERSION:

Starbuck (45:58) calls the moment of the apparent break in the continuity of life, conversion. The mental state just preceding that break is known as the state of conviction or the sense of sin, previously mentioned. The term has many shades of meaning including the conviction for sin proper, the struggle after new life, prayer -- calling on God, doubts, a tendency to resist conviction, depression, restlessness and anxiety, humility and helplessness, seriousness, etc., but all are elements in this sense of sin. The manifestations of this state are determined firstly by differences in the temperament of the individual, and secondly by the picture that the individual keeps before him of either the ideal life he wishes to assume or the sinful one which he wishes to renounce.

Among women, the experiences which deal with the feelings are the more common: depression, anxiety, seriousness, helplessness, humility. Among men, prayer and a tendency to resist conviction are common -- those experiences in which the volitional element is the greater. From these facts, Starbuck concludes that in the religious life of women, feeling plays a larger part; in the religious life of men, intellection and volition play the larger part (45:65).

From the answers received to his questionnaires, Starbuck concludes that men of non-revival conversion insist upon seeing their way clearly toward the new life, that men of revival conversion are more wilful and have more intense revival experiences than women; women in both revival and non-revival conversions are more reserved. Women also lack the active temperament to assist in carrying them through the stress and strain of conviction (45:68-9).

CONVERSION PROCESS PROPER:

Great difficulty is encountered in an attempt to reach the very well-springs of conversion because each case is original in itself and the most willing of autobiographers are reluctant or else incapable of telling their inmost experiences. Though De Sanctis says that "true conversion is an integral overturning of consciousness which gives way to a fresh systemization" (23:92), he also says (23:93) "there is a moment --

no matter how fleeting -- during which the mutation extends to the profoundest roots of the affective life, though it may have seemed to involve only the intelligence". Conversion in this limited sense, therefore, does not always imply a lasting life of moral perfection.

The problem in a study of conversion does not deal with the method of discovering how one knows a dogma but how one comes to believe that dogma, "by what process a cognitive state becomes a state of faith...the way in which a theoretical conviction...becomes a faith sufficiently firm to determine the conversion," psychologically put (23:113). And De Sanctis holds that the psychological explanation is in the subconscious, that conversion "from the point of view of pure psychology is a displacement or transference of affective energy to an object which represents the 'substitute' of its antecedent" (23:127). It is obvious however that if the conversion process stopped with this transference the effect would be merely transitory since this st^g might occur repeatedly. If however the affective transformation be cemented by sublimation or the "refinement of an ethical ideal", the transformation becomes relatively stationary. This sublimation may be conscious, that is voluntary; or unconscious, and its degree will depend upon the force offered by the 'substitute' or the new life (23:127).

Starbuck is in agreement with other authorities in his discussion of the experiences immediately preceding and

following conversion but he makes a more detailed study (45:82-94) of the point of transition where the old life leaves off and the new life begins. The mental state consists of two lives -- the present and by contrast sinful one and the wished-for righteous one, each opposing the other in a struggle for the possession of consciousness. The person is a mere observer in the struggle but suffers through the battle of the contending forces. Where the conversion occurs, the ideal life wins.

Although Starbuck holds that the greatest change occurs in the subconscious yet the following characteristics of the change may be inferred from the surface phenomena that were put into words:

- 1, yielding, breaking of pride;
- 2, determination, exercise of will;
- 3, forgiveness;
- 4, God's help, or some outside power;
- 5, public confession -- public sanction;
- 6, spontaneous awakening (ranks highest);
- 7, feeling of oneness with God or friends.

From the viewpoint of volition, Starbuck assigns two aspects to conversion: the point of self-surrender and forgiveness accompanied by a sense of harmony with God where, he holds, there is a suspension of the will; and the point where the new life bursts forth spontaneously as a natural recoil

from the sense of sin, marked by a striving toward righteousness and therefore use of the will (45:100).

Coe, in his book called Men and Women, makes the following interesting comparison of men and women in religious crises:

MEN	;	WOMEN
Intellect more prominent; hence more theoretical doubts.	;	Sensibility more prominent; hence, more doubt of personal status.
Emotion focused on definite objects and at definite periods; hence, more turbulence.	;	Emotion more constant, more diffused, more gentle.
Less suggestible, resist more, have more intense struggle, and less fulfilment of expectation. Attain more in solitude.	;	More suggestible; hence, yield more readily to ordinary influences. Attain less in solitude; have less intense struggle, and more fulfilment of expectation.

(45:81)

To all of which, there are the usual exceptions wherein the characteristics of one group carry over to the other.

James would explain conversion as a phenomena of the subconscious. His theory has been interpreted by Howley:

- 1, "There exist fields of consciousness and variations in these fields: hence the origin of the subconscious"; 2, "There is a tendency in psychological elements thus withdrawn from clear consciousness to organise themselves in a new synthesis, which, in certain exceptional circumstances, can constitute a secondary personality fully prepared in the shadow to burst into the light: hence the formation of the sub-conscious self"; 3, In the case of a conversion, "there is an irruption sudden or gradual of these elements into clear consciousness: hence the relations of the sub-conscious with

the normal consciousness" (29:59).

POST-CONVERSION:

After the conversion experience, doubts, temptations, conflicts may disturb the serenity of the individual but in the true conversion, doubts are always resolved and therefore true conversion, integral and entire conversion, cannot have a counter-conversion (23:173). All becomes serene if the "will is steadfastly fixed upon the great aims contemplated" (23:175).

The statistics of Starbuck seem to indicate (45:123) that male converts experience joy and the intenser of the emotions while female converts experience a sense of oneness with God, nature and humanity; those converted at revivals tend to irradiate physiologically their feelings experienced in conversion, traceable probably to the fact that the stimuli of revivals are greater; non-revival cases are characterized by calmness, peace, happiness and a feeling of acceptance. However women of revival conversion are frequently calm, by comparison with the turbulence of the emotions of men. Women of revival conversion have a feeling of responsibility as well as one of disappointment. It has been found that their expectations of conversion have not been completely fulfilled, although the fulfilment is more complete than in the case of men.

After the period of conflict when conversion is established, individual behavior will indicate psychic orientation:

identifications, that is, projections of the physical and psychic personality upon some other person or thing, will result. Psychically, prayer will be a projection of the self to God; charity will be a psychic and physical projection of the personality upon one's fellow men. Generally speaking, two types of behavior, singly or in combination, will result from conversion: the contemplative life and the social life -- what Starbuck would call (45:128) "active sympathy with the world outside" -- neither term being taken in the limited sense. The type which does result will depend upon the temperament of the individual (23:175-92).

To the individuals of contemplative trends will accrue a sense of perceiving truths not known before -- life's mysteries become clear and often "the solution is more or less unutterable in words" (30:248). In all true conversions, there is the working of a new and greater personality, oneself acquires a new significance (45:119), the world in itself appears to have changed (30:248). And for the individual, the greatest results of conversion are what Starbuck calls (45:119) the processes of unselfing or self-unfolding resulting from self-knowledge, self-appreciation and self-consciousness.

PART II
SURVEY OF CATHOLIC AUTHORS
AND COMPARISON WITH NON-CATHOLIC

CHAPTER VI
CAN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION BE SCIENTIFIC?

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CAN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION BE SCIENTIFIC?

Before beginning to compare the attitudes of Catholic and non-Catholic psychologists toward conversion, it would seem necessary to indicate what Catholic psychologists mean by the term "conversion". Howley has contributed the classic discussion of conversion to the field of psychology. In his explanation of what he chooses to call "integral conversion" (29:139-79), Howley sums up the definitions of conversion as given by the major Catholic psychologists: by conversion is meant a radical change in fundamental belief, as for example from agnosticism to Catholicism; a change in the whole personality particularly the entire mental outlook; a change in ethical standards and moral conduct, -- all of which is dominated by the indefectibility of faith peculiar to Roman Catholicism. As has been pointed out in Chapter I, page 3, by indefectibility of faith is meant the subjective firmness of assent that excludes every alternative.

The New Catholic Dictionary (37:254) begins with the etymology of the term "conversion"; it is a combination of the Latin words "con", meaning with or toward, and "vertere", meaning to turn:

A turning or change "from a state of sin to repentance, from a lax to a more earnest and serious way of life, from unbelief

to faith, from heresy to true faith. It consists not merely in joining a Church but in a change of heart and in the acceptance of the doctrines and submission to the laws of the Church established by Jesus Christ".

Problems are encountered in a psychological study of conversion. It is an observable fact that non-Catholic psychologists have more insistently than Catholic psychologists demanded scientific investigation in the field of religious psychology in general and in the field of religious conversion in particular. The first question arises: to what extent do Catholic psychologists admit the usefulness and possibility of scientific investigation? And how far can Catholic and non-Catholic psychologists collaborate in scientific investigation?

Marechal, in discussing religious psychology as an empirical science, says that it is necessary to determine the conditions which constitute religious psychology as such a science, because the facts dealt with in religious psychology have individuating characteristics -- characteristics which set these facts apart from the facts dealt with in any other science. In examining the facts of religious psychology, it must not be forgotten, Marechal says, that the observed subject remains "human" even when he is active in a sphere which transcends the human -- he remains continuous with a physical, biological and psycho-

logical world and is subject, with limitations, to the laws and reactions of this world. The religious state is viewed against a preformed background. In a particular instance, it is difficult to evaluate rightly such influences as climate, nationality, temperament, education, knowledge, language, mental habits, etc.

"Religious psychology carries with it many difficulties which are common to it and the neighbouring sciences, but its special condition aggravates them still further" (36:28).

Marechal has done much in the way of showing how far the facts of religious psychology can be subjected to investigation by empirical science. He has gone a step further into the matter and shown how far the laws of psychology can be applied to a strictly religious phenomenon.

"First of all, a religious phenomenon, if it sometimes closely resembles, apart of course from the difference of object, an ordinary psychological fact, presents when defined and intensified, exceptional, even abnormal, characteristics which tend to assimilate it to psychological facts" (36:28).

On closer examination, even the strangest religious phenomena appear to possess coordination under viewpoints entirely separated from the pathologic. Moreover these apparently strange religious phenomena prolong themselves in high moral practices which can be completely justified by fundamental religious truths. Marechal adds that these phenomena are accompanied frequently by "perfect psychological equilibrium, and on occasion with a most remarkable practical sense" (36:29).

There are many facts of religious psychology which cannot be fitted into this preformed scientific background. In such cases, understanding and possible classification depend entirely on the analysis made in each case. Such analyses are subject to two outstanding limitations. Firstly, preconceived opinions will influence the analysis; no one is entirely free from prejudices and all people view facts in the light of their own personal background. Secondly, after the closest analysis, there will be much remaining which is impossible of classification.

Another point makes more difficult the scientific investigation of the facts of religious psychology: the most characteristic facts evade the observer. He finds his experimenting reduced to a description and theoretic interpretation of these facts. Furthermore though some minor aspect of the fact may be outlined by experimentation, replacing that fact in its original place in the psychic state being observed is very difficult. Marechal says:

"For example, the ecstasy which can be provoked in the hypnotic state, while it shows certain features resembling mystical ecstasy, differs from it completely on other points. Thus mystical phenomena seem to depend in the circumstances of their appearance on an influence which surpasses and dominates our known physiological and psychological laws" (36:29).

The necessary element in religious facts is not the external phenomena but the inner psychic state. Thus it can be seen readily why difficulties surround the mere observing of

these facts. Most psychologists know the external phenomena by narration only; as for the inner psychic facts, the subject is the only direct observer. The subject furnishes the statements for the psychologist to work upon. Though the testimony is exact and the observations accurate, the testimony is usually quite incomplete. The writings of the great mystics are evidence of this. This incompleteness may be due to two facts: first, the records were not made to satisfy psychological curiosity; and second, it is almost impossible to describe completely an unusual internal state.

People interpret the experiences of others, as related to them, in terms of their own temperaments and experience. A religious temperament is not always found in psychologists. In interpreting the writings of a religious subject, a psychologist will refer to his own experience which from a religious point of view may be limited or even entirely lacking. Many features of the original writing may escape him. Quite frequently he is unable to judge or interpret the writings of the subject. Because of the inadequacy of language, the expression of the convert is difficult.

Another distinct limitation placed upon the efficacy of the scientific method as applied to the study of conversion is the inaccuracy of the written document. It is impossible to believe that the written record of a conversion is an adequate objective presentation of facts observed internally. In a spe-

cific instance, the convert may have erred as to the fact itself -- the alleged fact may be only the result of an inference, the interpretation of that fact. Often too, it is not possible to find terms exact enough for the expression of a fact. In this event, the convert will resort to metaphor. Figurative language tells more about the emotional state of the writer than it tells about the fact to be described. The sincerity of the writer will not make easier the task of extracting the literal meaning from figures of speech.

The attitude of Catholic psychologists in regard to the usefulness and possibility as well as the legitimacy of scientific investigation in the field of religious psychology, in the light of the above discussion (36:28-31), may be summed up in the words of Marechal. He says that

"to treat religious phenomena as 'scientific facts' is...to undertake the task of translating them into laws and of submitting them to an empirical determinism! It can be proved "that this methodic operation falsifies the real, at least in biology and psychology, and therefore, at least to an equal extent, in religious psychology" (36:31).

On the other hand, there are many phenomena, not strictly mystical, in which the religious life is manifest which may incontestably be described in empirical terms by one other than the subject. Among these phenomena, Marechal places

"...conversion to the faith and moral conversion; the special firmness of the adhesion to faith; constant purity of life, fidelity to a very elevated moral ideal...; the facility and attraction of prayer;..."(36:34).

However there is one limitation. For purposes of classification, a psychologist will separate these phenomena from the sequence in which the subject experienced them. Thus they will be stripped, though unconsciously, of many fine shades of meaning which are not apparent from without, but which modify strongly an internal state.

The words of Marechal sum up the attitude of Catholic psychologists on the extent to which conversion and all religious facts may be subject to scientific investigation; Marechal also suggests the extent to which Catholic and non-Catholic psychologists can collaborate in the field of research in religious psychology. He says:

"No purely psychological theory of religious facts being able to justify a claim to experimental probability, it is necessary to look outside the limits of psychology for a criterion which shall enable us to form by anticipation of eventual experiences a judgment as to the extent to which it is legitimate to apply empirical theory in these matters" (36:51).

He adds that there is apparently no obstacle in the way of all psychologists joining forces in the field of research when these psychologists are studying the religious fact. There are provisos however: there shall be no other concern than the investigation of facts; from the point of view of theory, phenomena may be synthesised if the synthesis is limited to the summing up of past experience and the preparation of future experience. There seems no reason for conflict between Catholic

and non-Catholic psychologists if they concern themselves with the loyal application of a method only, and do not concern themselves with the theoretical limits of this method.

"Catholic and non-believing psychologists can collaborate...And such an alliance is rightly made on a scientific basis, for science in the modern and critical sense of the word is before everything a 'method'" (36:52).

Bruehl corroborates this opinion when he says:

"Will action is not arbitrary but influenced, though not determined, by reasons. Motivation can be reduced to laws. Consequently conversion also can be made the subject of scientific inquiry, since it is a will process and a motivated reaction" (10:123).

Conversion could be denied scientific treatment only if it were an irrational process ignoring the law of causality. But conversion is a rational process. Therefore it is capable of rational analysis. (10:124).

The second problem now arises in this psychological study of conversion: Is conversion amenable to laws? And if so, to what extent?

Bruehl says there are two distinct aspects to the phenomenon of conversion. It may be viewed as the work of Divine grace or it may be considered as a psychological process. Insofar as it is regarded as supernatural, it seems a mystery and therefore not completely analyzable.

"It has its root and ultimate explanation in the counsels of Divine Providence, whose ways

are inscrutable. In every conversion, therefore, at some time an element will be found that defies analysis and baffles all attempts at explanation. A moment occurs when man is confronted by the unfathomable, when he is compelled to desist from further scrutiny, and when he must content himself with reverent silence and adoration" (10:117).

This is the supernatural aspect. Conversion has also a natural aspect to the study of which Catholic psychologists may address themselves without presumption. There are two general rules to which conversion is no exception: first, God in dealing with human beings uses natural causes for His own purposes; second, "the course of grace follows that of nature". While conversion is genuinely supernatural, and therefore subject to supernatural laws, it is from its natural aspect subject to the laws that govern all human activity.

Ultimately conversion may be attributed to divine impulse. Yet conversion certainly has antecedent and concomitant factors which are natural. The part which man plays in the conversion process cannot be neglected although the divine factor is the important and deciding one (10:118).

A third problem presents itself: from the analysis of the psychic elements that enter into the conversion process, can a classification be made? Is there a uniformity in the manner in which these elements occur? Do the same psychic phenomena occur at approximately the same point in most conversion processes?

Bruehl has some interesting observations to offer at this point (10:122). It has been said that each conversion is an individual phenomenon. Therefore it is impossible to submit the psychic elements in conversion to scientific classification. It would likewise be impossible to impose general categories. The saying is quoted that many roads lead to Rome. If these facts alone were true, it would be useless to attempt to discover norms and standards for the conversion process. Each case of conversion is distinctly an individual one possessing individualizing characteristics. The motives to conversion are numerous and varied. Mental processes are unique in each conversion. Different individuals look for and find different comforts in the church. Converts themselves come from all social classes, all intellectual classes and all professional classes. It is obvious that all conversions do not begin at the same place nor do they follow the same paths. The initiating force of Divine grace is not included in this last statement because it is, as has been said, the ultimate cause. The diversity in conversions is great. Yet under this diversity can be found a peculiar amenability to rule. General points which are common to most conversions can be discerned beneath the apparent diversity.

The goal at which conversions end is in all cases the same. Therefore it is logical to postulate a "fundamental underlying unity". The similarity found in the mental acts that

enter into the conversion process permits classification. First of all, we find conviction, which Bruehl has defined as "a definite mental reaction that, though it occurs under different circumstances, always is subject to the same psychological laws" (10:123). When dealing with the motives and reactions of men, allowance must always be made for the factor of free will. However, can it not be safely said that men placed in the same circumstances will have, ordinarily speaking, the same reactions? And that similar motives produce similar conduct? Even the free actions of men prove the validity of affirmative answers to these questions. The external conditions under which the conversion process began may be different, but the mental process will ordinarily be found to follow the same course. In each case of conversion, the original suggestions to conversion, the motives, the influences which impeded or accelerated progress, the emotional reactions -- all proceed from human nature which is specifically the same. For this reason, a similarity in the operative forces can be traced (10:122-3).

It can thus be seen that each convert does not necessarily constitute an individual category into which no one else will fit. It is observed that individual conversions group themselves as types. Bruehl offers the following classification:

- 1, the esthetical type -- those who are attracted to the church by the splendor and beauty of its liturgy or the monuments of art which the church has inspired;

- 2, the moral type -- those whom the church has attracted by its sanctity, its charitable works, its ethical ideals, by the lofty nature of its morality;
- 3, the emotional type -- those who see the church as a place of rest where happiness, peace and comfort may be found;
- 4, the intellectual type -- those who come into the church because of its doctrine, consistent and harmonious, which is unmistakably divine in origin. (10:124).

An example of the esthetical type of convert is the case of Dom Willibrord Verkade, O. S. B., as described by Henry (28:1015). Dom Verkade had lived as a Theosophist among the artists of Paris. After his conversion, he went to a Franciscan convent in Italy. Here he learned of Beuron and its artistic school. Ultimately he became a monk in this convent.

Fiske's description of his conversion (25:824-5) places him in the emotional class. His attitude toward Mass and the Blessed Sacrament is a feeling of "spiritual uplift and refreshment". He found an undreamed-of satisfaction for his "hunger for worship, for reality in religion, for prayer that is... an actual communion with God in Christ Jesus..." Fiske's conversion brought him to the realization that he was "overjoyed and at peace, after years of mental unrest and searching for truth..." Intellectual conviction came later.

Phelan would classify Orestes A. Brownson and John

Henry Newman as members of the intellectual class of converts. Brownson had upheld the philosophies of Cousin, St. Simon, Owen, Kant and Hegel. Finally he "submitted to the Catholic Church" wherein he remained. Of Newman, Phelan says "Few could believe that the brilliant Oxford scholar and religious genius was sincere..." Yet both Newman and Brownson remained firm in the Roman faith until the end (41:791).

Among more recent converts, John L. Stoddard stands out as one of the intellectual type. His recent book, Twelve Years in the Catholic Church, is testimony of his allegiance to his adopted faith. Stoddard reaffirms his belief in such fundamentals of truth as "the Divinity of Christ, the credibility of his miracles, the authenticity of the Gospels, the Teaching Church..." (41:792).

Bruehl in a footnote (10:124) quotes Dr. Mannix in a passage which gives a somewhat different scheme of classification:

"While the lines of investigation may be, in different instances, somewhat varied and largely interwoven -- due to diversified activities, locality, family traditions, reading matter at hand, etc. -- Catholic conversions can, we believe, generally be grouped under one of the following headings: (a) the historical convert, (b) the philosophical convert, (c) the denominational convert, (d) the esthetic convert, and (e) the dynamic convert".

CHAPTER VII
HOWLEY'S THEORY OF INTEGRAL CONVERSION

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It was mentioned in the beginning of Part II that Howley among Catholic writers had contributed the classic discussion of conversion as a mental state to the field of psychology. He distinguishes between revival or evangelical conversions, and Catholic conversions.

Howley analyzes the psychic process of conversion, or conversion as a mental state, into the three following steps: 1, the awakening, in which the realization of one's unsatisfactory spiritual state initiates psychic or mental stress or pressure; 2, conviction, wherein this mental stress resolves itself under the influence of the nascent depressive idea into an acute psychic crisis with the formation of centres of psychic instability (a centre of instability "is some one psychic element or small group of elements, which, being disturbed, the group of which it forms part breaks up, with a more or less general rearrangement of the whole field as a result" ((29:97))); a nascent idea is some psychic element, not a bare concept, "which may even be a complex of sensations, images, passions, concepts, and volitions, yet has a certain unity and simplicity taken as a whole, and which is a novelty in consciousness, either as coming suddenly from without, as in ordinary apprehensions, or from within, from the deeper memory, or from the break-up of some

psychic complex" ((29:97-8))); 3, deliverance, wherein the mental stress is dissolved by some other nascent consolatory idea; this results in the disintegration or breaking down of the field of religious consciousness, and the reintegration, the building up of a new field of religious consciousness (29:112).

The above three steps are found in every type of conversion. However there is a very great difference between the ordinary cases of conversion, however violent or eccentric they may be, and those where the conversion is from infidelity to Christianity or from Protestantism to Catholicism. Howley asserts that both the Jesuits and the Revivalists assume some sort of beliefs as necessary presuppositions to their differing religious exercises. The conversions they effect are developments and practical applications of existing beliefs rather than formations of new systems of faith. A converted Catholic thus, according to this rule, does not acquire a new faith -- he merely knows more about his own and practices it more faithfully. Likewise a revival convert whose dogmatic outlook remains the same may be led to study his Bible and join some church. Therefore in this ordinary type of conversion, no new elements are formed -- there is a mere rearrangement and reinforcement of existing psychic elements. Thus where there is a change of belief, there will be new elements entering. The conversion will of necessity have to be integral, entire, that is a "conversion of the whole personality especially the entire mental outlook"

involving a fundamental and radical change in belief, for example, from infidelity to Christianity or Catholicism (29:139-40).

Howley holds that there are two processes in gradual conversions,

"the putting off of the old man by the break-up of the old convictions, and the putting on of the new by the formation of the new psychic sphere of faith. There is a disintegration and a reintegration of the field of consciousness, but there is a new element in the reformed field. The break-up may come from some nascent idea, some intellectual difficulty which finds an appropriate centre of instability" (129:173).

Conversions to the Catholic faith are the best illustrations of this psychological theory of reintegration because the Catholic faith is characterized by uniformity and constancy of belief. This reintegration or rebuilding of the disintegrated sphere of faith with the inclusion of the new elements has certain characteristics: "the elements will try to group themselves in various manners tentatively, yet with a certain felt orientation" (29:174) wherefore states of doubt may arise; the vital change may come imperceptibly yet converts are aware of the power of free choice (29:175); Mainage quoted and translated by Howley (29:177) (Th. Mainage, O. P.: Introduction a la Psychologie des Convertis. Paris: Lecoffre, 1913, p. 122) says:

"We will see that the consciousness of the convert exhibits a strange dualism: one would think it was at the mercy of a force at once external and immanent. And this force is neither brutal nor unintelligent. It acts as if proceeding from a skilful teacher, thoroughly acquainted with its

psychological and moral field of action".

Mainage would further compare conversion to a type of education where "the educator does not show himself...; God Himself present in the consciousness of the convert".

Interpretation and Criticism
of
James' Theory of the Subconscious
as
Applied to Conversion

The principles of James' theory of the subconscious as a psychological explanation of conversion have been outlined in Part I of this thesis. To recapitulate: James in his first point postulates the existence of the subconscious; secondly, he holds that certain elements group themselves into a new synthesis, a secondary personality; thirdly, a conversion is merely an irruption of these elements into consciousness.

A Catholic psychologist, Farges, offers the following criticism (24:506-7) of James' theory:

"If the mechanism of the subconscious is properly understood, no idea is to be found therein which has not come from consciousness, for there are no such things as innate ideas, and all our ideas are evolved by our conscious intelligence from the data of our senses. The sphere of the subconscious is, in reality, only the vast treasure of the memory, not only in the static and alert state, but in the dynamic state in which the anterior data of consciousness and all the rest of our psychological life ponder and automatically combine. Deprived

of all intellectual and conscious guidance, these combinations, when no longer guided by acquired impulse, will wander blindly at the hazard of circumstance..."

The productions of these combinations has been called the lower psychism. It is this lower psychism which William James would use "to explain that wonderful transformation of souls, of minds and hearts, admittedly not to be explained by the higher and conscious psychism..." The subconscious may be an instrument in the hands of the conscious workman, but it is never the real workman, and remains inferior to him in dignity and fruitfulness.

It would seem then that James' theory meets with objection from Catholic psychologists in the second and third points. Considering the second point, the admission of a secondary and independent personality cannot be made. Two independent personalities cannot coexist in one normal human being, much less with the second completely hidden except for the irruption into consciousness. The secondary personality must depend upon some power, some higher intelligence outside of itself for its existence. In that case, what is the need of both personalities in one person? Two independent coexisting personalities in one human being, when only one is necessary for existence, would be contrary to the principle of economy.

Catholic psychology does not object if, by secondary personality, James means merely the subconscious, the mental level where forgotten or almost forgotten elements rearrange

themselves in new combinations. Objection or lack of objection to James in his second point depends upon the interpretation given that point: it can be agreed that subconscious elements can constitute a secondary personality; it cannot be agreed that this secondary personality is independent.

Considering the third point, conversion is more than the mere irruption into consciousness of certain elements re-synthesized in the unconscious. In addition to the psychic states involved, conversion represents the workings of grace in the character changes affected, as well as the application of the human will in adhering to the new life, chiefly the ethical conduct.

Conversion represents a fundamental and all-pervading change. A mere irruption of unconscious states into consciousness could hardly account for the force which impels a convert to kneel in prayer every night and morning when heretofore he had refused to acknowledge the existence of a supreme being; to attend mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation even when attendance at mass is beset with difficulties, and when before he had attended church irregularly or not at all; to confess his sins to a representative of Christ when the nearest he had come previously to confession was the giving of confidence to a friend. More than the mere irruption of re-synthesized elements from the unconscious to the conscious mind is needed to explain these phenomena of the physical order. Grace is needed to com-

plete the explanation. Would any explanation be adequate which ignores divine aid?

CHAPTER VIII

GRACE

CHAPTER VIII

GRACE

Psychology perhaps can recognize all the natural psychic forces, conditions and results of conversion. But can the most profound psychology penetrate to the final source of faith? The psychical phenomena can be classified but James is willing to admit "that when it becomes necessary to explain HOW and WHY these phenomena occur, psychology is unable to give an account" (30:196). May one not assume from this statement that psychology is not unwilling to admit a supernatural power causing and aiding faith? Few psychologists will positively rule out the divine. Conklin (22:103) admits a definition of conversion as a change in beliefs, attitudes, habits and ideals...all of which is attributed by the convert to divine intervention. De Sanctis says that conversion is a mutation of "life under the impulse of an ultra-terrestrial ideal" (23:34). He further states (23:65) that after many true conversions, the will is yet to be overcome. It might be said here that a mere natural power could hardly effect a genuine and lasting change in an unwilling creature; one must call upon the supernatural, the divine, to explain this final overcoming of the will which De Sanctis says occurs after many true conversions. Starbuck's questionnaires uncovered the fact that an awareness of "God's help, or some outside power" was one characteristic of the conversion change.

Now, this element of supernatural influence which non-Catholics admit as a subjective experience in the convert and whose objective reality they do not deny is, of course, maintained by Catholic psychologists. Mainage, a Catholic theologian of France with keen psychological insight and much experience, as interpreted by Howley, describes from his evidence the consciousness of a convert as at the mercy of an external force, neither brutal nor unintelligent, a skilful teacher knowing well his psychological and moral field of action, an educator who does not show himself... "God present in the consciousness of the convert" (29:177). It can thus be seen how closely similar are the definitions of the leading non-Catholic psychologists and one of the leading Catholic psychologists.

Bruehl sees the necessity of Divine Grace in the pre-conversion period. He says "objections, difficulties and hesitations" may occur immediately before "the act of conversion". Such a momentous act as conversion meets various psychological resistances and arouses as well the opposition of the powers of darkness. "Something must be left to the mysterious operation of Divine Grace" (11:228).

Bruehl finds evidences of Divine Grace in the phenomena which occur after conversion (11:230-3). He says that in the natural order, a form of after-care is needed in both the social and business contacts of the convert. Then he says:

"Doctrinal difficulties are less likely to occur after the profession of faith. Even those that unaccountably cropped up at the last moment usually vanish completely after the actual conversion has taken place. This interesting psychological phenomenon may be regarded as the effect of divine grace, which triumphantly sweeps away whatever last obstacles there may have been. By a supreme will act aided by grace the convert has entirely broken with the past, and this past rarely reaches out to trouble him again. He does not regretfully look back. He is content where he is. He feels at home. He has found peace. There may be no spiritual exaltation, but there is a sense of certainty and security" (11:233).

Howley asks (29:72-3): When a man after conversion finds passions that were formerly obstinate stifled, motives purified, greater strength to suffer and tolerate, can he credit these forces to his own unconscious self? Since the days of St. Paul, the name of grace has been given to this factor outside of one's control. If these phenomena were attributable to oneself, the number of saints would be appreciably increased. Mere psychic disturbances could hardly determine that Francis should woo the Lady Poverty instead of remaining a fashionable citizen of Assissi, or that Xavier should be the Apostle of the Indies (29:76).

It is not necessary to postulate a miracle to account for the new psychic element that enters into a complete conversion but it is necessary to postulate a power outside oneself. If faith is the "evidence of things unseen" and implies voluntary adhering to or believing in what we do not directly know,

an acceptance by the will of what the intellect cannot directly perceive, the explanation cannot be within oneself. Solution by the theory of the unconscious negates the question, does not affirm the answer (29:140-1).

In the following passage, Farges explains the workings of the ordinary ways of divine grace in conversion:

"We understand that divine grace takes possession of our unconscious in order to instil into it feelings, enlightenments, tendencies and a wholly new direction. In this way are explained those deep movements of the heart and of the will which seem to precede all our reflections, those sudden inspirations of the understanding respecting matters concerning which we had never thought; above all, those changes of soul that suddenly overthrow our former tendencies, which are so well named conversions" (24:510).

As has been pointed out, Marechal holds that scientific method does not furnish a complete empirical explanation of the facts of religious experience. He holds that the problem of the special phenomenology of religious facts presents itself, at least partially, outside the field of science. Marechal's solution of the problems of religious psychology is an extra-scientific one. He "starts from the principle, admitted on other grounds, of the reality of the supernatural and of the active role of Grace..." According to his solution,

"the religious life would, even in its phenomenology, be constantly influenced by supernatural grace -- the grace of light and moral force. This influence, however, would insert itself into the series of psycho-physiological determinism without directly violating it in our eyes; for the empirical effects of grace,

considered in isolation, hardly ever transcend the apparent power of natural causes".

This explanation in no way rules out psychology since, with the exception of mystical union, "the abstract 'type' of the religious phenomenon...remains psychological". (36:42).

The Catholic Encyclopedia defines grace as, in general, being

"a supernatural gift of God to intellectual creatures (men, angels) for their eternal salvation, whether the latter be furthered and attained through salutary acts or a state of holiness" (15:Vol.6, 689b).

Bruehl says: "A conversion is primarily God's work. It is true that for the accomplishment of His high purpose God deigns to use human instrumentality" (12:566). And again: "In the last analysis, conversion is the work of grace" (14:226).

SUMMARY:

1, Non Catholic psychologists admit the possibility that grace may be at work, although they ignore it in assigning the causes of conversion.

2, Catholic psychologists will not permit the influence of grace to be ignored in a genuine Catholic conversion. The need of grace they know for certain from the field of revelation; and from the field of empirical psychology, they find there are certain elements in the conversion process that cannot be adequately explained without some supernatural influence, for exam-

ple, the complete break with the previous life, the constancy in the new life, adherence to stricter ethical conduct, a more marked submitting to authority, etc.

CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

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From the material presented in Part I, it can be seen readily and concluded that in the essentials, there is a striking similarity among these standard non-Catholic writers. Where differences are observable, they are traceable to differences in points of view. Is the assumption too great in saying that it is quite probable that these non-Catholic authors viewing the same phenomena from the same viewpoints might attribute to these phenomena the same causes? Starbuck, for example, holds that psychologically conversion may be a type of, or step in, personal religious evolution or development (45:21); De Sanctis maintains that conversion is a complete and lasting change, intellectually, emotionally and morally. However De Sanctis limits his considerations by definition to a change impelled by the force of an ultra-terrestrial ideal (23:34). Yet Starbuck's definition does not rule out an ultra-terrestrial force. Conklin offers no definition of his own. Rather he enumerates the various meanings that the word conversion may have (22:103-4). The near-definitions of Starbuck and the definition offered by De Sanctis both find a place in Conklin's enumeration. Thus, there is a marked similarity in the ideas which these non-Catholic psychologists have of the nature of conversion.

The investigation of literature dealing with the types of conversion uncovered other instances of this similarity. The general classification of the ordinary cases of conversion is into two types: sudden conversions and gradual conversions, though they may be given other names. Definitions of these types have been given in Part I. De Sanctis throughout his study calls sudden conversions the fulminant or lightning type; Starbuck calls them the impulsive type; James, the instantaneous type. Gradual conversions De Sanctis calls the progressive type; Starbuck, the volitional. As was seen in Chapter III, the differences are very slight, being almost differences in name only.

This brief discussion of the definitions of the nature and types of conversion might serve as an indication of the similarity among these non-Catholic writers. Yet none of these definitions individually or a composite of them can completely cover a genuine Catholic conversion: that phenomenon which is constituted by a change in belief, a change in mental attitude or outlook, a change in ethical standards and moral conduct; which is characterized by a unification and harmony of the entire personality which in turn is traced to the indefectibility of the Roman Catholic faith. Non-Catholic psychologists cannot account for this complete phenomenon which Howley calls an "integral conversion". The question arises: What explanation can Catholic psychologists offer which will suffice?

Over and above the insufficient psychological explanation, the answer is grace, "a supernatural gift of God to intellectual creatures (men, angels) for their eternal salvation..." (15:Vol.6, 689b). The place and functions of grace in a Catholic conversion have been discussed in Chapter VIII.

It has been seen that the psychological explanation of conversion as given by non-Catholic authors is not an adequate explanation of the conversion process. Grace completes that explanation. And yet there are many principles upon which Catholic and non-Catholic psychologists agree in their studies of conversion. The following explanation will show how far some of the principles of non-Catholic religious psychologists can be applied to a genuine Catholic conversion.

It was seen in Chapter IV that physiological disease is looked upon by many non-Catholic psychologists as a cause of conversion. It is true that in a Catholic conversion, a physiological disease may be present as the conversion process progresses. But it can hardly be said that illness is a cause of conversion any more than it can be said that poverty is a cause of crime. The patient, due to the time, the quiet, the incentives to reflective thought is certainly in a state favorable to conversion. The outstanding converts of modern times, Newman, Kinsman, and Stoddard among them, were in marked good health before their conversions.

Non-Catholic psychologists have attributed conversions both to old age and to youth (adolescence and the period of puberty). Starbuck goes so far as to postulate that if conversion has not begun before the twentieth year, it will not occur. Now Catholic conversions are not limited by age. Genuine Catholic conversions have been known to occur in the very young and the very old. Most of the examples given in this thesis are of men who were converted in the prime of their lives.

The most marked agreement between Catholic and non-Catholic authors occurs in the external psychicauses of conversion. Among them may be mentioned suggestions from reading or sermons, misfortunes, miracles, prophecies, or the examples of saints and martyrs. Missionary priests attest to the number of converts who originally became interested in the church as a result of sermons and missions. The records of Lourdes and the scenes of other miracles indicate that herein is another stimulus, and a strong one, to Catholic conversion.

Misfortunes, and both physical and moral suffering have been found by both Catholic and non-Catholic psychologists to comprise the greatest external condition for conversion. The life of any saint, the testimony of any convert will bear out this fact. Most converts experience personal sufferings; there are cases on record, for example the case of Papini, where the convert suffered vicariously. The sufferings and misfortunes of others led him to the church.

Catholic psychologists agree with non-Catholic psychologists that the internal psychic cause of which the convert is aware -- such as a need for emotional calmness or intellectual guidance, a need for love, a craving for an outlet for one's activity -- is a very powerful cause of conversion. Conscious internal psychic causes may be found singly or in combination in both Catholic and non-Catholic conversions. Newman craved intellectual guidance; Kinsman, spiritual calm; the majority of converts from the ordinary walks of life are moved by a desire for immortal happiness or a fear of eternal punishment.

In his treatment of post-conversion phenomena, De Sanctis says that, although some converts experienced doubts and conflicts, the true conversion has no counter conversion (23:173). This last statement might apply to a genuine Catholic conversion if all other conditions were equal. Because it is integral and entire and is a unification and harmonization of the whole personality, there should be no counter-conversion. However cognizance should be taken of the weaknesses of human nature, the peculiarities of the individual temperament, and the constant temptations to which human beings are subject.

Starbuck's treatment of post-conversion phenomena (45:123) would seem to be not directly pertinent to a Catholic conversion inasmuch as his discussion deals for the most part with conversions effected at revivals. When he discusses the

emotional reactions of men and women to conversion in general, no basis for objection is found. The emotions that men and women experience after conversion to Catholicism will, in most cases, be dependent upon the peculiarities of the individual temperament as well as upon the respective emotions and their degrees of intensity peculiar to men and women.

Certain it is that individual behavior will be altered after a Catholic conversion. As De Sanctis points out (23:175-92), the convert will project his personality upon some other person or thing. Prayer is a projection of self to God and results in the contemplative life; charity is a projection of one's personality upon one's neighbor and results in the social life. Although a Catholic psychologist uses the terms, contemplative life and social life, in a different sense, the facts may be applied to a Catholic conversion. The behavior of a convert after conversion will resolve itself, depending upon his individual personality and grace, into direct service for God or service to his neighbor.

The psychological principles involved in conversion, upon which Catholic and non-Catholic psychologists may be said to agree may be summarized as follows:

- 1, the existence of the unconscious -- when by the unconscious is meant that state of mind wherein the subject is completely or almost completely unaware of specific mental phenomena;

- 2, adolescence is a condition favorable to conversion, other conditions being equal, although conversions to Catholicism are observed at all ages. The particular examples mentioned in this thesis are all cases where conversion occurred long after the period of adolescence.
- 3, the initial stimulus to conversion, as in every psychic process, is outside consciousness;
- 4, the integral change involved in the conversion process must affect both the emotional and the intellectual life.

SUMMARY:

From the survey of the field of Catholic literature offered in Part II, the following points, in the nature of a summary, may be said to hold for Catholic conversions:

1. Religious facts and among them conversion can be subject to scientific investigation on the proviso that the limitations of scientific investigation be kept in mind. Most outstanding among these limitations are:
 - A. The religious state of the subject is viewed against a preformed background of a physical, biological and psychological world.
 - B. Understanding of religious facts depends quite frequently upon the analysis made in each individual case.
 - C. Many religious phenomena can be explained only by

an influence superior to known physical and mental laws.

- D. The inner psychic state cannot be known directly.
 - E. A psychologist without religious training or temperament is incapable of correctly interpreting religious facts.
 - F. The written document is an inaccurate record of a mental state.
2. Conversion, since it has a natural aspect, is to that extent subject to the same laws which govern any natural activity.
 3. Conversion may be subject to classification from the viewpoint of psychic elements.
 4. Grace is the ultimate cause and the sine qua non of conversion. Grace functions through natural channels--physical and psychic laws. It in no way necessitates the working of the human will. In other words, grace is concomitant with psychic phenomena in conversion. To show the relationship between grace and the psychic states concomitant with grace is the problem of Catholic psychologists.

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