

My Understanding of “Conversion”

Human Perspective: *Conversion* refers to a person turning to God by accepting in faith who Jesus was and what Jesus accomplished on the cross for that person. Thus the person is *converting* [changing] to become a Christian, a person of faith in the identity and work of Christ.

God Perspective: As a person cannot come to faith in Christ without God acting to enlighten the truth of Christ, we could take *conversion* to refer to a person receiving the ability to believe by God’s *grace* [gift]. As part of this process, God also by *grace* [gift] forgives that person’s *sins* [waywardness], brings that person spiritually alive for the first time, accounts to that person the *righteousness* [purity and goodness] of Christ, begins the process of growing that person to be more like Christ in character, begins to free that person from the delusion of *sin* [corruption], secures and establishes an intimacy with that person by the Holy Spirit, and adopts that person into the heavenly family.

My Perspective: What *conversion* is not, is a person fully *repenting* [turning away] from a life of sin and determining to follow Christ by obediently following scripture. This would be a vital part of the Christian experience after *conversion*, as God worked within the person to bring about understanding and acceptance of God and his ways. This would be impossible for the person prior to *conversion*, who is still deceived by *sin* [corruption] and ignorant of what constitutes sins [waywardness]. The *repentance* [change] required for *conversion* is to *repent* [turn away] from a lack of faith, that is, to now believe. In this, I side with Chafer¹ and Baylis² of DTS as opposed to the Covenant/Reformed view that *conversion* entails *repenting* [turning away] from all known sins or making Jesus *lord* [master] of one’s life.³

¹ See, for example, Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation: God’s Marvelous Work of Grace* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1991], 45-53.

² See, for example, Charles P. Baylis, “Repentance in Acts in Light of Deuteronomy 30,” in *Michigan Theological Journal*, 1.1 (Spring 1990), 19-34.

³ See, for example, Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997], 39, where the author not only attributes this to “Covenant Reformed theology” but also to “Evangelicals in the broadly Reformed tradition”!