

# Baier's Compendium of Positive Theology

## Chapter Four

*On regeneration and conversion.*

1. As it happens, Christ hands no one over to salvation, except for those who believe in Christ, so it is to be seen *by which action* faith in Christ is conferred on humans; which Scriptures call *regeneration* or *conversion*.

2. The word 'regeneration' indeed, *broadly* understood, includes beyond conversion also justification and a renewing; by the stricter meaning *now* justification alone, *otherwise* renewing or sanctification; *but* it also designates precisely a gift of faith. The last significance of this loci is: to whom do the *new creation*, the *bringing to life* and the *spiritual resuscitation* refer.

3. And thus when regeneration causes a certain spiritual *change*, *not* indeed *substantial*, *but accidental*, the ends of this regeneration are noted: *from which* and *to which*.

4. The end *from which* is the lack of spiritual forces directed toward faith and other spiritual acts, and thus on the part *of the intellect* an impotence towards knowing spiritual objects, on the part *of the will* an impotence of following spiritually good things, on the part *of the sensitive appetite* an unsuitability toward obeying the Spirit and restraining fleshly desires.

5. The end *to which* of regeneration are spiritual *forces* or a *spiritual life*; which indeed on the part *of the intellect* introduces a spiritual light or men rightly judging about spiritual objects or assenting to them, on the part *of the will* men following spiritually good things, especially believing firmly in Christ, on the part *of the sensitive appetite* a certain faculty, through which he begins to be brought back under obedience to the Spirit.

6. The *principal efficient* cause of regeneration is the triune God.

7. The *internal impulsive* cause is the mercy of God.

8. The *external* and *meritorious impulsive* cause is Christ the mediator.
9. The *lesser principal efficient* cause are *words, baptism*, and in his ways also the same *ministers* of the church.
10. The subject *which* is the human lacking spiritual life, however not stubbornly resisting the operation of the Holy Spirit, without a difference in age, and *either* he never had the spiritual life, *or* through mortal sins he lost, what he had.
11. The subject *by which* is the human spirit, as far at the intellect and the will; further in its own way also the sensitive appetite.
12. The *form* of regeneration consists in the same gift of faith; to which mode it pertains, by which the Holy Spirit stirs the mind of adult humans, with it he regenerates through the word, that *successively* through previous supernatural acts excited by him he applies by this the same habitual faith.
13. The *nearer end*, which is also an *effect* of regeneration, is justification and renewal; the *ultimate* end is the salvation of humans and the glory of God.
14. The *affects* of regeneration are I. *necessity* in the order towards salvation; II. lasting *efficacy*, as much as it is from the part of God; III. *defectability* on the part of men; IV. *repeatability*.
15. It is possible to define regeneration, that it is an action of God, by which God gives humans lacking spiritual forces, but not stubbornly resisting, out of pure grace, on account of Christ, through word and baptism, on the part of the intellect and will, by spiritual forces towards believing in Christ and so far beginning a spiritual life, or he produces it in the same, by the cause of the following justification, renewal and eternal salvation.
16. The word '*conversion*' is accepted *in two ways* in Scripture: insofar as *now* God is said to convert man, *now* man is said to convert himself; although *as far as the thing itself* it is one and the same action.
17. And thus especially the *two* ends of conversion are to be noted; one *from which*, the other *to which*; of which each may be divided into either *formal*, or *objective*.

18. The *formal end from which* are sins, both *actual*, either of *commission*, or *omission*; in so far as, when they are admitted, *morally* they remain as settled, or not withdrawn, and they offend God and they cause an obligation toward the penalty of sinning; and *habitual, original or impulsive*, and *acquired*; not alone in so far as they are of the habit of sinning, truly also by the reason of joining guilt and fixed punishment.

19. The *objective end from which* generally speaking are the things, which are the objects of actual sins; especially truly those, by which sinners before others by mind and affect are addicted and by him, by God esteemed less, as if they were transferred.

20. The formal goal *to which* of conversions, is faith in Christ, by which, offended by sins, the human sinner is reconciled to God.

21. The objective goal *to which* is God.

22. And thus to it, so that *actual* sins through conversion are abolished, it is required first, so that they are retracted from sinners and so that in the intellect indeed *they are known*, not only by a *speculative* judgment, that in truth they are sins, truly also by a *practical* judgment, because one ought to perceive to concentrate on the abolition of sins and about the method and the means, by which they are abolished; on the part of the will a *dissatisfaction* with sins is required, and this an *effective* dissatisfaction, or a detesting joined with sorrow.

23. *Then* it is required, that in actual sins, also as far as an *offense* to God and an obligation of those sinning to the satisfying of God, the mind strives toward the abolishing; that indeed otherwise it does not happen, than through faith in Christ the mediator and his merits and satisfaction for our sins; as when faith apprehends it, at the same time it strives toward God, who, although he is offended by our sins, however by his love and grace we are embraced and now through the satisfaction of Christ might be fully reconciled.

24. Conversion extends to the abolishing of *habitual* sins through the same acts, through which it extends to the abolishing of actual sins, thus however, that not only morally, but both *physically* and *really*, if not inwardly, at least *after the thing* and by reason they ought to be expelled or to be abolished by the Lord.

25. Especially therefore on the part of the *intellect* a lack of light and of strength including and being believed to spiritual objects, and again a habitual inclination

to blindly being judged about those things, this is done away with in conversion through the act of faith, divine grace being led into us; and indeed a simple *ignorance* of believing is destroyed through a simple apprehension of believing, however *errors* or false opinions in the doctrine of faith and morals are destroyed through the act of assenting to the true doctrine, depending on divine revelation; an accidental *inclination* of the intellect *toward perverse judging* about these things, which come from the Spirit of God, is repressed through the pious affection of the will of the believing, through the arousing by the power of the divine word, and if finally a habitual *lack of light* or strength is destroyed *efficiently* through the act of faith, *formally* through the habit of believing, efficiently produced by the mediating act of believing.

26. Similarly on the part of the *will* an inclination toward evil and a *lack of strength* toward the healthily embracing the spiritual good is destroyed through the act of being seriously and effectively displeased with sins, partly and especially through the act of faith, which, as it places a certain desire for grace and the forgiveness of sins in the sinner, the same thing truly brings in a security and certainty from the grace and forgiveness of sins obtained from God, also at the same time they are joined together with the love of Christ the mediator and of God appeased through them and with the hope of the following grace and salvation, thus they formally rise up opposing acts of the will and *efficiently* they tend to the habitual expelling of sin, while they are driven out *formally* through the spiritual habits born from this.

27. If however it is easily understood, in what way conversion, while it is occupied in doing away with the end *from which*, at the same time it tends to acquiring the formal end *toward which*, or habitual faith in Christ, truly through the same *acts and motions of faith*, which changing the soul of humans being moved by divine virtue and leading to the sense and sorrow of sins, at first faintly or feebly, then, as more often repeated, thus more strongly or firmly, until strength having increased *habitual faith* is produced.

28. Meanwhile, *when the first beginnings of faith and conversion are given to a human, at once begins the wrestling of the flesh and the Spirit; and it is manifested, that that wrestling is not without the wrestling of our will.*

29. *The acts*, which begin the task of conversion and constitute it, are said and are *spiritual* and are rightly distinguished *from the physical*. However, they are the *physical things*, which are for the *material object*, properly and in itself, have a sensible subject, or they lead to sensible things of cause or other habits, for a *formal* object they have the light of nature and goodness recognized by the light of nature. On the other hand, the *spiritual* acts are *chiefly* indeed, of those objects which exceed the order and light of nature, however they are able and

accustomed to be known under divine revelation and known under good reason through revelation; the acts also pertain however to this, which acts, although they are occupied around the things subject to the light of nature, however under some spiritual plan they tend in it, or they tend to the thing exceeding understanding of the light of nature and they include and connote some acts of a more raised order.

30. Also in addition to those animal acts are reckoned those, which are called *pedagogical*; which ought to be exercised around the means of conversion not only on the part of the body and the external members, but also on the part of the intellect and the will.

31. Moreover when the same intransitive conversion is both *penitence* or *repentance*, it is clear that part of it rightly constitutes *contrition* and *faith*.

32. By the known nature and by the parts of conversion, now further it is observed that the *efficient* cause of conversion and its *principal* cause is the triune God and him alone.

33. The *impulsive internal* cause is the mercy of God; the *external* cause or meritorious cause is Christ the mediator.

34. The *instrumental* cause is the word, both *law* and *gospel*. Through the *law* the knowledge of sins and sorrow about them is produced in humans; through the *gospel* faith in Christ is produced. On which account, however, also the cross is said to lead us towards conversion or repentance, *not directly* but *indirectly*.

35. However man through his *natural* strength actively brings nothing or is able to bring nothing to beginning or completing his conversion *inwardly*; granted that as far as it is possible to train external acts of the intellect and will by mediate uses.

36. And also this is, because it is otherwise said that a human, of what sort it is through nature, does not have a *free will* in his conversion.

37. However that operation of God, which works conversion in a human through the word of the law and gospel, is customarily called *grace*, and is distinguished as *prevenient*, *operating* and *cooperating* grace.

38. However the human *in the beginning* of conversion is rightly said to be *merely passive*, although in the *progress* of conversion, now by the accepted things before a new strength, he is *active*.

39. Also it is to be observed, that grace, by which God works conversion, is *not irresistible*, but *resistible*, in so far as humans not only by the *means* of conversion and the external *use* of them, they are able truly to *wickedly fight against* the grace of conversion in its *inward* operation and often they are accustomed to do so, and also thus they hinder their conversion, whether the beginning or the end.

40. The subject *which* of conversion is the *adult human, turned away from God* through sin, everyone *not* stubbornly *rejecting* the operation of the Holy Spirit.

41. The subject *by which* of conversion is the human spirit on the part of the *intellect* and the *will*, and in his way as far as possible the sensitive appetite.

42. The *nearer goal* of conversion is justification; the *final* goal on the part of humans is eternal salvation, on the part of God his glory.

43. The *following* thing or the fruit of conversion is the *new obedience* and also the *purpose of not sinning*, but of *living piously*; because indeed, if it is *habitual*, it is not born from contrition, but *from faith*.

44. Meanwhile it is possible to be done and it is done sometimes that humans are *reborn* and *converted* not only once, but *by many changes* they *destroy* the state of rebirth and grace through sin and through *conversion* they are *restored a second time* into the same state.

45. *Truly* also about repentance, although it is *too late* and it touches at last under the end of life, it is possible to be saved, although it is *most dangerous to delay* repentance so long.

46. It is possible to define the recognized *transitive conversion*, that it is an action of God, by which God in adult humans, and either not yet before being reborn, or after rebirth through sin turned from him (God), and by his intellect and will from pure grace, on account of Christ, through the word of the law recognition of sin with earnest sorrow about them, however by the word of the gospel faith in Christ with the purpose of changing the life is worked, the same

cause bringing to the same person justification and life eternal.

47. Obtained intransitive conversion, or *repentance*, is described, that it is an immediate act of a human, by which he, preceded and further helped by divine grace, knows his sins from the law, by faith he apprehends, the promises about the free forgiveness of sins on account of Christ, offered in the gospel, and he arouses in himself the placed trust in the merits of Christ, with the purpose of a better life, by the cause of the forgiveness of sins and the following eternal salvation.

Translated by Ted Mayes, Maryville, MO, 1997. Converted to PDF format, 2006.