Watching and Praying: A Psychoanalytic View of Personality Change in 18th Century British Methodism

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that John Wesley's model of spiritual development, and his interpretation of scriptural symbolism, is not only coherent in terms of theology, but also as a form of psychological transformation - a comprehensive and systematic method of personality change. The study provides a survey of modal tendencies in 18th-century British childrearing. It singles out three culturally normative developmental difficulties: invasive parental authoritarianism, early loss of primary caretakers and the precocious preoccupation with death and divine judgment. These stresses placed considerable strain on emotional development, thereby interfering with the integration of the positive superego. Wesley's model not only encapsulated these issues symbolically, but also facilitated a gradual resolution of conflict and allowed the ego greater access to the self-regulatory functions of the superego.

During repentance, a spontaneous regret for past behavior was coupled with exacerbated self-reproaches. This stage included a deliberate practice of grieving that triggered the depressive components of the three traumata listed above. It culminated in an experiential sense of divine forgiveness, an ecstasy that Wesley deemed justification. The ecstasy manifested personal ideals amid euphoria, and provided a temporary condition of enhanced self-esteem. Justification is conceptualized psychoanalytically as the emergence of previously repressed ego-ideals which form the basis of conscience. Watching and praying consisted of the use of two meditation techniques that promoted a sense of God's favor, perpetuated self-esteem, and permanently consolidated the insights of justification.

In psychoanalytic terms, the exacerbation of grief in the repentance phase may be viewed as the onset of a transference neurosis whose object was God. In context of Wesley's preaching of a loving deity, the theological analysis of the relation to God served as therapeutic insight into conflicted patterns of object relations rooted in childhood.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction: Methodism and Personality Change............................................................................... 1

2. Trauma and Conflict in 18th Century British Childrearing.................................................................. 21

3. The Stages of Spiritual Development................................................................................................. 54

4. Desolation........................................................................................................................................... 69

5. Justification and the New Birth........................................................................................................... 132

6. Inflation and Depression....................................................................................................................... 189

7. The Practice of the Presence................................................................................................................ 222

8. Watching and Praying: The Meditative Core of Sanctification............................................................ 242

9. Concluding Reflections......................................................................................................................... 294

Works Cited............................................................................................................................................... 306
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: METHODISM AND PERSONALITY CHANGE

John Wesley (1703-1791) was the founder of British Methodism, an evangelical movement which, during his lifetime, was an extension of Anglicanism, but later separated to become an independent church body. He was born and raised in his father’s parish at Epworth in the county of Lincolnshire. Although both of his parents had converted to Anglicanism long before he was born, Wesley’s ancestors were Puritan non-conformists. Up until his death, Wesley belonged to the Church of England, and regarded Methodism as a legitimate expression, as well as a necessary outgrowth of, Anglican piety.

Following in his father’s footsteps, Wesley was educated at Oxford where he received his orders as an Anglican priest. In the mid 1730’s, after refusing to take up his father’s post in Epworth, Wesley served as a clergyman in the colony of Georgia. Disillusioned by failed expectations and haunted by the belief that he did not possess an authentic faith, he returned to Britain in 1738. Under the missionizing influence of Peter Bohler and Philip Molther, Wesley became convinced of the Moravian conception of faith which consisted of an instantaneous and immediate sense or witness of God’s pardon. On May 24, 1738, Wesley himself received the witness of assurance during a sermon given at a religious society in Aldersgate street in London. Many view this event as the decisive turning point in his religious life and in his celebrated career as a preacher. Following a short lived collaboration with the Moravians at Fetter Lane, Wesley, who could not accept their Calvinist precepts, went on to form his own society at Kingswood. Here he began field preaching to the Kingswood colliers in 1739.

Although he was not the first to take his ministry into the field, Wesley holds a place in history as perhaps the most important and successful early popularizer of open air revivalism. As the first Methodist revival took shape in the late 1730’s, and onward
into the next decade, Wesley's travels as a preacher gradually spanned the whole of the British Isles. His notoriety can be attributed to several key factors: his charismatic presence and skill as an orator, his rendering of the gospel, and the fact that large numbers, especially those in the north country and in burgeoning industrial areas, were seriously neglected by the Anglican Church, and therefore eager to receive his message of hope. As thousands became attracted to the movement, Wesley tirelessly established a network of societies and preaching houses throughout England. He recruited both ordained as well as lay circuit preachers to assist him in his cause. His efforts were largely met with disdain by the Anglican church, who accused him of enthusiasm, of breaking church rule by encouraging the unordained to behave as though they were priests and by violating jurisdictions that were already overseen by official clergy.

Wesley orchestrated the institutionalization of Methodism almost entirely on the basis of his own authority and judgment. He assumed a monarchical stance in presiding over his flock, and, with few exceptions, relegated all executive power to himself. In addition to providing an extensive code of conduct for both his preachers and the society members, he assiduously monitored the dissemination of what he regarded as the correct form of doctrine. For example, he took great liberties in editing and revising Christian texts so that they appeared to conform with his own theological position. He was also the founder and sole editor of a Methodist journal, *The Arminian Magazine*.

Wesley's theology emphasizes the universal benevolence of God, while affirming the freedom of human will, as both prompted and guided by grace. His understanding of spirituality, and, indeed, salvation, rested on the idea of development, of growth in personal holiness. When believers were born anew, not only were they forgiven or "justified", their sensibilities were rehabilitated by an infusion of grace and divine righteousness. By continually exercising this righteousness in daily affairs, they would gradually perfect their holiness until all desire, intention and action were exclusively informed by the values of Christian altruism, by the law of love. In essence, this was
Wesley's conception of sanctification, a soteriological doctrine which he felt was central to scripture, and which he popularized through the revival. He held that the eradication of sin, a momentous transformation of the Spirit, was something that was possible in this life. Like the forgiveness of sins, sanctification was freely available to all who genuinely sought it.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that Wesley's spiritual model, and his distinctive interpretation of scriptural symbolism, correspond to discrete psychological phenomena. His description of spiritual development is not only coherent in terms of theology, but also as a form of psychological transformation - a comprehensive and systematic method of personality change. The metaphors employed in each successive stage of development are representations of psychodynamic processes, portrayed within a religious idiom. Drawing on studies of child-parent relationships in 18th century Britain, I will show how the initial stage of repentance is a symbolic expression of conflicts stemming back to infancy and early childhood. During this phase, as individuals become painfully aware of their sinfulness and their desire for forgiveness, previously unconscious conflicts - those centering on issues of parental authority, punishment, unresolved grief and separation anxiety - are figuratively drawn into awareness where they can begin to be consciously worked through. Furthermore, because Methodist conversion experiences typically involved a "perceptible inspiration", what Taves refers to as a "displacement of ordinary waking consciousness" (1993, p. 206), justification and the new birth may be regarded as the ecstatic emergence of ego ideals. The sudden and compelling manifestation of moral and altruistic insights is a direct outcome of the resolution of the previous stage of repentance. In turn, sanctification refers to the long-term integration or consolidation of these insights. The perfection of holiness is a gradual process involving a meditative procedure which permits believers to become aware of their aggression, and hence their resistance to change, while simultaneously providing them with the means to overcome the resistance.
In clinical psychoanalysis, psychic change and growth are secured by the patient’s immediate relationship to the analyst. In technical terms, the therapeutic alliance between the patient and the analyst allows for an examination of the patient’s transference neurosis. This fosters insight into unconscious wishes and anxieties, and, in turn, promotes a working through of conflict. I argue that the same sequence is observable in Methodism, with the crucial exception that the transference neurosis and the therapeutic alliance are focused primarily on culturally mediated notions of divinity. In this way, as Arlow has pointed out, the God imago may be regarded as a “transferrential figure” (quoted in Grossman, 1993).

**Wesley as Psychologist**

Wesley’s theology synthesized various streams of tradition. According to Heitzenrater, “Wesley embodied ideals and qualities not always easily held together or reconciled” (1989, p.56), and is often dubbed a “radical conservative”, a “romantic realist”, or a “quiet revolutionary”, at once evangelical and sacramental. Various authors attempt to single out a primary doctrinal influence which is seen to unify the work and define its essential nature. Hildebrant (1951) appeals to Lutheranism; Monk (1966) and Cell (1935) highlight Calvinism. Semmel (1973) sees Wesley as primarily Arminian. Bowmer (1951) stresses high church Anglicanism, while Knox (1950) and Davies (1963) regard him as an enthusiast. For Towson (1957), the distinctive features of Methodist doctrine and organizational structure are chiefly indebted to Moravianism.

Various “transdenominational” interest groups have also singled out particular strains of Wesley’s thought, and presented them as pre-eminent themes:

“Evangelicals” have portrayed a Wesley who looks much like a frontier revivalist; the “social gospel” folk like to see Wesley the philanthropist and social worker; the “holiness” faction stresses the centrality of his doctrine of sanctification; the “ecumenical” types emphasize his catholic spirit; the “fundamentalists” build upon a defined package of his doctrines - each of these, and others besides, editing Wesley carefully so as to fit
into a mold that is, not surprisingly, identical to their own (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 61).

Attempts to locate and characterize Wesley’s conversion have similarly attracted denominational debate (Rack, 1989, pp. 145-157). The discrepancy involves conceptions of conversion that are held by evangelicals versus writers such as Green (1961) with “Catholic sympathies” stemming from high church Anglicanism. The former group defines conversion along Lutheran lines - as an instantaneous event - and therefore sees Wesley’s 1738 Aldersgate conversion, with its assumption of Protestant justification by grace through faith, as decisive. The latter Catholic stance, “or those unsympathetic to evangelical notions of defining real Christianity in terms of a sharp transition from salvation by works to salvation by faith”, play down the significance of Aldersgate (Rack, 1989, p. 145). In Catholic tradition, conversion as a technical term means “entering religion”, or, becoming a member of a religious order (p. 154). More generally, conversion here implies a conscious and voluntary commitment to lead a Christian life. This group holds that it is more reasonable to locate Wesley’s conversion in the mid 1720’s, where, as a young Oxford undergraduate, his disciplined commitment to holiness and asceticism, influenced by the likes of Jeremy Taylor and Thomas a-Kempis, first took shape.

Whaling (1981, pp.2-3) rightly argues that analyses of Wesleyan theology and spirituality which emphasize single doctrinal influences, lose sight of their rich and overdetermined character. The diverse aspects of tradition in Wesley’s amalgam are inextricably bound to each other. Citing Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Continental Mysticism, the Eastern Fathers and Protestantism, Whaling states, “the Methodist revival assimilated the work of many Christians and many movements...the Wesleys inherited a Christian tradition at the beginning of the eighteenth century that contained a cluster of elements that provided the background wherein they could develop their vision of God”. Several commentators stress Wesley’s theological and doctrinal syntheses. For example,
both Rack (1989) and Dimond (1926) point to the interface of supernatural enthusiasm and rationalism. Maddox claims Wesley’s anthropology and his views on redemption incorporate western juridical emphases (i.e. sin as a ‘‘debt’’) alongside ‘‘therapeutic’’ concerns of eastern orthodoxy (i.e., sin as a ‘‘disease’’), in which redemption is seen as a gradual inward restoration to God-likeness (Maddox, 1994, pp. 65ff). Examples such as these are copious in the literature.

A different tack is taken by authors such as Thompson (1966), and Outler (1964) who dispute the existence of any systematic consistency in Wesley’s writings. For example, Outler speaks of a folk theological ‘‘pastiche’’ dictated by evangelical concerns. A more extreme version of this position is articulated by Thompson who holds that Methodism, as a system of thought, is unintelligible. This position is inadequate given what we know of Wesley’s passionate predilection for logical consistency.

Dryer (1983) holds that it is not expedient to rely exclusively on theological and doctrinal elements if we are to identify consistent themes in Wesley’s work. He argues that philosophical empiricism, informed largely by Lockean epistemology, is a fulcrum, a central organizer in Wesley’s synthesis of tradition. “Nothing is known”, he writes, “that cannot be felt” (p. 28). This principle, with its many psychological implications, is characteristic of Wesley’s theological stance as revealed in both his sermons, treatises and letters, as well as his most notable doctrinal disputes.

For example, in opposition to Anglicans, Wesley held that personal discernment of justifying faith was not an intellectual exercise dependent solely on rational self-evaluation. Faith is experiential and therefore immediately apparent to the senses. Epistemological and psychological concerns also highlight his debate with the Moravians. Wesley refused to accept Molther’s static view of faith which entailed an instantaneous and entire renewal of the whole person (Heitzenrater, 1989, pp. 123-124). Molther held that once this renewal occurred, it was a permanent and unchanging disposition. To the consternation of both his Moravian and Calvinist detractors, Wesley
formulated a *dynamic* model of spiritual growth that was doctrinally flexible in accounting for both variations in individual experience, degrees of faith and holiness, and periods of regression and progression. In time, Wesley’s theology would account for backsliding, variations in the content and intensity of assurance, and episodes of depression and doubt.

All of these subjective variables contradicted the assumptions of pre-election and the exclusivity of imputed versus imparted righteousness. From the Calvinist position, Wesley’s dynamic spirituality was heretical. Since righteousness was not actually infused but imputed in a purely juridical manner, and since God’s preordained selection of the elect was absolute, assurance and holiness could not be conceptualized by subjective degrees. For Wesley, proof of the theological legitimacy of imparted righteousness rested on its very *perceptibility*. Thus, as Dryer has shown, Wesley’s early break with the Moravians, and his abiding rejection of the central tenets of Calvinist doctrine was in large measure due to his willingness to prioritize psychological considerations: “the great controversies of his life all turned on points of psychology” (1983, p. 14).

Wesley’s empirical bent, combined with his belief in rigorous self-examination, promoted an acute psychological awareness that tempered all facets of his views. His sermons and letters reveal a remarkable pastoral sensitivity replete with insights often consistent with basic psychoanalytic understandings of human motivation. For example, in explaining why an individual may not be aware of or unable to acknowledge another’s state of spiritual perfection, Wesley appeals to various psychological factors that impede perception: one’s own lack of spiritual vitality; guilt over “unrepented sin, which lies upon one’s conscience”; the “overvaluation” or idealization of the other or conversely, the overestimation of one’s self (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 334).

With respect to guilt, Wesley was not unfamiliar with the idea of the denial of conscience (cf. Rangell, 1974). In his sermon on *The Wilderness State*, he claims that one explanation of anxiety and depression in the pursuit of holiness is unacknowledged
sin. Once sin is identified through introspection, one may anticipate the return of joy in the Holy Spirit (Wesley, 1984-87, II: pp. 208-221). Moreover, Wesley rejected the idea of “natural conscience”, arguing instead that moral “convictions” were supernaturally mediated by the Holy Spirit. All individuals, even those who appear morally bankrupt, possess some measure of “preventing grace” (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 48). Wesley claims, however, that the “generality of men stifle [their convictions] as soon as possible, and after a while forget, or at least deny, that they ever had them at all” (Wesley, 1984-87, II: p. 157). Commenting on the idea of prevenient grace, Outler states Wesley “pursues the self-excusing ‘natural man’ into the depths of his unconscious motives as if there were a conscience at their core” (1984c, p. 248).

Along with the denial of guilt, Wesley articulated other psychologically astute observations on the topic of sin. For example, immoral behavior and the denial of guilt require a self-deceptive rationalization in the form of collusion. A sinner may need to persuade others to behave similarly in order to further reinforce the rationalization (II: pp. 556-557). Or, in connection with backsliding, Wesley realized that despair destroys one’s sense of mastery. Therefore, it is easy to be deceived by appearances. Those who persist in a course of sin may not necessarily do so out of presumption, but out of hopelessness (I: pp. 211-212).

Wesley was equally perceptive on the theme of love. The experiential sense of God’s pardon and acceptance instills a reciprocal love for God and all his creatures. In psychological language, a good conscience creates a shift in the projective currents which often distort interpersonal relations. Wesley writes, “Love prevents a thousand provocations which would otherwise arise, because it thinketh no evil...”. One no longer infers evil where it does not appear, nor reasons about things which are not seen. “[Love] tears up, root and branch, all imagining which we have not known. It casts out all jealousies, all evil surmisings, all readiness to believe evil. It is frank, open, unsuspicious; and as it cannot design, so neither does it fear evil” (I: pp. 503-504). Love
eradicates suspicion. Wesley's language is consistent with Kleinian thought (Klein, 1988, p.353). The consolidation of a good internal object mitigates both aggression and the negative projections which follow. Love conferred upon the ego by its identification with a good object obviates paranoid thinking and cultivates trust and gratitude.

Consider Wesley's exegesis on forgiveness as it appears in the Lord's prayer. He writes:

All our trespasses and sins are forgiven us if we forgive, and as we forgive, others...So that if any malice or bitterness, if any taint of unkindness or anger remains, if we do not clearly, fully, and from the heart, forgive all men their trespasses, we far cut short the forgiveness of our own. God cannot clearly and fully forgive us. He may show us some degree of mercy. But we will not suffer him to blot out all our sins, and forgive all our iniquities (Wesley, 1984-87, I: pp. 587).

Here again, Wesley's thinking is reminiscent of psychoanalytic theory. In persistently harboring resentment and hostility, the superego will not give the ego permission to forgive itself. One can not gain narcissistically what one is unprepared to give. Therefore, guilt remains.

Wesley's psychological mindedness is apparent not only in his pastoral insights, but ultimately in his articulation of a gradated model of spiritual development. The model presupposes what in modern parlance can be deemed "personality change". Wesleyan spirituality entails the active attainment and permanent consolidation of religiously defined moral values. Ideally, this development involves the entire person in that it simultaneously effects perception, temperament and character.

The Centrality of Personality Change

Personality change understood as growth in piety and holiness is pivotal in Methodism. Lindstrom (1942, p.102) holds that sanctification as an "ethical transformation of the heart and life of man" is the most important conception in Wesleyan theology. Sanctification encompasses both "inward" and "outward" holiness - a transformation of both subjectivity and behavior. In as much as Wesley correlates
sanctification and salvation, his understanding of salvation extends beyond the Lutheran idea of a legal transaction guaranteeing eternal blessedness in a future life (Maddox, 1994, p. 143). For Wesley, salvation is also a gradual process of growth commencing in the present:

...What is Salvation? The salvation which is here spoken of is not what is frequently understood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul’s going to paradise...It is not a blessing which lies on the other side of death, or (as we usually speak) in the other world...It is not something at a distance: it is a present thing, a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of...the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory (Wesley, 1984-87, II: p. 156).

Similarly, in his long elucidation of the Sermon on the Mount, Wesley distinguishes between the present and final eschatological aspects of the coming of Christ’s kingdom (I: pp. 581-582). The kingdom is “begun below, set up in the believer’s heart” when he “repents and believes the gospel”. Redemptive grace is voluntarily acted upon in order to foster an on-going regeneration of the believer’s soul: “He taketh unto himself his mighty power; that he may subdue all things unto himself. He goeth on in the soul conquering and to conquer, till he hath put all things under his feet, till ‘every thought’ is ‘brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ’”. The full eschatological “kingdom of glory in heaven” is regarded as “the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth”.

The kingdom is the “immediate fruit of God’s reigning in the soul” (I: p. 224). Clapper (1989) and Steele (1994) demonstrate that, for Wesley, the “fruits of the spirit” refer to a specific set of affects that vitalize perception, promote happiness, and motivate believers to live in accordance with Christian values. In this way, the kingdom “within” is characterized by “righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost”, the love of God and all mankind, and a calm serenity of soul that excludes fear (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 481).
Furthermore, Wesley continually insisted that the character traits associated with regeneration were conspicuous, and clearly observable. The change is so thoroughly apparent that those who have been born of the spirit can not help but be exemplary. Their bearing and their actions naturally instill an evangelizing influence on others. Always careful to align his views with scripture, Wesley held that genuine Christians are the “salt of the earth”, and the “light of the world”. ...so long as true religion abides in our hearts it is impossible to conceal it... ‘Ye’ Christians ‘are the light of the world’, with regard both to your tempers and actions. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the midst of heaven. As you cannot go out of the world, so neither can ye stay in it without appearing to all mankind...it is impossible to hide your lowness and meekness and those other dispositions whereby ye aspire to be perfect...Love cannot be hid anymore than light; and least of all when it shines forth in action, when ye exercise yourselves in the labor of love, in beneficence of every kind (1: p. 539).

Wesley also pointed to the indisputable signs of dramatic characterological change in his followers. In his letters he writes,

Now, transfer this to the case before us: and those who were blind, but now see - those who were sick many years, but are now healed - those who were miserable but are now happy - will afford you also a very strong evidence of the truth of Christianity...

The habitual drunkard that was is now temperate in all things; the whoremonger now flees fornication; he that stole, steals no more, but works with his hands; he that cursed and swore, perhaps at every sentence, has now learned to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with him in reverence; those formerly slaved to various habits of sin are now brought to uniform habits of holiness...My Lord, can you deny these facts? (quoted in Lee, 1936, pp. 141-142).

The centrality of personality change within the whole economy of Methodist soteriology was, from early on, reflected in its communal structure. Indeed, the hierarchical cast of the Methodist societies reflected Wesley’s conviction that holiness entailed personal growth and change. The pastoral design of group meetings was directly modeled on Wesley’s stages of holiness, his ordu salutis (Rack, 1989, pp. 238-239).
Those who had yet to receive the experiential witness of God's pardon (i.e., justification) were placed in "classes" of 12, overseen by a spiritually advanced leader. Those who had been justified and were actively pursuing the gift of perfection assembled in "bands". A select number of the spiritually elite who had received the additional witness of entire sanctification met in "select societies" or "select bands". This three-tiered division was supplemented by a band that ministered specifically to "penitentials", or backsliders "who were grown slack" (Heitzenrater, 1995, pp. 123-124). Rack states that societal membership itself became a means for defining stages in spiritual development (1989, p. 240).

Maddox (1994) has shown that Wesley's exegetical approach to scripture was informed by a unifying principle which highlighted four soteriological truths: the corruption of sin, justification by faith, the new birth, and present inward and outward holiness. Thus, logical consistency in biblical interpretation, like the structure of Methodist societies, was informed by the key phases of personal transformation.

**Sanctification and Self-Actualization**

At the turn of the century, Starbuck (1911) and James (1982), the founders of the psychology of religion, took up the problem of spiritual progress. Starbuck, whose informants were predominantly American Methodists, devoted an entire chapter to the topic of sanctification. Starbuck understood sanctification as a more or less complete personal adaptation to a set of religious ideals manifesting originally during conversion.

At conversion, the person has accepted a new ideal as his own. It is vivid and real enough, but it exists largely as a possibility for future development...Sanctification is the step, usually after much striving and discontent, by which the personality is finally identified with the spiritual life which at conversion existed as a hazy possibility (1911, pp. 383-384).

Sanctification is a state in which one is "cleansed" of former temptations and evil habits. The absence of internal conflict is coupled with growth in altruism and the
conviction that one's life is encompassed within a greater whole, often expressed as a deeper consciousness of God's presence.

James expanded Starbuck's observations on spiritual growth by identifying a variety of crises that typically preceded conversion and, on this basis, created a generic typology (1982, pp. 127-258). A "sick-soul" is initially beset with conflicts arising from tensions between unrealized existential or religious ideals and a present state of depression characterized by a group of ailments including loss of identity, malaise, guilt and anxiety. James set a historical precedent by formulating a depth-psychological understanding of conversion as an instance of conflict resolution. "Subliminal" influences in the "subconscious" incubate towards a solution that resolves the conscious problem. The gradual or instantaneous emergence of subconscious ideas constitutes the revelatory character of conversion, and the sick-soul enters the ranks of the "twice-born". If the rejuvenating effects of conversion are permanent, the individual may go on to achieve "sainthood" (i.e., asceticism, purity and charity), which may, in turn, be followed by mysticism.

Merkur (1996a) states that Starbuck's and James' description of spiritual progress can be seen, from a psychoanalytic perspective, as the integration of religious ideals within the sense of self. Although they may emerge passively during conversion, the actual integration of religious ideals occurs after a period of conscious consideration: "the manifestation of the ego-ideal - better, positive superego - materials and their integration within the ego is analogous to the psychoanalytic processes of acquiring insight and working it through" (pp. 2-3).

Following the work of Starbuck and James, academic research has focused mainly on the problem of conversion. Interest in longitudinal post-conversion personality development resumed only with Maslow's work on "self-actualization" (1970; 1971), the fulfillment of the inborn potentials of the personality. For example, clinical researchers from both humanistic and transpersonal schools of psychology studied the relationship
between "peak experiences" (Maslow's term for unitive ecstasies) and transformations in the personality which coincided with the criteria of self-actualization (Pahnke et al, 1969; Kurland et al, 1973).

It is therefore noteworthy that Oakland (1981) and Carter (1981) point to a thematic convergence between Wesleyan sanctification and Maslowian self-actualization. Oakland delineates several areas of general concurrence (1981, p. 162). Faith implies freedom from internal tension, or Carl Rogers' notion of "trusting one's own organism". "Union with Christ" or the "indwelling of the Spirit" is seen to be phenomenologically similar to peak experiences. St. Paul's discussion of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5 is compared to Maslow's profile of the self-actualized personality.

...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, [are] not terribly different from self-actualization characteristics such as spontaneity, humor, acceptance, democratic character structure, social interest, deep interpersonal relationships, resistance to enculturation, life mission and ethical awareness (p. 162)

Carter draws a parallel between salvation as the renewal of the image of God, and the actualization of personal potential (1981, p. 155). Furthermore, he, along with Hauerwas (1985), claim that Christian maturity is synonymous with the principle of "congruence", the holistic balancing of affect, cognition and behavior, which is the mark of integrity (Carter, 1981, p. 157)).

Although Dimond's (1926) work predated that of Maslow, his assessment of the effects of Methodist spirituality on personality are remarkably similar to Maslow's criteria. Dimond speaks of a progressive psychological integration through which the personality is raised to a higher level of vitality (p. 204). The principle of congruence is implied when he refers to the unification of character, a "co-ordination of all mental resources, so that effort and volition provoke no conflict" (p. 204). Methodist conversion led to an increased appreciation of the values of truth, goodness, and beauty. Echoing Maslow's account of the cognitive content of peak experiences, Dimond refers to the
“normal mysticism of the evangelical”, a self-transcending sense of continuity with a universe that is infused with value and order (p. 268). This kind of sensibility spontaneously evokes an attitude of worship and a sense of deep peace (cf. Maslow, 1970).

Oakland’s and Carter’s claim that there is a thematic correspondence between sanctification and self-actualization opens up a useful line of inquiry. The concept of self-actualization takes psychological integration for granted and therefore invites comparison with Wesley’s depiction of sanctification as “harmony of the soul” (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 159). However, several important qualifications deserve mention. Firstly, these authors’ findings remain far too general and broadly descriptive. Oakland’s correlation of peak experiences with the “indwelling of the Spirit” and “union with Christ” is vague and needs to be clarified with greater precision. Carter’s discussion of sanctification is generic and cuts across traditions. Since the term is used differently in, for example, Catholic, Lutheran and Pentecostal teachings (Alexander, 1989), as well as in later incarnations of Methodist theology (White, 1986), his conclusions cannot be applied universally.

Furthermore, we must keep in mind that sanctification and self-actualization are not isomorphic terms. In contrast to the idea of integration, Cohen argues that holiness may also become a medium through which neurotic and psychotic pathology is played out (1981, p. 145). Because holiness can be present without health, there can only be a partial correlation. According to Brierly, the “integration of sanctity” involves a “total surrender of ego-direction to super-ego control”, and is a variation of the more “inclusive and democratic harmonization of id, ego and super-ego systems” (1947, p. 47). This kind of organization is more likely to lead to conflict and the repression of instinctual needs. Merkur reminds us that many mystical traditions “shun love, sex, partnership, parents, children, etc...” (1996b).

15
As important as these qualifications are, the ideas of integration and moral development, so central to the concept of self-actualization, are useful indices of analysis for a psychological examination of Wesley’s method and model of long-term spiritual development. His understanding of “Christian freedom” presumes a whole-hearted integration of moral values. Active commitment to Christian ideals is a result of “yieldedness”, as opposed to “strength” (Deiter et al, 1987, p. 35). In being justified, the love of God is shed abroad in the believer’s heart and powerful emotional currents compel the ego to yield, that is, to identify freely and lovingly with its newly acquired ideals. Christian service then flows from an eagerness to fulfill the law, and not a coercive sense of obligation that is fraught with ambivalence and fear. Put differently, superego imperatives become more fully accepted by the ego, and internal conflict is thereby reduced.

Various authors provide overarching assessments of the general effect of Wesley’s regenerative vision on the lives of his disciples and followers. Church stresses self-enhancement through the acquisition of a new standard of moral values (1948, p. 2). Moral conviction brought confidence, purpose and peace to otherwise hopeless lives. Ramage holds that conversion led to a “marked and permanent reformation of character and a general increase in personal contentment and efficiency” (1967, p. 143). Rack, although wary of facile generalizations on the overall achievements of Methodism, claims it is reasonable to suppose that “an elite achieved a high degree of devotion and sacrificial service, and that a larger number achieved a more orderly, moral, civilized and indeed happier life than they would have without their faith” (1989, p.436).

The commentary on the topic of spiritual development and sanctification that exists within the purview of Wesleyan studies has been largely historical (e.g., Gunther, 1989; Heitzenrater, 1989; Rack, 1989), sociological (e.g., Thompson, 1963; Werner, 1984) or theological (e.g., Lindstrom, 1950; Deiter et al, 1987). There are as yet no sustained psychological discussions of both conversion and post-conversion sequences
and dynamics, nor of the religious techniques used to achieve sanctification. Given that various authors refer to the beneficial effects of Wesleyan spirituality and its integrative influence, the problem is highly significant and warrants systematic treatment. If we are to speak of psychological integration, two questions naturally arise: what is it that is being integrated, and how may we define the prior state of disintegration? In the following chapter I will answer these questions by examining three common traumatogenic experiences that were a part of 18th century childrearing practices in England.

Theory and Data

In Wesley's writings, the process of sanctification is characterized by a series of standard vicissitudes occurring within successive stages of development. Furthermore, as Methodist autobiographies show, idiosyncratic progressions, regressions, complications and distortions arise due to variations in individual personalities and life circumstances. For this reason, the theoretic basis for the present study will reflect the approach of recent psychoanalytic writings on the topic of personality transformation and religious experience (e.g., Fauteux, 1994; Merkur, 1998a). These works presume a multifaceted and sophisticated understanding of religious experience that does not intrinsically pathologize the data. Of particular importance in this regard is the role of ideals and idealization.

According to Bacal and Newman (1990, p. 260), prior to Kohut's work on narcissism, psychoanalytic views on idealization focused on resistance - the need to defend against contempt and hostility. For example, Klein emphasizes the relation between idealization and splitting (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 319). The former is used as a means of warding off aggression stemming from the pressures of the death drive. Writers such as Reik (1953; 1954; 1960) and Chassegue-Smirgel (1985), both of whom see the ego ideal as a regressive precursor of the superego proper, point to the way in which
idealization is connected to the destruction of the reality principle, and the ego’s inability to accept its limitations. Kohut, on the other hand, argues that idealization is a basic and fundamental need in psychological development. An “enfeebled self” is provided with “nutrients” through mirroring and identification with idealized self-objects (Bacal and Newman, 1990, p. 260). In a similar vein, Eigen writes: “In instances of serious personality impoverishment, contact with ideal images can genuinely nourish the ego, build supplies, and restore hope, as well as stimulate and support the need for meaningful work” (1993, p. 91). It is significant that when Freud first formulated the concept of the ego ideal, he claimed it played a facilitating role in sublimation (1914). Moreover, notwithstanding Klein’s primary conception of idealization as a defense, she was aware that “a stable psychic development also requires the preservation and enhancement of the imago of the idealized good parent or parents” (Sagan, 1988, p. 189).

As we shall see, religious ecstasies and unitive experiences play a key role in Methodist spirituality. Because unitive ecstasies are psychological states of ideality, they too have been pathologized along lines similar to that of idealization. Lewin (1951) holds that mystical unity is a form of manic denial predicated on oral regression to an ideal state of fusion with the breast (1951). For Hartocollis (1974; 1976) mystical experience is motivated by anxiety over internal aggression and is therefore an elaborate reaction formation. Along with Lewin, Hartocollis refers to the passive-regressive fusion of the self and nurturing breast in the service of denial. Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985, p. 217) also defines mystical unity as a form of pathological ideality. Instead of submitting to the demands of the reality principle, mystics experience an oedipal triumph through fantasied fusion with the pre-oedipal mother.

In line with Waelder’s principle of multiple function (1930), I suggest that the that the uses and functions of idealization are variable, complex and overdetermined. Judgment as to whether idealizing transferences or unitive raptures are inherently adaptive or pathological lose sight of the often indeterminate array of human
motivations. Either-or perspectives are irreducibly myopic. Kakar, commenting on the relationship between mysticism and "ideal experiencing", makes the same point.

What I am emphasizing, however, is not the traditional analytic agenda of pathological, defensive, or compensatory uses of these various degrees of dyadic unity in mystical experiencing. As Michael Eigen has elaborated in a series of papers, For Freud, ideal experiencing, that is, states or moments of beatific (or horrible) perfection, in which I would include the mystical states, usually involved something in disguise - mother, father, sex, aggression and so on. Lacan, Winnicott and Bion (and implicitly also Erikson), on the other hand, look at ideal experiencing in its own right, as a spontaneously unfolding capacity for creative experiencing. *This capacity can be deployed defensively as has been spelled out in detail in the Freudian literature, but it is not coterminus with defense* (emphasis added; 1991, p. 28).

No doubt, idealization may function as a resistance. Equally important, however, is the fact that these terms may be reversed. Healthy forms of ideal experience may themselves be subject to resistance (Hartmann and Loewenstein, 1962, pp. 62-63; Eigen, 1993 p. 68). The same applies to unitive ecstasies in that they may be both the outcome and object of defense (e.g., Fauteux, 1994 pp. 52-82; Merkur, 1998, p. 95; 1999a, pp. 114-123). Since states of ideality are central to the Methodist pursuit of "perfection", the same array of dynamics are discernible. For example, although Methodist ecstasies present the ego with ideals to be utilized towards greater degrees of psychic integration, their emergence may be hindered by repression. Or, when they do manifest, they may not only enhance certain facets of psychological functioning, but also simultaneously reinforce dissociative trends. In some instances, unresolved unconscious conflicts directly attach themselves to otherwise healthy and non-conflicted ideals and convert them into non-integrative neurotic compromise formations. As in the dream work, the diversity of conscious and unconscious meanings, motivations and processes involved in the determination of unitive experiences requires a subtle and differentiated analysis. Therefore my approach is generally indicative of Fauteux’s "dialectic perspective" in which religious experiences hover between poles of pathology and
adaptation, conflict and resolution, regression and progression. Although unitive experiences can be used to achieve greater wholeness, they may also cater to “hidden fears” and “childish needs” (1994, pp. 1-2).

The primary sources of historical data for the present study are two-fold. The phenomenological delineation of stages, dynamics and techniques in Wesley’s model of spiritual development will be derived primarily from four volumes of sermons assembled in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*. This will be supplemented by other data from related treatises, correspondences and memoirs.

One must bear in mind that Wesley’s model and pastoral insights were, in large measure, shaped by direct observation of the experiences of his followers (Gunter, 1989, pp. 40, 209-211; Rack, 1989, pp. 157, 548-550). By the late 1750’s, partly as a result of a second Methodist revival which came into full fruition in the following decade, Wesley’s delineation of sanctification came to be almost entirely informed by others’ accounts of their personal experiences. Therefore, along with Wesley’s writings, I will be paying particular attention to Methodist autobiographical narratives that highlight spiritual development. A further rationale for the supplementation of this data is the inevitable distinction between the “ministry’s teaching and laity’s response” (Cohen, 1986, p. 21). I have avoided citing material from third person accounts in order to maximize the personal accuracy of written descriptions. Following Albin’s lead (1985), the primary source of first-hand accounts is Wesley’s *Arminian Magazine*, first published in 1778 (and continued as the *Methodist Magazine* after 1798). Autobiographical narratives were regular inclusions in each issue. Citations from autobiographical texts published independently of the magazine - memoirs and diaries - will also be included. Finally, occasional comparisons to materials from related Christian traditions will be made in order to clarify and amplify the phenomenology and psychology of early Methodist spirituality.
 CHAPTER 2

Trauma and Conflict in 18th-Century British Childrearing

Wesley’s personal history, data derived from the autobiographical accounts of his followers, and the literature on childrearing and social conditions during this period, reveal three culturally normative phenomena connected to childhood experience. These are forms of autocratic parenting, an inordinately high rate of mortality and childhood bereavement, and precocious religious preoccupation with death, judgment and damnation. The stresses induced by these phenomena, which in some instances reached traumatic proportions, complicated emotional development and led to disintegrative ruptures between the ego and what is referred to as the “positive superego” (Lederer, 1964). Some discussion of the latter concept is required.

The bulk of psychoanalytic literature focuses on the negative and punishing features of the superego which are derived from unresolved childhood conflicts. The positive dimensions of the superego which foster non-conflicted ego-motivation, sublimation, self-esteem, and intimate relations with others have, unfortunately, been largely overlooked. These are crucial components in the functioning of a healthy personality. However, several authors, including Schafer (1960), Lederer (1964), Schecter (1979) and Josephs (1989) have written articles and monographs on the topic. Schafer makes a convincing case that the construct is already alluded to by Freud.

The positive superego has an important protective function in representing the internalization of loving parents or primary objects. It affords courage, endurance and allows for the toleration of pain, privation, mistreatment and abandonment, what Saul refers to as “inner sustainment” (1970).

The positive superego is implicated in the vicissitudes of self-esteem. In living up to one’s ideals, the ego experiences relief, satisfaction, self-respect and pride. For the purposes of clarity, it is important to keep in mind the technical distinction between ego
ideals and the superego as a whole. The former are properly regarded as functions of the latter (Jacobson, 1964; Milrod, 1990). Ego ideals are abstract and depersonified structures derived from representations of loved and admired qualities of the primary objects. They provide a reference point for the ego's achievements in reality (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p. 144) and generate aspirations and direction, along with measures for self-critical evaluation. Because they instill admiration, the ego's ability to both pursue and realize ideal standards becomes the basis for an ongoing sense of self-esteem. The superego, as an overarching and autonomous structure, additionally engages in self-observation and the application of judgments of conscience in connection with the attainment of ideals (Freud, 1933a). In as much as the positive superego is the locus of values, it is, in health, characterized by strength and vitality. It is thereby involved in sublimation and in imbuing the personality with a sense of conviction and determination.

Loewald (1962) and Lederer (1964) argue that the superego equips the ego with a decisive vision of the future, a "destiny" (Lederer, 1964, p. 29). Positive superego values promote self-transcendence and concern for other individuals (i.e., conscience). Lederer conceives of the superego as an otherness within the self - as an internalization, the superego and its values are "good company", they provide "the ability to be alone" (pp. 38-39). The imaginative use of various object representations through which the positive superego is constructed ensures the ability to identify with the subjectivity of others and therefore facilitates empathy and intimacy (Furer, 1967).

The combined psychological effects of invasive parental authoritarianism, early loss and the morbid preoccupation with divine judgment are mutually reinforcing. Each of these items impacts negatively on the internalization of ego enhancing representations of parents and primary caretakers. Rage, grief and anxiety promote disintegrative defenses such as splitting and repression, which in turn obstruct the consolidation of the positive superego.
Rambo maintains that the study of conversion is multifaceted, thereby encompassing the realms of cultural, social, personal and religious systems (1993, p.7). Because they are intimately linked to these categories, we need to study the three disruptions in childhood experience.

Susanna Wesley’s approach to childrearing exemplifies a mode which Greven calls “evangelical” (1977) and Rubin refers to as “evangelical nurture” (1994). For these authors, evangelical childrearing is primarily geared towards the religiously sanctioned goal of breaking the toddler’s will (p. 48). It is characterized by an autocratic imposition of demands for impulse control at a time when the child is, from a maturational perspective, unprepared to comply without resorting to disruptive defense mechanisms.

Susanna’s children were, from birth onwards, “put into a regular method of living” (Greven, 1977, p. 36), which included strictly maintained schedules of dressing, sleeping and feeding. This would assure “that the infant’s needs and desires would be shaped into conformity with the intentions and plans of the parents” (p. 36). Susanna’s principle aim was to subdue and conquer the child’s self-will in order to instill early on a sacrificial attitude necessary to fulfill the will of God and to secure eternal life (p. 116, Newton). She believed that parents who indulged the child’s obstinacy, the inherited residue of Adam’s rebellion, were aligned with the devil in condemning the child to eternal damnation. The following quotation is taken from a letter Susanna sent to her son John, offering advice on the proper method of childrearing:

In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will and bring them to an obedient temper. To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must with children proceed by slow degrees, as they are unable to bear it; but the subjecting the will is a thing that must be done at once, and the sooner the better; for by neglecting timely correction they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which are hardly ever after conquered, and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child... When a child is corrected, it must be conquered, and this will be no hard matter to do, if it be not grown headstrong by too much indulgence. And when the will of the
child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by...no willful transgression ought ever to be forgiven children without chastisement less or more, as the nature of the circumstances of the case may require. I insist on the conquering of the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual...then a child is capable of being governed by reason and piety of its parents till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind (quoted in Greven, 1977, p. 38).

The inculcation of fear as the handmaiden of discipline was essential to the process. Susanna insisted on corporal punishment from an early age, and writes that when her children "turned a year old (and some before) they were taught to fear the rod and to cry softly, by which means they escaped abundance of correction which they might otherwise have had..." (p. 36). As a result, "that most odious noise of the crying of children was rarely heard in the house, but the family usually lived in as much quietness as if there had not been a child among them" (p. 36). Notwithstanding Susanna's zealous concern for the welfare of her children, Greven (1991, p. 20) draws attention to her use of physical punishment in order to enforce control and silence her children by fear of pain. Daily infractions such as entering the kitchen without permission carried a strong threat of such reprisal.

Wesley's sermons On the Education of Children (Wesley, 1984-87, III: pp. 347-360) and On Obedience to Parents (III: pp. 361-372) clearly indicate that he was in full agreement with his mother's views. In these writings, Wesley augments his mother's recommendations with a rhetoric that is more urgent and severe than his mother's. He writes: "Why, disobedience is as certain a way to damnation as cursing and swearing. Stop him, stop him at first, in the name of God. 'Do not spare the rod and spoil the child'. If you have not the heart of a tiger, do not give up your child to his own will, that is, to the devil" (III: p. 367). Tireless persistence in the breaking of children's wills is necessary in order to be "clear of their blood" (III: p. 353). Children should be taught
that they are "more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive" (III: p. 356). Wesley’s passionate objection to a parent’s expression of warmth and affection - a conviction legitimated by compassion for the child - reveals an ambivalence that is presumably the fruit of his own subjection to the regime he himself assigns:

...[fondness] is usually mistaken for love; but Oh, how widely different from it! It is real hate; and hate of the most mischievous kind, tending to destroy both body and soul in hell! O give not way to it any longer, no not for a moment. Fight against it with your might! For the love of God; for the love of your children; for the love of your own soul! (III: p. 369).

Evangelical nurture produces several distinctive psychological effects. Rubin refers to a “culture-bound syndrome” rooted in Protestant ideology (1994, p. 10). Basic trust and the attainment of confidence in one’s sense of agency and mastery are considerably thwarted. Condemnation of willfulness and autonomy interfere with the toddler’s gradual movement out of primary identification with an ambivalently perceived parent. The guilt and shame that are attached to self-assertion create conflicts which become increasingly evident in the beginning of adolescence and onward into adulthood. Individuals may become ensnared in an oscillating cycle of rebellious acting out against parental and religious norms, which is then followed by guilt ridden repentance and submission.

The parent’s equation of love and punishment is acceded by the child so that the pursuit of self-acceptance is imbued with masochistic qualities. Wesley expresses the alliance between love and punishment when he writes, “One of the greatest evidences of God’s love to those that love him is to send them afflictions with grace to bear them...we feel pleasure in the midst of the pain, from being afflicted by him who loves us, and whom we love” (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 368).

As a result of the infant’s dependency on the parent, and the threat of physical retaliation, rage cannot be expressed openly and is consequently turned inward as guilt.
The persistence of unconscious aggression is reinforced by the identification with the punitive parent as an internal censor; this compels the individual into endless rounds of submissive expiation. The early crystallization of a harsh superego means that proneness to depression is a defining symptom of evangelical nurture (Greven, 1991, p. 44). In Klauber’s psycho-historical discussion of the doctrine of predestination, he points out that the introjection of “damaged and revengeful” images of the parents unconsciously legitimates the idea of damnation (1974, p. 254).

The chronic fear and actuality of punishment in childhood impairs the development of empathy (Greven, 1991, pp. 127-28), the “ability to put oneself in the place of others and to understand how they feel and experience life”. Lapses in the empathic imagination impose limitations on the individual’s ability to commune and be intimate with others without experiencing conflict and dread. In this way, experiences of inner solitude, emptiness and loneliness are heightened.

In sum, the most prevailing pathological consequences of evangelical nurture are the splitting of internalized parental representations, intrapsychic conflict, and the futility of willful action connected to the proscription of autonomy. As we shall see, the psychological themes described above are symbolically repeated in Wesley’s writings on the repentance phase which precedes justification and the new birth. Justification is viewed as a metamorphosis of one’s previous experience of God. A dramatic shift is effected between a wrathful deity who cannot be appeased by the imperfect reparation of fallen mortals, and an all loving father who offers unconditional forgiveness through the passive gift of faith.

We know for certain that Wesley’s infancy and childhood was consistent with the main features of evangelical nurture. The practice is historically linked to Puritan styles of childrearing (Newton, 1968, p. 107; Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 263; Byman, 1978). Moore states that Susanna’s letter provides valuable insights into the childrearing practices of 18th century England (1974, p. 32). He suggests that the popularity of
Wesley’s message during the early revival may have been due to the way in which it resonated with those who also had the same kind of “over controlling, close-binding mother”.

Rack, however, argues that there is no clear evidence to suggest that Susanna’s approach was normative (1989, p. 54-56). Data on European childrearing practices between 1600 and 1800 is sketchy at best. Earle (1989, p. 233) states that apart from fragmentary excerpts, “silence surrounds every aspect of childhood”. Amidst inconclusive evidence, a debate has emerged concerning general attitudes of parents towards their offspring. Stone holds that because high rates of mortality led to parental indifference towards children, they tended to be treated in a harsh and unloving manner, and were frequently beaten. By the second half of the 17th century, there was a shift in attitude among the middle ranks towards a more kind and encouraging relationship. However, the majority of social historians reject Stone’s thesis on the basis of “unrepresentative sources and selective quotations” (Earle, 1989, p. 232), and see little change in child-parent relations between the 16th and 19th centuries. Most parents loved their children, and the fear of losing them only intensified their tenderness. Pollack, who sides with this position, questions the common assumption of a Puritan preoccupation with original sin and the practice of infant will-breaking (1983, p. 120). Earle (1989, p. 232) finds Pollack’s views more convincing than Stone’s, but he cautions against overgeneralization. Pollack’s work is based on extracts from British and American diaries and autobiographies. Although these sources contain clear evidence of benevolent and affectionate attitudes of parents towards children, they do not provide details on child care, discipline, early education and so forth.

We cannot, therefore, assume that evangelical nurture was a culturally normative mode of childrearing in 18th century Britain. Still, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a general ethos of parental authoritarianism prevailed, promoting comparable, if not exactly identical, effects in psychic development. Ramage makes the point that
although the period of Puritan political ascendancy came to a close in the previous century, its psycho-social effects continued to reverberate through British culture. Puritan ideology became incorporated into “social conventions and parental attitudes, and [perpetuated] itself as a slowly diminishing quantity for several generations after its original source had dried up” (1967, p. 200). According to Lorence (1974), parental styles during this period can be placed into two broad categories. The first is typified by indifference and minimal contact with children, and was most common among the upper classes and aristocracy. On the other hand, intrusive parents belonging mainly to the middle classes, molded and supervised their children, usually for religious reasons. It is generally held that economically driven values associated with emergent middle-class domesticity dovetailed with those derived from Puritan culture. The list of similarities includes self-control (i.e., the government of passions and appetites), obedience, sobriety, and industry. These qualities were instilled by exploiting the child’s sense of shame (Plumb, 1975, p. 69).

It is thus important to note that a large proportion of Wesley’s followers were positioned in the “middling ranks” (Dimond, 1926, p. 32; Hempton, 1996, p. 3; Rack, 1989, pp. 9, 22, 173, 440-441.). Rack refers to the mistaken assumption that the majority of Methodists were outcasts belonging to the lower orders (pp. 438-439). Middling ranks of tradesmen, artisans, craftsmen, industrial workers, etc. “were the real target of Methodism and the backbone of its membership” (p. 22). This sector constituted a rapidly increasing reading public whose sensibilities were shaped by a genre of devotional literature of high Anglican and Puritan piety. These publications were a substantial part of total publishing. Texts such as Jeremy Taylor’s Holy Living and Holy Dying, as well as William Law’s Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life were essentially ascetic in emphasizing self-control, duty and moral concern. Most books written specifically for parents focused upon moral issues - the need to inculcate in the child a fear of God and a respect for parental authority (Earle, 1989, p. 234). Earle’s analysis of
middle class wills is consistent with this view (p. 235). Fathers conveyed great concern about education and future careers of children. In some instances, sons were disinherited for disobedience, unfaithfulness and lack of duty. Overall, there is little evidence of pampering and tolerance of disobedience. The expression of filial honor and respect was encoded in a formal discourse of bowing, kneeling or standing in the presence of parents. Earle characterizes middle class homes as “quiet” and “somber”, where children were “seen but not heard”, and “whisked away” if they became a nuisance (p. 237-238). A parent’s desire for respect and obedience “created a more formal relationship than is suggested by some authorities” (p. 239).

Locke’s influential 1693 essay on the education of children is believed to have inaugurated a new awareness in child psychology, a more tolerant attitude supplanting the autocratic mindset of the Puritans (Plumb, 1975, p. 65-70). His view of the child shifted away from the conception that condensed willfulness, wickedness and original sin (Bayne-Powell, 1939, p. 51-52). Optimal educational development was now seen to be realized in an atmosphere of liberty devoid of “nagging and scolding”. A proper facilitating environment and course of education would foster the innate goodness of the child and minimize the propensity for evil. However, Locke was equally concerned with the virtues of self-control, and his pre-eminence as a “chief educational authority” would contribute to prevailing middle-class domestic values in the following century. Locke advocates an ascetic course in childrearing when he writes: “[Children] should be hardened against all suffering, especially of the body, and have no tenderness but what arises from an ingenious shame and a quick sense of reputation” (Locke, 1964, p. 145). He also states, “as the strength of body lies chiefly in being able to endure hardships so also does that of the mind” (p. 40).

The prevailing conviction that children should be “hardened” as a means of inducing self-restraint was physically realized in the custom of infant swaddling whereby physical movement was radically restricted from birth (Lorence, 1974, pp. 16-17).
Plumb sees a direct association between this practice and the deliberate cultivation of subservience (1975, pp. 65-66). Swaddling was rationalized, however, as a way of ensuring the proper growth of the skeletal structure and to protect internal organs (Rendle-Short, 1960, p. 100). Babies were ordinarily swaddled up until the second half of the 18th century when, as a result of increasingly vocal criticisms by physicians such as Cadogan and Buchan, the practice was gradually given up. In 1803, Buchan wrote the following:

There is not any parts of my professional labors which I review with greater pleasure, than my exertions in early life to rescue infants from the cruel torture of swaddling, of rolling and of bandages. When I first ventured to take up the subject about half a century ago, it certainly required the ardor, courage and enthusiasm of youth to animate my opposition not only to the prevalence of customs and the stubbornness of old prejudices, but to the doctrines of the Faculty themselves (quoted in Rendle-Short, 1960, p. 105).

As in evangelical nurture, middle class parenting encouraged precocity by “catapulting children into adulthood” (Lorence, 1974, p. 18). According to Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969, pp. 264 ff.) children were regarded and treated as little adults, subject to the same religious pressures and disciplines as their forebears: “Parental anxiety and ignorance of developmental psychology contributed to the idea that childhood was but a brief introduction to the heavy responsibilities of the adult world” (p. 299). Youthful precocity traces back to the Puritan substitution of a morally independent “inner direction” for “worldly values”. Sommerville claims that Puritans recognized and encouraged a degree of intellectual and moral autonomy in children (1978, p. 131). The danger lay in a potential overestimation of the child’s natural capacities, such that other psychological needs in the area of dependency were neglected. Similar to the fact that the Puritans developed a rational children’s literature in lieu of folklore (p. 131), we find that between the 16th and 18th centuries, there were virtually no books written to “divert
and entertain children" (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 299). There was, however, a surfeit of works dedicated to their moral and religious edification.

Leonore et al. (1987, p. 22), state that the middle rank’s concern with controlled behavior was in part a response to uncertainty created by shifting economic forces, as well as the “depredations of illness” caused by fever, choleric epidemics, and consumption. Survivors of financial ruin and other devastations such as loss of kin would be dependent solely on their laboring skills in order to survive. What is more, the commercial activities of the middle class gave impetus to formalize and codify its domestic and vocational realms, thereby reinforcing the ethic of behavioral control (p. 26). Another motivating factor is specifically religious. In Pollack’s sample of autobiographical extracts taken from 18th-century England, we see parents grieving the loss of children and anticipating re-union in the hereafter (1987, p. 126-127). High infant mortality rates combined with parental separation anxiety would reinforce the early impartation of these behavioral trends to ensure the child’s salvation. Finally, it is not surprising that parental authoritarianism held sway given the hierarchical cast of society, imbued as it was with “the idea and practice and mentality of ‘dependence’” (Rack, 1989, p. 6).

Evidence also suggests that floggings and other forms of corporal punishment were typical in the home, as well as schools and other educational facilities in the public domain. In an essay on “flogging”, published in the Gentleman’s Magazine in 1735, the author marvels that no writer has yet “treated professedly of the art”. A respondent’s reply to the essay is rather telling: “Is not this sort of correction common in almost every family, as well as every school in Great Britain? What great wonder that no learned Dissertator has told us what everyone knows” (quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 303). Earle (1989, p. 233) refers to the omnipresence of corporal punishment in British life during this period. It was regularly advocated in conduct books, and exacted by parents, teachers, vocational trainers and correctional authorities. Even someone as
liberal as Locke advocated it as a last resort. Furthermore, he believed corporal
punishment was suitable for children too young to be persuaded by reason alone (Plumb,
1975, p. 68).

Instances of parental beatings are frequently reported in Methodist
autobiographical narratives. For example, Hester Ann Rogers describes her father, an
Anglican minister, as “beset” with the sin of anger (1832, p. 5).

He was a man of strict morals...of real piety. I was trained up in the
observance of all outward duties, and in the fear of those sins, which in
these modern times are too often deemed accomplishments. I was not
suffered to name God but with the deepest reverence; and once for telling
a lie, I was corrected in such a manner as I never forgot (emphasis added;
p. 3).

In celebratory tones, Thomas Payne recounts how his father did not spoil his
children by sparing the rod: “[he] always remonstrated and then corrected. His well
timed corrections seldom failed to leave some good impression upon us” (Arminian
Magazine, 1781, p. 581). Thomas Rankin was “severely beaten” by his father for
fighting with school mates (Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp. 182-183). For lying, Richard
Moss was “whipped severely” by his father, who told him he was “in the way to Hell”
(Arminian Magazine, 1798, p. 3). Being a man of violent temper, John Oliver’s father
informed his son that he would “knock [his] brains out” if he associated with Methodists,
and was known to break sticks and chairs on John’s back (Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp.
418-419).

In sum, the domestic values associated with the rise of middle class culture in the
18th century, promoted a genus of psychological and behavioral trends akin to those
which characterize evangelical nurture. It is not unreasonable to assume that the
combined impact of parental intrusion, the inculcation of self-control and obedience,
psychological and physical “hardening”, precocity and various corporal punishments
would create complications and difficulties in emotional development comparable to those connected with evangelical upbringing.

In the autobiographical narratives published in Wesley’s *Arminian Magazine*, we find that childhood bereavement is exceedingly common. The list of names reporting the loss of parents, siblings and other relatives, is exhaustive. Wesley himself was one of nineteen children, only nine of whom survived to reach maturity (Wallace Jr., 1997, p. 8). During his era, life expectancy was 35 years, and this was coupled with a markedly high rate of infant mortality (Rack, 1989, p. 8). Families were often devastated by epidemics of small pox, scarlet fever, consumption, typhus, malaria, thrush, tuberculosis, etc. (Bayne-Powell, 1939, p. 157; Pollack, 1987, p. 93). The omnipresence of illness and death is captured in John Nelson’s autobiography when he explains how he received a letter informing him of numerous misfortunes - his daughter and father in law were dead, his mother sick and son feared to be dying, and his wife lamed by an accident with a horse (Nelson, 1842, p. 30).

Common reactions to early loss have been documented by Bowlby. He refers to a “defensive exclusion”, or deactivation of the child’s attachment needs and behaviors (1980, pp. 46-52; 1988, pp. 70-71). Unresolved mourning or the chronic threat of separation may promote a permanent deactivation, a sealing off of attachment structures which then impedes the ability to experience closeness and intimacy with others. Bowlby’s list of disordered variants of mourning includes features consistent with themes in the Methodist literature. For example, unresolved mourning may generate a hope of reunion which is expressed as the desire to die in order to join the lost parent (1980, p. 354). At the age of eleven, James Rogers lost his father. For some time, he was inconsolable and would have gladly given anything to have died as well. Believing he was unprepared for judgment, Rogers begged his brother to tell him what he must do to be saved, convinced that when he was ready, God would take him (*Arminian Magazine*, 1789, p. 349-350). Moreover, several Methodists describe ecstasies in which rapturous
emotions are so intense that one wishes one could die in order to be more fully united with Christ or God the Father in heaven (e.g., *Arminian Magazine*, 1781, p. 585; 1784, p. 521). Bowlby also refers to persistent guilt due to a child's ego-centric proclivity for self-blame and reactive aggression (1980, p. 361-363). With respect to rage, Bowlby writes: "...there is no experience to which a young child can be subjected more prone to elicit intense and violent hatred for the mother figure than that of separation" (1960, p. 24). These trends generally coincide with the legacy of guilt in Methodist literature and the frequency of recurring cycles of depression.

Unitive ecstasies (usually occurring at the moment of justification or sanctification) are normative in early Methodist experience. It is noteworthy that several authors have suggested a relation between mystical experience and the loss of significant others (Zales, 1978; Aberbach, 1987; Nixon 1995, 1996a, 1996b). To summarize, these writers hold that experiences of mystical unity may in part be motivated by an attempt to resolve grief stemming from incomplete mourning. The lost objects, frequently parents, are consciously or unconsciously equated with the religious or supernatural object of union. Nixon (1995, p. 9-10) adds that complications in the mourning process due to guilt reinforce ascetic self-denial in mystical practice.

A third area of pathogenic potential in 18th-century British childrearing is the early preoccupation with morbid themes of death, divine judgment and damnation. This cultural pattern is a particular form of precocity, and again is genealogically linked to Puritanism. (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 269). In *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, perhaps the most distinguished of Puritan conversion narratives, Bunyon recalls how even pleasure derived in ordinary play was spoiled by the recriminations of his conscience.

These things, I say, when I was but a child nine or ten years old, did so distress my soul, that when in the midst of my many sports and childish vanities, amidst my vain companions, I was so often much cast down and afflicted in my mind therewith, yet could I not let go my sins. Yea, I was
also then so overcome with despair of life and heaven, that I should often wish either that there had been no Hell, or that I had been a devil - supposing they were only tormentors; that if it must needs be that I went thither, I might be rather a tormentor, than be tormented myself (quoted in Delameau, 1990, p. 519).

Delameau writes, “Excessive feelings of guilt in early childhood, despair, sadistic temptations: Such are the dark vistas opened by this exceptionally loaded text” (p. 519). So much of children’s religious literature in the 17th and 18th century is characterized by an “inability to appreciate the fundamental differences between the nature of the religious experience of the child and that of the adult...” (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 266). For example, James Janeway’s A Token for Children, a Puritan text that had wide distribution well into the 19th century, informed children that lying, truancy, Sabbath breaking and neglect of prayer incites God’s insufferable fury: “...When they beg and pray in Hell fire, God will not forgive them but there they must lye forever...are you willing to go to Hell and be burned with the Devil and his Angels?...How do you know that you might be the next child to die?” (quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 266).

Wesley writes in much the same manner: “Is it not common to say to a child, ‘put your finger into the candle...can you bear it even for one minute? How will you bear Hell fire?’” (Wesley, 1984-87, III: pp. 39-40). The erasure of psychological differences between child and adult is also evident in Janeway’s instructions to young sinners that they must retire in private and implore God for his forgiveness.

...fall upon thy knees and weep and mourn, and tell Christ that thou are afraid that he doth not love thee, but that thou would fain have his love; beg of him to give thee his grace and pardon for thy sins, and that he would make thee his child: tell God that thou dost not care who don’t love thee, if God will but love thee; say to him Father, hast thou not a blessing for me, even for me? O give a Christ; O give me a Christ: O let me not be undone for ever...(quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 266).

In English popular literature in the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly in religious chapbooks and low cost books, visual images of death and final judgment are favored over other types of Christian iconography (Delameau, 1990, p. 510), and up into
the 19th century, children's works continued to couple moral instruction with morbid themes of damnation. Plumb speaks of a "savage and macabre streak" in attitudes towards children, and cites the "salutary" practice of corpse viewing at Wesley's Kingswood school (1975, p. 83). In 1770, during a revival, the Kingswood students viewed the body of a dead neighbor. Some of the boys became so alarmed that they refused to sleep until they had been safely converted (Rack, 1989, p. 359).

Gruesome accounts and visual representations of unrepentant deaths along with the unthinkable prospect of eternal damnation brought considerable nervous strain to tender minds. Distress was further exacerbated by first-hand exposure to the vagaries of illness and the reality of loss. It is therefore not surprising that Wesley should refer to the prevalence of night terrors:

I know not whether [Satan] may not have a hand in that unaccountable horror with which many have been seized in the dead of night, even to such a degree that all their bodies have shook. Perhaps he has a hand also in those terrifying dreams which many have, even while they are in perfect health (Wesley, 1984-87, III: p. 27).

In Methodist autobiographies, descriptions of night terrors and anxiety dreams accompany recollections of childhood brooding over hell and damnation. Richard Moss, whose narrative is mentioned earlier in connection with physical beatings, writes that, at the age of five, he resolved to stop swearing for fear that it would send him to hell (Arminian Magazine, 1798, pp. 3-4). After being severely whipped by his father, he became "terrified" for a period of three years. Moss, whom, it should be noted, also lost his mother at the age of three, experienced frightful dreams on a weekly basis. His family was kept up at night as a result of his screaming in his sleep. Resembling a pattern of exhaustion common in adults undergoing depressive crises prior to conversion, Moss' night terrors drained him of his bodily strength. These episodes caused him to become "serious and thoughtful" - he could no longer take pleasure in play during the final years of his schooling. In this example, we see how the combined effects of early loss and
physical punishment orchestrate a religiously inspired dread of conscience. Hester Anne Rogers, also previously mentioned in context of corporal punishment, refers to her self-recriminations as a child (1832, pp. 4-5). On one occasion, “her conscience accused her greatly” because she had neglected her nightly round of prayer. Consequently, she had a vision of Satan appearing at her bed side and shrieked so loudly that her parents were roused. After that, Rogers became unerringly diligent in prayer.

Allusions to early morbidity and the precocious dread of conscience are commonplace in Methodist autobiographies. Mrs. S.N. found peace with God at the age of three (Arminian Magazine, 1789, p. 525-526). In the following years she frequently wished she had died at that time. Upon turning six, she realized she was a “hell deserved sinner” and lamented that she had ever been born. S.N.’s resolutions to do away with sin were continually broken and renewed, making her “very uneasy” when she was alone. Since her convictions became stronger as she grew older, S.N. began to devote herself regularly to hours of prayer and self-examination, and kept a written record of her transgressions which she would confess to God, “sometimes with much brokenness of heart”.

Before she was ten years old, Catherine Corbett believed God was striving with her by his Holy Spirit (Arminian Magazine, 1781, p. 535).

I spent many hours in secret, weeping, and praying to the Lord, to take me to himself. I was so much afraid of pride, that I could hardly be persuaded to put on new clothes, lest they should make me think better of myself; and I had continual fear of doing or saying anything to offend God; so that my relations used to say, “The child is not for this world”.

Thomas Tennant was raised by parents who were converted to Methodism. Tennant remembers having convictions of sin from his childhood. Although he was able to “get rid” of them as he grew older, he was less successful in “shaking off the fear of death”. Prior to the age of fourteen, Tennant experienced an acute panic attack precipitated by guilt over idling on the Sabbath (Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp. 469-470).
One Sunday afternoon, when I had sauntered up and down St. James's Park, I went into Westminster-Abbey, not for devotion, but to pass away time. I had not been there long before I was struck with a horrible dread! My sins were set in array against me! I hastened out of the Church, but did not expect to get home alive. I seemed ready to expire, and was to my own apprehension "Condemn'd the second death to feel, Arrested by the pains of Hell!". I cried to the Lord in an agony of fear, who heard me from his holy place, and came to my deliverance. My dread and horror were in a measure removed; and I resolved never more to spend any part of the Sabbath in merely seeking my own pleasure.

In several instances, precocious manifestations of morbidity and severe conscience are clearly associated with early loss of primary objects and general exposure to death. James Rogers believed that the spirit of God strove with him when he was four years old.

On hearing a passing bell, or seeing a corpse, I was very thoughtful, and would often ask my parents pertinent questions about a future state. On seeing lightning, or hearing a loud clap of thunder, my fears were usually alarmed to a high degree; and the more so as an impression always followed me, that it was God speaking from the clouds; and as I generally expected at these times, that he was just descending to judge the world, I would run to the door to see him come! Such ideas as these were much increased and confirmed by several dreams, which I had from my infancy, about death, judgment, heaven and hell (emphasis added; Arminian Magazine, 1789, pp. 347-348).

When Rogers was ten, he dreamt of an apocalyptic scene in which the earth was set ablaze. "Bad people" and "many of my play-fellows who were accustomed to lie, and cheat, and play on the Sabbath" were "struck with inexpressible horror and consternation". Feeling a "most painful anxiety" for his own safety, and "deeply conscious" of his unreadiness for judgment, Rogers' terror roused him from his sleep. The dream left a solemn impression for several weeks and from this time forward, he sought instruction on how to become prepared to "meet [his] judge with comfort".

On losing his mother at the age of four, Thomas Lee was removed to his uncle's home.
From my early days, the Lord was at times powerfully working upon my soul. From ten to eleven years of age I was exceedingly distressed. I generally saw, as I thought, Hell before me, and believed it was to be my portion...my life became a burden to me. For on the one hand, Hell appeared intolerable, and on the other I found no delight in the service of God, so that my days were consumed in trouble. Frequently did I murmur against God, and often wished to be annihilated (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 25).

At some undisclosed period during his early schooling, Charles Hopper describes how his “favorite and only” school teacher succumbed to what is depicted as religious melancholy, ostensibly triggered by his involvement in a card game one week after he had received the sacrament at Ryton church (Arminian Magazine, 1781, pp. 25-26). Whether or not this portrayal is an accurate account of the cause of the depression is beside the point. What is psychologically significant is Hopper’s understanding of the meaning of his teacher’s depression, which became increasingly more acute, culminating finally in suicide. Hopper writes: “This melancholy event made my heart tremble, and was a means of bringing some serious thoughts into my mind about heaven, hell, death, and judgment” (p. 25). These “impressions” persisted until he became severely ill for two years. Hopper, reduced to a “mere skeleton”, was pronounced incurable by his doctor. The prognosis shocked him into serious preparation for a future life. Later in the narrative, however, he portrays something of his youthful sadism: “I took pleasure in hanging dogs, worrying cats, killing birds and insects, mangling and cutting them to pieces” (p. 26). One evening, Hopper and his companions triumphantly pelted a group of frogs with stones. Later that night he was “requited” by God:

...I dreamt I fell into a deep place full of frogs, and they seized on me from head to foot, and begun to eat the flesh off my bones. I was in great terror and found exquisite pain until I awoke, sweating and trembling, and half dead with fear (p. 26).

Hopper immediately adds that it was around this time that his father died of consumption. It is important to note the rhythm of trauma and response which punctuates the account of his childhood. Complications in mourning can be seen in
Hopper’s “serious” turn to thoughts of death and damnation following the loss of his beloved school teacher. His phrasing suggests that the ensuing illness was the natural outcome of his ruminations. The reparative turn to holiness is spoiled by aggression, retaliatory dread, and further loss. Hopper’s story conveys a dynamic pattern which is paradigmatic in Methodist biographies. The psychological impact of early loss, the working through of sadness and rage, is thwarted by depictions of God’s inscrutable wrath and his terrifying arsenal of punishment. A vicious circle of intrapsychic conflict is set up - rage is further exacerbated and acted out in various ways, only to be met by the fear of punishment, and the compromise of despondency.

As a result, one can detect a recurrent mode of development in Methodist biographies which has psychological coherence, and is not simply the product of rhetorical flourish or discursive style (e.g., *Arminian Magazine*, 1780, pp. 25-26; 1780, pp. 650-65; 1798, pp. 3-5). We continually see a trajectory beginning with early loss of parents, siblings, friends etc., followed by the onset of a bad conscience and broodings over death and damnation. Anxiety and depression are variably persistent until they come to a decisive head in adolescence and early adulthood. The stresses involved in negotiating adult autonomy are deepened by the struggle to maintain allegiance to ambivalently held parental and religious norms. Early adulthood is characterized by conflict, by oscillations between profane "revelry" and "mirth" (e.g., horse races, drinking, card playing, dancing), and resolutions to withstand the temptations of "sin". Since there is no joy in either of these positions, individuals describe themselves as helplessly lacking in resolve, and continually overcome by "evil passions". This period of life is fraught with shame, sorrow, anxiety, depression and an increasing sense of futility. The futility experienced in attempting to adhere to religious ideals is precisely a result of the vicissitudes described above. Persistent conflicts and unresolved mourning means that superego goals and directives are unconsciously infused with aggression and
are regularly resisted such that the urge to succumb to what is viewed as unholy, is overdetermined by a need to rebel, to act out the aggression.

The repeated descriptions of psychological pain and disturbance in these writings is not just a narrative device - *it is causally consistent with their past experiences*. In light of the prevailing social-historical factors that are clearly apparent in the narrative accounts, preconversion depression and conflict in early adulthood is psychologically consistent with the combined effects of harsh parenting, early loss and the culturally sanctioned emphasis on judgment and damnation. The convergence of these elements suggests that the recurrent themes in Methodist biographies are not simply a function of rhetorical devices emphasizing exaggerated depictions of chronic discontent.

In terms of emotional development and the integration of the positive superego, it is clear that the psychological effects of these three culturally normative traumas are mutually reinforcing in various ways. For example, evangelical nurture and harsh parental authoritarianism diminish the child’s empathy for the parent. This creates a *diffuse sense of loss* of a more emotionally inclusive relationship, even in the living presence of the parent. Bowlby holds that the demise of particular facets of relatedness to caretakers, as for example, the loss of the mother’s love, “is in very truth, a bereavement” (1960, p. 38). Moreover, ambivalence towards the authoritarian parent would complicate this “bereavement” even further if the parent were to actually die. Also, we have already seen how morbid preoccupation with damnation disrupts mourning. All three of these scenarios effect the consolidation of autonomy. They invoke unmanageable aggression, and produce a range of affective dispositions including anxiety, rage, depression and guilt.

In as much as there is continuity among these traumas, we may assume that memories and fantasies of a wide range of experiences, all of which shared a common emotional meaning, were thematically condensed, or brought together in the unconscious. In other words, significant moments in early development, those which
contributed directly to the internalization of self and object images, became emblematically grouped, or superimposed into organized units of psychic structure (cf. Grof, 1976, pp. 46-77; Kernberg, 1976, p. 70; Lichtenberg 1989, pp. 253-293). These groupings, or what Lichtenberg refers to as "model scenes", are expressed in cultural narratives and myths. According to Freeman (1981, p. 337), individual myths "contain complex, condensed representations of many of the intrapsychic conflicts and developmental phases encountered by the child during the course of development".

Keeping in mind what we know of Wesley’s own childhood - evangelical nurture and the multiple loss of siblings - we can observe the condensation of these core relational issues in his commentaries on hell and the fall.

In Wesley’s view, the horrors of hell are primarily organized around the theme of loss. For the inhabitants of hell, the misery of separation from loved ones is key: "They are torn away from their nearest and dearest relations, their wives, husbands, parents, children, and...the friend which was as their own soul. All the pleasure they ever enjoyed in these is lost, gone vanished away. For there is no friendship in Hell" (Wesley, 1984-87, III: pp. 34). The most unendurable loss is banishment from God himself. Since God is the center of all created spirits, separation from him amounts to an eternity of unrest and destruction (III: p. 35). The pain of separation is made worse by the unendurable pangs of a guilty conscience, one that is likened to the eternal gnawings of a worm that never dies (III: p. 36). Suffering is unrelentingly sadistic: “No sleep accompanies that darkness...And be their suffering ever so extreme, be their pain ever so intense, there is no possibility of their fainting away - no, not for a moment” (III: p. 41).

In essence, Wesley’s hell is a nightmare of severed relationships and tortured absences, “the punishment of loss”. His description of those “torn away” from their loved ones is reminiscent of the language of bereavement. Moreover, loss is obviously connected to disobedience and willful infraction so central to the psychology of evangelical nurture. Sin destroys an original intimacy with the parent-deity. In hell,
reprobate spirits are deprived of their natural rest in God, for whom they were created, and instead are plagued by the burden of unbearable absence and guilt. The latter is intensified by several factors including the awareness of one’s responsibility for the loss, the awareness of God’s wrath, and the agonized persistence of the passions and tempers (e.g., rage, envy, jealousy, revenge) which destroy the bond to the very objects that are so desperately desired.

In this way, hell is emblematic of a developmental conflict wherein aggression in response to discipline and conditional love diminishes the child’s original sense of intimacy with the parent. The persistence of unconscious rage and envy towards the authoritarian parent can not permit of reparation and the recovery of the original bond, thereby creating a permanent breach in the quality of relatedness. The central struggle in what Klein calls the depressive position (1988) (the fear that one’s aggression will destroy the good object) can be seen in Wesley’s depiction of the way in which a profound longing for divine presence is simultaneously coupled with the “unholy” passions and tempers which are responsible for the eternal rupture between the soul and God. Put differently, Wesley’s interpretation of hell is an ideal rendering of the “worst fears” of evangelical nurture - that ambivalence over issues such as the parent’s invasive discipline, conditional acceptance, and the frustration of autonomy will culminate in total rejection and the permanent loss of attachment. (My use of the expression “worst fears” is meant to imply that not all experiences of loss were necessarily couched in an underlying psychology of guilt and punishment. Although the cultural scene encouraged a modal tendency in the direction I have described, we must assume that there were also individuals whose sense of loss was primarily based on love, and whose grief was not inordinately complicated by conflict).

The same developmental issues are present in Wesley’s commentary on Adam and the fall (Wesley, 1984-87, II: pp. 189-190). In the beginning, Adam existed in a state of perfection. Because he was created in God’s image, Adam was endowed with the love
and knowledge of his creator. The period of undisturbed intimacy and innocence at the start of creation represents an early state of attachment characterized by an unambiguous identification with an all-good parent. However, Adam’s willful disobedience, an act of oral aggression (eating the forbidden fruit), severs the bond between himself and God. Again, Wesley prioritizes themes of separation and loss: Adam “dies” to his maker, and “loses the life of God”. Because of his infraction, Adam is deprived of God’s favor. Instead, he is, for the first time, subject to the power of servile fear, or, the threat of an angry parent whose love is denied in the face of the child’s wicked display of willfulness. The loss of primal intimacy is further encoded in Adam’s attempt to hide himself from God’s presence, an image symbolic of the child’s need to conceal his emotions. Adam’s offense “kills” his soul, such that he becomes steeped in wickedness, corrupt, abominable and wholly unclean (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 22). Here, expressed in the idiom of myth, we see the crystallization of an early superego formed in the wake of parental antagonism and the child’s struggle to assert initiative and autonomy. Wesley’s commentary clearly evinces a developmental line. With the increasing biological maturation of the infant’s motor skills and general mobility, along with growing sophistication in mental development, the emotional placidity of the child’s initial dependency relationship with the parent becomes disrupted by new developmental advances in the direction of autonomy - developments which are met by the parent’s disapproval.

The Split Imago

The development of internal representations, or schemas of self and other derived from interpersonal transactions, unfold in a developmental sequence which organizes these materials into higher order psychic structures that contribute directly to the functions of reality testing, relatedness to others, and the regulation of drives and affects. According to Blatt et al, the developmental sequence moves from “enactive, affective, and physicalistic to symbolic and abstract” (1997, p. 352). Therefore, object
representations are crucial ingredients for the development of psychic structure; the depersonification and abstraction of representations is key to the consolidation of the positive superego. Theorists from several schools of psychoanalytic thought emphasize the synthesis of polarized parental representations as part of the ongoing integration of the psyche (Mahler et al., 1975; Kernberg, 1976; Klein, 1988). Because it is predicated on the internalization of primary caretakers, one cause of distortions in superego development is due to failures in the synthesis of libidinal and aggressive dimensions of parental representations. Affectively opposed object representations, or split imagos, produce various kinds of complications including strong ambivalence, conflict, repression, oscillations between idealization and devaluation of self and other, shifts between elated and depressive mood states, etc.

The three culturally normative traumas of 18th-century British childrearing encouraged the polarization of self and object representations. For example, Greven claims that evangelical nurture and invasive parental authoritarianism provide adequate circumstances for the emergence of split imagos (Greven, 1991, pp. 141-147). When parental love is based on the conditions of absolute obedience, and steeped in threats of physical punishment and the withdrawal of affection, the child is highly prone to the defensive splitting of love and rage. As a result of dependency on the parent, rage attached to images of a hostile object and a humiliated self are either isolated or subject to repression. In this way, they are denied the opportunity for their affective extremity to be toned down and transformed by assimilation with positive representations. Greven argues that the repression of rage in evangelical nurture fosters an enduring ambivalence that is reflected in “permanent impulses to aggression and destruction” (p. 142), as well as contradictory representations of God as both a loving father and as a fearsome and angry task-master. These trends are observable in Wesley’s advice to parents on how to instruct children about the love of God: “Think what he can do! He can do whatever he pleases. He can strike me or you dead in a moment. But he loves you; he loves to do you
good” (emphasis added; quoted in Maddox, 1994, p. 63). Also, it is crucial to keep in mind that oscillations, reconciliations and transformations in these differing representations of the God imago are central to Wesley’s model of spiritual development.

With respect to early loss, contradictory emotions based on abandonment rage, guilt, and the need to idealize the lost object also encourage the splitting of self and object representations in order to maintain psychological equilibrium.

Evidence of split imagos and marked ambivalence are common in Methodist autobiographies. As a child, Sarah Crosby idealized the figure of Jesus: “From my childhood I had desires to serve God, and in particular to love Jesus Christ, and often wished I had lived when he was upon the earth, that I might, like Mary, have sat at his feet, and followed him, withersoever he went” (Arminian Magazine, 1806, p. 419). At the same time, however, she also felt a “painful wish” that she “might be as good as anyone was”. Funerals made her fret about her mortality and whether or not she would go to heaven when she died. Crosby concludes the opening paragraph of her narrative with reference to her unmannerly nature: “Yet I was extremely rude and heedless, so that some who knew me feared for me” (p. 419). Crosby’s fleeting summary of her childhood accentuates contradictory emotions that are reminiscent of evangelical nurture. Her idealized view of Jesus and her desire to serve and bask in his loving presence are offset by fears of not being good enough for divine acceptance. This promotes reflections on the perils of dying unprepared for judgment: “When I die what will become of my soul: if I were but sure of going to heaven, I would not care what became of my body” (p. 419). The juxtaposition of love and fear is followed by a reference to aggression, as expressed in her discourteous behavior.

At the age of seventeen, after a period of growing guilt over such worldly “distractions” as singing, dancing and card playing, Crosby’s conflict of ambivalence climaxed in a morbid panic attack.
...while sitting alone, I was struck, as I thought, with death; being seized with a cold trembling from head to foot, which increasing, I directly fell on my knees, and prayed the Lord to forgive my sins, and save my soul. All that I knew to be sin was then placed before me; so that I had but little hope of mercy. But while I laid myself down to die, my strength came to me again, for which I was very thankful, and made great promises to live to God; but did not put them in practice till some months after...” (pp. 419-420).

Ambivalence marks Crosby's entire account. She had a “strong propensity to delight” (p. 419) in profane diversions, although their unholy character left her feeling guilty and unhappy. After overcoming the fear that God would take her life, she is grateful for being spared and makes great promises, the realizations of which, are promptly postponed for several more months.

William Hunter was put to school early and taught to read the scriptures from childhood. His recollections convey two currents of feeling towards God: “I felt a degree of the fear of God when very young, and sweet drawings of love. Sometimes the thoughts of death were dreadful to me, so that I felt very unhappy” (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 589). Following this admission, Hunter immediately recounts a nightmare: “I once dreamed that Satan came to me, and would have me: when I waked I was full of fear, and prayed much that I might be delivered from him...” (p. 589). Given Hunter’s apprehension of God, along with his thoughts of death, the Satan nightmare can be seen as the negative pole of a split representation of deity. Hunter then reflects on his father, whom he says was “severe” and instilled in him much “dread” (p. 589). Hunter, however, justifies his father’s harshness with the claim that his own disobedience warranted such treatment. Here again, an abbreviated account of childhood is organized by conflicted patterns of ambivalence: Hunter experiences sweet drawings of love towards God, but fears him in connection with “dreadful” thoughts of death. In parallel, Hunter also “dreads” his earthly father, but experiences guilt and “[shame] before the Lord” for having been responsible for provoking his father’s wrath (p. 590).
When contradictory images of the parent remain largely separated from one
another, the ego’s continually shifting identification with an approving and then rejecting
object makes for a series of mood swings between rapturous acceptance and depressive
dejection. Widely divergent self and object images prevent relative constancy in
self-esteem.

Long accounts of spiritual struggle and growth in Methodist autobiographies are
regularly characterized by vacillations between elation and depression, idealization and
devaluation and perpetual efforts to keep unmanageable hostility in check. In tandem
with the style of Puritan and other Protestant conversion narratives, it is common in
Methodist accounts for writers to refer to cycles of “rebellion” against God, ranting and
blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, followed by despair and, in the extreme, reactive
suicidal impulses (Rubin, 1994, p. 129). Sarah Ryan’s narration of her spiritual
difficulties illustrates this trend. One evening at a Methodist class meeting, the “power
of God overwhelmed [her] soul” (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 302). Entering into
trance, Ryan fell back in her chair and lost her eye-sight. Immediately, Jesus appeared to
her “inward sight” (p. 302). This vision (along with words that were “applied with
power” during the following morning) convinced Ryan that her sins had been forgiven (p.
302). She rejoiced and continued full of “light, happiness and heaven” for six weeks (p.
302). However, introspection of sin, part of the Methodist pursuit of sanctification,
caused Ryan to doubt whether she really possessed faith and was ultimately forgiven by
God. Frustrated by her lack of certainty, Ryan experienced a compulsive hostility that is
noticeably offset by attempts to safeguard her adoration of God.

And feeling such enmity against God, I often thought, “Must I always bear
this burden? If God can deliver me from it, he shall. I long to worship him
in the beauty of holiness”. But all this time I was exceedingly distressed
and tempted of the devil. And when I attempted to pray, those thoughts
were continually suggested to me, that the Lord Jesus was only an
impostor, and the scripture a cunningly devised fable (p. 303).
Ryan’s dejection was deepened when she discovered that she harbored an idol in her breast (an abiding attachment to an absent husband) that stood between her soul and God. Consequently, she “continued in great distress and anguish of soul” (p. 303) until an Easter service when she again had words applied during communion and was “filled with light and joy and love” (p. 304). For six weeks, Ryan “went on in glorious light and was taken above temptation” (p. 306). Once more the cycle repeated itself. Her awareness of the evil which remained in her heart, now “more dreadful than ever”, triggered a “violent” return of her “old temptation, of denying the divinity of Christ” (p. 304). Ryan’s attempts to conscientiously apprehend her “enmity” against God, a practice which was essential to spiritual renewal, simultaneously invoked doubt over divine acceptance, and caused further frustration and aggression. Intermittent episodes of ecstatic communion along with renewed assurances of divine forgiveness provided temporary respite from her worry, leaving her spiritually exhilarated until the introspection of sin deflated her yet again. Ryan’s palpable ambivalence led to alternating periods of identification with an idealized, and then devalued and rejecting image of God.

John Haime’s autobiographical account is a remarkable example of an individual whose lifelong spiritual struggles were punctuated by cycles of unbearable depressions, and unitive raptures that provide only fleeting comfort and reassurance (Armimian Magazine, 1780, pp. 207 ff.). Haime’s elaborate depiction of his profound ambivalence, aggression and retaliatory anxiety begins with a short synopsis of his childhood. The description is paradigmatic of a lifelong conflict: “...I was undutiful to my parents, and much given to Cursing, Swearing, Lying and Sabbath-breaking. But I was not easy in this way, being often afraid, that the devil would take me away” (p. 208). A great deal of Haime’s desultory life is spent wandering and traveling in solitude; although lonely, he is continually uprooting himself and fleeing from permanent relationships with others.
Tyrannized by a savage superego, Haime’s battle with his intense aggression produces a variety of symptomatic states and actions.

Haime speaks of demonically infused (i.e. compulsive) “reasonings” or doubts concerning “the being of a God”, which intensified “till [his] senses were almost gone” (p. 208). Although the latter phrase is a standard trope in these narratives, there is strong evidence to suggest that the language is psychologically accurate. On one occasion, while traveling as a preacher in Ireland, Haime’s distress induced a temporary fugue state, leaving him deprived of his senses and disoriented. Supporting himself by a gate in the road, he was insensible as to where he was, where he came from, and where he was going (p. 309). Haime also experienced compulsive temptations to blaspheme: “[Satan] so strongly tempted me to blaspheme God, that I could not withstand” (p. 208). Aggression was met with retaliatory dread of damnation and despair. Haime speaks of his efforts to ward off powerful urges to utter blasphemies publicly in church (p. 210), and in one particular instance, his attempt to maintain self-control resulted in a spontaneous eruption of blood from his nose and mouth (p. 267). Despair over unmanageable aggression triggered such vehement suicidal impulses that he was once carried into hospital, “just dropping into hell” (p. 265).

One indication of the extent of Haime’s aggression is the frequency with which concrete manifestations of the demonic appear in his narrative. For example, at times he was unable to close his eyes and sleep lest he should be snatched away by the devil and wake up in hell (p. 209). He often experienced demonic nightmares. One evening, as a result of his resentment towards God, Haime decided not to pray before going to bed. He consequently felt a “hell in [his] conscience” and was “thoroughly persuaded, the Devil was in the room: and...fully expected every moment, that he would be let loose upon [him]” (pp. 209-210). Reifications of the bad object were sometimes coupled with hysteria:
...one day as I was walking alone, and faintly crying for mercy, suddenly such a hot blast of brimstone flashed in my face, as almost took away my breath. And presently after, as I walked along, an invisible power struck up my heels, and threw me violently upon my face (p. 267).

Haime's aggression not only precipitated guilt and extreme self-loathing, but ultimately created an unbearable isolation that took on cosmic proportions. Some of Haime's descriptions of his loneliness are phenomenologically similar to Laski's category of desolation experiences which are characterized by features exactly opposite to unitive ecstasies (cf. peak experiences): chaos versus unity; incarceration versus liberation; anguish and grief versus joy and peace; abandonment and exile versus contact; emptiness versus enlargement (1961, pp. 162-163). Merkur holds that desolation experiences are directly related to unitive ecstasies in that they represent the inversion of unitive ideas - inclusion, relation, propriety etc. (1999a, pp. 120-121). Therefore, the cognitive-affective contents of desolation experiences may be viewed as the product of resistances against unitive ideation due to conflict. Unitive ecstasies are symbolic manifestations of ego ideal materials (Haartman, 1998a). Since ego ideals are developmentally rooted in internal object representations, the inverse relation between desolation experiences and unitive ecstasies is generally connected to the conflictual dynamics of the split imago.

The desolation experiences reported by Haime evince ideas of negative or inverse unity. Separation, loneliness and self-blame are projected as cosmic totalities. While wandering mournfully in solitary places, he felt as if all others were content except himself, and believed that he had no place in heaven, having sinned beyond mercy (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 208). Furthermore, both God and humanity had abandoned him: "I thought, there was none that loved me now, none that had any concern for my soul, but that God had taken away from everybody, the affection, they once had" (p. 272). The cosmos is perceived in terms of persecutory absences.
I could not look a man in the face, nor bear to be in any company...everything was a burden to me...The roads, the hedges, the trees, everything seemed cursed of God. Nature appeared void of God, and in the possession of the Devil. The fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, all appeared in league against me (pp. 265-266)

In keeping with the unitive logic of synchronicity, events in the external world are brought into direct personal relation to Haime as projections of his internal reproaches and, in this way, manifest in the form of negative synchronicities.

In rough weather, it was often suggested to me, “This is on your account! See, the earth is cursed for your sake; and it will be no better till you are in hell...Everything seemed to make against me. I could not open the Bible anywhere but it condemned me (pp. 271-272).

Throughout the narrative, Haime experiences intermittent raptures which briefly restore his sense of cosmic inclusion and relatedness to others and God. The following two examples occur early on in Haime’s account.

One day...I cried aloud... “Oh that thou wouldst hear my prayer, and let my cry come up before thee!”...He took away all my sorrow and fear, and filled my soul with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost...all nature seemed to rejoice with me...But I was so ignorant, I thought I should know war no more (emphasis added; p. 212).

The next morning as I was going to water my horse, just as he entered the river, in a moment I felt the love of God flowing into my soul. Instantly all pain and sorrow fled away. No fear of hell or the Devil was left; but love to all mankind now filled my ravished soul (emphasis added; p. 212).

Rapturous interludes restore his self-esteem because they convey an elated sense of inclusion in the world of nature, human others and in the accepting eyes of God. Yet, over and over, the emotional intensity of these moments fades back into familiar dejection. Haime was unable to sustain self-esteem, and although his unitive ecstasies brought a temporary sense of loving connectedness with others, his aggression and guilt habitually returned to spoil the process. This pattern is consistent with Haime’s constant uprootedness and inability to remain settled in any one place, despite his longing for relatedness. Haime’s aggression prevented the internal synthesis of widely divergent
self and object representations. The fear of his own destructiveness promoted a life dictated by repeatedly unsuccessful rapprochements. For example, Haime states that after twenty years of severe depression, he finally achieved a relatively enduring sense of God's acceptance (pp. 310-313). This momentous turn occurred during a prolonged visit with a kind family for whom Haime acted as a caretaker and spiritual overseer. Although he considered staying on with them, he soon found that he was “bound in spirit”, unable to pray without stammering, and felt “altogether comfortless” (p. 312). Soon after, he resumed his rounds as a traveling circuit preacher. It should be noted that the extremity and duration of Haime's depression were exceptional among Methodist autobiographical narratives.

All of the data presented above bears directly on the problem of personality transformation. In the previous chapter, I stated that if we are to understand psychic integration, we need to have an exact definition of what is being integrated. My examination of psychological development and change in early Methodism is ultimately based on the problem of the split imago (i.e., conflicting self and object representations). Wesley's approach to spiritual development, his attempt to instill an immediate sense of God's forgiving presence, his instructions on how to use meditative techniques as a way of consolidating the moral insights that were an inherent part of the sense of presence, in short, his "method", provided followers with an opportunity to heal the internal splits and to overcome the debilitating effects of infantile ambivalence. Each stage in his model represents an advancement in this development, a continual working through of aggression. With every step towards the ideal of sanctification - the eradication of sin - Methodists gained further mastery of their hostility. At the same time, they experienced an increasingly stronger feeling of satisfaction, self-regard, and purpose in being able to genuinely embrace and continually abide by their ideals.
CHAPTER 3
THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Wesley’s lengthiest discussion of sanctification is his 1766 treatise, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, which was written in the aftermath of a second Methodist revival that flourished during the early 1760’s. Part of Wesley’s intention in composing this document was to offer a reasoned and more tempered definition of sanctification than that which had been touted by radicals such as Maxfield and Bell (Fraser, 1988, p. 321). Prior to the revival, these men had been lay-preachers for the Methodist cause. They eventually separated from Wesley’s fold to advance an extreme version of infallible perfection. Referring to themselves as “The Witnesses” (p. 267), Maxfield’s and Bell’s schism preached an “absolute perfection” that matched the stature of heavenly angels (p. 283). Given that the current political climate eschewed any perceived forms of “enthusiasm” (Lee, 1931), Wesley openly condemned the witnesses for fear that their extravagances would only confirm “the recurring suspicion that Methodism was simply a new version of the wild sects of the Interregnum, or the more recent French Prophets” (Rack, 1989, p. 337). Among their extreme claims, the Witnesses professed miraculous healings (curing the blind and raising the dead), exemption from death, and a state of complete renewal that dispensed with any need for self-examination, prayer and participation in the sacraments (Fraser, 1988, pp. 338, 273ff).

Wesley relied heavily on the reports of others, and the revival fomented a variety of positions on sanctification whose validity he carefully considered. The upsurge of perfectionism allowed Wesley to study the phenomena up close. According to Fraser, the revival became a “laboratory” designed to test ideas about the possibilities of grace (p. 318). Whereas previously, Wesley had generally believed that sanctification occurred shortly before death, what he observed during the revival convinced him that it could be
sought and expected as a present possibility. Divergent perspectives arose and sparked controversy (pp. 237-336). Were there more than two degrees of regeneration? Was there a third “gift” beyond justification and sanctification? Some claimed that after the heart was cleansed from sin, another degree of regeneration, the attainment of the mind of Christ (i.e., having one’s mind permanently and uninterruptedly focused on God without any distraction or “wandering thoughts”) was to be expected. Did sanctification include an assurance of final perseverance, the impossibility of backsliding? What was the relationship between gradual growth in holiness and the fact that some testified that sanctification was an instantaneous event? Was the eradication of sin absolute, or qualified by the contingencies of a mortal body? Did all those who were sanctified receive an experimental proof of the trinity in the form of a vision?

After the flurry of revivalism and radicalism had settled, Wesley felt a need to provide a written consolidation of his views on these issues. Thus, his 1766 treatise provides definitive answers to all of the foregoing problems. As usual, Wesley is at pains to formulate logically defensible positions with a minimum of ambiguity. Therefore, early on in the treatise, he provides a definitive outline of the stages of spiritual development, including brief descriptions of their experiential and affective characteristics (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, pp. 312-313). After delineating these ranks, he remarks that “this is the strongest account [he] ever gave of Christian Perfection”, and adds that it is “the same which [he] taught from the beginning” (p. 313). The latter statement, however, eclipses the evolution of Wesley’s thinking on the topic of spiritual development and sanctification. Before examining this crucial outline of stages, perhaps the most explicit overview of Wesley’s model, we need to have some sense of the gradual maturation of his understanding of holiness, and closely related theological notions such as faith, assurance, and salvation (Maddox, 1994, pp. 124-127; Heitzenrater, 1989, pp. 106-149; 1995, pp. 77-95).
Already in the mid 1720's, as an Oxford undergraduate, Wesley's conception of faith as the assurance of salvation was influenced by Lockean empiricism. Even as his views evolved, the general idea that the assurance of God's acceptance was a question of *certain evidence* remained constant. It was the psychological constitution of that evidence, its mode and content, that shifted as time went on. During this early period, faith was an "assent to a proposition on rational grounds" (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 110). Since divine testimony was the most reasonable of all evidence, faith was rationally ensured by conformity to the conditions that ensured God's promise of acceptance (Maddox, 1994, p. 124). In an exchange of letters, Wesley's parents warned him of the deistic overtones in his thinking - belief predicated on rationality alone was heretical. Wesley accepted their criticism, acknowledging that grace is an assent to God's revelation precisely because God has chosen to reveal it, and not because truth is derived from reason (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 111).

At this time, Wesley's definition of holiness was informed mainly by "external measures" (p. 111) such as refraining from sin, attending church, saying prayers and participating in the sacraments. From 1725 onwards, he became increasingly concerned with cultivating an inward piety. Influenced by such writers as Jeremy Taylor, William Law, Henry Scougal, and Thomas à Kempis, Wesley's idea of faith began to encompass proper motives and intentions, as well as behavioral action. He therefore devised a systematic regime for the cultivation of inner holiness. A rigorous schedule of ascetic regulations with respect to sleep, diet, study and worship was supplemented by self-examination and meditation. The spirit and structure of Wesley's efforts became the basis of the Oxford "Holy Club", a network of undergraduate students whose conspicuous piety and works of charity attracted attention. They were derisively referred to as "Methodists", a term which Wesley eventually adopted.

During the latter half of the 1720s, Wesley believed that the certain evidence of assurance resided in the consciousness of the sincerity of one's efforts (pp. 114-116).
This position, however, proved to be somewhat unsatisfactory. Not only were the signs of inward holiness more difficult to gauge than those dictated by external measures, the very nature of introspection led to a kind of double bind. His careful examination of sin, a part of the means by which virtue was implanted, cast doubts on the extent to which he possessed sincerity, and hence, faith (Gunter, 1989, pp. 102-103, 114-115). Because his uncertainty only made him more scrupulous, his piety became markedly obsessive (Heitzenrater, 1995, p. 53; Rack, 1989, p. 95; Steele, 1994, p. 108). As we shall see, a crucial feature in Wesley's mature spirituality is the way in which the problems of depression and anxiety induced by self-examination were dispelled by recourse to an experiential sense of God's forgiving presence.

Beginning in 1732, Wesley's commitment to inner piety or "holiness of heart" was for a time influenced by mystical writers (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 116-118). In addition to his familiarity with William Law, Wesley studied the works of Mmes. Bourignon and Guyon, Fenelon, Mons de Renty and others. The mystics' emphasis on "purification", their rejection of temporal concerns (rules, discipline and sacramental ritual) leading ultimately to other-worldly union with God seemed to offer a solution to the problem of Wesley's "growing obsession with the rules of holy living" (p. 116). In the end, the mystical approach proved to be equally problematic. Wesley's personal style was inherently "compulsive, over organized [and] perfectionistic" (Moore, 1974, p. 36). Moore claims that these attributes were derived not only from Susanna Wesley's autocratic style of parenting, but also her belief that John was especially chosen to achieve unique status as a man of God. Wesley's character, his perfectionism and ambition, did not sit well with the passivity of mystical practice. The removal of good works deprived him of the opportunity to gain a sense of assurance through action. Thus, although his later rejection of mystical piety was based on a pragmatic critique of otherworldliness, it should be noted that the emphasis mystics placed upon passivity and
“blind faith” (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 118; Tuttle, 1989 pp.106-107) created too much anxiety for one with an obsessive nature.

During his mission to Georgia in the mid 1730’s, Wesley first came into contact with the Moravian Brethren (Heitzenrater, 1989, pp. 119-124). In conversations with August Spangenberg and later, on his return to England, with Peter Bohler, Wesley became convinced that Christian faith was a matter of trust bequeathed by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. Largely under the influence of Bohler's teachings, Wesley began to understand that the assurance of salvation was imparted by the spirit in a single moment. Bohler also claimed that faith was not subject to degrees; weakness of faith was an entirely meaningless concept. Either an individual possessed it fully, or remained unaccepted and unforgiven by God. When it came, the inner workings of the Holy Spirit conveyed an immediate apprehension of divine pardon, as well as the complete manifestation of the fruits of the spirit: a confidant joy and the freedom from sin, fear and doubt. Any lapse in these subjective criteria of assurance, any residue of anxiety or diminution of joy, was a sure sign of unbelief. During Wesley’s own conversion at Aldersgate in May of 1738, his heart “was strangely warmed” (quoted in Whaling, 1981, p. 20). He writes: “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given to me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death”. Even as he had received the assurance of forgiveness and felt that his sins were taken away, he immediately doubted his status as justified by God. Adjudicating his experience by Bohler’s rigid standards, Wesley believed he did not possess the full measure of the fruits of the spirit. Although he experienced peace in being forgiven, he lacked palpable feelings of joy, and love for Christ.

Later that same year, Wesley traveled to Germany to meet with Nicholaus von Zinzendorf, the head of a Moravian community in Herrnhut (Heitzenrater, 1989, pp. 124-126). Here Wesley discovered that some of the Brethren professed more moderate views of faith that differed from Bohler’s either/or stance. Zinzendorf held that the
perception of assurance could occur after the actual moment of justification, therefore bringing into question the necessity of assurance as a prerequisite of the former. Speaking in terms that were more consistent with Wesley’s own experience, Zinzendorf stated that peace may be evident at justification and that joy was frequently absent (Heitzenrater, 1995, p. 83). Overall, the German Moravians appeared to extol a more differentiated view of the matter. Unlike Bohler, they made various distinctions that allowed for degrees of faith, an option which was more attractive to Wesley given his own lack of certainty. The Brethren discriminated between justification and assurance (theologically and chronologically), faith and assurance, and the beginning and fullness of salvation (p. 83). Although Wesley would never fully accept all aspects of Zinzendorf’s theological stance, these distinctions became intrinsic to Methodist spirituality.

Since Wesley’s sojourn in Germany provided him with an alternate perspective, he became increasingly dubious of Bohler’s absolutist claims. Ultimately, Wesley concluded that Bohler’s conception of faith collapsed justification (the forgiveness of sin) and sanctification (the elimination of sin) (Fraser, 1988, pp. 34-41; Heitzenrater, 1995, p. 83; Rack, 1989, pp. 394-397). As is evident in early sermons such as Salvation by Faith and The Almost Christian, Wesley continued publicly to adhere to the absolutist position. Privately, however, he was becoming more convinced of the difference between faith and full assurance, and the idea that one could be a Christian without being fully so. Moreover, he realized that Bohler’s stance had unfavorable psychological implications. His lofty criteria could easily induce despair in those who had in fact already received some legitimate measure of Christian faith (Maddox, 1994, p. 124).

Wesley returned from Herrnhut in September of 1738. From this time forward, he gradually dismantled Bohler’s stark dichotomy between Christians and non-Christians and began to formulate qualitative distinctions and levels, moving from static perfectionism to degrees of faith. Now, authentic faith could exist amidst doubt and fear.
The ideal of perfection, one that largely coincided with Bohler’s description, was by no means abandoned. The eradication of sin was preserved as an ideal, but seen in a more processual light. Freedom from the reign of sin, or grace given to overcome temptation and guilt, chronologically preceded freedom from the remains of sin (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 129). In the same way, the assurance of faith, or present pardon, differed from the full assurance of salvation. Wesley tended to view the latter category, the promise of unerring perseverance unto salvation, as exceptional and rare. Faith was acquiring a dynamic character involving the active co-operation of its recipients (Maddox, 1994, pp. 147, 171-173). It could be enhanced or neglected. In as much as it became a matter of “daily confidence”, Wesley never lost sight of the possibility of backsliding (Heitzenrater, 1995, p. 89).

By 1747, the essential tenets of Wesley’s temporal and qualitative modifications of Moravian perfectionism were delineated publicly (Maddox, 1994, pp. 126-127). Eventually, even the fear of God and reliance on one’s own imperfect righteousness, a condition which commonly preceded the perception of divine pardon, was regarded as an initial form of justifying faith, one which anticipated the more complete reception of assurance. The notion that faith had various developmental manifestations clearly demonstrates Wesley’s serious consideration of subjective and psychological variables.

Already in 1741, applying the biblical allegory of Christian growth as found in St. John’s first epistle, Wesley articulated a coherent picture of graded development (Wesley, 1984-87, II: p. 105). “Babes” acquire peace with God because their sins are forgiven; they are freely justified. To interpolate a more theologically elaborate definition of “babes in Christ”, we find that in 1763, Wesley describes them as “partially sanctified” - born in the spirit, they are still carnal in part (I: p. 326-332). Thus, although these believers are delivered from the power and guilt of sin, they still feel the remains of the “old man”. Even as this power “crucifies” the flesh, they remain aware that it “struggles to break free from the cross”. For example, Wesley explains that an individual
may experience a strong propensity to anger. Yet, strength is imparted by the Holy Spirit to prevent its actual expression.

“Young men” differ from babes in possessing an abiding witness of pardon (I: p. 105). At this level of holiness, doubts and fears as to one’s status are permanently dispensed with. “Fathers” are in possession of full sanctification in being wholly freed of evil thoughts and tempers. To interpolate once again, in the 1766 treatise on perfection, (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 311), Wesley identifies the psychological distinction between babes and fathers. For the former, evil thoughts arise, but immediately vanish by “looking up” to Christ. Since the thoughts of fathers are continually fixed in prayer, evil inclinations have no opportunity to even arise, and, in this way, are completely eradicated.

Degrees of faith and growth in holiness, here encapsulated in metaphors of lifespan development, are implicit in Wesley’s 1766 delineation of spiritual stages leading to sanctification. Because Wesley regarded this statement as his “strongest” account of the process of sanctification, I have taken the liberty to quote the text at length.

Indeed, how God may work, we cannot tell: but the general manner wherein he does work is this: Those once trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, that they were rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, are by the Spirit of God applying his word convinced that they are poor and naked. All the things that they have done are brought to their rememberance, and set in array before them, so that they can see the wrath of God hanging over their heads, and feel that they deserve the damnation of hell. In their trouble they cry unto the Lord, and he shows them that he has taken away their sins, and opens the kingdom of heaven in their hearts, righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Sorrow and pain are fled away, and sin has no more dominion over them. Knowing they are justified freely through faith in his blood, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ; they rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts.
In this peace they remain for days, or weeks, or months, and commonly suppose that they shall know war any more; ‘till some of their old enemies, their bosom sins, or the sin which did most easily beset them
(perhaps anger or desire), assault them again, and thrust sore at them that they may fall. Then arises fear that they shall not endure to the end, and often doubt whether God has not forgotten them, or whether they did not deceive themselves in thinking their sins were forgiven. Under these clouds, especially if they reason with the devil, they go mourning all the day long. But it is seldom long before their Lord answers for himself, sending them the Holy Ghost to comfort them, to bear witness continually with their spirits, that they are the children of God. Then they are indeed meek and gentle and teachable, even as a little child. And now first do they see the ground of their heart, which God before would not disclose unto them, lest the soul should fail before him, and the spirit which he had made. Now they see all the hidden abominations there, the depths of pride, self-will, and hell; yet having the witness in themselves: thou art an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ; even in the midst of this fiery trial, which continually heightens both the strong sense of they then have of their inability to help themselves and the inexpressible hunger they feel after a full renewal in his image, in righteousness and true holiness. Then God is mindful of the desire of them that fear him, and gives them a single eye, and a pure heart. He stamps upon them his own image and superscription; he creates them anew in Christ Jesus; he comes unto them with his Son and Blessed Spirit, and fixing his abode in their souls, brings them into the rest which remains for the people of God” (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, pp. 112-113).

Since the rest of the chapters in the present study are based on the chronology of stages as laid out in the preceding extract, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to providing a brief overview of the basic phenomenology and related psychodynamics.

The initial stage, which Wesley elsewhere refers to as “repentance” (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 225), may be regarded as a desolation crisis (Laski, 1961, pp. 160-170). Here the solemnity of God’s law is forcefully recognized and accompanied by an acute conviction of personal sin and the need for spiritual renewal. Repentant persons are plagued by the belief that their conduct and vanity are worthy of damnation. Low self-esteem is reinforced by the “sight of the wrath of God hanging over their head”. During this phase, religious symbolism is used to exacerbate and magnify a pre-existing neurotic depression derived from the vicissitudes of the three modal traumas of childhood (see chapter two). In other words, we may say that the pre-existing neurosis is transformed into an existential crisis. Unconscious ambivalence and guilt stemming

62
originally from conflicted relations with parents are transferentially manifested in the anxiety over divine judgment. God’s wrath is symbolic of a punitive superego which tyrannizes and demoralizes a paralyzed ego. Wesley writes that “Those who once trusted in themselves are...by the Spirit of God applying his word convinced that they are poor and naked”. This phrasing connotes an active and voluntary involvement in the deepening of the depression, and thus refers to various forms of ritual mourning which accompany repentance. The courage to engage in ritual mourning and the ability to tolerate the deepening intensity of the desolation is paradoxically assured by the promise of God’s eventual acceptance. As we shall see, it is the desire for divine forgiveness, along with the wish for more wholesome and satisfying forms of relatedness to others, that mobilizes the crisis and brings it to a head. The individual’s ability to sustain a sense of hopefulness, to forge a therapeutic alliance with the positive superego, is key to the resolution of this phase of conflict.

The symbolic amplification of conflict mobilizes important shifts in the defense structure of the personality. In general terms, the Methodist desolation crisis allows for a conscious acknowledgment and abreaction of repressed rage and guilt (Rammage, 1967, pp. 193-194). Desolation culminates in justification, a unitive ecstasy characterized by the apprehension of God’s forgiving presence. The ecstasy may be regarded as the emergence of an inspiration, a creative solution that is unconsciously formulated during the previous phase, and manifests as an ego ideal. Methodist repentance may be reasonably brought into line with other cross-cultural techniques of ritual mourning used to achieve religious ecstasy (Merkur, 1989, p. 127).

The experiential characteristics of justification, the second stage, are psychologically and thematically interrelated. The justified become aware of God’s pardoning love, and are blissfully enraptured. This, in turn, eradicates guilt, anxiety and the sense of condemnation. Forgiveness is witnessed directly by conscience. The existential dilemma of the previous stage is temporarily resolved by divine acceptance
and the dramatic suspension of self-recrimination. The justified feel an intense devotion to God which is generalized into an empathic unitive love for all mankind. Central to justification is a metamorphosis of the conception and experience of deity, a transformation of the God imago (Rizzuto, 1979; Meissner, 1984).

God is no longer the projection of a punitive superego, exacting obedience out of fear. He is now an indulgent father compelling obedience out of love. During the repentance phase, intense depression and anxiety reach a threshold activating a compensatory abreactive process resulting in a spontaneous alternate state of consciousness. The unitive ecstasy is the vehicle through which an idealized imago is made conscious and replaces its persecutory counterpart.

The third stage in the process involves an initial state of psychological inflation which is eventually curtailed by depression. Wesley states that the justified remain in peace “for days, or weeks, or months, and commonly suppose that they shall not know war any more; ‘till some of their old enemies, their bosoms sins...assault them again...”.

The justification ecstasy typically induces a state of jubilation with certain manic overtones. Methodist autobiographies frequently attest to a loss of both appetite and the desire for sleep as a result of an all consuming pre-occupation with God (e.g., Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 189). This initial infatuation and relief causes many to believe that the process of sanctification has already been completed. In time, however, various “unholy” inclinations, which for a period had been put to rest, resurface and lead to a resumption of the previous depression. The sense of failure in being unable to sustain the heightened emotional rapport with their religious ideals, the disappointment of feeling as though they were falling back into patterns of pre-conversion conflict causes them to become uncertain of their status. They wonder if they have been “forgotten”, or abandoned by God, and whether or not their justification was authentic. A period of mourning is then surmounted by the comforting return of the Holy Spirit. It is important
to note that the resumption of assurance is portrayed as *permanent*: now the Holy Ghost bears "witness continually with their spirits..."

In psychodynamic terms, after the repentance phase, unconscious aggression has not actually been worked through, but is split off, thereby accounting for the manic overestimation of personal holiness. Eventually, currents of unconscious aggression are stirred and return in the form of doubt. This "dark night" (Fauteux, 1994, pp. 63-82) pattern of mourning provides an important opportunity for the commencement of an active working through of neurotic depression. The sense of being abandoned by an absent God (a fantasy that used to rationalize persistent aggression and "immorality"), recapitulates a childhood dilemma. Aggression towards the parent is projected and experienced as rejection. Now individuals utilize the memory of their recent acceptance by and love for God as a source of motivational strength to withstand the lure of temptation (acting out aggression), and struggle to maintain hope in the resilience of the bond. The ability to tolerate the frustration of uncertainty and maintain trust throughout this period encourages the growth of psychic structure in the form of both impulse control and the further consolidation of an inner object representation whose goodness can bear the pressures of rage and ambivalence. The successful enactment of this developmental task is met by the revival of assurance, a renewed bestowal of the superego's approval and love which is now enduring. What the superego initially inspired in ecstasy, the ego now begins to actualize in practice. This intrapsychic work involves processes that parallel the achievement of libidinal object constancy (McDevitt and Mahler, 1989).

The fourth stage of Wesley's model is characterized primarily by the introspection of sin, a meditative technique which is indispensable to sanctification, or "righteousness and true holiness", "a single eye and a pure heart". It commences at a point when the witness of pardon has become permanent, for then children of God are "meek and gentle and teachable". There is an important link between the persistence of
the witness, on the one hand, and introspection and self-knowledge, on the other. Wesley states that here, for the first time, believers "see the ground of their heart, which God before would not disclose unto them". They see "hidden abominations", "the depths of pride and self-will and hell". Yet, in undergoing the "fiery trial" of introspection, in apprehending their carnal wickedness accompanied by the threat of damnation, they continue to feel God’s pardoning acceptance. In short, a sound therapeutic alliance with the God imago strengthens the ego. Herein lies the genius of Wesley’s method. The achievement of an abiding sense of forgiveness provides the courage to engage in the self-examination of the very impulses, thoughts, feelings and intentions which are starkly opposed to the will of God, and are otherwise felt to incite his wrath. Previously, these impulses may have created anxiety or depression; they may have been acted upon or unsuccessfully suppressed. In principle, they can now be systematically examined without interference by forms of neurotic reactivity. The persistence of divine acceptance mitigates depressive anxiety, while identification with religious ideals, the "inexpressible hunger" after full renewal, ensures that temptation will not translate into action. The achievement of a stable representation of a benign deity, the equivalent of libidinal object constancy with respect to the God imago, allows for this integration to occur. In this way, aggression which was initially split-off during justification can now be more substantially resolved.

It must be kept in mind that Wesley’s rendering of discrete phases is an abstraction. His strict chronological demarcation of the stages is in part determined by the need to classify observations in accordance with his interpretation of scriptural standards, such as St. John’s metaphors of lifespan development (i.e., "babes", "young men" and "fathers"). Certainly, the formulation of coherent distinctions has heuristic worth both theologically and pastorally. On the other hand, Methodist autobiographical narratives reveal a great deal of idiosyncratic variety in terms of spiritual progress. Unencumbered linear progression through the stages is seldom represented. Thus,
Hauerwas (1985, p. 253) points out that Wesley’s scheme of stages is “too neat”; such sequential “exactness” is not true to actual patterns of human development. It does not adequately account for regressions and the fact that the stages overlap.

A final observation is necessary. In classical psychoanalysis, the modus operandi of the “recovery”, the overcoming of resistances and the working through of unconscious fixations resides in the transference. Freud writes, “...in the hands of the physician, [the transference] becomes the most powerful therapeutic instrument and it plays a part scarcely to be overestimated in the dynamics of the process of cure” (Freud, 1923 [1922], p. 247). The notion that the patient displaces on to the analyst the essential patterns of object relatedness established primarily in childhood remains axiomatic in the post-classical development of psychoanalytic thought. The therapeutic action of analysis resides in the working through of conflict within the transference itself (Rycroft, 1973, p.169). In classical terms, the conditions of the clinical encounter - lying prone on the couch, verbalizing the free flow of one’s thoughts, experiencing the intimacy of sustained personal disclosure - summon the transference into being and thus mobilize and amplify the patient’s neurosis in direct relation to the analyst. According to this view, the transference relationship necessarily exacerbates and facilitates the neurosis towards a therapeutic end. Thwarted love and rage, rigidly embedded forms of interpersonal expectations such as the anticipation of seduction or rejection, feelings of envy, hostility and affection - all these must emerge in the immediacy of the encounter in order for change to occur.

The basic assumption in this view of the remedial effect of psychoanalysis can be used to illuminate the psychology of transformation in Wesleyan spirituality. In the latter case, a crucial transference is played out in the realm of religious symbolism, primarily in relation to individual’s culturally mediated perception of God. In Wesley’s model, the exacerbation of the neurosis first occurs in the desolation phase. The “transferential” dread of divine condemnation intensifies pre-existing depressive trends. An equally
powerful wish to unite with an unambivalent object, reinforced by the promise of Christ’s unconditional acceptance, is activated and then realized in the ecstatic moment of justification. The unprecedented access to a positive imago, whose actuality is heightened by the cognitive and affective features of the ecstasy, is then subsequently utilized to overcome the debilitating legacy of unconscious aggression.
In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, one of the inaugural texts of psychology and religion, James created phenomenological typologies of experience which represented perennial trends in religiosity (1985). Heavily influenced by Protestant thought and revivalism, the universality of James’ categories must be brought into question. Even so, it remains significant that he identified religious melancholy as one of the essential forms. In his discussion of conversion, he posits a *direct and operative relationship between despair and religious awakening*. The conscious contents of religious and existential depressions activate compensatory processes in the subconscious (pp. 166-258). An ideological solution precipitates outside of awareness and manifests itself, whether gradually or suddenly, as a jubilant awakening which resolves the depression.

James’ treatment of the catalyzing role of religious melancholy represents the Protestant variation of a cross-cultural phenomenon in which forms of depression, whether spontaneous or deliberately activated by ritual mourning, lead to religious ecstasy. For example, Zaehner refers to states in nature mysticism which he interprets as “the manic and depressive poles of what we now call a manic-depressive psychosis” (1957, p. 85). States of “contraction”, or “extreme depression” and “utter abandonment” are contrasted by an “expansion” of the soul (p. 161). Over and above Zaehner’s unwarranted pathologization, Laski argues that his correlation of nature mysticism and bi-polar states is too narrow.

But the acceptance and documentation of these sad states in religious mysticism suggest that if some mystical states do have a relation to manic-depressive psychoses, such a relation is not confined to the experience of people identified by Zaehner as not having had theistic experiences (1961, p. 161).
That this bi-polar dynamic also appears in theistic contexts is shown by its presence in Christian spirituality. Laski cites St. John of the Cross’ dark night of the soul (p. 160). St. John’s description of a darkness that is eventually dispelled by an illumination is one instance of a common theme in Christian “affective mysticism” (Moller, 1965). Beginning in the twelfth century with St. Bernard of Clairvaux, affective mysticism emphasized an intensely personal relationship to God, where the descriptive language of ecstatic union expressed the “amorous longings of the mystic” (p. 116). Fluctuating passions brought into play by separation from and union with divinity became paradigmatic. Two examples suffice to illustrate the point. Sofia Von Klignau describes a unitive ecstasy that is preceded by a guilt-ridden depression. After a midnight mass, she stood behind the altar and contemplated her faithlessness, her “defiled and sullied” soul which she felt was “ill-pleasing and loathsome in the sight of God” (quoted in Buber, 1985: 81-83). Her dissatisfaction somatized into physical symptoms and pain. When her torment became intolerable, she fell into a swoon and collapsed several times. She felt “despicable”, like “a worm that crawls upon the earth.”. Later, she retired to her bed, made the sign of the cross and recited the verse, “In manus tuas”. She writes:

And when I had said [the verse], I saw that a light beautiful and blissful beyond measure was coming from heaven, and it surrounded me and shone through me and illuminated me entirely, and my heart was transformed all of a sudden and filled with an unspeakable and strange joy, so that I utterly and completely forgot all the misery and torment that I had ever known until this time.

Similarly, Arbman indicates that during the mystical period of St. Theresa of Avila’s life, she suffered acute spiritual crises, “states of violently agitated tormenting unrest, doubt, abandonment, anxiety and spiritual anguish, sometimes complete impotence and confusion” (1963, p. 43). These “vehement depressive crises” often ended in ecstasy: “a wonderful, incomparable consolation and elevation, joy, satisfaction, courage and confidence” (p. 43).
Outside of Christian spirituality, Kakar identifies the dark night pattern in Ramakrishna’s first ecstatic encounter with the Mother Goddess (1991, p. 11). The _darshan_, or vision, was preceded by a “full-fledged depression”: restlessness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, weeping, and suicidal thoughts. Ramakrishna said,

> There was then an intolerable anguish in my heart because I could not have Her vision. Just as a man wrings a towel forcibly to squeeze out all the water from it, I felt as if somebody caught hold of my heart and mind and was wringing them likewise. Greatly afflicted by the thought that I might not have the mother’s vision, I was in great agony. I thought there was no more living in such a life. My eyes suddenly fell upon the sword that was in the Mother’s temple. I made up my mind to put an end to my life that very moment...suddenly I had the wonderful vision of the Mother, and fell down unconscious. I did not know what happened then in the external world...But in my heart of hearts, there was flowing a current of intense bliss...It was as if the houses, doors, temples, and all other things vanished altogether; as if there was nothing anywhere! And what I saw was a boundless infinite conscious sea of light!...I found a continuous succession of effulgent waves coming forward...Very soon they fell on me and made me sink to the abysmal depths of infinity (quoted in Kakar, 1991, pp. 11-12).

The bi-polar dynamic is well represented in psychedelic ecstasies. Grof, who created a phenomenology of standard adverse reactions, identified three recurring crises, or “psychomimetic” phenomena, which usually occur prior to the onset of a unitive ecstasy: abandonment depression, life and death struggle, and death-rebirth.

> After the subject has experienced the very depth of total annihilation and has “hit cosmic bottom”, he is struck by visions of blinding white light and has feelings of enormous decompression and expansion of space. The general atmosphere is that of liberation, redemption, salvation, love and forgiveness. The individual feels cleansed and purged, as if he has disposed of an incredible amount of “garbage”, guilt, aggression and anxiety. He experiences overwhelming love for his fellow men, appreciation of warm human relationships, solidarity and friendship. Such feelings are accompanied by humility and a tendency to engage in service and charitable activities (1976, p. 139).

Comparative data indicate that the bi-polar dynamic is _actively_ exploited in religious contexts to provoke ecstasies by means of ritual mourning. Merkur has shown
how Jewish apocalyptists engaged in exaggerated grieving which he claims was “the
crucial psychological element of their technique for inducing an alternate psychic state”
(1989, p. 125). Mourning as a means of ecstatic induction can be traced back at least as
far as the 14th century BCE in Canaan. The practice is also referred to in the Old
Testament. Merkur argues, for example, that the book of Job “can be read as a seer’s use
of lamentation to induce an ecstasy...”(p. 125). In the writings of the Jewish
apocalyptists, various references to lamentation, prayer, fasting and weeping in solitude
point to ascetic practices connected to ritual mourning. These techniques produced
“waking visionary experiences that culminated in positive revelatory material” (p. 126).
Merkur draws cross-cultural evidence for the practice of ecstatic mourning by citing
Christian apocalypses, Jewish mysticism, as well as the initiatory experiences of Native
American peoples (p. 127). Arisman states that the Native initiatory vision quest
commonly employed bitter complaint and weeping in order to secure a vision.

A factor which...calls for our particular attention is the negative or ascetic
aspect of the fasting procedure, the severe mortification of the flesh. This,
over the entire North American continent, took the form of a severe and
prolonged fast, in many places connected with other forms of physical and
mental mortification: vigils, artificial vomiting and excretion caused by
emetics and by other means, steam-baths and ice-cold baths,
self-mutilation...all understood as purifying and hardening procedures, but
also a means of arousing the pity and favor of the deity (1968, p. 598).

Religious mourning, whether spontaneous or ritually induced, produces a mood
swing from depression to elation. Merkur holds that the elation is the result of a
“versatile bipolar mechanism”, an unconscious defense against the depression (1989, p.
133). This defense is not only used in pathological instances (e.g., manic-depressive
psychoses), but also manifests itself normally in daily life. Various examples include the
shift from “vigilant concern” to “joyous satisfaction” at the completion of a task (p. 133),
elation stemming from depressive themes in humor, and the consoling aspects of
religion. Merkur makes mention of the way in which religions promote “unnecessary
and exaggerated feelings of guilt, shame, doubt and despair...which are unconsciously transformed into the corresponding range of positive affects” (p. 133). He reasons that because depression and elation are tied to the self-critical and self-praising functions of the superego (cf. Jacobson, 1964), the bi-polar affective shift is due to the application of a superego “value judgment” (Merkur, 1989, p. 134).

Psychologically, repentance, the first phase in Wesley’s ordo salutis, may be regarded not only as a state of mind, but also as a technique, a form of religious mourning used to achieve an ecstatic apprehension of the Holy Spirit. Repentance conforms to what Laski refers to as a “desolation state” (1961, p. 162). It is distinguished by “feelings of falling, darkness, seeing things as lacking color; the ‘mind’ felt to be oppressed, the heart dry, hard, cold, dejected; feelings of contraction, of being shut in; general depression; lack of interest or enthusiasm; feelings of isolation” (p. 165). She observes that the mental characteristics of the desolation state are the inverse of those which typify unitive ecstasies.

In Methodist repentance, predisposing factors in the personality dovetailed with the deliberate use of techniques. Powerfully affective symbolism tapped into and enhanced pre-existing depressive trends, such that grief, abandonment anxiety and guilt were consciously magnified. Wesley understood that sorrow over sin was to be actively drawn out and maximized. He instructed his followers to know their corruption; grieving itself was the way to the kingdom (1984-87, I: p. 225). As we shall see, Methodist autobiographies document the use of various kinds of induction methods including fasting, sleep deprivation, lamentation and solitude. Whether individuals were already manifestly depressed before their contact with Methodism, or subsequently brought into desolation on hearing Wesley’s message, they were encouraged to voluntarily heighten their sadness and anxiety through ritual mourning. Although, theologically, the resolution of the desolation was viewed solely as an act of grace, it was paradoxically
understood that active mourning was involved in orchestrating the new birth since contrition appealed to God’s mercy. The relationship between repentance and justification coincides with the bi-polar dynamic.

The practice of ritual mourning served to galvanize pre-existing neurotic conflicts, which, when brought closer to consciousness, were manifested as a transference neurosis onto God. As the transference developed, individuals became increasingly aware of their ambivalence and guilt. From a theological point of view, Wesley held that in order to receive pardon, one had to become fully cognizant of sin. Only through this form of immediate self-knowledge, coupled with authentic remorse and the desire to be saved, could one hope to be justified. The goal of the first step in spiritual renewal was to achieve an intimate awareness of one’s enmity towards God.

Psychologically, the unfolding of the transference neurosis within the idiom of religious imagery promoted a conscious acknowledgment and mastery of unconscious ambivalence, thus creating the potential for a therapeutic shift in the relationship between the ego and the positive superego.

Finally, although the transference neurosis of desolation was unconsciously framed by the various traumas of infancy and childhood, its emergence was ultimately triggered and sustained by Wesley’s invitation to accept Christ. The promise of unconditional acceptance, love and spiritual contentedness was a potent incentive that inevitably stirred resistances, thereby eliciting the conflict of repentance. The prospect of Christ’s forgiveness was also the prevailing source of hope, the object of a therapeutic alliance that permitted individuals to prevail through the stresses of desolation.

Wesley on Repentance

The depressive themes of Methodist repentance are situated within the historical discourse of melancholia (Rubin, 1994, p. 5). Hippocratic writers of the 5th century BCE first conceptualized melancholy as a humoral imbalance. Its effects were the result of an
excess of black bile produced by the spleen. Afflicted persons suffered from fear, sadness, loss of appetite and sleep, and despondency. Galen’s systematization of humoral medicine in the 2nd century established melancholy as a “clinical standard” for the next 2000 years (p. 5). For the Elizabethans, melancholy was regarded not so much as a disease, but as a virtue reflective of exceptionality and genius. This view was absorbed by Puritan spirituality. Here melancholy became a “special chastisement” from God, a sign of his favor (p. 5). Trials of estrangement and conviction of sin fostered spiritual maturation. Thus, by the late 16th century, the humoral imbalance motif acquired a further distinction. Puritan conversion and its preoccupation with discerning the signs of election created a “pathological discourse” (King, 1983, p. 15) focusing on what, in modern parlance, are considered “obsessional” themes. In his Treatise of Melancholia, Timothy Bright referred to a “salvation panic” (Rubin, 1994, p. 5) associated with pietistic Puritans. Oppressed by conscience and overwhelmed by the sense of sin, individuals became terrified of God’s wrath and the prospect of eternal damnation. In 1621, religious melancholy proper was first identified by Robert Burton in his Anatomy of Melancholy. Basing his observations on “Schismatics” or “Separatists” (King, 1983, p. 24), he adduced three interrelated conditions: innate depravity and sin; the crisis of spiritual passage and conversion (feeling forsaken by God and dread of the law); and extreme guilt (Rubin, 1994, p. 5). The melancholic temperament was expressed in a series of common metaphors which became emblematic of the spiritual crises of Puritan divines: “solitude, dryness, wilderness, desert; slime, mud, foulness, slough; sorrow, fear, darkness, despair; doubt, weariness, exhaustion, strain...” (King, 1983, p. 24).

The seemingly obsessive character of Puritan piety, typified by doubt and compulsion, was highlighted in Burton’s treatise. He was not unaware that the quest for the certain signs of election led to an uneasy hypervigilance that spread to all personal acts and external events. A surfeit of interpretations and speculations concerning
indications of election - the constant questioning of intention and the discerning of signs in the daily flow of events - fostered agonized misgivings, indecision and hesitancy. Individuals became perfectionistic, weighed down by a laborious attention to detail in order to ensure that “any small business or circumstance [not] be omitted” (p. 26). The intolerable absence of certainty only magnified and refined their circumspection, while despair loomed insistently in the midst of their efforts. To add to their misery, Puritans found themselves “possessed” by demonic infusions or “fiery darts” (p. 27). They were vexed by irresistible compulsions in the form of fixed ideas. Blasphemous devaluations of Christ, verbal obscenities pressing towards actual expression, the suppression of destructive impulses towards self and other - these urges overcame them in private prayer and public worship. For Puritans, such cataclysms commonly preceded and accentuated, in bold relief, the ensuing exhilaration of divine acceptance.

The foregoing themes made their way into Methodist repentance, and were reinforced by Wesley’s Puritan background. Although subject to theological modification (Wesley adamantly rejected predestination), the dread of having “passed the day of grace” (Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 180), that is, the crippling suspicion that one’s wickedness created a permanent alienation from God, was, as in the Puritan context, the requisite passage way to salvation. The stark opposition between salvation and damnation, between true Christians and “almost Christians”, is particularly apparent in Wesley’s early sermons (Holland, 1973-74) while he was still under the sway of Moravian absolutism. During the early years of the revival, Wesley believed it proper to maximize feelings of anxiety and futility in those who had not yet received the assurance of pardon (Maddox, 1994, p. 160). He writes, “it is my endeavor to drive all I can, into what you may term [a] species of madness...and which I term repentance and conviction” (quoted in Holland 1973-74, p. 77). Various hysterical phenomena were particularly apparent during the early revival: individuals dropping down as if dead, bodily
convulsions and contortions, roaring aloud, etc. Holland argues that these effects were the result of Wesley's continual adherence to an uncompromising view of faith. Followers were told they were damned until faith appeared passively through grace. Despite their "longing to be reconciled to God", faith could not be "voluntarily exercised" (p. 80). Therefore, mounting anxiety in the face of helplessness induced panic attacks and dissociative reactions. It is argued that Wesley's later modification of the either/or stance, his revised conviction that those who waited earnestly for faith were already accepted, radically diminished the frequency of depressive and hysterical reactions (pp. 83-84; Outler, 1984c, p. 200-202).

Even so, it is crucial to note that the essentially depressive character of repentance, along with the array of hysterical manifestations, remained conspicuous in Methodist circles throughout the 18th century (Gunther, 1989, pp. 150-151; Rack, 1989, pp. 195-197). The emotional mayhem of the early revival may have diminished in the mid-1740's, but it by no means became obsolete. Prolonged depressions, panic attacks and dissociative phenomena are consistently recounted in Methodist autobiographies. Even in the 1780's, Wesley documents instances of "mass hysteria" in his journal (Thompson, 1963, p. 418). Moreover, such reactions were regularly observed by Methodist itinerant preachers (Gunther, 1989, p. 150), many of whom were perceived as "hell fire" preachers (e.g., Arminian Magazine, 1780, pp. 98, 309). Also, as late as 1760, we continue to find rhetorical "scare tactics" in Wesley's printed sermons. Writing on the necessity of the new birth, he states that the unholy "will all drop into the pit together" and lie "in the lake of fire, 'the lake of fire burning with brimstone'" (Wesley, 1984-87, II: p. 195). Commenting on the persistence of convulsive reactions, Rack states that many of these responses were the result of a cultural predisposition that operated independently of cues given by hell fire preachers: "What is common to all of them is often a strong sense of hell, and this seems to be induced...by the subjects own innate belief and
conscience which appear to have required little to arouse them. They created their own hell” (Rack, 1989, p. 197). Gunther (1989, p. 151) suggests that the downplaying of depressive crises and hysteria by Methodist scholars is due to a modern aversion to phenomena that were culturally acceptable in the 18th century.

Wesley regarded repentance as an “awakening”. Prevenient grace, or God-given conscience, which has hitherto been suppressed, now manifests consciously as “convincing grace” (Lindstrom, 1950, pp. 114-115). Repentance promotes self-knowledge of one’s state of spiritual decrepitude (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 225), wherein feelings of loss, low self-esteem, and guilt are central.

Themes of abandonment and separation are generally encapsulated in the idea of being spiritually “lost” while one is “mourning for God” (I: p. 151). Loss is further reinforced by bereavement imagery in which the soul is conceptualized as “dead”, both to itself, and to divinity.

But before any dead soul can live, he ‘hears (hearkens to) the voice of the Son of God’: he is made sensible of his lost estate, and receives the sentence of death in himself. He knows himself to be ‘dead while he liveth’, dead to God and all the things of God: having no more power to perform the actions of a living Christian than a dead body to perform the functions of a living man (I: p. 145).

Those who come to realize that they are “dead to God” are encompassed by “clouds of ignorance”, and the “shadow of death”, which in turn are the result of a “perverse and distorted” will (I: p. 226). The decimation of self-worth is brought about by the knowledge of absolute “corruption” (I: p. 225). Repentance is “neither more or less than a deep sense of the want of all good, and the presence of all evil” (I: p. 194), the “inbred corruption of the heart” (I: p. 226).

All thy passions, both thy desires and aversions, thy joys and sorrows, thy hopes and fears, are out of frame, are either undue in their degree, or placed on undue objects. So that there is no soundness in thy soul, but ‘from the crown of the head to the soul of the foot’...there are only ‘wounds, and bruises, and petrifying sores” (I: p. 226).
Corruption is an “evil root” from which “springs unbelief, ever departing from the living God” (I: p. 226). It fosters “independence” from God - “affecting to be like the most High” (I: 226).

From this evil fountain flow forth the bitter streams of vanity, thirst of praise, ambition, covetousness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and pride of life. From this arise anger, hatred, malice, revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmisings; from this all the foolish and hurtful lusts that now ‘pierce thee through with many sorrows’, and if not timely prevented will at length ‘drown the soul in everlasting perdition’ (I: pp. 226-227).

This formulation is consistent with the psychology of evangelical nurture. The idea of inbred corruption symbolizes the effects of an unresolved fixation. The child’s struggle for autonomy in face of the parent’s disapproval produces adversarial conflict. To compensate for feelings of humiliation and envy, the child aggressively identifies with the parent’s power (i.e., “affecting to be like the most High”). The narcissistic defense, expressed here as “pride”, is seen as the fruit of corruption. Narcissistic wounds and their exaggerated compensations all too easily generate rage (i.e., “anger, hatred, malice...”) and the ensuing fear of punishment. Internal conflict stemming from an early object relation is here transcribed as a spiritual crisis. The horrible sense of separation from God, and the fear of his wrath, is generated by an internal struggle focusing on themes of “rebellion” and “independence”. The latent content of the separation symbolism refers to the child’s desire to be at one with the parent, a wish which is continually stymied by antagonism and dread of the parent’s retaliation.

Self-knowledge of sin and contrition flow from this dynamic. For Wesley, this is the central core of repentance. Methodist desolation is marked by a terrible guilt which is magnified to an extreme pitch.

These ‘who are sick’, the ‘burden of whose sins is intolerable’, are they that ‘need a physician’; these who are guilty, who groan under the wrath of God, are they that need a pardon. These who are ‘condemned already’, not only by God but also their own conscience, as by a thousand witnesses, of all their ungodliness, both in thought, and word, and work,
cry aloud for him that 'justifieth the ungodly'... (Emphasis added; I: p. 192).

The stalemate of ambivalence and the burden of overwhelming guilt, induces passivity, helplessness, and ultimately, a pervasive sense of futility. As mentioned, Wesley's inculcation of despair is particularly apparent in his early sermons, while he was still influenced by Moravian standards. This position was rationalized by the doctrine of the law. Wesley preached that until justification and the new birth, one remains subject to the old "covenant of works" (I: p. 210). This pact, which exacts unremitting perfection in both deed and inner intention, originally coincided with Adam's divine status prior to the fall. At that time, his spiritual faculties bore the imprint of the imago Dei. Created in God's image, Adam was "righteous, merciful, true and pure", completely innocent of sin (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 25). He was therefore able to fully comply with the dictates of the law. After his transgression, he was deprived of the very faculties that ensured his perfection. Adam's loss of the divine image and his descent into abject carnality was subsequently passed on to the rest of humanity. As a result of original sin, the covenant of works necessarily devolved into a doctrine of unattainable ideals. Now, the total poverty of righteousness leads to "despair over works". Wesley writes,

Alas, thou canst do nothing; nothing that will in any wise make amends to God for one evil work or word or thought. If thou couldst now do all things well, if from this very hour, till thy soul should return to God, thou couldst perform perfect, uninterrupted obedience, even this would not atone for what is past. The not increasing thy debt would not discharge it. It would still remain as great as ever. Yea, the present and future obedience of all the men upon the earth, and all the angels in heaven, would never make satisfaction to the Justice of God for one single sin. How vain then was the thought of atoning for thy own sins by anything thou couldst do! (1984-87, I: p. 228).

Perhaps the most graphic and systematic depiction of the repentance desolation is Wesley's 1746 sermon, The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption. The following extracts are cited sequentially according to the chronology and logic of Wesley's text. Each extract is
representative of the main thematic elements. Wesley begins his discussion by
describing repentance as a horrid awakening into fear of an omnipotently vengeful deity.

He is terribly shaken out of his sleep, and awakes into a consciousness of
his danger...Horrid light breaks in upon his soul; such light as may be
conceived to gleam from the bottomless pit...He at last sees the loving, the
merciful God is also a 'consuming fire'; that he is a just God and a
terrible rendering to every man according to his works, entering into
judgment with the ungodly for every idle word, yea and for the
imagination of the heart. He now clearly perceives...that he is an avenger
of everyone who rebelleth against him, and repayeth the wicked to his
face; and that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God'
(I: p. 255).

The knowledge of God's awesome fury is accompanied by an acute awareness of
the infallible righteousness and omnipresence of his law. This leads to an exaggerated
sense of self-reproach.

The inward spiritual meaning of the law of God now begins to glare upon
him. He perceives the 'commandment is exceeding broad', and 'there is
nothing hid from the light thereof'. He is convinced that every part of it
relates not barely to outward sin or obedience, but to what passes in the
secret recesses of the soul, which no eye but God's can penetrate. If he
now hears, 'Though shalt not kill', God speaks in thunder, 'He that hateth
his brother is a murderer;...If the law say, 'Thou shalt not commit
adultery', the voice of the Lord sounds in his ears, 'He that looketh on a
woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his
heart.' (I: pp. 257-258).

The conviction that one has "trodten under foot the Son of God" (I: p. 256),
creates overwhelming guilt and further augments the negative sense of self.

...so he sees himself naked, stripped of all the fig-leaves which he had
sewed together, of all his poor pretenses to religion or virtue, and his
wretched excuses for sinning against God...His heart is bare, and he sees it
is all sin, 'deceitful above all things, desperately wicked; that it is
altogether corrupt and abominable, more than it is possible for tongue to
express; that there dwelleth there no good thing, but unrighteousness and
ungodliness only; every motion thereof, every temper and thought, being
only evil continually (I: p. 256).

Self-hatred strengthens the conviction that one truly deserves eternal damnation.
And he not only sees, but feels in himself, by an emotion of soul which he
cannot describe...[that] he deserves to be cast into the 'the fire that never
shall be quenched'. He feels that 'the wages', the just reward, 'of sin', of
his sin above all 'is death;' even the second death, the death which dieth
not, the destruction of the body and soul in hell (I: p. 256).

In turn, the anticipation of death and damnation triggers persecutory anxiety.

He feels...fear of death, as being to him the gate of hell, the entrance of
death eternal; fear of the devil, the executioner of the wrath and righteous
vengeance of God; fear of men, who if they were able to kill his body,
would thereby plunge both body and soul into hell; fear, sometimes
arising to such a height that the poor, sinful, guilty soul is terrified with
everything, with nothing, with shades, with a leaf shaken of the wind.
Yea, sometimes it may even border on distraction, making a man
'drunken, though not with wine', suspending the exercise of the memory,
of the understanding, of all the natural faculties. Sometimes it may
approach to the very brink of despair; so that he who trembles at the name
of death may yet be ready to plunge into it every moment, to 'choose
strangling rather than life' (I: p. 257).

Finally, desperate attempts to do away with sin are met with failure. Cycles of
active reformation and sin lead to hopelessness. It is through this process that the
despairing psychology of the covenant of works, the futility of personal righteousness, is
driven home.

Now he truly desires to break loose from sin, and begins to struggle with
it. But though he strive with all his might he cannot conquer; sin is
mightier than he. He would fain escape, but he is so fast in prison he
cannot get forth...The more he strives, wishes, labours to be free, the more
does he feel his chains, the grievous chains of sin, wherewith Satan binds
and 'leads him captive at his will'...He is still in bondage and fear by
reason of sin: generally of some outward sin...but always of some inward
sin, some evil temper or unholy affection. And the more he frets against
it, the more it prevails; he may bite, but cannot break his chain. Thus he
toils without end...repenting and sinning again, till at length the poor
sinful, helpless wretch is even at his wit's end, and can barely groan, 'O
wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this
death?'[he] is being hurried away by a force [he] cannot resist (I: pp.
258-260).
As mentioned above, the religious symbolism of repentance replicates a conflict of ambivalence stemming from early interactions with the parent. Consequently, Wesley's description of repentance is a religious interpretation of insight into the essential characteristics of a neurosis. The awakening into conviction implies the mobilization or stirring up of a pre-existing conflict, and the emergence of a transference that is focused on a negative representation of deity.

To begin, latent hostility is made manifest via the symbolism of corruption. The allure of carnal desire, the very essence and fruit of this condition, is the source of the soul's alienation from God. Corruption, by definition, is that which breeds willful opposition to the law. It is for this reason that Wesley highlights the terminology of rebellion; he speaks of independence and an adversarial pride that is modeled on divine self-sufficiency. References are made to an innate "enmity against God" (IV: p. 155), and the wickedness of men's hearts (IV: p. 152). Rebellious pride breeds hostility in the form of hatred, malice, envy etc. The doctrinal notion of corruption promotes a conscious recognition of these feelings, and serves as a symbolic medium for coherent reflection. In effect, the provision of this culturally congenial metaphor suspends the chronic denial of rage, so that it can overcome self-deceptive barriers and be consciously acknowledged. I would like to stress this point because the integrative potential of Wesley's method is dependent on the awareness of aggression, in order that it can be significantly worked through in the later stages of spiritual development.

The problem of hatred towards God is a common theme in Protestant experience. In his autobiography, Luther describes how his rage, "as a sinner who could not find forgiveness in the sight of an angry and righteous God" (Rubin, 1994, p. 21), only quickened his already disturbed conscience. Jonathan Edwards also acknowledges a universal hatred of divinity too dangerous to comprehend (p. 42). In particular, he claims that the desire to dethrone God is a common wish. This notion, which typifies the theme
of rebellion, is reminiscent of Wesley’s use of the phrase, “affecting to be like the most High”. Similarly, intimations of revolt, envy and robbery accompany Wesley’s discussion of divine providence. In describing God’s omnipresence in the cosmos, Wesley cautions against usurpation: “Walk humbly: for if you in any way wise rob God of his honour, if you ascribe anything to yourself ...[it will be] ‘an occasion of falling’...It is as long as you do this you are the peculiar care of your Father which is in Heaven” (1984-87, II: p. 549).

Fantasies of usurpation may be brought into line with the authoritarian psychology of evangelical nurture. For example, Klein (1988, p. 351) holds that reparation may be continually spoiled by the child’s desire to triumphantly reverse the power structure of the child-parent relationship. This idea fits well with Wesley’s discussion of the sheer debility of personal righteousness as a means to make amends for sin. All attempts to effect reparation are, by definition, already poisoned at their inception by inbred wickedness. In a religious idiom, Wesley articulates the stalemate of love “corrupted” by hostility and resentment. Contrition and the desire for forgiveness are sincere, yet ineffective as consistent motives for action. This is so because opposing impulses to reject the law are unconsciously fueled by a need to assert one’s thwarted autonomy. Under these conditions, personal righteousness is inalienably tainted. Hence the disempowering cycle of repentance and transgression, of doing and undoing. This is the underlying dynamic in the irresistible force that repeatedly compels one back into sin. Psychologically, backsliding is akin to acting out. The impairment of the will is masterfully transposed in religious terms. Indeed, Wesley’s discourse is often remarkable in the way it so deftly portrays the nature of neurotic conflict. Consider the following passage:

He is indeed a ‘sinner that goeth two ways’ - one step forward and another backward. He is continually building up with one hand and pulling down with the other. He loves sin, and he hates it: he is always seeking, and yet
always fleeing from God. He would and he would not...He is a motley mixture of all sorts of contraries; a heap of contradictions jumbled in one. Oh, be consistent with thyself, one way or the other (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 638).

It should be noted that “compulsive anti-moral” behavior was overdetermined by a further cultural variable which clearly dovetailed with the infantile source of fixated rage. Rammage holds that Methodists influenced by Calvinistic conceptions of deity revolted inwardly against an inscrutable God who “saved or damned by arbitrary decree” (1967, p. 203).

The obsessional and blasphemous thoughts reported by Puritans such as John Bunyan, Cotton Mather and Benjamin Colman were similarly viewed as proof of innate enmity (Rubin, 1994, pp. 53-54). Rack points out that doubt and the temptation to blaspheme are “familiar experiences” in the Methodist conversion literature and “part of the psychology of this type of convert” (1989, p. 425). Here, anger manifests consciously but is generally disavowed and symbolically displaced. Compulsive blaspheming was seen as the work of the devil (p. 425; King, 1983, p. 27). Thus, Wesley speaks of “evil angels” who darken the heart with infusions of rage and envy (1984-87, III: p. 22).

In line with the basic logic of neurotic conflict, the conscious apprehension of hostility is accompanied simultaneously by the fear of retaliation. Now that one’s perception of God is largely determined by the projection of aggression, the negative pole of the split imago comes menacingly to the fore. The wrathful deity of the old covenant may be regarded as the displaced representation of a punitive parental introject that tyrannizes and demoralizes a paralyzed ego. Wesley portrays this God as uncompromisingly furious. He is a “consuming fire”, an “avenger”. His fierce displeasure is likened to an “earthquake”, and a “mighty tempest” (I: p. 147). He vindictively consigns unrepentant sinners to the bottomless pit, the “jaws of everlasting destruction” (I: p. 147). The omnipotence of God’s wrath is complemented by his piercing omniscience. Sinners see how the law is “exceeding broad” and that “there is
nothing hid from the light thereof”. In this way, the dread of retribution is coupled by
scrupulously thorough self-condemnations which are an index of the enormous scope of
the original conflict and repression. What we observe here is a classic manifestation of
neurotic guilt. Every idle word and imagination of the heart is condemned - thoughts are
treated as equivalent to deeds. Hatred and lust are felt to be commensurate with actual
murder and adultery.

Profound self-blame ultimately inspires the belief that one is worthy of eternal
damnation. The anticipation of one’s just deserts inspires persecutory anxiety. Wesley
alludes to sado-masochistic fantasies of attack, the “fear of men, who if they were able to
kill his body, would thereby plunge both body and soul into hell”. Moreover, anxiety is
indiscriminately generalized to all facets of perception: the “guilty soul is terrified with
everything, with nothing, with shades, with a leaf shaken of the wind”.

We have already considered how the covenant of works metaphorically portrays a
conflict of ambivalence. Unresolved aggression, symbolized as the inherited residue of
original sin, defiles personal righteousness. All forms of active expiation are made
ineffective by the taint of corruption. Not only does the religious symbolism of the
covenant aptly characterize a psychological reality, Wesley’s preaching of the doctrine
was also specifically intended to instill hopelessness and despair. It functioned as a
device which exacerbated conflict and thereby generated the equivalent of learned
helplessness, a veritable “no-win” situation. Cohen’s insightful analysis of the effects of
the covenant in Puritan spirituality also applies to Methodism. He speaks of a
“theological noose”, a contradictory “double-bind” (1986, p. 62) which commands
obedience, while stipulating, in the same breath, its very impossibility. Echoing
Holland’s claim that Wesley’s inculcation of passivity was responsible for causing
hysterical panic, Cohen writes, “Unveiling the Covenant of Works exposed congregations
to conflicting signals...preachers fully expected the covenant to agitate their hearers,
inducing affections of fear, enmity and fright” (p. 62). He explicitly claims that the covenant caused neurotic behavior.

Here again, we can discern a subtext that both allegorizes and repeats a modal child-parent scenario. In the authoritarian style of upbringing, children develop a sense of inadequacy, futility and guilt when rigorous demands for impulse control supersede their developmental abilities to comply. Preaching about the covenant of works was an effective mode of neurotic induction because it was so thoroughly resonant unconsciously. It was an all too familiar story that activated an archaic and irresistible force not easily stilled.

To summarize, Wesley’s depiction of repentance is a poetic rendering of a neurosis. This includes the vicissitudes of aggression (corruption as innate wickedness, compulsive blaspheming, the deadlock of contrition versus rebellion); the punitive parental introject manifesting as the angry deity; aggravated conscience and pervasive guilt; persecutory anxiety; and agitated conflict leading to despair.

Methodist autobiographical accounts substantiate Wesley’s account, and my interpretation of it. Joseph Jones relays something of the disappointment he felt in his father, who brought “numerous troubles both on himself and his family, which ended in extreme poverty” (Arminian Magazine, 1789, p. 234). Jones laments the fact that his father did not take the trouble of apprenticing him in his trade. At length, a kindly blacksmith, a distant relative of Jones, provided him with an opportunity to be trained. Although he was treated well, Jones “ran away” from his employer in order to find work in another town (p. 235). Later, he returned and was graciously taken back. Then, after fleeing a second time, Jones found himself seized with fever and financially destitute. These circumstances catalyzed his repentance: “In this affliction I was brought to a sight of my sins, when I cried heartily to God for the pardon of them...” (p. 236). Yearning for the Saviour’s forgiveness, and realizing that “reformation was necessary”, he “became a
diligent attendant on the means of grace, and was very regular in the performance of all the outward duties of religion” (p. 236). To his dismay, Jones soon discovered that he was unable to follow through on his resolutions.

But after a while I fell again into my old sin of drunkenness...I was more like a fiend than a man...for I cursed and swore, and altogether like one newly come from the bottomless pit. When I came to myself, I knew not where to hide my guilty head; and was greatly tempted to put an end to my wretched existence. As I now gave up all hopes of mercy...[I] tremulously looked for all the fierceness of the Divine displeasure! Thus finding myself under the frowns of the Almighty, and my parents not suffering me to come near them, I was driven to almost everything that was desperate: and why I did not destroy myself no one but God can tell...the most horrid, terrifying and blasphemous thoughts that can be conceived had possession of my mind (p. 236).

Based on the information that Jones chooses to disclose in his narrative, I suggest that unresolved resentment towards his father is the key factor in a conflict which ultimately gave shape to Jones’ repentance crisis. It appears that he dealt with his resentment by actively identifying with his father, whom Jones regarded as neglectful and irresponsible. As if in prelude, he initially displaces filial aggression onto the “kindly” blacksmith, who, on two occasions, is rudely left in the lurch. Following Jones’ illness, another beneficent father figure is found in God, whose mercy “melts” Jones’ heart. Ambivalence, however, sets in again, and he re-enacts the compulsive strategy of abandonment by succumbing to drunkenness and verbal profanity. His guilt-ridden behavior instills the fear of God. “The fierceness of the Divine Displeasure”, was seemingly confirmed by his parent’s refusal to have anything to do with him. Now a feedback loop of aggression and bad conscience spirals towards hopelessness. His fear further exacerbates his rage: “Thus finding myself under the frowns of the Almighty...I was driven to almost everything that was desperate”. Aggression rebounds back and forth between self and object - suicidal temptations are coupled with blasphemous thoughts (e.g. “Thousands of temptations I had to curse the Father, Son and Holy Ghost”.

88
Jones’ text clearly affirms how sin is motivated by hostile defiance which, as previously indicated, can be seen as a form of acting out behavior.

I was indeed as a vagabond upon the earth, and continually expecting when the wrath of the Almighty would visibly break forth! At length I grew so hardened, and insensible, as to dare the Almighty to do his worst! and as I had no hope of mercy, I gave the reigns to my lusts, and determined to have all the pleasure I could in this world (p. 237).

Needless to say, the psychological effects of the belief that divine acceptance is conditional upon good works is aptly illustrated in Jones’ writing. The same vicious circle of guilt, rage, anxiety and despair is also apparent in Thomas Oliver’s narrative (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 88). Although he had been previously converted to Methodism, he was convinced that he had not yet been justified. Prior to the actual event, he wept bitterly for seven hours, fearing that “Christ died for all but him” (p. 88). His lamentation gradually shifted into bitterness: “At last I began to murmur against God; and was tempted to speak and think blasphemously of him and to resolve to pray no more” (p. 88). He reached for his bible, “with hopes of reading something encouraging” (p. 88), but immediately threw it down again, thinking that it would only aggravate his despair.

The autobiographies also attest to the incapacitating effects of persecutory anxiety. We find that Wesley is not making an extravagant claim when he refers to a mounting terror that “may even border on distraction”, “suspending the exercise of the memory, of the understanding, of all the natural faculties” (1984-87, I: p. 257). For example, Ruth Hall writes that during her crisis of repentance,

...my convictions grew deeper and deeper, till I was scarce fit for any business. I hardly had any natural understanding left, and no memory at all; so that if I went out to fetch anything, I had forgot it before I was half way down the street. I then, by the advice of my parents, who were afraid I should be quite distracted, removed to York (Arminian Magazine, 1781, p. 477).
Wesley on Ritual Mourning

The depressive nature of repentance is represented by images of falling and descent. Wesley speaks of falling into the hands of God, plunging into hell, being cast into the fire, “sinking into the depths of perdition” and standing “on the brink of the pit”, etc. (1984-87, I: p. 147). Ostow observes that the onset of depression is “often represented in dreams as falling or sliding uncontrollably down” (1975, p. 402). Conversely, the resolution of descent and darkness which occurs at the moment of justification, is portrayed in terms of ascent and joyous illumination.

O may the angel of the Lord come upon thee, and the light shine into thy prison! And mayest thou feel the stroke of an almighty hand raising thee with, ‘Arise up quickly, gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals, cast thy garment about thee, and follow me’ (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 148).

Heavenly, healing light now breaks in upon the his soul. He ‘looks on him whom he had pierced’, and ‘God, who out of darkness commanded light to shine, shineth in his heart”. He sees the light of the glorious love of God, in the face of Jesus Christ’ (I: p. 261).

These trajectories of descent and ascent, darkness and illumination, are figurative renderings of the bi-polar dynamic. Religious melancholy gives way to elation. More specifically, a pre-existing neurosis is deliberately mobilized via religious imagery and conveniently exploited as a means to achieve the exhilarating apprehension of God’s pardon.

Wesley was well aware of the phenomenon of ritual mourning. He recognized it in scripture. Those who have “received the spirit of fear” (cf. Rom. 8: 15; 2: Tim. 1:7) should view it as a “gift of God” (I: p. 250): “And thus is the scripture fulfilled: ‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted’” (Matt. 5: 4; I: p. 424). Wesley’s depiction of repentance is at once a description and an inductive technique. Indeed, his sermons functioned as hetero-suggestive instruction manuals on how to receive the spirit.
Backed by divine decree, Wesley literally commands his followers to know their corruption. In this regard, Lindstrom writes,

> What he does is to conjoin a subjective attitude with the objective one. Objective facts and circumstances must be not merely comprehended by man but actually experienced... "Feel", he says, "that your carnal mind is enmity against God"... Therefore [the individual] is admonished thus: "Sinner, awake! Know thyself! Know and feel, that thou wert 'shapen in wickedness', and that 'in sin did thy mother conceive thee'... The individual’s awareness of his corrupt nature is considered an absolute prerequisite of his faith in Christ... (1946, p. 32-33).

Wesley enjoins sinners to actively enhance their guilt and voluntarily deepen the depression.

For he that cometh unto God by this faith must fix his eye singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come as a mere sinner inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness only, pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery. Thus it is, and thus alone, when his mouth is stopped, and he stands utterly guilty before God, that he can 'look unto Jesus' as the whole and sole propitiation for his sins'. Thus only can he be 'found in him' and receive the righteousness which is of God by faith'... Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell, and thou shalt then find favor in his sight..." (1984-87, I: p. 198).

If one wishes to escape God’s judgments, one should “cast [one]self into them. ‘Judge thyself’, and thou shalt ‘not be judged of the Lord’" (I: p. 147). Deliberate self-condemnation is coupled with grieving. Sinners must earnestly "cry aloud" to receive forgiveness: "Now weep for your sins, and mourn after God till he turns your heaviness into joy. And even then weep with them that weep, and for them that weep not for themselves" (I: p. 696).

Further evidence of ritual mourning in Wesley’s sermons is found in his discussion of fasting. There was no doubt in his mind of a definite link between fasting and melancholy. Citing instances from scripture, he points out that “strong emotions of mind”, “any vehement passion such as sorrow or fear”, deprive individuals of their desire
to eat (I: p. 597). Depressive affect is the “natural ground of fasting”: “One who is under the deep affliction, overwhelmed with sorrow for sin, and a strong apprehension of the wrath of God [naturally abstains]...not only from pleasant, but even from needful food” (I: p. 598). Deliberate fasting is expiative by definition. It “means” the soul from the “indulgences of the inferior appetites which naturally tend to chain it down to earth” (I: p. 600) and has thereby been appointed “to be a means of averting God’s wrath” (I: p. 601). Although Wesley disapproved of severe and physically masochistic forms of asceticism - the neglect of apparel, self-flagellation, mutilation, and starvation (I: pp. 594-595, 609) - he stipulated the necessity of self-sacrifice. Those who “desire to walk humbly and closely with God will find frequent occasion for private seasons of thus afflicting their souls before their Father which is in secret” (I: p. 597). Intimately tied to the intentional deepening of religious melancholy, fasting was seen as an “outward” means by which the grace of God was conveyed into the soul (I: p. 605).

But let us take care to afflict our souls as well as bodies. Let every season, either of public and private fasting, be a season of exercising all those holy affections which are implied in a broken and contrite heart. Let it be a season of devout mourning, of Godly sorrow for sin... ‘For godly sorrow’, the sorrow which is according to God, which is a precious gift of his Spirit, lifting the soul to God from whom it flows, ‘worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of’ (I: pp. 609-610).

For Wesley, fasting, as a facet of ritual mourning, produced beneficial effects through the alteration of conscious experience. It assisted prayer by increasing virtuous sensibilities (I: p. 600) which correspond precisely to the characteristics of the justification ecstasy. These include “chastity...seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility, and tenderness of conscience, deadness to the world...the love of God and every holy and heavenly affection” (I: p. 600). Therefore, fasting was a means of attaining faith (I: p. 60). Wesley furnishes his text with biblical examples in which fasting is clearly tied to ecstatic modes of revelation in prophecy, dreams and visions (I: pp. 602-603).
Finally, as a means to elicit the justification ecstasy, religious mourning worked in tandem with another psychological process involving the unconscious elaboration of materials initially mulled over consciously. Both James (1989) and Starbuck (1911) accounted for affective and cognitive shifts in conversion by appealing to “subliminal” influences that proceeded beyond the periphery of awareness. Anticipating Wallas’ (1926) notion of “incubation”, James regarded this kind of subconscious creativity as a form of problem solving in which the conscious deliberation of a pressing emotional dilemma was extended into an “extra-marginal” field (1989, pp. 232-233). In addition, inputs from the external environment, be they concrete events or abstract ideas, also contributed to the store of subconscious materials utilized as sources of inspiration (Starbuck, 1911, pp. 106-107).

In his discussion on how to wait for the Holy Spirit, Wesley indicates that the need to overcome oppressive feelings associated with repentance, or, the “desire to flee from the wrath to come” (1984-87, I: p. 394), naturally drives one to become immersed in the “order of God” (I: p. 394). One is impelled to find “a preacher who speaks to the heart”, to converse with fellow Christians, “to [search] the scriptures” and other “serious books” (I: p. 394). Being so inclined, readers are urged to fully capitalize on this trend, to unashamedly “talk of the things of God”, to “pray to him” and partake of his supper. Concentrated exposure to Christian discourse is combined with active “meditation” so “that [God’s word] may have its full force upon [the] heart” (I: p. 394). The urgent need to be relieved of depressive affect heightens the emotional significance of that which is absorbed, thus sponsoring unconscious processes of creative synthesis. Even the idea of the sudden manifestation of the spirit is subject to suggestive incubation: “Look then every moment for his appearing! Be it at the hour you are employed in his ordinances; or before, or after...or when you are hindered therefrom...He is always ready...always willing
to save" (1: pp. 395-396). Wesley's advice on the use of ordinances similarly promotes
the suggestive incubation of unitive ideas, so central to the ensuing ecstasy.

Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore eye him in all,
through all, and above all...If God was there, if his love flowed into your
heart, you have forgot, as it were, the outward work. You see, you know,
you feel, God is all in all (1: pp. 396-397).

The importance of the role that unconscious incubation played in the facilitation
of the new birth is seen in the fact that only a minority of instantaneous conversions
occurred amidst the “heat” of open air preaching (Albin, 1985, p. 278; Abelove, 1990,
p. 90). Conversions cannot be attributed solely to the emotional turbulence of these
scenes. On the contrary, evidence suggests that Methodist discourse was, for the most
part, gradually assimilated over a period of time coinciding with the trials and
tribulations of the repentance phase. Albin’s statistical analysis of spiritual narratives
published in the Arminian Magazine leads him to conclude that the most frequently cited
location for the new birth was in the privacy of the home. He writes: “This fact suggests
that Evangelical conversion in early Methodism was a slow process involving significant
thought and reflection” (1985, p. 278).

Ritual mourning and its effects created an ideal circumstance for the maximal
production of unconscious creativity. As mentioned, the wish to resolve the depression
provided ample motivation for psychic work, both within and outside of awareness.
Moreover, depression generally leads to introversion and an increased investment of
attention upon the self and the internal world. Wesley states that convictions dampen
one’s natural attraction to “idolatry”, a term which not only refers to irreverent affections
such as pride and ambition, but also to the whole realm of sensual gratifications and
worldly pleasure. One therefore instinctively disengages from the world: “When once
you are possessed of this genuine conviction, all your idols will lose their charms. And
you will wonder how you could so long lean upon those broken reeds...” (1984-87, 1: p.
In addition, we shall shortly see how Methodists undergoing repentance deliberately sought personal seclusion and isolation as part of their mourning technique. It is noteworthy that the Committee on Psychiatry and Religion (1976) posits a connection between mystical ecstasy, solitude and creativity. They hold that both mystics and “creators” seek solitude because only in this state “can the mind work out the new mental configuration it seeks” (p. 795).

During the repentance phase, a comprehensive series of religious ideas and ideals attaching to the theme of reconciliation with God are subject to long term consideration. What begins as a voluntary reflection on God’s promised acceptance through faith, his merciful omnipresence, and the moral rationality of his commandments, is assimilated unconsciously and worked through in a fashion that engages all levels of the self. Ideally, a cognitive-affective synthesis of novel religious ideals and identity structures is formulated in response to internal conflict, and manifests subsequently during the ecstatic moment of justification.

**Autobiographical Accounts of Ritual Mourning**

Methodist autobiographies consistently document the use of various forms of ritual mourning. I have singled out three kinds of data that are particularly conspicuous in this literature. These are fasting, grieving in solitude, and, more generally, the psychological paradox inherent in the self-conscious use of depression inducing techniques. Let us consider each of these items in turn.

Many of the narratives inform us that fasting was “added to all the other means of grace” (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 480) during desolation. Even though Wesley proscribed excessive forms of self-deprecatory mourning, the autobiographical evidence suggests that his followers frequently disregarded the rule. While undergoing convictions, William Green was inspired by “an account of a wonderful work among the children at Kingswood, some of whom were determined, not to eat or sleep till they knew
their sins were forgiven" (*Arminian Magazine*, 1781, p. 253). John Nelson writes that “I would neither eat nor drink, till I had found the Kingdom of God” (1842, p. 18). For three weeks, John Atlay did not sleep or eat, “but just enough to keep life” (*Arminian Magazine*, 1778, p. 578). Four days after being justified, Richard Moss found himself in darkness (*Arminian Magazine*, 1798, p. 53-54). The comforting sense of God’s presence had vanished abruptly. He consequently “tried every means of recovering the Light”, but to no avail. Doubting whether his sins had really been taken away, Moss resorted to fasting.

I never eat a full meal, so that I was hungry from the beginning of the week to the end. From Thursday noon till Saturday noon, I tasted no food at all. Insomuch, that I was quite worn away, and grown weak, that I could scarcely walk...I wished I had never been born or, that my soul and body might die together. I was weary of life, and would have starved myself to death; only for offending God (pp. 53-54).

Alexander Mather’s repentance convictions were aggravated by circumstantial guilt. Not only had he neglected a vow of daily prayer with his wife, he was also, for a time, forced to work (as a baker) on the Sabbath. Like Atlay, his penitential loss of appetite was accompanied by sleeplessness. In this instance, it is unclear to what extent Mather’s deprivations were spontaneously produced or deliberately enacted.

And my convictions increased day by day, till my appetite was gone, and my sleep departed from me: my bones were filled as with a sore disease, and my tears were my meat day and night...my flesh consumed away, like a moth fretting a garment. And my bones were ready to start through my skin: for I had no rest day or night...I now slept little and ate little, and the grief of my soul drank up my spirits (*Arminian Magazine*, 1780, pp. 95-99).

We know that excessive fasting has frequently played a role in Christian asceticism prior to Protestantism. Menninger (1938, pp. 77-126) and Mounteer (1981, p. 160) argue that the deliberate starvation of Christian martyrs, as practiced, for example, by the early Desert Fathers, is an expression of buried feelings of hatred and revenge towards parents. These feelings, which, according to both authors, lead to cannibalistic

96
urges to devour and destroy, are penitentially turned against the self. Starvation is a primitive compromise formation in that it is both a denial, as well as a displaced expression of the rage. In a similar fashion, Rubin holds that in Protestant tradition, excessive fasting is a culture-bound syndrome that stems directly from evangelical nurture (1994, pp. 82-87). “Evangelical anorexia nervosa” (p. 82), as he refers to it, was one of several forms of “humiliation” and “self-maceration” employed as a means to assuage guilt and gain acceptance (p. 87). The behavioral manifestations of this syndrome were food refusal, anxiety, sleep disorders, and obsessive-compulsive ceremonials. Because self-interest also pertained to the satisfaction of the body’s natural appetites, conflicts focusing on autonomy made their way into the domain of orality. Fasting, taken to a symptomatic extreme, arose out of a deadlock in which the hope of receiving evidence of God’s love was offset by the pessimistic conviction that one was destined for damnation.

We will recall that Wesley designated fasting as a means to avert the wrath of God (1984-87, 1: p. 601). There is thus a suggestion that eating was unconsciously permeated with aggressive meanings. In the autobiographies, we see how images of the demonic, of greed, malice and persecution, are often connected to orality. For example, Richard Moss, whom, as indicated above, fasted until he could hardly walk, refused to take the Lord’s supper for fear that if he sinned afterwards, he would “eat and drink his own damnation” (Arminian Magazine, 1798, p. 5). During the period of excessive fasting, his prayers were disrupted by a “strange horror”: “It seemed as if the enemy were just by me, ready to swallow me up” (emphasis added; p. 54). Images of sinners “swallowed up” by hell and “consumed” by sin are copiously portrayed in the literature. Wesley uses these very metaphors when he refers to hell as the “jaws of everlasting destruction” (2 Thess. 1:9), or speaks of idolatry as swallowing up the unawakened (1: p.
Elsewhere, he explains how sins "have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits..." (I: p. 586).

Even after becoming a successful circuit preacher, it is evident that Thomas Oliver's ideals were compromised by lingering ambivalences (Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp. 137-138). His unconscious aggression manifested in an oral register. One day, while having supper at Cullompton, he was suddenly "dreadfully tempted" to think that he was not called to preach. In that moment he felt that his food did not belong to him, and that he was a "thief" and a "robber" in eating it. He burst into tears and could not finish his meal. Soon after, he dreamt that Christ had come in the clouds to judge the world, and gave him an "exceeding black" look. In response, Oliver "humbled" himself with fasting and prayers. For J.B. of St. Hellier, both the divine and the demonic are expressed in terms of oral aggression. She begins her memoir with a standard trope: "I was one day deeply troubled. It seemed Hell was just ready to devour me, for the sins I had committed..." (Arminian Magazine, 1788, p. 71). Further on she describes an eidetic image (perhaps a vision) in which the Lord revealed to her how he had destroyed "the man of sin": "But I cannot fully express it. I beheld sin as a horrible monster, which the Lord dismembered, till the whole appeared lifeless and torn in pieces" (emphasis added; p. 183). In a similar vein, oral aggressive fantasies of mutilation and dismemberment, as well as behavioral manifestations such as gnashed teeth, choking, suffocation, and spitting are associated with the phenomena of hysterical panic attacks preceding conversion. (Rammage, 1967, pp. 131, 152-153).

The foregoing data suggests that fasting, as a form of atonement, can be viewed as a reaction formation, a passive denial of rage. Those who abstained from food humbled themselves sacrificially. The unholy vicissitudes of oral sadism - voraciousness, incorporative greed, envy and destruction - are the hallmarks of carnality, and the essence of that which is diabolical. They are, as it were, the repressed underside of evangelical
nurture. Extreme fasting, along with the physically visible signs of emaciation and exhaustion, were demonstrative submissions, palpable proofs that one had really forsaken willfulness in exchange for grace. The masochistic character of fasting is consistent with an object-relational pattern internalized by children weaned on evangelical authoritarianism. They learned that love is rewarded on condition of pain. In other words, a modal fantasy was formulated early on, perhaps even preverbally, that suffering through deprivations is the means by which acceptance is conferred by the parent. One can list any number of speculative explanations as to why aggression took on an oral coloring: invasive disciplinary standards during the early oral period, struggles over dietary restrictions, the regressive displacement of anal and oedipal conflicts, or the overdetermined combination of all these factors. Whatever the explanation may be, the stirrings of oral sadism were masochistically reversed. In ritually enacting the denial of prohibited oral needs, and, in the case of excessive fasting, becoming physically depleted and psychologically miserable, one could hope to avert the wrath of the divine-parent, and finally receive forgiveness.

In seeking the proper way to conversion, many Methodists relied on several of the old practical Puritan works by authors such as Alleine, Baxter and Bunyan (Rack, 1989, p. 176). Like Wesley's writings, these texts served as instruction manuals, just as they had done in their own cultural setting during the previous century. King states that, in Puritanism, prominent spiritual narratives functioned like oral traditions in that "conventions of writing became a force capable of fashioning a person's reality...the Puritan autobiographer offers his soul's anguish as an exemplum or as an affliction for emulation" (1983, p. 40). Methodists readily inherited this tradition. In his autobiography, Silas Told (1954), who, along with two other siblings, was separated from his mother at early age and "sent to nurse at Kingswood" (p. 12), explains that during childhood, he felt only bliss in comprehending God. His early spiritual experiences are
exclusively portrayed in an exuberant, if not rapturous, light. While he was still in petticoats, he was often "transported in such a measure with heavenly bliss, that whether in the body or out of the body [he] could not tell...". (p. 16). He found peace "meditating on things divine"; church services were "a heaven upon earth"; he "drank deep into the bliss of everblessed and adorable Jesus" (pp. 57-58). When, at the age of ten, Told began to "read pious books, especially Pilgrim's Progress", we see a definitive shift in his religious sensibilities. He describes the precocious onset of his repentance at the age of twelve, an ecstatic event that was clearly initiated by the suggestive force of Bunyon's text.

Sitting one day, reading the Pilgrim's Progress, I suddenly laid down the book, leaned my right elbow on my knee, with my hand supporting my head, and meditated in the most solemn manner upon the awfulness of eternity. Suddenly I was struck as with a hand on the top of my head, which affected my whole frame; the blow was immediately followed by a voice, with these words, "Dark! dark! dark!" and although it alarmed me prodigiously, yet upon the recovery from so sudden a motion, I found myself broad awake in the world of sin. Notwithstanding all my former happiness, I now found nothing could give me satisfaction; nor could I ever rest satisfied about my salvation, as temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil were ever besetting me (pp. 58-59).

Years later, while in his thirties, Told underwent an extended period of religious melancholy. What is significant is how the depiction of his mournfulness is so reminiscent of the language of Bunyon's own spiritual narrative, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Told takes long solitary walks in fields, "roaring for the very disquietude of [his] soul" (p. 75). Begrudging the placid ignorance of the beasts, he chooses "strangling rather than life", believing that suicide will "afford him the greatest happiness" (p. 75).

An important trend in Puritan literature, one that became central for Methodists, was the practice of solitude and withdrawal as part of the standard fare of religious mourning. The Puritan motif of the self-exiled sinner searching for God in the
wilderness was literally enacted as a technique. George Fox, for example, supplemented fasting by “walk[ing] abroad in solitary places many days...”.

...[I] sat in hollow trees and lonesome places until night came on; and frequently in the night walked mournfully about by myself; for I was a man of sorrows in the time of the first workings of the Lord in me. During all this time I was never joined in profession of religion with any, but gave up myself to the Lord, having forsaken all evil company, taking leave of father and mother, and all other relations, and traveled up and down as a stranger on the earth, which was the way the Lord inclined my heart...(quoted in James, 1985, pp. 335-336).

Influenced didactically by Puritan example, Methodists commonly mourned in the solitude of fields, woods, barns and private chambers. As we have just seen, this was Silas Told’s approach. One Sabbath-day during John Pawson’s desolation, he attended preaching but, as he puts it, “could not break through” (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 27).

When it was over, I walked into the garden and wept bitterly. From thence I went into a solitary place and, where no one might see me, bemoaned myself before the Lord. O, the anguish I then felt. I was scarcely able to look up (pp. 27-28).

John Hanby explains that he spent much time “praying in the fields, woods, and barns”.

Any place, and every place, was now a closet to my mourning soul, who longed for the Day-Star to arise in my poor benighted heart. And it pleased infinite mercy, while I was praying in a dark place (greatly terrified for fear I should see the devil), that the Lord set my weary soul at liberty...[with an] extasy of joy (Arminian Magazine, 1780, pp. 511-512).

Hanby spent much time “in the fields, praying and meditating” (p. 513), and he refers to this as his “method”. William Carvosso, whose mind was “greatly distressed” because he had yet to recieve the blessing of sanctification, “turned into a lonely barn to wrestle with God in secret prayer” (p. 42). He writes, “While kneeling on the threshing-floor, agonizing for the great salvation, this promise was applied to my mind, ‘Thou art fair, My love; there is no spot in thee’” (p. 42).
In connection with the theme of precocity, several narratives refer to childhood convictions that are similarly coupled with the practice of solitude. Mrs. A.B. reports that somewhere around the age of ten, she experienced "great distress" over her "lost estate" (Arminian Magazine, 1789, pp. 414-415).

...I wandered in the woods. I did not communicate my feelings to any person, nor had I indeed anyone to whom I could open my mind, or could be of use to me. At length, one day as I was wrestling in prayer in a wood, I found a measure of that rest which I sought: I found love and joy in my heart, and retained a degree of it till I was fifteen years of age (p. 415).

John Mason, who lost both his parents before the age of five, "was often alarmed with the fear of Death and Judgment" and "trembled at the thought of being cast into the fire of hell" (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 651). "At those times", he writes, "I frequently went alone and prayed that God would have mercy upon me, and save me from my sins" (p. 651). Being much afflicted from her infancy, S. Mallit began to seek God when she was nine years old (Arminian Magazine, 1788, p. 130). The question of who God was, and why she had been brought into the world "troubled her".

...my trouble so increased, that I was deprived of my sleep, and often passed the night in weeping. I was frequently weeping in the day too; so that some thought I was going melancholy. One night as I was mourning by myself, the Lord took pity and revealed himself to me. In a moment all my sorrow was turned into joy, and I knew I was made to love and serve God (emphasis added; p. 130).

Further evidence of the importance of isolation as a facet of ritual mourning is provided by Albin (1985). In his sample, he finds that in slightly less than half of the reported cases of Methodist conversion, the individual was alone (42.8%; p. 278). This was also the case for those who were instantaneously sanctified (45.6%; p. 279).

It is quite probable that certain modes of solitude fostered various degrees of sensory deprivation. Individuals actively sought secluded low stimulus settings such as private chambers, stables and barns, and many recount mourning by themselves under the
cover of night. Recall that John Hanby’s soul was set at liberty while praying alone “in a dark place”. Experimental research on sensory deprivation shows that it can induce alternate states of consciousness, the contents of which range from simple eidetic images, extended dreamlike sequences, and unitive experiences (Bexton et al, 1954; Lilly, 1956; Woodburn et al, 1956; Merkur, 1993). In various studies, Merkur has demonstrated how sensory deprivation is systematically utilized to evoke visionary experiences in religious contexts such as Inuit shamanism and initiation (1992), Jewish apocalypticism (1989) (where it is combined with darkness, solitude, fasting and sleep deprivation) and Gnosticism (1993).

Upon close examination of the language Methodists use to describe their mourning, not only do we see evidence for the deliberate application of techniques intended to deepen their convictions, we also discern an intriguing pattern which is best described as psychological paradox. In these descriptions, we find that one sector of the personality is authentically and deeply distressed, while another is self-consciously applying a technique, assessing its effects and anticipating the joyous reception of the spirit. Put differently, part of the ego remains relatively detached from the process in order to engage in self-reflection and make “executive decisions” with respect to actions that will intensify the depression. The characteristics ascribed to this self-observing function may be conceptualized as the product of an intra-psychic “therapeutic alliance” between the ego and the positive superego. Ideally, the alliance creates a safe holding space in which the transference neurosis onto God can develop. As a result, painful materials which fuel the depression are permitted to emerge and be sufficiently managed until dispelled by the justification ecstasy.

A paradigmatic example of this fascinating “double-consciousness” is found in John Pawson’s narrative (Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp. 29-32). He describes being involved in a difficult struggle with his father who strenuously objected to his son’s
affiliation with the Methodists. After continual threats of disinheritance, Pawson finally convinced his father to attend a number of Methodist services, whereupon Pawson senior became amenable and “began to pray that the Lord would shew him the way of Salvation” (pp. 29-30).

A little later after [Pawson senior] went...into the stable, where he thought no-body could hear or see him, and prayed earnestly to the Lord. Here it was that the light of the Holy Spirit broke in upon him: he now had a clear sight of his sinful and lost condition, and was brought into such distress, that...he roared for the very disquietness of his soul. He was now ashamed and confounded, and could hardly hope for mercy. This was a day of glad tidings to me...(p. 30).

Once the conflict with his father was resolved, Pawson turned his attention to the state of his own soul. He writes, “though I knew myself to be without God in the world, I was dull and unaffected...” (p. 30). Having assessed himself in this manner, he actively starts to cultivate his own repentance.

...but it was my continual prayer, that the Lord would take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh. I cried day and night unto him, that he would give me a broken and a contrite heart, and it was not long ere he inclined his ear. I went to hear the word at a neighboring village, when, in the beginning of the service, the power of God came mightily upon me and many others. All of a sudden my heart was like melting wax, and my soul was distressed above measure, I cried with an exceeding bitter cry; the trouble and anguish of spirit that I labored under far exceeding all description. The arrows of the Almighty struck fast in my flesh, and the poison of them drank up my spirits; yet in the height of my distress I could thank the Lord, that he had granted me what I had so long sought for. I now sought the Lord with my whole heart, and neglected no opportunity of hearing his word, or of waiting upon him in every means of grace; yet many times did I not hear one half of the sermon, my distress being so exceedingly great. I had such a clear sight and deep sense of my exceeding sinfulness, that I was humbled in the dust...The things of this world became quite bitter to me...my mind being so occupied with grief for my past sins, and with my desire to be delivered from them. My business became a burden to me: I was quite confused and brought very low... I was on the very brink of despair (pp. 30-31).
One morning, while walking in the fields, Pawson was tempted to conclude that it was “all in vain...to expect any mercy” (p. 31). The Lord then revived his “drooping heart” with the word, “O tarry thou the Lord’s leisure: be strong and he shall comfort thy heart” (p. 31). This enabled him “both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God” (p. 31). Next, Pawson describes being discouraged by news of an acquaintance “who had only heard about three sermons” but was “brought to enjoy a clear sense of the love of God” (p. 32).

I returned home, and immediately retired into my chamber; but here I had no sufficient opportunity to give vent to my grief: I therefore walked into the barn, where I thought no one could see or hear me. Here I prayed and wept, and roared aloud, my distress being greater than I was able to bear: yet, I was not quite without hope, but expected, vile as I was, that the Lord would at last be gracious unto me (p. 32).

Pawson’s narrative is replete with examples of deliberate mourning and the paradoxes of induced depression. He recounts how his father, after asking the Lord to show him the way to salvation, withdrew into a stable to pray and consequently received a clear sight of his sins. Pawson junior rejoiced over his father’s good fortune in becoming afflicted: “This was a day of glad tidings to me”. Influenced by example, Pawson then deduced his own state of unaffectedness, and began to engage in ritual mourning by crying unto the Lord and petitioning for a “broken and contrite heart”. His self-suggestive entreaties were subject to incubation and later given incentive to manifest during a public service. Pawson’s heart promptly “melted like wax”, his soul “was distressed beyond measure” and he bitterly cried aloud. As indicated above, suggestive incubation is involved in the unconscious processes that orchestrate the content of the justification ecstasy. Here we see how it also plays a central role in the amplification of religious melancholy. In some instances, suggestive incubation was used to precipitate panic attacks as a means to speed the work. For example, in a different narrative, Zechariah Yewdall states that he would do and suffer anything “to find the blessing and
peace of God” (Arminian Magazine, 1792, p.164). He thus beseeched God to “shake him over the mouth of Hell” (p. 164). Shortly thereafter, he attended a prayer meeting and, in contemplating his hypocrisy, discovered the wrath of God hanging over his head. Frightened of “dropping into Hell” (p. 164), Yewdall, along with several others, wailed for two hours, while friends stood by and prayed over them.

Returning to Pawson’s account, we see that, notwithstanding his anguish, he is, at the same time, gratefully encouraged: “yet in the height of my distress I could bless the Lord, that he had granted me that which I had so long sought for” (p. 31). Sentiments of this nature - the dread of damnation which is paradoxically welcomed as a sign of hope, as evidence that one is on the right path - are commonly expressed throughout the Methodist narratives (cf. Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 127, p. 480; 1881, p. 2; 1798, p. 8). They aptly illustrate the double-consciousness of deliberate mourning. Even as his convictions bear down upon him, Pawson is able to partially extract himself from the depression in order to observe and comprehend it as a reassuring indication of movement towards justification. Note that this detached evaluation does not impede his ability to be genuinely stricken with grief. His life becomes a burden, he is “confused” and “brought very low”: “I was on the brink of despair”. We are further persuaded of the authenticity of his condition when we read the account of his state of mind just prior to being justified. He writes: “I heard very little of the Sermon, but continued kneeling all the time of service; and after it was ended, I still continued trembling, weeping and crying aloud for mercy...my bodily strength was quite exhausted” (pp. 32-33).

Following the onset of his repentance convictions, Pawson continues to nurture his depression. He explains, for example, that he went walking in the fields, “bemoaning himself” (p. 31) and decides that he is beyond the reach of mercy. At that moment he is comforted by the word, “...be strong and he shall comfort thine heart”. In effect, Pawson is reminding himself that his despair, although difficult to endure, is the key to his
salvation. If he simply can muster the strength to bear the pain for as long as it lasts, he will eventually be forgiven and redeemed. This enables him to become calm and hopeful. The intensification of grief initiates a symbolic self-reflection, the “comfortable word”, which keeps him mindful of the salvific purpose of his exertions. In this way, Pawson’s verbal inspiration, a product of the therapeutic alliance, provides him the courage to follow through with his objective, that is, to sustain the basic intensity of the mood.

When Pawson hears about an acquaintance who is justified in so short a time, he is understandably “confounded” and returns home to exploit and increase his current state of distress. He retires to his chamber to mourn, but decides that it will not grant him sufficient privacy to cry aloud and “vent his grief”. He therefore goes into the barn where “no one will see or hear [him]” and amplifies his sorrow in solitude. Once again, real anguish is tempered and contained by the self-consciousness of his actions, and the awareness that they are sanctioned by God. He writes, “my distress [was] greater than I was able to bear: yet I was not quite without hope, but expected, vile as I was, that the Lord would at last be gracious unto me”.

The psychological paradox of ritual mourning in Methodism, what I have referred to as the “double-consciousness” of grief management, bears on an important methodological issue. In his elucidation of religious melancholy in British and American Puritanism, King (1983, pp. 47-48) criticizes what he sees as naive psychohistorical approaches which uncritically assume that textual depictions of melancholy can be taken at face value and therefore preserve and convey the real intentionality of the authors. Opting instead for a post-modern definition of writing, King stresses that nothing can be inferred outside of textual discourse itself. In other words, to adduce a phenomenology of the writer’s actual intentionality and inner experience is to impose an alternate discourse that is, by definition, absent in the original source. Viable scholarship confines
itself to the systematic examination of conventional tropes and turns of phrases. King’s implicit psychology is uncompromisingly unilateral; discourse alone determines consciousness and identity. He allows for the retroactive reconstruction of individual’s experiences through the use of culturally selected metaphors, but rejects the idea that the syntax actually “articulated the sensations they felt and wanted to exclaim” (Cohen, p. 20). In rejecting a middle ground between formalized rhetoric and psychological interiority, King unduly reifies discourse. For example, current work in cognitive linguistics has reached a consensus that the tropes of everyday speech are the actual ideas with which we think, and through which we experience the world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Ortney, 1993). Methodists spoke and wrote the way they did because their metaphors expressed the terms of their experience.

No doubt, King’s critique is at least partially valid. For example, he rightly challenges the view that “temptation to suicide [is] an actual expression of American cultural pathology” (King, 1983, p. 51). He writes, “When Puritan ministers warned of self-murder, their words did involve an irony, for an authority’s admonition became the suggestion that one should in fact think of suicide” (p. 51). King’s use of the term “irony” is intended to deconstruct the literal authenticity of suicidal intentions. The intervening variable of suggestion implies that they would not spontaneously appear otherwise. His critique can easily be applied to Methodism given that both Wesley and many of his followers refer to suicidal temptations. On the other hand, the irony of suggestion is more adequately understood as the double consciousness of ritual mourning. In delineating the psychodynamics of authoritarian parenting, I have argued that the varieties of preconversion suffering should not be dismissed as mere narrative devices (see chapter two). Their characteristics are psychologically consistent with object-relational precursors. Thus, the suggestive aspect inherent in the expectation of suicidal temptations was given real emotional force by predisposing factors in the
personality (e.g. unconscious aggression and guilt). In the main, when this kind of ideation emerged it was experienced in an emotionally compelling manner. Yet, it was safely tolerated precisely because it was known to be an expected outcome that signified the coming of the spirit. The voluntary use of culturally sanctioned mourning techniques, along with the provision of linguistic images already symbolically attuned to the practitioner's inner world, allowed for the essentially manageable emergence of a genuinely intense set of negative emotions.

**Repentance Attacks**

Hysterical attacks can be identified not only by fairly obvious descriptions of extraordinary behavior and subjective experiences (many of which vary with respect to the amount of detail given), but also by references to the specific length of time in which they occurred. Because they are concentrated climaxes of issues that are central throughout the entire span of the desolation phase, hysterical crises are of relatively limited duration, and are documented as such. In 1739, Wesley noted in his journal that while he preached, approximately eight individuals “dropped down as if dead” (quoted in Rammage, 1967, p. 147). They underwent “violent agonies”, what Wesley calls the “the snares of death” (p. 147). While, for one individual, the “strong pain” lasted an hour, several others remained in this way for three days (p. 147).

Zechariah Yewdall provides a description of his brother’s experience.

One evening while in prayer with the family, the Lord visited him in an extra-ordinary manner. The heinousness of his crimes were presented to the eye of his mind; he saw the righteous displeasure of the almighty, the curse of the broken law, and the horrors of a guilty conscience: To his apprehension, Hell was moved from beneath to meet him. *His soul and body were in dreadful agony for two hours together*, and he cried aloud for mercy. We were even afraid the whole neighborhood would be alarmed. In the midst of this distress, the Lord was pleased to visit him in love (emphasis added; *Arminian Magazine*, 1795, p. 113).
Here, the “extra-ordinary” character of the attack is, amongst other things, indicated by reference to its specified duration.

The following two extracts, taken from narratives written by Thomas Rankin and William Carvosso, are extended accounts of the subjective phenomenology of hysterical attacks. They both contain typical themes, images and sequences.

Rankin’s repentance commenced when he was 17. He suggests that it was, at least in part, precipitated by the recent death of his father (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 184). Rankin was left “all on a sudden as dark as midnight”, and went on in a “wretched” state for over six months (p. 186). As time grew near for the sacrament to be administered, he was “filled with horror”, fearing that his participation, as a reviled sinner, would be sacrilegious, and that he would therefore “crucify the Son of God afresh” (p. 186). In the end, he approached the table “in confidence”, but accidentally spilt some of the wine (p. 187). Inexpressibly distressed, Rankin was tempted to interpret the mishap as a sign that Christ’s blood was also spilt in vain for him. Later, God was pleased to “remove the violence of the temptation” and give him “a dawn of hope” (p. 187). Rankin, now actively mourning, fought for his salvation “from the ground of his being” (p. 187). He wept, prayed and searched the scripture. After hearing Whitefield preach in Edinburgh, he realized that all that stood between his soul and Christ was his own unbelief. Two days before he found “peace” (p. 187), Rankin’s convictions came to climactic head.

...I arose in the morning greatly distressed, went out into the garden, and mourned over my deplorable state. All at once, I had such a view of the wrath of God, that my soul sunk down into despair. I felt a taste of that misery, which the damned in hell feel. I had not the least glimpse of hope...I was strongly tempted to lay violent hands upon myself. I said, *Strangling is better than life: why do I tarry any longer?* At that instant, these words darted into my mind, *How can I do this great evil; and Sin against God?* I stood amazed and confounded...I went into my chamber, and cast myself down upon my face on the bed...Soon after, I was deprived of my senses, and seemingly fell into a trance. It appeared to
me, that I was lying in the bed, and my soul near entering into the world of
spirits. To die, I thought, was but a trifle; but to go to hell-fire was
dreadful: yet, after a while, I was willing to go to hell, if God could not
otherwise be glorified. I saw the justice of God demanded it; and cried
out, *Thy will be done.* I looked to the foot, the sides, and the head of my
bed, and thought I beheld it surrounded (as thick as they could stand) with
fiends of the most horrible aspects, ready to convey my soul to eternal
flames. They seemed to look upon me with a hellish triumph, which
words cannot describe. I had, at that time, such a view of eternity as I
never had before or since; and also of the soul’s immortality. I had also
such a view of the holiness and justice of God, as was unspeakable. Just
as my soul seemed waiting for her separation from the body, this thought
darted into my mind, “O! where is the sinner’s friend? Where is the Lord
Jesus Christ?” In speaking these words, I lifted up my eyes to heaven;
and, I thought, I beheld the heavens open; and there appeared a most
glorious person, who looked upon me and smiled. I cried out, “That is the
Lord Jesus Christ! That is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of
the world!” I gazed upon him a considerable time: and then looked for my
hellish attendants; but they were gone, and I saw them no more. I was then
restored to the use of my senses, and arose from the bed. All my misery
and despair were gone (pp. 187-188).

Before the actual attack begins, Rankin struggles to cope with his ambivalence. It
appears to have been initially stimulated by the passing of his father, and the fact that
Rankin felt obliged to take on the mantle of paternal responsibility (i.e., overseeing
family worship and assisting his mother in business; p. 184). Clearly, the metaphors he
chooses to convey his fear of communion betray an element of destructiveness. Rankin
believes that he has “trampled on the blood of the cross” and crucified Christ afresh (p.
186). His ambivalence is enacted in a “slip”, when he accidentally spills the wine during
communion. It is important to observe that Rankin is aware that he harbors a resistance:
all that stands between himself and Christ is his own “unbelief”. The vicissitudes of
internal aggression are made even more apparent in the imaginative content of the actual
panic attack. When it begins, Rankin is given an unprecedented view of the wrath of
God. He is convinced that he is without hope of mercy, and that he is guilty of
“quenching the light” previously given him. Feeling abandoned by an indignant God,
Rankin rages against himself and momentarily contemplates suicide.
In the second phase of the attack, themes of abandonment, guilt, despair and suicide are augmented by an ecstatic interlude characterized by demonic persecution and death struggle. Lying in his bed, Rankin is soon deprived of his outward senses and experiences a vision. When it begins, he believes that he is in the process of dying. His soul separates from his body and enters into the world of spirits. Although he considers death to be a “trifle”, he is admittedly terrified by the thought of hellfire. Nevertheless, Rankin overcomes his fear and decides to completely surrender himself to the experience: “yet, after a while, I was willing to go to hell, if God could not otherwise be glorified”. In consenting to his punishment by offering up his soul for the greater glory of God, he gains the reassuring approval of an ego ideal. The reparative gesture, in turn, grants him the courage to let go and allow the vision to unfold fully. In other words, Rankin is here making active use of the therapeutic alliance. Upon doing so, further unconscious materials emerge in symbolic form. In this way, the vision proceeds in terms of discrete episodes, as is the case with narrative sequences in dreams. He now beholds a legion of fiendish devils “ready to convey [his] soul to eternal flames”. At the moment when he is about to be permanently separated from his body, Rankin makes a plea for mercy: “O! Where is the sinner’s friend?” The appeal serves as an auto-suggestion which initiates a salvific vision of Jesus. This image, which effectively resolves the death struggle, may be understood as a symbolic conferral of acceptance upon the ego by the ego ideal. It presumably comes in response to Rankin’s sacrificial decision to relinquish control and suffer demonic persecution in the name of the God. When Christ appears, Rankin lovingly gazes upon the lamb until he realizes that the “hellish attendants” have vanished, and that he has been graciously delivered. Now, the ecstatic vision comes to an end: “I was then restored to the use of my senses, and arose from the bed”.

Rankin’s account contains a series of features which are frequently represented in the descriptions of hysterical attacks. During these experiences, the standard repentance
motifs of guilt, abandonment despair, suicidal temptations, persecutory anxiety and the fear of death erupt with unparalleled intensity. If they are accompanied by an alternate state of consciousness, as was the case with Rankin, these items undergo further symbolic elaboration in visual form. They may then culminate in a death crisis which is followed by a salvific outcome, usually in the form of an eidetic image of Christ, or a non-visual sense of his immediate presence.

Rankin’s extract also exemplifies typical psychodynamic trends. Firstly, his resistance or “unbelief” is a product of unconscious ambivalence, the derivatives of which are apparent both in the events which lead up to the attack, and during the actual experience itself. Further evidence of resistance can be ascertained by the fact that after his saving vision of Christ, Rankin, although relieved of his heavy load, has no palpable testimony of pardon. The following morning, after wrestling with God in prayer, he finally receives the full blessing. His language, however, indicates that aggression continues to interfere with the ecstatic manifestation of the ideal: “I was so overwhelmed with the love of God, that I thought I should then have died” (p. 189). Secondly, his ability to endure his rage is not only achieved by symbolic displacements (aggression turned against the self, or projected on to God and demons), but also by active appeals to his ego ideal. A sense of protection afforded by the alliance with the positive superego ensures that the experience will continue to unfold towards completion. Without further theoretic elaboration, we may conclude that Rankin’s attack is the result of an acute manifestation of repressed ambivalence that is safely contained and managed by the mechanisms listed above.

Let us turn to Carvosso’s account. After attending a Methodist sermon given by Thomas Hanson, Carvosso states that the “word quickly reached [his] heart”: “the scales fell off my eyes; and I saw and felt I was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (1835, p. 36).
I had such a sight of the damming nature of sin, and of what I had done against God, that I was afraid the earth would open up and swallow me up. I then made a solemn promise to the Lord, that if he would spare me I would serve him all my days. I now gave up my sins and all my old companions... That night I had a hard struggle with Satan, about praying before I went to bed. It appeared as if he was by me, and labored to terrify me with his presence, and the cross of the duty; but the Lord helped me against the temptation by applying that portion of Scripture, “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works... Satan instantly fled and I fell on my knees... I suffered much for many days; but about the space of eight hours before I received the pardon of sin, I might say with David, “The pains of hell gat hold upon me”; and the adversary of my soul harassed me with this temptation, “The day of grace is past; it is now too late”. I had no one to instruct or encourage me, no one to point me to Christ... in the midst of the conflict I said, in answer to the powerful suggestions of the devil, “I am determined, whether I am saved or lost, that, while I have breath, I will never cease crying for mercy”. The very moment I formed this resolution in my heart, Christ appeared within, and God pardoned all my sins, and set my soul at liberty. The spirit itself now bore witness with my spirit that I was a child of God (pp. 37-38).

Carvosso’s repentance begins during Hanson’s preaching. Note that in Carvosso’s case, the movement from desolation to justification progresses quickly. He is saved only several days after the onset of his convictions. When they do arise, he immediately resolves to repent and find salvation: “I now gave up my sins, and all my old companions...”. Carvosso’s unequivocal resolve, along with the speediness of his conversion and the fact that the account of his attack is not as lurid as the likes of Rankin and others, suggests that Carvosso’s ambivalence was not particularly excessive. Even so, his writing reveals some degree of conflict and resistance. For example, after making a “solemn promise to the Lord”, his efforts to pray in the evening are disrupted. Resistance manifests symbolically as an intellectual vision of the presence of Satan: “It appeared as if he was by me, and labored to terrify me with his presence”. However, through a creative inspiration in which a portion of scripture is “applied”, Carvosso is able to re-establish the rapport with his ideal and thereby recover his equilibrium. The actual full blown attack is indicated by the demarcation of an eight hour interval in which the “pains of hell” were upon him. Although no explicit mention is made of a death
struggle, Carvosso did experience an acute abandonment desolation: "The day of grace is past; it is now too late". This theme is reinforced by his statement that he was without any guidance from others who might instruct and encourage him. That Carvosso's attack centered primarily on abandonment is likely due to his early history. After his father left the family while he was still very young (p. 35), Carvosso resided with his mother and five siblings until the age of ten. At this time he was requested to go and live with a farmer who attended the same parish. When Carvosso claims that he "cheerfully consented" (p. 35) to this arrangement, we are tempted to infer a denial of grief and the possibility of unresolved mourning. Indeed, for Carvosso, separation anxiety appears to be a conspicuous personality trait. For example, much later in his memoir, he describes how he was devastated to learn that his son was considering entering on a foreign mission.

At reading [his letter] I was greatly affected; indeed I was for some time overwhelmed, and incapable of giving him any answer...I could not bear to entertain the thought, and therefore begged him not to think of anything of the kind till I should be removed hence...The subject was a burden to my mind indescribable (p. 104).

Carvosso's memoir generally reveals that partings and farewells were especially difficult moments (cf. p. 166).

During his attack, Carvosso interpreted his fear of abandonment as a diabolical "temptation". This suggests that ambivalence due to separation trauma initially served as a resistance to his acceptance of Christ. However, as in Rankin's narrative, Carvosso overcomes the resistance by appealing to his ideal. He answers "the powerful suggestions of the devil" by declaring that he "will never cease crying for mercy". His verbalized resolve to persevere through the crisis of doubt clinches his justification. The moment is punctuated by a sense of divine presence: "Christ appeared within, and God pardoned all my sins, and set my soul at liberty".
Finally, another aspect of Carvosso’s experience can be matched with that of Rankin’s. Following his conversion, Carvosso continues to experience some degree of ambivalence. For several days he labors under the “delusion” that he must not speak of his salvation (p. 38).

From experience I now knew well that Satan was a “roaring lion”; but I was not yet aware of his being able to transform himself into an “an angel of light.” He now told me, I must not declare what I had experienced; that if I did, I should at once fall into condemnation...without the least hesitation I said, “Then I will take care not to mention it”. (p. 38).

Hysterical somatizations and irregular motor behaviors, what Dimond refers to as “abnormal physical attacks” (1926, p. 126), were also fairly common features of these crises. Surveying a wide variety of Methodist sources, Dimond organizes a comprehensive set of symptomatic manifestations into four phenomenological categories: curiosity, fear, anger and rage (pp. 277-279). I have singled out what appear to be the most salient items and reduced them to two general headings. The first heading can be designated as “general bodily disturbances”. It includes such items as cold perspiration; muscle tremors and rigidity (p. 277); complete loss of the use of one’s limbs (p. 278) (this is connected to the “dropping down as dead” phenomena, currently referred to in certain evangelical circles as being “slain in the spirit” or “resting in the spirit”, cf. MacNutt, 1990); diffuse convulsions (Dimond, 1926, p. 279); heaving breasts (p. 279); and frantic bodily efforts representing “instinctive flight” (p. 278). The second heading, “oral-respiratory disturbances”, is obviously a sub-grouping of the first. It includes labored breathing, suffocation and strangulation (p. 277); gasping, gulping and convulsive motions of the lips (p. 277); dry mouth (p. 278); loss of voice or conversely, loud roars and bellowings (p. 278); and oral aggressive manifestations such as the furious gnashing of teeth and impulses to bite. Certain types of oral disturbances are associated with feelings of “repulsion and disgust” (pp. 143, 279): spitting as an expression of
strong aversion, oral expulsion, and sensory hallucinations of noxious or evil tasting substances (p. 279).

Bodily disturbances were typically, though not exclusively, linked to particular forms of ideation (often hallucinatory in nature, pp. 136-137) associated with a death crisis. For example, at Gateshead Fell, Wesley asked those who cried aloud to describe their experiences. He writes, “Some said they felt as if a sword was running through them; others, that they thought a great weight lay upon them, as if it would squeeze them to the earth...and others...as if their whole body, was tearing to pieces” (quoted in Dimond, 1926, p. 131). Wesley also made inquiries about such phenomena at Newcastle.

A few gave a more intelligible account of the piercing sense they had of their sins, both inward and outward, which were set in array against them roundabout; of the dread they were in the wrath of God and the punishment they had deserved, into which they seemed to be falling, without any way of escape. One of them told me, “It was as if I was just falling down from the highest place I have ever seen. I thought the devil was pushing me off and that God had forsaken me”. Another said, “I felt the very fire of hell already kindled in my breast; and all my body was in as much pain as if I had been in a burning fiery furnace” (quoted in Dimond, 1926, p. 147).

Sarah Crosby’s panic attack, previously cited in chapter two (p. 46), illustrates how the fear dying was combined with sensory-motor manifestations: “...I was struck, as I thought, with death; being seized with a cold trembling from head to foot”. Both James (1982, p. 250) and Starbuck (1911, p. 77) cite the account of a man involved in 18th-century American Methodist Holiness. The passage is a singularly vivid example of an excruciating death struggle. In being an outstanding specimen of the very phenomena we are currently examining, I have taken the liberty to include it in this context.

I know not how I got back into the encampment, but found myself staggering up to Rev.-’s Holiness tent - and as it was full of seekers and a terrible noise inside, some groaning, some laughing, and some shouting, and by a large oak, ten feet by the tent, I fell on my face by a bench and
tried to pray, and every time I would call on God, something like a man’s hand would strangle me by choking. I don’t know whether there were any one around me or not. I thought I should surely die if I did not get help, but just as often as I would pray, that unseen hand was felt on my throat and my breath squeezed off. Finally something said: ‘Venture on the atonement, for you will die anyway if you don’t.’ So I made one final struggle to call on God for mercy, with the same choking and strangling, determined to finish the sentence of prayer for Mercy, if I did strangle and die, and the last I remember that time was falling back on the ground with the same unseen hand on my throat. I don’t know how long I lay there or what was going on. None of my folks were present. When I came to myself, there were a crowd around me praising God. The very heavens seemed to open and pour down rays of light and glory. Not for a moment only, but all day and night, floods of light and glory seemed to pour through my soul, and oh, how I was changed, and everything became new. My horses and hogs and even everybody seemed changed.

The physical and mental upheavals of the death struggle all too easily invoked comparisons to labor. The metaphor was a logical one given that the ordeal so often issued in the new birth. The following account was recorded by Wesley in his journal.

As my mother bore me with great pain, so did I feel great pain in my soul in being born of God. Indeed I thought the pains of death were upon me, and that my soul was taking leave of the body. I thought I was going to Him whom I saw with strong faith standing ready to receive me. In this violent agony I continued about four hours; and then I began to feel the ‘Spirit of God bearing witness with my spirit that I was born of God’. Because I was a child of God, He ‘sent forth the spirit of His Son into me, crying, Abba, Father’. For that is the cry of every new-born soul. O mighty, powerful, happy change! I who had nothing but devils ready to drag me to hell, now found I had angels to guard me to my reconciled Father; and my Judge, who just before was ready to condemn me, was now become my righteousness (quoted in Lee, 1936, p. 285).

Furthermore, like real labor, mental anguish and convulsive tearings took their toll on the body. Recipients of the attacks were left physically drained and exhausted (cf. Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp. 32-33). Sarah Crosby states that her body felt “as though it had been beaten” (Arminian Magazine, 1806, p. 471).

Finally, in another variation of the attack, individuals presented themselves as manifestly possessed by and, to varying degrees, consciously identified with demonic
forces. Here, the eruption of repressed hostility is revealed in the most direct and undisguised manner. In such cases, individuals characteristically railed at God, as well as preachers and other intermediaries who attempted to exorcise the intruder and deliver their souls. Wesley noted the phenomenon in his journal.

I was sent for to one in Bristol, who was taken ill the evening before. She lay on the ground furiously grasping her teeth, and after a while roared aloud. It was not easy for three or four persons to hold her, especially when the name of Jesus was named. We prayed; the violence of her symptoms ceased, though without complete deliverance. In the evening I was sent for to her again. She began screaming before I came into the room; then broke out into a horrid laughter, mixed with blasphemy. One, who apprehended a preternatural agent to be concerned in this, asking, “How didst thou dare to enter into a Christian?” was answered, “She is not a Christian - she is mine”. This was followed by fresh trembling, cursing, and blasphemy. My brother coming in, she cried out, “Preacher! Field preacher! I don’t love field preaching”. This was repeated two hours together, with spitting, and all expressions of strong aversion. We left her at twelve, and called again at noon the next day. And now it was, that God showed He heareth prayer. All her pangs ceased in a moment; she was filled with peace, and knew that the son of wickedness was parted from her (quoted in Dimond, 1926, pp. 152-153).

Cennick provides a dramatic account of a hysterical outbreak amongst a crowd who had gathered to hear him preach on the forgiveness of sins. The event was suitably framed, if not partially instigated, by a violent thunderstorm. He writes, “indeed, it seemed that the Devil, and much of the powers of darkness, were come among us” (Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 180).

Large Flashes of Lightning, and loud claps of Thunder, Mixed with the Screams of frightened Parents, and the Exclamations of nine distressed Souls!...many raving up and down, crying, “The Devil will have me! I am his Servant! I am damned! My Sins can never be pardoned! I am gone, gone for ever!” A young man (in such Horrors, that seven or eight could not hold him) still roared, like a Dragon, “Ten thousand Devils, millions, millions of Devils are about me!” This continued three hours. One cried out, “That fearful Thunder is raised by the Devil: in this Storm he will bear me to Hell!” O what a power reigned amongst us! Some cried out with a hollow voice, “Mr. Cennick! Bring Mr. Cennick!” I came to all, that desired me. They then spurned with all their strength, grinding their
teeth, and expressing all the Fury, that heart can conceive. Indeed, their staring eyes, and swelled faces, so amazed others, that they cried out as loud, as they who were tormented. I have visited several since, who told me, their Senses were taken away; but when I drew near, they said, they felt fresh Rage, longing to tear me to pieces! (emphasis added; pp. 180-181).

Even in the case of those who became manifestly possessed, the expression of violent rage was subject to a defensive displacement by way of dissociation. Thus, expressions of malevolence were deflectively attributed to an external source, to demonic infusion. However, we do see that there was variability in the extent to which individuals remained detachedly aware of a foreign presence responsible for their actions. For example, in Wesley’s report, the woman he describes is depicted as fully identified with her tormentor. Cases in which the capacity for self-reflection was entirely repressed were presumably the result of hysterical or hypnotic dissociation. Cennick’s account provides even further evidence of dissociation. Here possession was punctuated by intervals of fugue - several claimed their senses were taken away when they were not in the immediate vicinity of his presence.

For many, however, the identification with evil was not the total content of consciousness experience. Thus, notwithstanding their fury, those in Cennick’s group were at least able to simultaneously plead for assistance. In fact, manifest possessions sometimes proceeded in an entirely ego-alien fashion. Although they experienced convulsions known to be the result of demonic intrusion, certain persons disidentified from the presence and the behaviors it provoked. For example, in undergoing a possession attack, John Haydon beat himself against the ground while three men attempted to subdue him. At the same time, he was sufficiently lucid and self-possessed to reflectively pass judgment on himself as a former skeptic. According to Wesley, during Haydon’s seizure, he proclaimed, “Let all come and see the judgment of God...I said it was a delusion, I was wrong...O devil, O legion of devils. Christ will cast thee out. I know his work is begun. Tear me to pieces if thou wilt; but thou canst not hurt me”
(quoted in Rammage, 1967, p. 150). Once again, we may observe how the double-consciousness of the therapeutic alliance could be usefully maintained even in the midst of such violent struggles. For the most part, throughout the vicissitudes of the attacks, be they acute abandonment desolations, convulsive death struggles, or demonic possessions, individuals retained the ability to appeal for divine assistance, and confidently glorify God.

In attempting to explain how the attacks were induced, several authors have advanced views which rely exclusively on external variables, thereby neglecting the role of predisposing personality factors. Dimond argues that attacks were precipitated by hypnotic dissociation due to the effects of a "crowd mentality" (1926, pp. 133-135). He writes, "The chief agent is probably the tendency for any mental content upon which spontaneous attention is fixed, to gain control of the motor centers apart from the will, and thus to work itself out into the activity of the muscular system" (p. 133). Dimond prioritizes public settings. The effects of the "crowd mentality" (p. 135) - loss of individual independence, the sense of corporate power, and a diminished consciousness of responsibility - promoted the inhibition of normal functions of consciousness, thereby facilitating the dissociative process. The "mental content" was derived from sermons, as well as hymns (p. 121-124). That there was a hypnotic element in many of the attacks is borne out by much of the data presented above. I am referring to such dissociative phenomena as fugues, involuntary movements and loss of motor control, and reified possession states. However, given that the attacks were not limited to public gatherings, the precipitating effects of the "crowd mentality" can not be extended as a general explanation.

Southey (1820) and Sargant (1959; 1976) emphasize the inculcation of terror. Wesley's skill as an orator, his impassioned admonishments of sin and threats of damnation, instilled an extreme fear which lead to hysterical outbursts. Holland, on the
other hand, questions the portrayal of Wesley as a “heated” hellfire preacher. He points out that Wesley did not frequently deal with the subject of hell in his sermons, and that he was “calmly logical as an orator” (1973-74, pp. 80-81). According to Holland, the reactions cannot be attributed to fear alone: “To become hysterical, people must feel not only threatened but also to some extent trapped or helpless in the face of that threat” (p. 80). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, he claims that the attacks which occurred in Wesley’s early ministry were due to a combination of two factors: his then current view that without the full measure of faith one was still damned, and his conception of faith as passively received. Under these conditions, an unbearable sense of helplessness generated hysterical trauma. The argument, however insightful, does not account for the persistence of the attacks beyond the early period. As a corrective, we may recall Rack’s view that those who succumbed to the attacks were already psychologically prepared to react in this manner (1989, p. 197). This position accords with the evidence we have reviewed concerning modal personality traits in Wesley’s followers. Therefore, theories which are limited to external-environmental factors do not convey the whole picture. Picking up on Holland’s lead, I would suggest that the sense of helplessness, and the violent behavioral manifestations it created, were derived primarily from internal conflict, and the anxiety attendant upon the gradual overcoming of resistances to painful materials.

Although they expressed it in a religious idiom, Wesley himself and some of his cohorts resorted to a conflict model to make sense of the attacks. They believed that convulsive episodes were the result of demonic resistance. Cennick, in fact, held that diabolic opposition was stirred even before the convulsions erupted. Like Carvosso (cf. 1835, p. 37-38), Cennick claimed that the preceding dread of abandonment was already a product of demonic antagonism hastened by the invitation to accept Christ.

Now, after the word of the Most High has touched the heart... the Serpent is seeking to root it up... but as the Spirit of God has gained entrance, he
rageth with all his might...[and] troubleth the soul with the Justice of God, with Fear of having passed the Day of Grace, or having sinned too greatly to be forgiven, in order to make them despair. Hence ariseth a fierce combat in the inward parts, so that he weaker part of man, the Body, is overcome, and those Cries and Convulsions follow (Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 180).

Wesley's position was less straightforward given his uncertainty in the matter (Rack, 1989, pp. 196-197). He was aware of naturalistic explanations, such as epilepsy and hysteria, but was convinced that the physical agonies he observed were of supernatural origin. Wesley wavered between viewing the attacks as the work of devil “tearing” individuals as they were coming to Christ (quoted in Rammage, 1967, p. 173), and as the result of the Holy Spirit applying the conviction of sin. In his final pronouncement, Wesley stated that either of these causes could be operative. (Rammage, 1967, p. 174).

Demonic resistance theory posits a dynamic interruption of the relationship to Christ. More specifically, it is Christ’s offer of pardoning love which consequently elicits stringent opposition. This theological formulation was given credence by empirical observation. In contrast to theories which place a premium on fear as the cause of the attacks, Wesley observed that most of his converts were “cut to the heart while he was inculcating the doctrine that Christ died to save sinners” (Gunther, 1989, p. 148).

This trend has not gone unnoticed by scholars (Rack, 1989, p. 228; Rammage, 1967, pp. 149, 158-59, 160-161, 206). For Rammage, this observation provides the key for comprehending the core psychodynamics of the repentance attacks. He stresses that although Wesley emphasized the “sin and hopelessness” of natural man, this was essentially a “preamble” to his real message: the infinite mercy of God (p. 124-125). Rammage argues that in rejecting the doctrine of predestination, and thereby “abolishing the arbitrariness of God’s justice and the uncertainty of his mercy” (p. 131), Wesley radically undermined the authoritarian conception of God. The promise of unconditional acceptance struck a profoundly responsive chord in the “love starved hearts” (p. 221) of
his listeners. As a result of the deprivations of childhood, their emotional lives were impoverished by the ongoing repression of hatred, and resentment. In being persuaded by Wesley of God’s benevolent intentions, an archaic wish to reinstate a relation to the loving parent was re-animated and effectively set in motion. However, images of the positive imago were inextricably bound to its opposite, the fixated representation of the bad parent. In order to access the former, a wedge had to be driven through the layer of repressed feelings and fantasies associated with parental trauma. The desire to surrender lovingly to Christ necessarily aroused fears of a repetition of the original conflict situation. The anticipation of rejection prompted fresh eruptions of rage, which only intensified separation anxiety (cf. Fauteux, 1994, p. 68). Given the threat of retraumatization, now expressed in terms of divine wrath and demonic assault, internal resistance was understandably intensified. Yet, in so many instances, long standing defenses were eventually broken through. Rammage holds that Wesley’s unprecedentedly benign portrayal of God offered a haven of safety wherein the pressure of internal resistance was overcome (1967, p. 202). In turn, unconscious materials could be delivered up, explored, and, in the case of the attacks, dramatically abreacted so as to be worked through.

Rammage’s argument can be seen as a further elaboration of the idea of the therapeutic alliance. In fact, he similarly draws upon a clinical analogy by singling out the analyst’s unconditional acceptance of the patient’s hatred and destructiveness. He writes, “Only in a relationship where the expression of his feelings will no longer be a threat to his safety can the patient acknowledge them” (p. 234). Thus, for Rammage, convulsive crises were healing abreactions of “primitive and powerful emotions of hatred” (p. 188). This formulation, however, needs to be delineated more precisely.

In general terms, during the desolation phase, the problem of the split imago is brought to a head. From an intrapsychic point of view, we may say that, while trying to
negotiate their salvation, individuals were precariously suspended between the
contrasting poles of a split representation of Deity. The resistance encountered in
surrendering to Christ can be best conceptualized as a failure of trust. In as much as one
continues to rage against God, one can never be certain of his mercy - it is perpetually
spoiled by projective fantasies of retaliation. Stated differently, resistance is born of a
dread that the during the moment of surrender the good object will be transformed into
its abandoning and persecutory opposite.

Ambivalence leading to the projective oscillation and confusion of internal object
representations is one of the causes of resistances to unitive ecstasies. Fauteux, for
example, in discussing the psychodynamics of spiritual desolations, states that anger not
only creates a fear of rejection, but also the conviction that “rebelliousness will be
punished by the other’s annihilating rage” (1994, p. 71). Citing Mahler, Fauteux refers
to aggression as being “unleashed in such a way to inundate or sweep away the ‘good’
object...” (quoted in Fauteux, p. 71). In commenting on the vicissitudes of ecstatic
merger states, Modell (1968) offers a similar view. According to him, “...when there is
an intense fear of merging with the ‘bad’ object the subject may fear a loss of identity, a
dread of being influenced, and ultimately, [the subject] may fear complete annihilation”
(p. 37). In a relevant context outside of the immediate discussion of religious ecstasy,
Klein (1988) also refers to the way in which aggression can promote the paranoid
confusion of good and bad internal objects. In her view, one’s ability to trust the good
object is depleted by persecutory anxiety. Consider the following case vignette:

The night after his mother’s funeral, D dreamt that X (a father-figure) and
another person (who stood for me) were trying to help him, but actually he
had to fight for his life against us; as he put it: ‘Death was claiming me’...I
interpreted that he felt the helpful external parents to be at the same time
the fighting disintegrating parents, who would attack and destroy
him...and that 1 myself and analysis had come to stand for the dangerous
people and happenings inside himself (p. 366).
The unconscious fear that aggression will effectively obliterate the supportive good object is, in Methodism, symbolically expressed by the fear of participation in the sacrament. Autobiographical reports continually make mention of this phenomenon (e.g. Arminian Magazine 1779, p. 186; p. 471; 1789, p. 415; 1798, p. 5). The belief that “unprepared and careless” ingestion of the Lord’s body and blood was a dangerous undertaking can be traced back to New Testament times (Rack, 1989, p. 20). Susanna Wesley, schooled in the Puritan tradition in which the reception of Holy communion was preceded by a period of introspective preparation, engaged in such rigorous self-examination “that both her body and spirit were fatigued for some days after” (Newton, 1968, p. 146). The dread of “eating and drinking one’s own damnation” (Arminian Magazine 1798, p. 5), a notion already given credence by the authority of scripture, was so common that John Wesley was moved to address the problem in one of his sermons. He reminded supplicants that communion is predicated on God’s mercy, not his wrath. Through it, he offers not damnation, but pardon (1984-87, III: pp. 433-34). In eating the holy sacrament, and thereby communing with the purified body of divinity, individuals dreaded that their own internal corruption would rob the host of its inherent goodness, and that such sacrilege would necessarily provoke a retaliation. This dynamic was also played out in the attacks which preceded the equally communitative moment of justification. It was expressed most dramatically by the various hysterical fantasies and visions of annihilation.

In the midst of their attacks, Methodists typically preserved the good object by displacing persecutory dread onto the devil. Recall that in the first phase of Thomas Rankin’s attack, the object of his abandonment desolation is God the father (Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp. 187-188). Later, when Rankin’s ambivalence is intensified during an ecstatic death struggle, the negative representation of divinity is transformed into a
legion of demons. The shift effected through the change of symbols maintains the integrity of the good object, and safeguards the therapeutic alliance.

Protective displacement also proceeded by the deflection of anger against the self, as was the case generally with convulsive outbursts. This view is consistent with Fenichel’s explanation of “hystero-epilepsy”.

Very intense destructive and sadistic drives which have been repressed for a long time...find an explosive discharge in the seizure. The repression of destructive drives [through their containment in convulsions] is due to an intense fear of retaliation (quoted in Merkur, 1998, p. 39).

Various modes of displacement permit repressed anger to emerge into consciousness. However, something further must occur in order for the attacks to function as “healing abreactions”. In ideal circumstances, the attacks are successfully curtailed by the experiential sign of God’s acceptance in the justification ecstasy. The completion of this sequence is ensured by the individual’s active use of the therapeutic alliance. At this juncture, what is achieved is a partial working through of primitive anxieties, as well as the conscious acknowledgment and tolerance of rage. As a result of mastery, made possible through symbolic means, a significant degree of self-esteem is attained and represented as divine pardon. An account of one of Sarah Crosby’s desolation attacks clearly demonstrates the conscious working through of modal conflicts stemming from parental authoritarianism.

And now the fiery hour came...I was in such agony of body and soul, as it is not easy to conceive. In an hour and a half, I had hardly life left in me...but for several days, my body was as though it had been beaten...God had shut out my spirit from his presence for ever; compared to which misery, I thought, had ministers trampled me under their feet, it would have been as nothing. Satan now suggested, “Will you ever exalt Christ again? Will you dare to say, God is Love?” I answered, in my heart, “I will exalt Jesus Christ; I will say God is Love, while I have breath.” Then said he, “Where is now his love to let you suffer thus?”

In the midst of these exercises, however, the Lord lifted up my head, and often enabled me to say, in faith, “Although the fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vine, or heard in the stall, &c. yet
will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation; for when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

I now perceived God had restrained the tempter, and began to inquire, "What condemnation is there in my soul?" there is no condemnation for those that are in Jesus Christ. How is it, that, in all I have suffered for these three years past, I have not felt the least inclination to turn back from the path of life, or entertained one hard thought of God?" I then appealed to him: Lord, dost thou not know that all my aims and intentions are upright before thee?" And I felt a witness in myself it was so...I now felt my soul fully cast on the Lord Jesus, and found a rest, which before I had not known, while peace and love filled my heart (Arminian Magazine, 1806, pp. 471-472).

Crosby's attack commences with the conscious manifestation of rage turned against the self. She refers to a mental and physical anguish which, for several days after, left her feeling as though she had been beaten up. Her hostility towards God is displaced through a reversal when she speaks of ministers trampling her underfoot. The release of aggression induces separation anxiety and the conviction that God has permanently deprived her of his presence. Here we see the symbolic repetition of the object relational drama between the child and the authoritarian parent. In signaling the threat of abandonment, it is imperative that hostility be defensibly contained. In this case, Crosby's momentary belief that she has been forsaken is a disguised acknowledgment of her rage. Furthermore, the very nub of the infantile conflict is verbally conveyed in the devil's suggestion: "Where is now his love to let you suffer thus?" In the context of evangelical nurture, this is the unthinkable and unanswerable question which the child must, at all cost, repress. While she is thus tempted to disbelieve (i.e., resisting Christ as a bad object), Crosby simultaneously "exercises" her commitment to the Lord. Even during the height of her ambivalence, she proclaims her "faith", her confidence that she will "come forth as gold". In thus demonstrating her allegiance to her ideal, she overcomes anxiety and the masochistic distortions of the bad parental introject. Under the sway of a newly emergent ego ideal, Crosby is able, for the first time, to engage in non-punitive self-assessment. She perceives that the tempter is "restrained"; no longer
"condemned", she re-assesses her conduct in the previous three years and rationally deduces that she has been an "upright" Christian. The ego-ideal reinforces this evaluation through a symbolic conferral of acceptance: "And I felt a witness in myself it was so".

Theoretic Summary

What Wesley refers to as repentance is the initial phase of spiritual regeneration. Theologically, sinners are rudely awakened from their sleep. They can no longer engage in self-deception now that the piercing convictions of prevenient grace frighteningly alter their perception of themselves. Repentance is understood as a form of self-knowledge which is brought to bear by the judgments of a formerly suppressed conscience.

Psychologically, the massive emotional shift in self-perception is brought on by the activation of repressed materials now making their way into consciousness. Infantile neuroses rooted in the traumatic consequences of parental authoritarianism, loss and bereavement are stirred and re-elaborated through appropriate analogies conveyed in a religious idiom. Wesley’s rendering of the doctrine of repentance promotes a transference neurosis through which ambivalence towards the parent is reproduced as enmity towards God - all of the standard psychic disturbances originally instilled by culturally modal complications in childhood development are given thematic representation. The apprehension of rage is frameworked by the idea of innate corruption and rebellion; the threat of parental punishment finds expression in God’s intractable wrath; vicissitudes of loss and actual bereavement are encoded in terms of alienation, spiritual deadness and mourning after God. Wesley’s provision of deeply reverberating symbolism magnetizes unconscious memories, feelings and fantasies, such they are both drawn into consciousness and given a coherent medium for thoughtful elaboration beyond the limited and rigid meanings assigned by the infantile source (cf. Obeysekere, 1990, pp. 12-13).
The transference neurosis onto God is deliberately amplified through techniques of religious mourning which include fasting, weeping and grieving in solitude. Although these practices have been used cross-culturally, they possess a particularly striking psychological resonance in the Methodist context. Like the religious imagery of repentance, the techniques used to heighten convictions are themselves fraught with significances that interlace with pre-existing unconscious themes. For example, fasting is an especially effective form of atonement given the various allusions to oral aggression as seen in Wesley’s writings and in the autobiographical literature. Moreover, solitude re-enacts feelings of separation and abandonment, while weeping gives individuals opportunities to vent grief over previous losses, the circumstances of which may have prevented them from doing so originally.

It is crucial to keep in mind that the painful unfolding of the transference neurosis is not only facilitated by negative doctrinal imagery and ritual mourning. Individuals allow themselves to undergo the miseries of repentance precisely because they are enticed by the promise of Christ’s unconditional love and acceptance. Both poles of the split imago are operative in the process. By forming a conscious therapeutic alliance with a merciful deity (the ego ideal), individuals muster the courage to examine their repressed ambivalence while tolerating the dread of punishment (the bad parental introject). This undertaking is not easy. Long standing anxieties produce considerable resistance. More specifically, in as much as individuals long to “believe”, or surrender themselves to Christ, persistent unconscious aggression towards the parent-deity means that they are never certain that they can relinquish their defenses, lest they surrender to an annihilating God who would damn them eternally.

The initial working through of the transference neurosis during desolation is ensured by the ability to maintain trust in the intrapsychic therapeutic alliance between the ego and the ego-ideal. As individuals’ despair deepens or climaxes during repentance
attacks, they continually voice their allegiance to God, thereby gaining an inner sense of approval from the ideal. This approval fosters sufficient hope and courage such that they are able to apprehend greater and greater intensities of ambivalence. We will recall Merkur's claim that the bi-polar affective shift from depression to elation is the rational result of a superego value judgment (1989, p. 134). The Methodist data permits us to conclude that the value judgment is applied at a point when one has achieved a relatively durable tolerance of primitive anxieties and hostility. As unconscious ambivalence is subject to symbolic mastery in consciousness by way of the alliance, the negative parental imago is momentarily deprived of its emotional influence. No longer under the sway of conflict and guilt, the ego is in a position to adopt its ideal without further inhibition. The sense of acceptance or "union" with the ideal issues in an ecstatic sense of divine pardon. Insight is achieved theologically: "I am loved by God even despite my sinfulness".
CHAPTER 5
JUSTIFICATION AND THE NEW BIRTH

In several works written in tandem with the rise of psychedelic culture in the 1960’s, Maslow attempted to clarify the defining features of spontaneously occurring unitive ecstasies. With the intention of side-stepping traditional religious terminologies and their doctrinal biases, he coined the secular term “peak experience” in order to refer to a transcendent moment of “highest happiness and fulfillment” (1968, p. 73). Several authors have found the concept useful in illuminating facets of Methodist spirituality (Outler 1981, p. xiii; Oakland, 1981; Maas, 1990). Both Oakland (1981, p. 162) and Maas (1990, p. 309) see a correlation between peak experiences and the experiential aspects of justification associated with faith and assurance. Oakland claims that in as much as Wesley was concerned with achieving a perfect relationship with God, he actively promoted peak experiences (1981, p. 167).

The comparison is not unfounded. For Maslow, peak experiences are characterized by a “unitive consciousness” (1970, p. 32) whose psychological components, or “beta-cognition”, reflect ultimate values of “being”. Most importantly, the ecstasy is organized by a perceptual abstraction through which the particularities of the cosmos are beheld as an integrated unity (pp. 59-68, 91-96). This typically instills a feeling of blissful inclusion within a world that is singularly redolent with meaning. The abstract perception of an underlying unity, and one’s immediate participation in it, leads to further momentary alterations of consciousness. During the interval in which they occur, peak experiences accentuate empathy and promote an increased ability to imaginatively adopt the subject’s point of view. An intensification of healthy conscience is coupled with a diminishment of narcissistic self-interest and materialistic values. Charity, humility, joyfulness and calm override conflict, depression, anxiety and,
ultimately, the fear of death. Exhilaration and relief foster spontaneous expressions of worship and praise.

In much the same way, Wesley explains that those who are justified are brought into a new world in which the presence of God is immediately intuited in and through all things. Believers who have undergone a second birth are graciously renewed by the provision of an entirely distinct set of supernatural faculties. "Spiritual senses" supplement the limited sensory capacities of the physical body by offering a view of the "eternal world", "the invisible things of God" (Wesley, 1984-87, II: p. 161). This endowment, which Wesley regarded as the condition of faith, affords a unitive perception of how God's love imbibes and sustains all facets of creation (III: pp. 89-95). As in Maslow's formulation, the experiential sense of an all encompassing unity, the omnipresence of God in the cosmos, instills a series of dramatic psychological changes that effect the entire personality. By receiving "the spirit of adoption" (I: p. 22), believers experience a sense of acceptance and inclusion as children belonging to the universal family of God. The spirit of adoption presupposes divine forgiveness. In overcoming the dread of judgment, individuals experience a "joy which surpasses all understanding". Faith eradicates guilt and anxiety over sin, and thereby promotes a good conscience towards God, which, in turn, is the basis of the justifying sense of pardon (I: p. 274). God's love is gratefully reciprocated and further extended to all creatures, who are, in the end, united in the same spirit (I: p. 274). In being granted a view of the eternal world (II: p. 161), one's fear of death is overcome (II: p. 481). Furthermore, individuals blessed in this manner undergo an irresistible shift in their system of values. Because their desires and interests are reorganized along spiritual lines, they develop a distaste for vain and materialistic pursuits, and prefer instead to glorifying God in all things (Steele, 1994, p. 133).

As a form of ecstasy, peak experiences occur during an alternate state of consciousness which transforms the conditions and content of normal perception. For
this reason, Maslow highlights a shift not only in affect, but also in “cognition” (1971, pp. 251-259). Before proceeding further, I need to specify my use of the term “ecstasy”. Merkur, who employs the term as a synonym for “religiously interpreted alternate state experiences” (1993, p.11), has advanced a definition which singles out a psychological variable operative in all varieties of religious ecstasy. His efforts in this direction provide a necessary corrective to previous conceptualizations constrained by ideologies of particular traditions. He points out, for example, that many Catholic writers follow St. Theresa’s terminology, in which ecstasy denotes the final step in the scala contemplationis (p. 11). Since other Catholic authorities such as St. Bernard of Clairvaux refer to ecstasies that do not involve a scala contemplationis, Theresa’s definition cannot be adequately generalized. Eliade applies the term to out-of-the-body experiences, but this too remains unsatisfactory in that the latter were traditionally regarded as “transports” (pp. 11-12) Beyond tradition-bound interpretations, Merkur opts for a psychological explanation which emphasizes the “autonomous” nature of ecstasy.

It is characteristic of all ecstasies that they involve at least some autonomous phenomena - what Catholic tradition terms “contemplation” and contrasts with “meditation”. Autonomous psychic materials seem subjectively to the ecstatic to be independent of control by will (p. 12).

In drawing attention to the autonomy of certain psychic processes during alternate states of consciousness, Merkur offers a formulation that can be applied cross-culturally.

...I define ecstasy as any state of involuntary belief in the reality of the numinous. Like sense perception during normal waking sobriety and dream hallucinations during sleep, the autonomous contents of an ecstasy have a compelling psychic reality for at least the duration of their occurrence. The ecstatic is then convinced that the numinous is real - as real or more than the perceptible world. In contrast with sober faith in the numinous, which requires an act of will, ecstatic belief in the reality of the numinous is involuntary. Whether or not the occurrence of ecstasy was voluntarily sought, once the experience is underway, faith in the reality of the numinous is not subject to volition. Doubt can be entertained, but it cannot be sustained for the duration of the experience (pp. 12-13).
Consequently, ecstasies are unique among the varieties of religious experience because they “have the power not only to confirm religious faith that already exists, but also to produce conversions from unbelief to belief” (p. 13).

In addition, Merkur distinguishes between two generic types of alternate states - trance and reverie - which may be illustrated by the distinction between hypnosis and hypnagogia, respectively. During hypnotic trance, all forms of fantasy material entertained in consciousness are subject to symbolic reification due to the repression of ego-functions which normally engage in reality testing (p. 34; cf. Shor, 1972a; 1972b). Thus, for example, the content of a vision will be apprehended as an objective verity, at least for the duration of the ecstasy. Conversely, during reveries states, in which ego functions are “relaxed” (as opposed to repressed), fantasy materials, for the most part, are “known subjectively to be intrapsychic” (Merkur, 1993. p. 34). In other words, while in a reverie state, the individual remains aware that the experience is imaginative in nature, although “[psychic materials] may be interpreted variously...as imaginations, extrasensory perceptions, or divine revelations” (p. 34). Most peak experiences, along with psychedelic and sensory deprivation experiences, are all instances of reverie. Thus, the variable that distinguishes this mode as a discrete class of ecstasy is the relatively unencumbered activity of conscious and preconscious ego functions. Unlike the mental conditions which hold sway during hypnotic trance, reverie preserves self-conscious awareness so that one can engage, to varying degrees, in rational forms of reflection and symbolic interpretation.

Merkur’s model of alternate state experience, his definition of ecstasy as involuntary belief in the numinous, and the identification of reverie as distinct from trance, provides a novel point of entry for an examination of the psychology of Methodist justification. Wesley’s theological description of the instantaneous and passive reception of faith coincides with the category of ecstatic reverie. To begin, his understanding of justification is clearly shaped by the reformed conception of faith as received through
grace. The objective evidence (Maddox, 1994, p. 173) or “experimental knowledge” (Wesley and Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 154) of pardon proceeds in an entirely autonomous fashion that precludes any volitional participation on the part of the believer. Quoting St. Paul, Wesley writes,

...[he] strongly insists...that the terms of pardon and acceptance must depend, not ‘on us, but on him that calleth us’; that there is no ‘unrighteousness with God’ in fixing his own terms, not according to ours, but his own good pleasure: who may justly say, “I will have mercy’, namely, on him who believeth in Jesus. ‘So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth’, to choose the condition on which he shall find acceptance, ‘but of God that sheweth mercy’...(I: p. 197).

Faith is not merely the result of reasoned deduction: “it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head” (I: p. 120). On the contrary, “God both opens and enlightens the eyes of our understanding...And we then see, not by a chain of reasoning, but by a kind of intuition, by a direct view, that ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself...’” (II: p. 481). As a consequence of Wesley’s appropriation of the Moravian view of justification, which placed special emphasis on the witness of the spirit (i.e. the immediate sense of pardon and the manifestation of the fruits of the spirit), he came to advance a doctrine of “perceptible inspiration”, thereby linking the reformed view of justification with “a more positive spiritual sensation that [he] described in terms of a new birth...” (Whaling, 1981, p. 44). For Whaling, this linkage attests to Wesley’s theological “originality” (p. 44). Using scriptural language that emphasizes passive apprehension, Wesley speaks of being “sensible” of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; one literally “feels” it, and is “moved” by it (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 155). The importance of this innovation can be seen in the fact that it regularly drew accusations of enthusiasm. Anglican critics held that Wesley’s portrayal of the new birth, as both instantaneous and inwardly felt, presupposed “extraordinary communications” which seditiously by-passed the ordinary doctrinal assurances of divine presence (Lee, 1931, p. 132).
Relying on scriptural precedent, Wesley portrays the witness as consisting of two components. The testimony of God’s spirit “is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the spirit of God directly ‘witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God’; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I...am reconciled to God” (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 274). God’s testimony is subsequently greeted by the testimony of one’s own spirit, which is to say, the affirmation of conscience. The undeniable feeling of good will towards God, a sentiment ensured by his pardon, brings with it holy tempers, or the fruits of the spirit. These are a further dimension of the second witness:

...even a loving heart toward God and toward all mankind, hanging with childlike confidence on God our Father, desiring nothing but him, casting all our care upon him, and embracing every child of man with earnest, tender affection, so as to be ready to lay down our life for our brother, as Christ laid down his life for us - a consciousness that we are inwardly conformed by the Spirit of God to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy and truth; doing the things which are pleasing in his sight (I: p. 274).

Wesley insists that the conscious effects of the dual witnesses are anything but obscure. The drawings of the spirit are unequivocally apparent to its recipients: “that divine consciousness, that ‘witness of God’...is more and greater than ten thousand human witnesses” (I: p. 146).

Furthermore, Wesley’s delineation of faith is also consistent with alternate state experience in that faith is depicted as something which transcends normal sensory modalities (“not discoverable by the bodily senses”; I: p. 194), and yet, remains entirely experiential. The perceptual abstraction of the invisible world secured by an altogether different register of spiritual senses; and the assertion that the witness of the spirit can not be verbally explained to those who do not possess it (I: p. 283), is phenomenologically consistent with what Hollenback refers to as the “trans-sensory” character of mystical consciousness: “I am observing that the mystic seems to perceive the objects of his or
her visions and locutions by means of some faculty other than the five physical senses” (1996, p. 43).

In as much as justifying grace is instantaneously given, and in as much as belief in Christ proceeds independently of volition, and brings with it dramatic changes in conscious experience - the conviction of pardon, the fruits of the spirit, the invisible and eternal world of God - it coincides with Merkur’s definition of ecstasy. But in what sense does it also conform to the category of reverie? Here we must recall Dimond’s (1926) and Rack’s (1989) assertion that Wesley effectively synthesized rationalism and supernatural enthusiasm. His epistemological stance was largely informed by Lockean empiricism (Dryer, 1983; Mathews, 1985; Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 145; Rack, 1989, pp. 384-386). Like Locke, Wesley rejected the notion of innate ideas and held that all knowledge was derived from the senses. Since knowledge of the things of God was not discernible by the sensory capacities of the flesh, Wesley extended the empirical premise into the idea of spiritual senses. With divine sentience, one could access the “data” of the eternal realm and engage in the same series of sequential steps which Locke had identified as the basis of reasoning: apprehension, judgment and discourse. Contrary to the philosophy of the Deists, Wesley knew that reason alone could not discover the verities of the spirit and therefore, was an inadequate basis for faith. However, when faith was granted at justification, and one could discern the things of God, then the reasoning process was applied to divine perception in exactly the same manner as it was in the context of profane perception. In other words, Wesley’s view of faith integrated lucid self-reflection and ecstatic perception. In agreement with the structure of peak experiences, the apprehension of God’s eternity and omnipresence was inextricably bound up with the temporal world: the creator was beheld directly in his creation. Or, to put it psychoanalytically, the knowledge of faith was rational because the ecstasies were reveries that did not preclude the ego’s ability to engage in reality testing.
Consider, for example, Marg Jenkins’ account of her justification ecstasy. She received the full assurance of pardon during a sermon.

I was surprised with the glory of the Lord that shone around me: it shone, indeed, in a way that is unutterable. It was as bright and as discernible as the natural sun at noon day. I thought my body as well as my soul was changed, and I seemed as if I was lost to this world, and yet my understanding was never clearer. The Lord spoke loudly unto my soul, “This day salvation is come to thy house, I will never leave thee or forsake thee”. I felt myself clean every whit; nor could I make myself sensible that ever I had sinned...I knew I was born of God, and felt I was brought to an innumerable company of angels, and Spirits of just men made perfect to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant...I opened my eyes (for they were shut) and I thought, all things around me were holiness unto the Lord (Arminian Magazine, 1778, pp. 228-230).

Jenkins’ light vision signifies both pardon and renewal. Note how she insists that in the midst of her ecstasy her “understanding was never clearer”. This is consistent with her non-reified use of language: she “seemed” as if she was lost to the world and “felt” she was brought into a company of angels. These qualifications attest to an ongoing rational assessment of her subjective state, her appreciation that, although it is divinely bestowed, the vision is occurring in her mind. What is more, even though initially she seems lost to the world, when later she opens her eyes, the sense of presence encapsulated in the purifying image of light merges with the objects of external sense perception and manifests as a symbolic abstraction: “all things around me were holiness unto the Lord”.

**Faith as the Medium of Ecstatic Perception**

Wesley abides by the scriptural notion of justification as pardon. (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 74). Being tainted by inbred corruption, men cannot placate God’s wrath for lack of righteousness. Only through faith in Christ, whose death vicariously propitiated the sins of human kind, is forgiveness granted. Pardon, in turn, presupposes acceptance by and reconciliation with God. When freed from the “spirit of bondage”, which typifies the previous stage of repentance, believers receive the “spirit of adoption”. (I: p. 122).
They no longer see God as a "severe master", but as an "indulgent father": "the Spirit itself bears witness with their spirit, that they are children of God" (I: p. 22). The spirit of adoption signifies a deliverance from guilt which is subjectively actualized by the witness of a clear conscience towards God. Having passed through the crucible of repentance into merciful pardon, the justified find that "the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts", and they are then persuaded "that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (I: p. 123). Justification therefore implies an intimate communion: "These, who 'have redemption through his blood', are properly said to be 'in him', for they 'dwell in Christ and Christ in them'. They are 'joined unto the Lord in one Spirit'" (I: p. 235).

The sole condition of justification and its renewing effects is faith (I: p. 195). Faith is, as it were, the medium through which the testimony of the spirit, the assurance of pardon, is conveyed (I: pp. 237-238). Mathews (1985) shows that, over time, Wesley distinguished between three distinct conceptions of faith. The development of his thought gradually condensed singular definitions into an overarching view. In 1725, Wesley defined faith primarily on rational grounds (pp. 406-407). It meant "fides", an assent to propositional truth afforded by divine testimony: "Faith must necessarily at length be resolved into reason". By 1738, Bohler convinced Wesley that his rationalist leanings were inadequate as a source of assurance, and certainly, Wesley's persistent lack of confidence, his "profound emotional and spiritual depression" gave credence to Bohler's argument (p. 407). Consequently, Wesley was persuaded by the Moravian conception of faith as "fiducia", "a trusting confidence in God's grace and mercy" (pp. 407-408). In the early 1740's, Wesley settled on what would be his most final definition, that of a spiritual experience afforded by the gracious provision of supernatural senses:

[faith is] the demonstrative evidence of things unseen, the supernatural evidence of things invisible, not perceivable by eyes of flesh, or by any of
our natural senses or faculties. Faith is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God and the things of God. It is with regard to the spiritual world what sense is with regard to the natural. It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God (quoted in Mathews, 1985, p. 408).

Faith as spiritual discernment was, by far, the most inclusive definition in that it integrated the previously irreconcilable meanings of fides and fiducia. Even with the extended notion of supernatural sight (a concept we shall have to examine since its implications bear directly on the issue of ecstatic perception), Wesley maintained the importance of a “trusting confidence”, the assurance of pardon (1984-87, II: pp. 109-110). However, the emphasis on sensory experience, with its empirical overtones, also clearly implied that “faith is always consistent with reason” (II: p. 414). Thus Mathews writes, “The knowledge of God to which we come through religious experience, by ‘seeing with the eyes of faith’, is not one whit less ‘reasonable’, according to Wesley, than the knowledge of the natural world around us to which we come through physical sensory experience” (II: p. 414).

Mathews speaks of the “venerable history and voluminous literature on spiritual senses in Christian Theology” (1985, p. 409). For thinkers such as Origen, who “invented” the doctrine of the “five spiritual senses”, onwards through to Bonaventure and Loyola, the senses were seen to provide a means through which mystical and intuitive experiences of God were mediated to the soul. Mathews suggests that given the extensive range of his reading and intellectual interests, it was not unlikely that Wesley was familiar with these figures, as he was with the writings of John Norris, Nicholas Malebranche, Peter Browne and, of course, John Locke, all of whom contributed to the topic of “sensory perception in general and [to the] ‘spiritual sensation’ of faith in particular” (p. 409). Moreover, prominent Puritan authors such as Baxter, Perkins, Sibbes and Owen “frequently applied the analogy of the immediacy of sensory perception when describing the experience of grace” (p. 409). It was Wesley himself who “wedded”
spiritual experience to the notion of faith as “a divine evidence or conviction of things not seen” (p. 409).

Wesley held that with the reception of spiritual senses at justification, the believer was “regenerated”, (Dryer, 1983, p. 18) or born anew by the power of the Holy Ghost (Lindstrom, 1946, pp. 83-84). Here, we need to further clarify Wesley’s theological stance. Although he clearly distinguished between justification and sanctification, he stipulated that both transpired at the same point in time. More specifically, since justification was a singular event, while sanctification (as opposed to entire sanctification) proceeded gradually, the latter was seen to commence incipiently with the onset of the former. In one sense, notwithstanding his theological innovations, Wesley continued to adhere to a strictly reformed view of justification as implying only “the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance incident to it” (p. 84; See also Abelove, 1990, p. 89). Concurrent with justification, however, was a new birth, the beginning of sanctification. This implied the impartation of a “real, inherent righteousness” (Lindstrom, 1946, 84). In being pardoned, believers could embark on the journey towards full spiritual renewal, and in as much as they were already sanctified in some measure, they were regarded as “babes in Christ” (Wesley, 1984-87, I: pp. 326-332). By delineating a sanctifying process that was temporally inseparable from forgiveness, yet theologically distinct, Wesley supplemented the Lutheran conception of justification, which embraced “the whole content of salvation” (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 92).

Justification, then, entailed a “relative” change whereby God “does something for us” by restoring individuals to his favor and taking away their sins (Wesley, 1984-87, I: pp. 431-32). By contrast, the new birth effected a “real” change in which God “does something in us”. In this capacity, the image of God is inwardly restored and the power of sin is eliminated. Both of these categories are subsumed under and therefore linked to the idea of spiritual senses. Because faith removes the veil between the temporal and the
eternal world, it is the vehicle for the witness of assurance, as well as renewal through the Holy Ghost.

The application of the sensory metaphor to faith impelled Wesley to articulate a further set of distinctions. He claimed that in a particular sense, faith referred to the assurance of pardon and divine acceptance (II: pp. 160-161). However, the general meaning of the term singled out the notion of supernatural sight and the divine evidence and conviction of things not seen:

[faith implies] a kind of supernatural light exhibited to the soul, and a supernatural sight or perception thereof. Accordingly, the scripture speaks sometimes of God giving light, sometimes a power of discerning it... We have a prospect of the invisible things of God. We see the spiritual world, which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties than if it had no being; and we see the eternal world, piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity (II: pp. 160-161).

The particularity of faith, or the immediate sense of pardon, emphasizes an entirely affective experience of gratitude and love. But as we have seen, Wesley augmented the Moravian conception of faith as fiducia by introducing an empirical slant. In reconciling reason and affect by insisting on the active involvement of a sensory mode, Wesley points to a cognitive dimension that is clearly implied by the believer's altered view of the cosmos: “We see the spiritual world, which is all round about us”. The combination of invisibility, omnipresence and eternality suggests that the cognitive component may be regarded as a unitive abstraction.

Wesley's sermon on Spiritual Worship shows how the unitive knowledge of God's imminence in creation is a crucial factor in Christian life. Here Wesley delineates the various facets of God's relationship to creation. He is at once the “Supporter”, “Preserver”, “Redeemer” and “Governor” of the cosmos (III: pp. 89-95). Thus, since his vitalizing presence continually creates, animates and sustains that which he has brought into existence, all things are imbued by and participate in his being. After establishing this premise, Wesley reasons that awakened Christians apprehend God's immanence,
primarily through an inward communion with Christ. They are thereby “filled with him”, and made “complete”: “when we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us; then we are completely happy; then we live all ‘the life that is hid with Christ in God’. Then, and not till then, we properly experience what the word meaneth, ‘God is love; and whosoever dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him’” (III: pp. 96-97). Eternal life commences at the new birth, “when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts” (III: p. 96). “Then it is”, Wesley writes, “that heaven is opened in the soul, that the proper, heavenly state commences, while the love of God, as loving us, is shed abroad in the heart, instantly producing love to all mankind” (III: p. 96). The “knowledge” of God is rooted in the union of the believer’s spirit with the “Father of spirits” (III: p. 101). However, this inner union of spirits necessarily affords an additional view of God’s immanent presence in the external world: “He is ‘about your bed’! He is ‘about your path’. He ‘besets you behind and before’. He ‘lays his hand upon you’. Lo! God is here! Not afar off! Now, believe and feel him near! May he now reveal himself in your heart! Now him! Love him! And you are happy” (III: pp. 102-103).

Wesley points to a “near a resemblance between the circumstances of the natural birth and of the spiritual birth” (I: p. 432). His elaboration of the analogy further underscores the unitive perceptions of faith in terms of external sense perception. One who is not yet born of God is likened to an unborn child. While in the womb, he has no awareness of the “visible world” which, in actuality, “surrounds him on every side” (I: p. 433). When he is delivered into the world, “all the bodily senses [are] now awakened” and he “exists in quite a different manner” (I: p. 433).

He now feels the air with which he is surrounded, and which pours into him from every side...His eyes are now open to see the light, which silently flowing in upon them discovers not only itself but an infinite variety of things which before he was wholly unacquainted. His ears are unclosed, and sounds rush in with endless diversity. Every sense is
employed upon such objects as are peculiarly suitable to it. And by these inlets the soul, having an open intercourse with the visible world, acquires more and more knowledge of sensible things, of all the things which are under the sun (I: p. 433).

Similarly, one who is spiritually unawakened "seeth not the things of God, the eyes of his understanding being closed, and utter darkness covering his whole soul, surrounding him on every side" (I: p. 434).

Hence he has scarce any knowledge of the invisible world, as he has scarce any intercourse with it. Not that it is far off. No; he is in the midst of it: it encompasses him round about. The 'other world', as we usually term it, is not far from every one of us. It is above, and beneath, and on every side...But when he is born of God, born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed! His whole soul is now sensible of God, and he can say by sure experience, "Thou art above my bed, and about my path; I feel thee in 'all my ways'. 'Thou besettest me behind and before, and layest thy hand upon me'. The spirit or breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul; and the same breath which comes from, returns to God...And by this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained but increased day by day, together with spiritual strength and motion and sensation; all the senses of the soul being now awake, and capable of 'discerning' spiritual 'good and evil' (I: pp. 434-435).

In this excerpt, the sense of divine presence is expressed by the unitive metaphor of respiration in which inhalations and exhalations of the spirit-breath are circulated between God and the new-born soul. Elsewhere, the experience of God's external omnipresence is thematically structured in terms of sight.

And 'blessed' are they who are thus 'pure in heart'; for they shall see God...He will bless them with the clearest communications of his Spirit...He will cause his presence to go continually before them, and the light of his countenance to shine upon them...They now see him by faith (the veil of the flesh being made, as it were, transparent) even in these his lowest works, in all that surrounds them, in all that God has created and made. They see him in the height above, and in the depth beneath; they see him filling all in all...They see him in the firmament of heaven, in the moon walking in brightness, in the sun when he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. They see him 'making the clouds his chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind'. They see him 'preparing for the earth', 'and blessing the increase of it'; 'giving grass for the cattle, and green herb for
the use of man’. They see the creator of all wisely governing all, and ‘upholding all things by the word of his power’. ‘O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world!’ (I: pp. 513-514).

Because the sight of divine presence “in all, and over all”, renders events in the cosmos as personal and purposeful, faith is inseparable from providence.

In all his providences relating to themselves, to their souls or bodies, the pure in heart do particularly see God. They see his hand ever over them for good; giving them all things in weight, and measure, numbering the hairs of their head, making a head round about them and all they have, and disposing all the circumstances of their life according to the depth both of his wisdom and mercy (I: p. 514).

Finally, God is also seen in his ordinances - in public and private worship, in scripture and in the bread and cup of communion.

In all these appointed ways they find such a near approach as cannot be expressed. They see him, as it were, face to face, and ‘talk with him as a man talking with his friend’ - a fit preparation for those mansions above wherein they shall ‘see him as he is’ (I: p. 514).

Again, Wesley’s description of the sense of God’s omnipresence is consistent with his Lockean convictions. Any speculative knowledge of God was to be rejected out of hand: “The invisible things of God are known from things that are made...from what he hath written in all his works” (quoted in Dryer, 1983, p. 23). Seeing the “invisible” things of God involves a cognitive dimension wherein the abstract significance of concrete perceptions are imaginatively reconfigured by an ideal. For example, following his justification, Thomas Olivers’ motivations and conduct were rejuvenated by a passionate commitment to serve the Lord. Through public preachings and exhortations, his conscience grew more “abundantly tender” such that “in [his] actions, [he] could not do an act of injustice, no, not to the value of a pin” (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p 86).

All his “thoughts, intentions and desires” (p. 87) were devoted to the glorification of God. He writes, “Upon the whole I lived by faith. I saw God in everything: the heavens, the earth, and all therein, showed me something of him; yea even from a drop of water, a blade of grass, or a grain of sand, I often received instruction” (p. 87).
Oliver’s description of faith presupposes a mindset that is both affective and cognitive. The devotional standards and values that inform his behavior also determine his view of nature as an expression of divine presence. Creation is made up of an infinite series of revelatory signifiers attesting to the transcendent unity of God. Interestingly, even when theologians discuss Wesley’s understanding of faith as a spiritual sensation, they tend to ignore the cognitive dimension that is inherent in the unitive perception of divine presence. They emphasize what Wesley refers to as the particular meaning of faith, the affective sense of acceptance and love (e.g., Whaling, 1981, p. 44-45; Lovin, 1985; Mathews, 1985, p. 414; Clapper, 1989, pp. 56-58; Maddox, 1994, p. 173; Steele, 1994, x-xi). In On the Discoveries of Faith, a sermon written in 1788, Wesley’s enumeration of the various objects of spiritual knowledge reveals the extent to which his conception of faith involves more than an affective experience of pardon. It should be kept in mind that this late text generally reflects a series of important modifications in his theological position. For example, Wesley clarifies here that repentance, the initial conviction of sin, is already a form of faith since it involves a self-knowledge of sin, which, in being granted by the Holy Spirit, brings individuals to Christ (Wesley, 1984-87, IV: pp. 35-36). Once again Wesley reiterates how faith discovers God’s presence throughout the created world (IV: pp. 31-32). This sermon, however, also introduces another set of specific apprehensions which require our attention.

Faith not only gives evidence of one’s own “immortal spirit”, it also allows one to become aware of other discrete presences, or “orders of spirits”.

These I term angels, and I believe part of them are holy and happy, and the other part wicked and miserable. I believe the former of these, the good angels, are continually sent of God ‘to minister to the heirs of salvation’; who will be ‘equal to angels’ by and by, although they are now a little inferior to them. I believe the latter, the evil angels, called in Scripture, ‘devils’, united under one head (termed in Scripture ‘Satan’, emphatically, the ‘enemy’, the ‘adversary’ both of God and man) either range the upper regions, whence they are called ‘princes of the power of
the air'; or like him 'walk about the earth as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour' (IV: p. 31).

It may be argued that the discernment of such presences was an entirely metaphorical interpretation of ordinary life circumstances and events which could be retroactively regarded as providential or inflicted by demonic influence. We must not, however, exclude the possibility that Wesley was also referring to moments of ecstatic perception. In previous chapters, I have cited instances of both intellectual and imaginal visions of Satan and his host of demons. There are also accounts of similar visions of angels (e.g., Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 228; 1784, p. 307; 1788, pp. 128-129; Carvosso, 1835, p. 255; Told, 1954, pp. 60-62).

Although Mathews (1985, p. 414) and Dryer (1983, p. 15) adamantly insist that Wesley did not regard "visions and voices" (p. 15) as a constituent of religious knowledge, there is evidence to suggest that this view is too simplistic. No doubt, he was wary of enthusiastic extravagances, but he was also more cautiously accepting of "extraordinary communications" than these authors suggest. Gunter states that Wesley "often encouraged" enthusiastic practices in local Methodist societies and "let them go for some time before he applied a correcting hand": "One wonders if Wesley was not only tolerant, but perhaps even pleased that at times there was more 'heat than light' in the Methodist Societies" (1989, p. 137). Believing that the work of the spirit was not simply confined to the past, Wesley gave more credit to these experiences than he would openly admit in apologetic contexts. We must also bear in mind the extent to which his views were shaped by conscientious observation of the experiences of others (Gunter, 1989, pp. 40, 209-211; Rack, 1989, pp. 157, 548-550). Since various kinds of ecstatic experiences are richly documented in the autobiographical narratives, which Wesley himself edited and published, we can hardly assume that he did not take them into serious consideration. As an example, something of Wesley's open-mindedness is found in his commentary on the "voice of God" (1984-87, I: p. 282-283), a metaphor for the
assurance of pardon. He writes, “Meantime, let it be observed, I do not mean hereby that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes” (I: p. 287). Given the frequency of written reports that document the occurrence of an imaginal voice, an audible pseudo-hallucination that functions as a witness of pardon (e.g., Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 579; 1779, p. 418; 1784, p. 521), Wesley here appears to be granting a degree of leeway for such phenomena.

Returning to the 1788 sermon on faith, Wesley claims that faith provides a view of the “eternal world”, which, in the present context, focuses on eschatology and judgment.

And here again faith supplies the place of sense, and gives us a view of things to come...Faith discovers to us the souls of the righteous, immediately received by the holy angels, and carried by those ministering spirits into Abraham’s bosom; into the delights of paradise, the garden of God...It discovers likewise the souls of unholy men, seized the moment they depart from the quivering lips by those ministers of vengeance, the evil angels, and dragged away to their own place...Moreover faith opens another scene in the eternal world, namely the coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven to ‘judge both the quick and the dead’. It enables us to see the ‘great white throne coming down from heaven, and him that sitteth thereon...We see ‘the dead, small and great, stand before God’. We see ‘the books opened...and the dead judged, according to the things that are written in the books’. We see ‘the earth and the sea giving up their dead, and hell’ (that is, the invisible world) ‘giving up the dead that were therein, and everyone judged according to his works’ (IV: pp. 32-34).

It is highly likely that these graphic elaborations of eschatological scenarios, all of which are seen by faith, are a consequence of the fact that ecstatic visions of judgment were commonly reported amongst Methodists (Rack, 1987, p. 38). According to Rack, Judgment visions typically served the purpose of convincing individuals “of their risk of hell” or assured them that “their names were (literally in some cases) ‘written in the book of Life’” (p. 42).
Finally, Wesley states that the faith of "fathers", or those who have become perfected, allows them to know the "eternal Three-one God" (1984-87, IV: p. 37). He writes, "One of these [i.e., The Marquis de Renty] expresses himself thus, 'I bear about with me an experimental verity and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity" (p. 37). In this excerpt, Wesley makes unequivocal reference to a specific type of ecstatic encounter. From the late 1770's onwards, a visionary experience consisting of a revelation of the separate persons of the Trinity became associated with a select group of individuals undergoing spiritual crises related to entire sanctification (Rack, 1987, pp. 39ff). In fact, during the early years of this decade, Wesley was convinced that Trinitarian visions were regularly given to those who had been perfected (p. 43; see also Fraser, 1988, p. 189).

Rack holds that the most frequently documented vision in early Methodism is that of Christ crucified, an interior image "commonly associated with some crucial phase in a conversion crisis" (1987, p. 38). He provides an excerpt from Thomas Taylor's autobiography.

While I was calling upon the Lord, He appeared in a wonderful manner, as with his vesture dripped in blood. I saw him with the eye of faith, hanging on the cross: and the sight caused such love to flow into my soul, that I believed that moment, and never since gave up my confidence (quoted in Rack, 1987, p. 38).

Similarly, Dimond, who claims that Methodist conversions have an "affinity with the mystical", points out how justification and the new birth often occur in tandem with "imaginal" visions (1926, pp. 180-185; See also Rack, 1987, p. 40). These experiences are instances of reverie in that subjects remain aware that their own imagination has "furnished the material for the vision" (Dimond, 1926, p. 184-85) - they are able to "indicate the subjective character of the hallucination" while simultaneously entertaining its reality. The sense of subjectivity "does not disprove the sensory character of the experience" or its religious significance. Note that Taylor's vision was beheld by the
"eye of faith". Many Methodist narratives show how individuals understood that interior visions were meditated by a supernatural sense, a visual faculty explicitly correlated with faith. For Charles Perronet, faith refers to what he calls an "external vision": "It is an impression upon the mind. While the soul is under the power of faith, the person of Christ is often presented to the imagination" (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 204). James Rogers writes that during his justification, "all the sufferings of Christ came to my mind" (Arminian Magazine, 1789, p. 462).

By the eye of faith I had as real a view of his sufferings on Calvary as ever I had of any object by the eye of sense. I saw his hands and his feet nailed to the cross; his head crowned with thorns; and his side pierced with a soldier's spear: with innumerable drops of blood falling from the different parts of his body...In that moment my heart was changed from a state of bondage into glorious liberty...(p. 462).

In much the same way, J. B. of St. Hellier's had been in prayer for three hours when she "saw by faith the Lord Jesus on the cross, and the blood streaming from his side" (Arminian Magazine, 1788, p. 72). Immediately her "load dropped off", and she believed her sins were "blotted out" (p. 72).

Bearing in mind that Wesley's delineation of faith includes a view of God's omnipresence, we find that, along with the imaginal or eidetic vision, the intellectual vision of presence is also a common occurrence. The latter entails an abstract yet compelling feeling of God's immediate proximity (cf. James, 1985, pp. 53-77). The following excerpts are exemplary:

...I had such a calm peace, and such an inward Communion with the Lord, that when I sat down to work, I seemed to be compassed about with the immediate presence of God: so that I sometimes cried out, "I am a child of a hundred years old!...The Lord now taught me many things and led me by a way I had not known (Marg Jenkins, Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 229).

O how does the Lord deal with such an unworthy worm! Such an effusion of his divine love and presence, that all within and without seems nothing
but God! I feel that my whole body, soul and spirit, is a sacrifice to him... (Bathsheba Hall, Arminian Magazine, 1781, p. 196).

I had several times such drawings of the Father (though I knew not then what they were) as made me seem to be out of the body; and I could scarce cast my eyes on anything, but I saw God in it: nor had I any fear of his wrath, but always saw him as a loving Father (Sarah Ryan, Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 298).

These experiences could occur at any point in the lifespan. Alexander McNab states that even as a child he had “deep impressions of religion”.

One day coming from school, when I was not more than seven years old, I was thinking, What is God? Suddenly an awful impression of his immensity rested upon my mind. I thought I saw and felt God in everything about me; yet it did not fill me with dread, but rather a pleasing solemnity (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 241).

In light of the foregoing evidence, I argue that the standard doctrinal conception of “faith” in early Methodism - that which prioritizes the affective sense of pardon and acceptance - does not fully encompass the phenomena which Wesley himself, and his followers, designated by that name. Theologically, pardon is logically prioritized since reconciliation with God is the necessary condition for spiritual renewal. However, as a supernatural faculty, faith was clearly understood to provide a further set of experiences, the cognitive content of which corresponds to typical patterns of ecstatic perception, namely, imaginary pseudo-hallucinations which include eidetic images as well as the abstract or intellectual sense of God’s unitive presence. Why then has theological scholarship given precedence to the affective dimension and generally ignored the latter component? To answer this question we must briefly examine two aspects of historical tradition, one philosophical and one theological.

In an insightful essay on Wesleyan ethics, Lovin shows how 18th century epistemology, largely dominated by Lockean empiricism, led “to an emphasis on the affective basis for choice and action” (1985, p. 264). Specifically, Locke’s mechanistic theory of sense perception ultimately became the underlying premise for an
understanding of moral initiative and action. Locke held that sense impressions were the result of “physical interactions between organ and environment” (p. 264). Tiny particles in the ether conveying energetic motions of external objects would, on contact, excite corresponding motions in the sense organs. This play of force caused the mind to register the presence of an object, and also spurred the “subtle movements of desire and aversion that contribute the affective dimension of every experience” (p. 264). In this model, physiology and psychology were effectively reduced to physics; even virtue was conceptualized along these lines.

Moral choice and the habits of virtue were explained less in terms of ideas than in terms of the intensity of certain feelings, the power of one set of motions to cancel the effects of another and exert a causal force sufficient for the overt, external motions that mark human choice and action (p. 264).

Now that human motivation was seen to be dictated by the interplay of affective forces, the scholastic idea of a reasoned will which subjugated and steered the passions was displaced by a theory of emotional determinism. A strong critique of the scholastic model was already apparent in the Puritan anthropology of the divided self (King, 1983, p. 34), wherein the vagaries of obsession, melancholy, and moral decrepitude undermined the ascendancy of rational volition. The empirical stance, however, did not obliterate the role of reason altogether. Although the intellect was seen to assess the means and consequences of any potential action, it was only when the affections were sufficiently engaged that an intention was finally translated into deed (Lovin, 1985, p. 265). Lovin convincingly argues that, in effect, Wesley’s understanding of the rejuvenating effects of the spiritual senses presupposed the mechanics of affective force.

...only a real experience of God could have an impact on the affections sufficient to determine the will on religious grounds. In the absence of that experience, the will would simply be determined by some other affection. No mere notion of divine command would be powerful enough to override the effects of real experience of more immediate, natural entities (p. 266).
Thus, the "physics of virtue", to use Lovin’s language, is indebted to philosophical empiricism, whose historical legacy has persistently skewed Wesleyan conceptions of faith in favor of the affections. As a result of the ethos created by the historical rejection of scholastic faculty theory, the equally important role of cognition in religious experience, whether it be discursive inspirations, visual imagery or unitive abstractions, has been inadvertently eclipsed.

Secondly, the scholarly neglect of the unitive dimension of faith, the abstract perception of presence, appears to be a consequence of Wesley’s ostensible rejection of mysticism. In 1736, he wrote a letter to his brother, the contents of which are often cited as evidence for the demise of Wesley’s early interest in mysticism (Tuttle, 1989, p. 85). In it he declares, “I think the rock on which I had made the nearest shipwreck of the faith was on the writings of the mystics: under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace” (quoted in Tuttle, 1989, p. 85). What appears to be critique of mysticism per se, is, on closer examination, a rejection of Quietistic modes of piety. We must not forget that there was much in the mystical literature which Wesley not only admired, but saw fit to disseminate amongst his followers. Whaling, who challenges the notion that Wesley “suddenly repudiated the mystical influences on his development” (1981, p. 10), points out that during the height of the revival, he published the works of such spiritual masters as Scupoli, Fenelon, de Renty, Mme. Bourignon, Mme. Guyon, Molinos and others. Tuttle goes as far as to claim that Wesley’s ambivalent attitude towards mysticism was “psychoneurotic”: “It can be demonstrated that although he was frequently disillusioned...even to the point of despair, he was nonetheless almost irresistibly drawn to the mystics” (1989, p. 43). On the one hand, Wesley was attracted to several themes, all of which were treated by Quietistic writers: the necessity of the crucifixion of the world; the perfection of love; and the achievement of a direct and unbroken communion with God via the continual practice of the presence (Rack, 1989, pp.102-103, 401; Tuttle, 1989, pp. 42, 149-150). However, he was
convincing the antinomianism, passivity and otherworldliness which epitomized Quietistic spirituality, destroyed the dignity and "value of the human personality" (Dimond, 1926, p. 85).

The Quietist's undermining of the instituted means of grace (a position taken by Molther, who advocated an extreme form of "stillness" in which individuals were encouraged to do away with communion, prayer, communication, and, in effect, all forms of action), and their preference for seclusion flew in the face of Wesley's "volitional and practical predilections", as well as his pronounced "social sentiment" (Dimond, 1926, p. 85). Wesley wished to promote an active "social holiness", rather than "private virtue" (Steele, 1994, p. 140); he "visualized a state of perfection to be achieved by a sizable body of dedicated people in the world rather than a few in solitude or the monastery" (Rack, 1989, p. 401). Furthermore, Quietist spiritual practice aimed to cultivate a passive resignation or "indifference" to one's own salvation. Fenelon, for example, defined perfection as a self-less love for "what God is, not for what he grants" (Tuttle, 1989, p. 40). In order to overcome self-love, the will had to be annihilated. Therefore, indifference was acquired by divesting the mind of any representational content which would kindle the desire of the senses. All forms of discursive meditation which, by definition, employed various kinds of mental imagery, were renounced (Chadwick, 1975, p. 219; Dupre, 1989, p. 133; Tuttle, 1989, pp. 37-38). As both an empiricist and an ardent reformer, Wesley could not accept a practice that sought to eliminate sensory experience.

Many eminent men...have advised us 'to cease from all outward actions'; wholly to withdraw from the world; to leave the body behind us; to abstract ourselves from all sensible things - to have no concern at all about outward religion, but to 'work all virtues in the will', as the far more excellent way, more perfective of the soul...this [is the] fairest of all devices wherewith Satan hath ever perverted the right ways of the Lord!...Christianity is essentially a social religion, and to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it (Wesley, 1984-87, 1: pp. 532-33).
The flight from the body and the sensory realm, along with the passive removal of the will, indicates strongly that Quietist spirituality relied upon trance as a means to achieve perfection. The Committee on Psychiatry and Religion maintain that in the trance state “...the external world is excluded from consciousness more or less completely, or its impact is muted - attention is turned away from it” (1976, p. 775); “The external world is removed from the individual’s awareness and therefore seems to have been destroyed” (p. 777). As a result of their world-renouncing character, Wesley could not accept the tenets of Quietist doctrine. Moreover, although acceding that faith was passively received, and that all righteousness was in Christ, he was in no way prepared to jettison the role of the will in the pursuit of personal holiness. In contrast to an introspective spirituality whose goal was to eradicate autonomy, willfulness and rationality, Wesley accentuated the sacral integrity of the self. He made it clear that individuals were endowed with the ability to embrace or reject God’s offer of saving grace. Christians were obligated, through recourse to their own volition (which was empowered by Holy Spirit), to nurture and exercise their faith by, amongst other things, rendering service to others in the world. Hence Maddox (1994) speaks of a “responsible grace” which enhances initiative and personal agency.

Through collating the various designations and descriptions which appear in the writings of Wesley and his followers, I have argued that the term faith was understood, in its most inclusive sense, not only as pardon, but as a medium of ecstatic perception. As we have seen, the normative alternate states in early Methodism were reverie based. Wesley’s description of the unitive perception of God’s presence in the world was at once rational and object related. Several writers have pointed to a mystical component in Wesleyan spirituality (Dimond, 1926, pp. 86-87, 183-184; Outler, 1987, p. 187; Rack 1987, p. 40; Trickett, 1989, p. 358; Tuttle, 1989, op. cit). The evidence I have adduced suggests that he endorsed a non-dissociative “extroverted” form of mysticism (Stace, 1961, pp. 62-81) which differed from the trance-based unitive experiences of the
canonical Christian mystics, and more particularly, the Quietists, whom Wesley was largely critical of. Wesley was not a mystic, if by mystic we mean Quietist. However, he was indeed a mystic by the standards of the comparative study of mysticism. His objection to a particular kind of piety, and a particular mode of ecstasy has more than likely obscured the extent to which unitive experiences are in fact, rather central to early Methodist spirituality. They are widely and constantly documented by both males and females who hailed from a variety of cultural-religious backgrounds. Neither were they exclusive to a particular class or vocational group. These findings are consistent with contemporary data on the demography of mysticism. Surveys indicate that one-third of the populations of Western cultures report “mystical and/or numinous experiences” (Hood, 1995 pp. 589, 594). Greeley, for example, found that four out of ten Americans have had, or believe they have had a mystical experience (cited in Ellwood, 1980, p. 1).

Justification, Peak Experiences and the Ego Ideal

Having established the relationship between faith and ecstatic perception in Wesley, let us examine more closely the affinities between Methodist justification and peak experiences. Maslow held that the momentary perception of cosmic unity “can be so profound and shaking...that it can change the person's character and his Weltanschauung forever after” (1970, p. 59). “Peak experiences”, he writes, “sometimes have immediate effects or aftereffects...Sometimes their aftereffects are so profound and great as to remind us of the profound religious conversions which forever after changed the person”. As mentioned above, the effects upon the personality bear striking resemblance to what Wesley deems “the fruit of the spirit”.

[The fruit of the spirit may be known by] love, joy, peace always abiding; by invariable long-suffering, patience, resignation; by Gentleness, triumphing over all provocation; by goodness, mildness, sweetness, tenderness of spirit; by fidelity, simplicity, godly sincerity; by meekness, calmness, eveness of spirit; by temperance, not only in food and sleep, but in all things natural and spiritual (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 355).
These dispositions, the aftereffects or “fruit” of God’s justifying pardon, are bound to the apprehension of a unitive ideal. Following Maslow’s lead, we may say that the unitive inspirations which manifest during Methodist conversion encourage corresponding changes in temperament. The emergence of a symbolic ideal, figuratively encoded in the abstract perception of God’s omnipresence, transforms the significance of what is taken in by the senses, and naturally evokes a series of emotional responses which enervate and invigorate the self.

For Wesley, profane consciousness proceeds according to the constraints of the body. In essence, he speaks of an “idolatry” consisting primarily of immediate perceptions of external objects whose meanings are limited by their materiality and the carnal appetites and desires they provoke. “Love of the world”, states Wesley, “is now as natural to every man as to love his own will” (1984-87, II: p. 179).

What is more natural to us than to seek happiness in the creature instead of the creator? To seek that satisfaction in the works of his hands which can be found in God only? What more natural than the desire of the flesh? That is, of the pleasure of sense in every kind?...Sensual appetites, even those of the lowest kind, have, more or less, the dominion over him (II: pp. 179-80).

The provision of spiritual senses promotes a movement beyond the hermeneutic poverty of carnal idolatry. Now the objects of sense perception take on transcendent significance - their concrete physicality becomes a conceptual sign of God’s immanence. Entering into the new world and seeing the invisible and eternal things of God means beholding the creator in creation itself: “God is in all things...we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature...we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God...who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is in a true sense the soul of the universe” (I: pp. 516-17). Not only did so many Methodist converts claim that their justification left them feeling as if they had become an “entirely new person” (Abelove, 1990, p. 89), some also felt “the release so strongly that the whole world of
nature was transformed for them” (Rack, 1989, p. 425). As Starbuck observes, one of the commonest experiences after conversion is the “sense of newness”. He writes: “The person is living in a new world. Old experiences are seen from a different point of view. The world bears a new face. It has likewise a new content and significance” (1911, pp. 119-120). His informants speak of “entering another world - a new state of existence”. There is a “clarification of spiritual vision” such that one sees “beauty in every material object in the universe”.

Upon receiving pardon, George Shadford saw Christ “by the eye of faith” (as opposed to his “bodily eyes”) making intercession for him (1866, p. 150). In that instant his soul was filled with “divine love”, and he wept “tears of joy and sorrow” (p. 150). The ecstasy subsequently transformed the content and meaning of his perceptions. Reminiscent of Maslow’s claim that peak experiences furnish individuals with a “personally defined heaven” (1970, p. 66), Shadford writes,

> As I walked home along the streets, I seemed to be in paradise. When I read my Bible, it seemed an entirely new book. When I meditated on God and Christ, angels or spirits; when I considered good or bad men, any or all the creatures which surrounded me on every side; everything appeared in a new relation to me. I was in Christ a new creature; old things were done away, and all things became new (1866, p. 150).

This phenomenon attests to a transformation of perceptual-cognitive patterns, a heightened symbolic awareness through which the divergent data of sense perception are thematically aligned by a supraordinate value. Here, the creation of what Winnicott (1971) deems “intermediate space” is brought about by an integrative synthesis of internal and external reality (cf. Meissner, 1984, pp. 173-77). The reconciling conferral of pardon, or, the acceptance of the ego by the ego ideal, is represented in consciousness by the abstract perception of unity in the external world. Thus, it appears to bear a “new face”. Unitive ideation, which may be viewed as a sublimation resulting from the initial working through of the desolation conflict, endows the cosmos with the
conceptual qualities of the loved and admired ideal - "God is in all things...and is in a true sense the soul of the universe".

Maslow distinguishes between the unitive content of peak experiences, and the way that content subsequently dictates the effects on personality. Wesley’s understanding of justification, and more specifically his distinction between the witness of the spirit of God and the witness of our own spirit, or the “fruits”, presupposes the same logic. (Wesley, 1984-87, I: pp. 289-90). All of the phenomenological categories which I have assembled below coincide with the major functions of the positive superego and the integrative character of ego ideals (cf. Freud, 1933a [1932]; Loewald, 1962; Jacobson, 1964; Lederer, 1964; Furer, 1967; Saul, 1970; Kohut, 1977; Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988; Milrod, 1990; Eigen, 1993).

**Self-esteem.** The witness of God’s spirit convinces individuals that their sins are “blotted out” (I: p. 274). The assurance of love and pardon, coinciding with the ego ideal’s acceptance of the ego, brings with it an “inexpressible joy” that is a measure of a dramatic boost in self-regard. Several writers argue that the correlation between the spirit of adoption and self-esteem is taken for granted in Wesley’s work. Maddox explains that the “recovery of our own happiness” through divine love presupposes “proper esteem for self” (1994, p. 146). “Self-regulated” love, according to Lindstrom, is a necessary consequence of God’s benevolence; the latter “legitimates” the former (1946, pp. 195-197). Tuttle states that, for Wesley, to know that God loves us is to love ourselves (1989, p. 165). In other words, the subjective sense of divine pardon is symbolic of self-acceptance. Wesley’s portrayal of the characteristic shift in the God image which occurs at justification, the substitution of a “loving father” in lieu of an “angry judge” (1984-87, I: p. 261) is significant in this connection. In a study on attachment and religious practice, Kirkpatrick marshals evidence from a variety of studies that indicate how loving images of deity are correlated with self-esteem. He writes, “people who think of their attachment figures as available and responsive also

Moreover, self-esteem, as Maslow has shown, is a direct consequence of the unitive perceptions of peak experiences. Grof and Grof make the same point.

Encounters with divine regions...are extremely healing...one often feels positive emotions such as ecstasy, rapture, joy, gratitude, love, and bliss, which can quickly relieve or dissolve negative states such as depression and anger. Feeling oneself to be part of an all-encompassing cosmic network often gives a person who has problems with self-esteem a fresh, expanded self-image (emphasis added; 1990, p. 68).

Merkur holds that because unitive ecstasies provide “unparalleled access to the deepest and most unconscious core of the superego”, they are “the most intensely pleasurable experiences possible for a human being” (1989b, p. 152). Their euphoric character is an expression of “positive self-regard in response to ego-ideals whose attainment form the cognitive contents” of the experience (1999a, p. 113). One’s self-esteem is “maximized when and because a unitive ideal is momentarily integrated in the self” (p. 113). This view generally coincides with the role of the superego as a self esteem regulator (Sandler, 1960, p. 153) and the idea that well-being is the result of an identification with and obedience to internalized values.

Empathy and the Intensification of Healthy Conscience. One of the most common realizations that flow from peak experiences is the conviction that the core of life is love. Individuals frequently acknowledge a change in the intensity of personal closeness to others, a deepening of their interpersonal relationships (Pahnke et al, 1969, p. 146; Kurland et al, 1973, pp. 113-114). Similarly, Wesley states that the witness of our own spirit, which emerges in direct response to God’s witness of pardon, engenders a reciprocal of love for God, as well as a compassion that extends to all humankind, whether it be intimate relations, acquaintances, strangers or enemies (1984-87, I: pp. 163; 518-19).
Then, and not till then - when the Spirit of God beareth that witness to our
spirit, 'God hath loved thee and given his own son to be the propitiation
for thy sins;'... 'we love God, because he first loved us,' and for his sake
we love our brother also' (I: p. 275).

When those who are justified feel that "the love of God is shed abroad in their
hearts" (I: p. 123), they become eager to do good works (I: p. 138) and to relieve the
misery of others by assisting in their repentance (I: p. 166). For this reason they are
deemed "lovers of mankind" (I: p. 165). Again, the compassion which Wesley speaks of
is firmly rooted in unitive thinking. God is "the Father of the spirits of the flesh" (I: p.
138). Therefore, Christians love all of humankind without exception because they are
related as spiritual siblings: "Agreeably hereto, the affection of this lover of God
embraced all mankind for his sake; not excepting those whom he had never seen in the
flesh, or those of whom he knew nothing more than that they were "the offspring of
God"" (I: p. 163).

Maslow repeatedly emphasizes the "object-directed" nature of beta cognition.

The cognition of being (B-cognition) that occurs in peak experiences tends
to perceive external objects, the world, and individual people as more
detached from human concerns. Normally we perceive everything as
relevant to human concerns and more particularly to our own private
selfish concerns...perception in the peak experiences can be relatively
ego-transcending, self-forgetful, egoless, unselfish...it becomes more
object-centered than ego-centered. The perceptual experience can be
more organized around the object itself as a centering point rather than

The object directed consciousness of peak experiences is attributable to an
enlargement of the empathic imagination. In Methodism, the perception of a
universalizing alliance through Christ establishes new identifications in the ego, thereby
intensifying one's empathic relatedness to others. In keeping with Ross' (1968, p. 271)
assertion that mystical experiences can lead to an increased maturity in object relations,
we find that unitive ideation facilitates the ability to imaginatively adopt another's point
of view, which, in turn, breeds compassion and altruism. In the Methodist
autobiographies, ecstatic interludes are regularly associated with pronounced feelings of affection, benevolence and charity. The following two extracts are taken, respectively, from accounts by Sarah Crosby and Duncan Wright.

At length, one day, while I was sitting at work, the Lord Jesus appeared to the eye of my mind, surrounded with glory, while his love overwhelmed me: I said, this is the power I have waited for... *My soul seemed all love, and I desired nothing so much as to lay down my life for others, that they might feel the same* (emphasis added; Arminian Magazine, 1806, p. 468)

I think it was in April this year, that the Lord justified me by his grace. I used to spend all my time in bed, while awake, in weeping and prayer; and it was in one of these weeping nights, that in an instant the Lord brought me out of my darkness into his marvelous light. I did not know then what to call it, but its effects were many, *I found an uncommon concern for the soul's of the soldiers; and the sight of a Methodist used to set my heart on fire with love* (emphasis added; Arminian Magazine, 1781, p. 371).

In the main, Methodist justification conforms to what Conn refers to as “affective conversion” (1986, p. 228). For him, this form of “moral” conversion is akin to falling in love. In both instances there “is a more or less radical transformation of a person’s life...” (p. 228). In the same way that love irresistibly draws us beyond ourselves towards the needs and interests of the beloved, affective conversion is marked by a “turning of possessive desire to desire for generosity; a reorientation from the possessiveness rooted in obsessive concern for one’s own needs to the self-giving of intimate love and generative care of others” (p. 228). Conn’s comparison invites psychoanalytic commentary. From Freud onwards, psychoanalysts have maintained that the experience of “being in love” involves a projection of the ego-ideal. Augmenting Freud’s dictum that in romantic love, “the object has been put in the place of the ego ideal” (1921, p. 113), Chasseguet-Smirgel writes, “In the state of love - from the outset, at the very moment of ‘election’ - the subject and its object represent the relationship between the ego (the subject) and ego ideal (the object)” (1976, pp. 356-357). With one important exception, the same dynamic applies to unitive ecstasies. Because they take recourse to
universaHzing abstractions, the projection of the ego-ideal is generally extended to include a plurality of others as a single category or object of devotion.

Furer's (1967) observations on the development of empathy in the second year of life, an event which he identifies as a "superego precursor", adds additional insight to the psychology of justification. He claims that between 14 and 18 months, the child acquires an identification with the mother as a loving consoler. By identifying with the mother's ability to feel and respond to the child's pain, the latter engages in an empathic role reversal which is modeled on the parent's solicitude. A similar identificatory event occurs in Methodist conversion and is theologically expressed by the distinction between the first and second witness. Wesley stipulates that without the prior manifestation of God's pardon, believers would not be properly enabled to love and minister to one another. Personal pardon is the basis for the altruistic sentiments of the second witness. Through an identification with God's solicitude as a "consoler", the justified are empowered to love: "But every Christian loveth [others] also as himself; yea `as Christ loved us"' (1984-87, I: p. 138). In sum, the first and second witness are related to each other in the same manner that self-regard is related to object love: "Self-esteem is necessary not only to the capacity to be alone, but also to the capacity to relate healthfully to others" (Merkur, 1999a, p. 114).

Because the various modes of identification which characterize unitive thought enhance the empathic imagination, peak experiences either strengthen one's convictions in pre-existing moral values, or they spontaneously inspire new ones (Haartman, 1998a, p. 217). In this regard, we find that Wesley frequently remarked upon the intensification of conscience following justification. The "light of faith", which he sees as qualitatively distinct from the fear and self-recriminations of the repentance phase, not only entails a "greater tenderness of conscience, and a more exquisite sensibility of sin", it is also a function of the spiritual senses, "the steady sight of things eternal" (1984-87, II: pp. 42-43).
Accordingly this is spoken of by St. Paul as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, 'that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God'; that he may strengthen the testimony of our conscience touching our ‘simplicity and godly sincerity’, and give us to discern in a fuller and stronger light that we now do the things which please him (1: p. 275).

The role of conscience is central in justification. The immediate sense of pardon presupposes a “conscience void of offense towards God and man” (1: p. 304). The joyful affirmation of a “good conscience” (1: p. 310) which is established through faith, subsequently “brings to light” a definitive set of value criteria or standards by which the judgments of conscience are made. In other words, faith affords a clear sight of God’s law.

Faith alone is that evidence, that conviction, that demonstration of things invisible, whereby the eyes of our understanding being opened, and divine light poured in upon them, we ‘see the wondrous things of God’s ‘law’, the excellency and purity of it; the height and depth and length and breadth thereof, and of every commandment contained therein...By this is that gracious promise fulfilled unto all the Israel of God, “I will put my laws into their minds, and write (or engrave) them in their hearts;’ hereby producing in their souls an entire agreement with his holy and perfect law (1: pp. 304-305).

Since the spiritual senses are thus “fitted to discern spiritual good and evil” (1: p. 311), one develops strong moral intuitions.

And now the eye of his soul waxes not dim. He was never so sharpsighted before. He has so quick a perception of the smallest things as is quite amazing to the natural man. As a mote is visible in the sunbeam, so to him who is walking in the light, in the beams of the uncreated sun, every mote of sin is visible. Nor does he close the eyes of his understanding anymore. That sleep is departed from him...a Christian has the most exquisite sensibility, such as he would not have conceived before. He never had such a tenderness of conscience as he has had since the love of God has reigned in his heart (1: pp. 311-312).

The intensification of conscience is due to the emergence of unitive values which form the basis of God’s law. Wesley’s description of this law of love, which is written
"afresh in the hearts of all true believers" (II: p. 8) evinces the ethics of mutual reciprocity.

[The law is just]. It renders to all their due. It prescribes exactly what is right, precisely what ought to be done, said, or thought, both with regard to the Author of our being, with regard to ourselves, and with regard to every creature which he has made. It is adapted in all respects to the nature of things, of the whole universe and every individual. It is suited to all the circumstances of each, and to all their mutual relations, whether such as have existed from the beginning, or such as commenced in any following period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitness of things, whether essential or accidental...there is nothing arbitrary in the law of God (II: p. 12).

In so far as all things are meaningfully interrelated and rightfully encompassed in a larger whole, the law reveals the underlying order and harmony of creation (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 182). Wesley’s rendering corresponds to a particular mode of unitive ideation which Merkur identifies as “propriety”: “The simplest form of the propriety mode involves an intense experience that the present time, place and events are proper, right, or appropriate to themselves” (1998, p. 121). “The propriety mode presents temporally present phenomena as right, proper, harmonious, utilitarian, functional, and perfect, in and of themselves...the mode presents the idea that their function in relation to each other causes things to be as they should be” (p. 151).

Mutual reciprocity is an imperative revealed by the law. From it stems the golden rule: “Though shall love thy neighbor as thyself” (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 182). According to Merkur, unitive ideation bolsters conscience because moral judgments themselves are predicated on the unconscious assumption “that in hurting another person, one hurts oneself” (1999b, p. 127): “Moral thinking evaluates and treats people as though they were oneself, even in situations when the self neither is dependent on others nor has any reasonable expectation of becoming so” (p. 128). Sandler (1960) and Breen (1986), for example, trace the origins of empathy and morality back to an early phase of primary identification with the mother. Although recent findings in infant observation
contradict the psychoanalytic myth of "primary narcissism" (Stern, 1985) - a neonatal stage of self-object nondifferentiation - there is a consensus amongst developmental theorists that, in tandem with the conscious ability to distinguish between self and object, the baby also entertains unconscious fantasies of merging and becoming one with the mother (Bergmann, 1971; Silverman et al, 1982; Harrison, 1986; Pine, 1990). Merkur suggests these fantasies are developmental precursors of, and therefore, the foundation for the moral and empathic imagination. He writes, "The capacity for the empathic beginnings of morality arises, I suggest, through the resolution of unconscious merger fantasies, precisely as generalized moral self-regulations arise through the resolution of the unconscious Oedipus complex (1999b, p. 131)". In a similar vein, Jacobson speaks of the unitive basis of ego ideals. According to her, in the "deep, unconscious core" of the ego ideal, "we may detect fusions of the early infantile images of both the love object and the self" (1964, p. 95).

[The ego ideal] gratifies indeed the infantile longing of which we said that it is never fully relinquished: the desire to be one with the loved object. Even our never-ending struggle for oneness between ego and ego ideal reflects the enduring persistence of this desire (p. 96)

These views underscore the object related origin of ideals. Even after they are subject to a process of abstraction, ego ideals maintain their affective tie to the concrete parental representations upon which they are modeled. They are de-anthropomorphized, but never depersonified (Merkur, 1999b, p. 127). Indeed, as Pruyser shows, the ego is bound to its ideals as love objects: they are "cherished", "loved", "defended" and "clung to"; ideals inspire "loyalty" and "commitment" (1974, p. 254). For Wesley too, the law is clearly object bound since it expresses the essential being of God.

[The law] is the face of God unveiled; God manifested to his creatures as they are able to bear it...It is the heart of God disclosed to man...the express image of his person...a copy of eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature...And this law which the goodness of God gave at first, and has preserved through all ages, is, like the fountain from whence it
springs, full of goodness and benignity. It is mild and kind; it is (as the Psalmist expresses it) ‘sweeter than honey and the honey comb’. It is winning and amiable...[in it] are hid all the treasures of the divine wisdom and knowledge and love (1984-87, II: pp.10-14).

In the ideal outcome of the desolation crisis, the lifting of repression allows the ego to regain access to intrapsychic representations of the good parent. The conscious acknowledgment of rage achieved through symbolic means temporarily allays the conflict of ambivalence, *such that early memories and fantasies of loving intimacy can be processed in consciousness and sublimated into an abstract ideal*. For this reason, the unitive form of the law preserves the trace of the “good object” from which it is derived. In this instance, a moral abstraction remains personified. The law is a figurative revelation of God’s personhood. In it one beholds his face, his heart and his mind, all of which are sweet, winning and amiable. In her study of contemporary religious conversions, Ullman’s findings consistently indicated that converts’ attraction to new ideological truths was inseparable from the discovery of a new relationship with either “a real or imagined figure” (1989, p. xvi).

**Motivation and Initiative.** It is the ego ideal’s developmental tie to the love object that arouses the ego’s devotion and compels it to act in accordance with what it regards as exemplary. When conflict does not intervene, the ego’s willingness to conform to the behavioral dictates of its values is ensured by affects that produce initiative, commitment and loyalty. In health, obedience to one’s ideals is spontaneous, inherently gratifying and free of the compulsive quality that characterizes the punitive mentality of a fixated or “savage” superego. As Maslow states, “[in peak experiences] the person feels himself more than at other times to be responsible, active, the creative center of his own activities and of his own perceptions, more self-determined...with more free will than at other times” (1970, p. 67).

Wesley assumed that the will was co-extensive with the affections (Lovin 1985, Clapper 1989, Steele, 1994). Self-consciousness and volition are not only a function of
reason, “but likewise of love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, fear, hope, etc., and a whole train of other inward emotions which are commonly called ‘passions’ or ‘affections’”. “They are styled, by a general appellation, ‘the will’, and are mixed and diversified a thousand ways” (1984-87, IV: p. 22). Since he regarded the characterological effects of conversion as a change in one’s affectional capacities (Clapper, 1989, pp. 123, 130), Wesley held that faith arms the will with a new set of motivating dispositions (Maddox, 1994, p. 69). Prior to justification, service to God is psychologically structured in terms of coercion. More specifically, because unjustified individuals remain subject to the “wrath and curse of God”, and since obedience is motivated by guilt and “slavish fear”, they cannot properly identify with the spirit and dictates of the law, as the prospect of embracing them is precluded by conflict (II: p. 29). However, through pardon, the affective basis for willful action is given over to love. 

...as he is not obliged to keep even the moral law as the condition of his acceptance, so he is delivered from the wrath and the curse of God, from all sense of guilt and condemnation, and from all that horror and fear of death and hell whereby he was ‘all his life’ before ‘subject to bondage’. And he now performs (which while under the law he could not do) a willing and universal obedience. He obeys not from the motive of slavish fear, but on a nobler principle, namely, the grace of God ruling in his heart, and causing all his works to be wrought in love (II: pp. 29-30).

The faith which works through love produces all obedience and holiness (II: p. 27). Notions of the “power of Christ” (I: p. 581) and “Christian Freedom” (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 180; Deiter et al, 1987, p. 35) refer to the dynamism of the ego ideal, and the way in which the ego gladly “yields”, as opposed to “submits” to its imperatives. When ecstatically presented to consciousness, ideals provide the ego with a sense of direction (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p. 144). Since they vitalize the will by summoning the ego’s enthusiasm and resourcefulness, ideals ensure a constant motivational source for concerted action. Methodist autobiographers repeatedly describe how their initial elation at conversion rapidly crystallized into a definitive vocational aspiration to become circuit
preachers. For George Brown, the witness of assurance came in the form of an “inward voice (sweeter than the harmony of angels)” (Arminian Magazine, 1784, p. 521). It whispered to him, “Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven. Go in peace and sin no more”. “Now indeed”, he writes, “heaven was opened in my new born soul”. Weeping for joy, Brown’s immediate concern is how to apply himself to his ideal: “Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? What return shall I make for the heaven I enjoy?”. “I slept none all night; but my soul rested in the peace of God, and I continued with him, as one would do with a beloved and intimate friend”. From his intimate communion with a personified presence, an abstract vocational ideal gradually takes shape and enters into his awareness: “In a short time the Lord let me see that I must preach the Gospel. When this was deeply impressed, I solemnly promised to obey the Call, and intended to begin in a very few days”.

Following his justification, Thomas Rankin entertained thoughts of becoming a preacher, but, as a result of ongoing conflict, bouts of depression interfered with his ability to fully consolidate his ideal. His resolve was clinched during an ecstatic episode.

...I awoke very early, and found my heart drawn out after God. I quickly arose and kneeled down to prayers: all the clouds fled away, and divine light and love shone with such brightness upon my soul, as I had not found in that degree since my conversion to God. I cried out with amazement, “O Lord, what dost thou intend concerning thy servant?” I walked about the room with streaming eyes, and an heart burning with love; and then kneeled down to pray again. While I was upon my knees, I beheld the fallen race of mankind in such misery and ruin, that I almost fainted away. Soon after these words were applied with mighty power, “Whom shall I send? whom shall I send?” I cried out, “Lord, here am I; send me if it will bring any glory to thy name. Then these words were applied, Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of here; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord! For ye shall not go with haste, nor go by flight; for the Lord shall go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward. And soon after these words. They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever!
At the application of these words, I was so overwhelmed with the
divine presence, that my soul seemed to be lost in the inexpressible

Rankin's ecstasy commences with a unitive vision of the "fallen race of man".
The emotional force of the image, which causes him to swoon, overrides the resistances
which have previously inhibited his intention to preach. The vision then shifts into an
interior dialogue whose verbal content continues to reassure him of the validity of his
aspiration. When his doubts are sufficiently overcome, Rankin receives the full approval
of his ideal, and the ecstasy climaxes in the rapturous enjoyment of "divine presence".
Consequently, he attained a "clear conviction" that he had been chosen by God to preach
the gospel. His new found determination is inextricably tied to the affective power of the
unitive vision. He writes, "I felt such love for the souls of my fellow creatures, that I
could have burnt at the stake, to rescue them from eternal misery. In short I felt such a
change through all my powers, that when I was brought from nature to grace, it was not
more conspicuous" (p. 192).

Emotional Equanimity and Self-Composure. Maslow explains that in peak
experiences "there tends to be a loss, although transient, of fear, anxiety, inhibition, of
defense and control, of perplexity, confusion, conflict, of delay and restraint" (1970, p.
66). As this is coupled with an increase in self-determination and "free-will" (p. 67), we
may alternatively speak of heightened impulse control and greater degrees of emotional
equilibrium, or, in short, an even temperament. Wesley holds that one of the fruits of the
spirit is "meekness", which he defines as self-composure.

[Christian Meekness] keeps clear of every extreme, whether in excess or
defect. It does not destroy but balances the affections...It poises the mind
aright. It holds an even scale with respect to anger and sorrow and fear;
preserving the mean in every circumstance of life...When this due
composure of mind has reference to God, it is usually termed resignation -
a calm acquiescence in whatsoever is his will concerning us...When we
consider it more strictly in regard to ourselves we style it patience or
contentedness. When it is exerted towards other men then it is mildness to
the good and gentleness to the evil (1984-87, I: pp. 489-90).
As self-composure, meekness refers to the ability to regulate and temper one’s emotions. Individuals who are able to tame the unruly and overwhelming intensity of their affects, remain, as it were, in calm possession of themselves. For Wesley, this trait is brought into being by their devotion: “meekness holds the reins...their zeal is always guided by knowledge, and tempered in every thought and word and work with the love of man as well as the love of God” (I: p. 490). Moreover, the reconciliation of passion and volition accomplishes the equivalent of sublimation.

But they have the mastery of all; they hold [the passions] in subjection, and employ them only in subservience to those ends [i.e., the will of God]. And thus even the harsher and more unpleasing passions are applicable to the noblest purposes. Even hate and anger and fear, when engaged against sin, and regulated by faith and love, are as walls and bulwarks to the soul (I: p. 490).

Emotional equanimity leads to the reduction of anxiety and fear (cf. Maslow, 1970, p. 66). Pardon dispels the chronic preoccupation with death and damnation so that, ideally, those whose hearts are filled with “love to every soul” are prepared lay down their life for others (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 509). Elsewhere Wesley writes,

‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;’ that peace which enables us in every state therewith to be content; which delivers us from all perplexing doubts, from all tormenting fears, and in particular from that ‘fear of death, whereby we were all our lifetime subject to bondage’ (II: p. 481).

In *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, pp. 342-347), Wesley provides an account of the death of an ardent follower, Jane Cooper. The extract shows that Cooper’s continual involvement with Jesus through watchfulness and prayer prompted a series of autonomous moral inspirations which she interpreted as evidence of her savior’s immanent presence.

It was mine, to be reserved, to be very quiet, to suffer much, and to say little...But the thing is to live in the will of God. For some months past, when I have been particularly devoted to this, I have felt such a guidance of his Spirit, and the unction which I have received from the Holy One has
so taught me of all things, that I needed not any man should teach me, save as this anointing teaches... 'Lord, I bless you that you are ever with me, and all you have is mine...' (p. 345).

Cooper’s communion with Jesus assuages her fears and gives her strength to suffer “the agonies of death” (p. 345) with joyous resignation. Through prayer and introspection, she actualizes a reciprocally dynamic rapport or dialogue with her ideal, through which her efforts to conform to the will of God are rewarded by personalized revelations of conscience (i.e., the guidance of the spirit). The satisfaction of receiving such signs of approval allows her to internally regulate her own anxieties: “I needed not any man should teach me, save as this anointing teaches”. Here, the emotional equanimity achieved through the symbolic personalization of a moral ideal fosters courage, endurance and the ability to withstand deprivation, all of which, as Schafer points out, are provisions of the positive superego (1960, 175-178; see also Kohut on the tension-relieving and self-soothing functions of internalized ideals, 1977, p. 46). Several Methodist death bed accounts refer to the way in which ecstatic manifestations of divine presence ameliorate the physical and mental anguish of the dying (e.g. Carvosso, 1835, pp. 50-51, 134; Rogers, 1832, pp. 59, 216). Hester Anne Rogers speaks of an “extraordinary exertion of [God’s] power and love, which, indeed, we often see manifested in the dying hours of those who love God” (p. 21). Similar findings are reported by humanistic psychologists. In a series of clinical experiments conducted in the 1960’s with terminal cancer patients, researchers found that psychedelically induced peak experiences led to significantly positive changes in individuals’ attitudes towards death. Feeling themselves identified with a larger spectrum of being, patients were able to comprehend the significance of their mortality in different terms:

Some of the patients who experienced the shattering phenomenon of death and rebirth followed by an experience of cosmic unity seemed to show a radical and lasting change in their fundamental concepts of man’s relation to the universe. Death, instead of being seen as the ultimate end of everything and a step into nothingness, appeared suddenly as a transition into a different type of existence; the idea of a possible continuity of
consciousness beyond physical death seemed to be much more plausible than the opposite. The patients who had the transcendental experiences developed a rather deep belief in the ultimate cosmic unity of all creation and experienced themselves as part of it without regard to the situation they were facing...It seems that it was this opening of the transpersonal and cosmic panorama that provided a background and referential system against which the fact of individual destruction appeared to be relatively unimportant (Kurland et al, 1973, p. 113).

**Autobiographical Accounts of Justification and the New Birth**

Because Wesley's account of justification and the new birth is theologically framed, his discourse reflects an optimal ideal of transformation that does not, and, indeed, cannot incorporate the diversity of experiences that are unique to single individuals. All of the phenomenological aspects which Wesley describes are amply detailed in the autobiographical literature, but personality differences introduce a series of idiosyncratic variables. Not surprisingly, converts' accounts are manifold and distinctively nuanced. In the main, most writers prioritize the sense of pardon. For some, however, pardon is conveyed by visionary experiences which themselves are subject to variation both in terms of content and mode (e.g., visual v.s. auditory). Moreover, in many instances, there is only a partial or uncertain manifestation of the spirit - a more complete array of doctrinally prescribed experiences may only emerge gradually over a period of time. I have assembled a set of extracts which, on the one hand, attests to this diversity and, on the other, reveals the essential features and effects of the justification ecstasy as described above.

Following a prolonged period of depression marked by fasting and sleep deprivation, John Mason was finally convinced of God's benevolence.

While I was exercised in this gloomy manner, I, one evening, took up the
new testament to read, and I hope never to forget the time and place. As I read, I felt, I cannot tell how, an unusual going out after God and Christ.
At once my eye, and all the powers of my soul were fixed on those words, Heb. ii. 9, *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels,*
*for the suffering of death, crowned with glory, and honor, that by the grace of God should take death for every man.* The deep silence that
rested on me gave way, and I broke out as in an extasy of joy, not regarding who might hear,

“For me he lived, and for me he died.”

In a moment, all my burthen of pain and sorrow fled away, and all my soul was filled with peace and joy. I was all love to God and man. Truly my delight was in the almighty, and I began to sing aloud...(Arminian Magazine, 1780, pp. 651-652).

Mason’s justification is triggered by a verse of scripture. He emphasizes the feeling of extreme joy in knowing that Christ died for his sins. Relief coupled with “love to God and man”, causes him to rejoice unashamedly: “and I broke out as in an extasy of joy, not regarding who might hear...I began to sing aloud”.

Father Reeves provides no details of the actual content of his justification, claiming only that “the Lord was pleased to set [his] soul at liberty”. What Reeves does convey are the immediate after-effects of the conversion.

I then began to see the worth of precious souls, and that I had something more to do than merely save my own soul. I began to rebuke sin wherever I saw it, and when I heard of any person sick, I could not rest until I had been to see them and told them of heaven and hell, and that they must repent, and what God had done for my soul. I was so ignorant that I thought they would believe all and receive all I said, and be saved. If they were in distress, I gave them all I had in my pocket (Corderoy, 1873, p. 16).

Since Reeves’ conversion establishes empathic identifications, he becomes less preoccupied with himself. Seeing “the worth of precious souls”, he realizes he “had something more to do than merely to save my own soul”. As is consistent with a typical post-conversion pattern that we will examine in greater detail in the following chapter, Reeve’s altruism appears to be somewhat inflated. His identificatory concern, a unitive mindset that momentarily obscures his ability to take into account the temperamental difference between his own exalted state of mind and that of others, leads him to assume that what was self-evident to him would be perceived similarly by others: “I was so ignorant that I thought they would believe all and receive all I said, and be saved”. There
is also a manic quality in the urgency with which he is driven to rebuke sin wherever he saw it, to admonish the ill ("when I heard of any person sick, I could not rest till I had been to see them") and to give away his money. In the main, however, what is most apparent in this extract is Reeves' pronounced compassion.

The moments leading up to Richard Whatcoat's justification are characterized by a resistance which produced a fantasy of corporeal punishment.

On Sept. 3, 1758, being overwhelmed with guilt and fear, as I was reading, it was as if one whispered to me, "Thou hast better read no more; for the more thou readest, the more thou wilt know, And he that knoweth not the Lord's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Arminian Magazine, 1881, p. 191).

Whatcoat resigned himself to whatever consequences lay ahead, and continued reading his bible.

When I came to those words, The Spirit itself beareth witness with our own Spirits, that we are the children of God, as I fixt my eyes upon them, in a moment, my darkness was removed, and the Spirit did bear witness with my Spirit, that I was a child of God. In the same instant I was filled with unspeakable peace and joy in believing: and all fear of death, judgment and hell, suddenly vanished away. Before this, I was kept awake by anguish and fear, so that I could not get an hour's sleep in a night. Now I wanted no sleep, being abundantly refreshed by contemplating the rich display of God's mercy, in adopting so unworthy a creature as me to be an heir of the kingdom of heaven! (pp. 191-192)

As with John Mason, Whatcoat's conversion was activated by scripture. In receiving the spirit of adoption, and thus becoming a child of God, he emphasizes the bliss which accompanies the abrupt elimination of his persecutory fears of death and damnation. He, along with many other converts, allude to a common phenomenon: an exuberance which temporarily overrides one's desire for sleep. This again is consistent with certain manic trends that are associated with the emotional intensity of the new birth.
Charles Hopper, who had become thoroughly “undone” by his own sense of corruption, “quietly retired to a little parlor” to “cover” his shame, and to plead with the Lord for his salvation (Arminian Magazine, 1881, p. 32).

He then heard my cry, and sent me relief. A glorious light shone into my heart, and discovered to me the blessed plan of man’s redemption, through the blood of a crucified Savior...He sent his Son to save sinners, the chief of sinners...The love of God is shed abroad in my heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto me. The Spirit of bondage is gone. The Spirit of Adoption is come. I can now cry, Abba father...No enmity - No wrath - No curse - No condemnation - The ruined sinner is saved. I then found a glorious and undeniable change. God, Christ, Angels, Men, Heaven, Earth, and the whole creation appeared to me in a new light, and stood related to me in a manner I never knew before. I found love to God, to his yoke, to his cross, to his saints, and to friends and enemies...I then went my way rejoicing; a wonder to my Father’s family; to all that knew me; and to myself. All my idols fell to the ground, before the ark of God. I found a perfect hatred to sin, and a complete victory over it.

The whole tenor of my life and conversation was new. Free grace, infinite mercy, boundless love, made the change. My heart, my tongue, my hands, were now, in my little way, employed for my loving God (pp. 32-34).

Hopper’s pardon not only dispels his guilt, but also instills a different perception of the cosmos: “the whole creation appeared to me in a new light”. As mentioned above, this effect is a function of unitive thinking, and Hopper’s narrative implicitly articulates the connection. After stating that creation stood related to him in a manner he had never known before, he immediately refers to a universalizing love that encompasses God and all beings. Furthermore, Hopper emphasizes that the transformation was both dramatic and conspicuous - he claims he was a “wonder” to his father’s family, and to all that knew him. The affective conversion enabled him to adopt a set of values whose emotional appeal led to significant behavioral and characterological changes. As a direct consequence of “infinite mercy” and “boundless love”, the “whole tenor” of his life and conversation was altered: “My heart, my tongue, my hands, were now, in my little way, employed for my loving God”.

177
Many accounts of the new birth include visual and auditory pseudo-hallucinations which express, either in a pictorial or verbal register, divine pardon. As is generally the case with the spontaneous and passive remission of guilt, an event which proceeds independently of the will, the autonomous character of the pseudo-hallucinations accentuates the sense of presence. Several examples of the vision of Christ crucified have been provided above. Since the imagery straightforwardly represents the means by which the savior has atoned for the sins of human kind, the vision is almost invariably presented “to the eye of the mind”, or the “eye of faith”, during justification. John Nelson, for example, resolved to abstain from all food and drink until he “found the kingdom of God” (1842, p. 18).

...but now I was as dumb as a beast, and could not put up one petition, if it would have saved my soul. I kneeled before the Lord some time, and saw myself a criminal before the judge: then I said, “Lord, thy will be done: damn or save!” That moment Jesus Christ was as evidently set before the eye of my mind, as crucified for my sins, as if I had seen him with my bodily eyes; and in that instant my heart was set at liberty from guilt and tormenting fear, and filled with a calm and serene peace. I could then say without any dread or fear, “thou art my Lord and my God.” Now did I begin to sing that part of the 12th chapter of Isaiah, “O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I shall trust and not be afraid: for my the Lord Jehova is my strength and my song; he is also become my salvation.” My heart was filled with love to God and every soul of man: next to my wife and children, my mother, brethren, and sisters, my greatest enemies had an interest in my prayers; and I cried, “O Lord, give me to see my desire on them: let them experience thy redeeming love!” (pp. 18-19).

Nelson’s vision, which was precipitated in part by his mental exhaustion (“now I was dumb as a beast”) allays his troubled conscience. Convinced that God’s anger had vanished, Nelson safely surrenders himself to his ideal: “I shall trust and not be afraid”. Consequently, his love for God is abstracted and extended towards “every soul of man”; he wishes that all could feel his own “desire” and experience God’s “redeeming love”. His immense gratitude releases a flood of tears: “...I was so affected that I could not read
for weeping. That evening, under Mr. Wesley's sermon, I could do nothing but weep, and love, and praise God, for sending his servant into the fields to show me the way of salvation" (p. 19). Furthermore, Nelson's elation creates a temporary sense of inflated self-sufficiency - being so filled with the spirit, he denies the need for food.

All that day I neither ate nor drank any thing; for before I found peace, the hand of God was so heavy upon me, that I refused to eat; and after I had found peace, I was so filled with the manna of redeeming love, that I had no need of the bread that perisheth for that season (pp. 19-20).

James Rogers', whose vision of Christ's sufferings on Calvary has already been cited above (Arminian Magazine, 1789, p. 462), experienced "an inexpressible degree of approbation".

In that moment my burden was gone; my heart was changed from a state of bondage into glorious liberty: and I was constrained to tell all those who feared the Lord, what he had done for my soul...I now went about among my old acquaintances, with a confidence that they would all repent and be converted if they knew how ready Christ was to convert them. Some I found willing to hear what I had to say; others stared at me as one quite out of his senses (Arminian Magazine, 1789, p. 462).

Like Father Reeves, Rogers' unitive identifications and his need to convert others, causes him to overestimate the ease with which this task would be accomplished.

Thomas Hanson's justification commences with a dissociative phenomena that in contemporary evangelical circles is referred to as "slain in the spirit" or "resting in the spirit" (MacNutt, 1984). Although it admits of variations, the phenomenon is generally characterized by a loss of motor control and a "detached awareness" (p. 34) which points to a hypnotic element. MacNutt states that "By and large people do not become unconscious" (p. 34), but experience a peaceful sense of God's presence: "With the body out of the way, so to speak, the person can concentrate more fully on what is happening within...Distractions grow less and we are better able to listen" (p. 47). Similarly, Hanson writes,
...under my brother Joseph’s prayer, I yielded, sunk, and, as it were, died away. My heart with a kind, sweet struggle melted into the hands of God. I was for some hours lost in wonder, by the astonishing peace, love, and joy which flowed into my heart like a mighty torrent. When I came to recollect myself, I asked what hast thou done? It was sweetly, but deeply impressed, “I have made thee mine.” No tongue can tell what peace, love, joy and assurance I then felt. My willing heart and tongue replied, hast thou thus loved me? Here I am, willing to spend and be spent for thee. God now gave me to see all creation, redemption, grace and glory in a new light: and everything led me to love and praise him (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 481)

The hypnotic onset of Hanson’s conversion is punctuated by the disappearance of both bodily control and conscious perception of the external world. However, he remains passively aware of internal currents of highly pleasurable emotions which are a sign of divine presence (i.e. he “melted into the hands of God”). When the hypnotic interlude subsides, and Hanson “recollects himself”, the sense of presence continues to manifest in the form of an interior dialogue. After asking for the meaning of the ecstasy to be revealed to him, he experiences an autonomous verbal inspiration which is construed as a direct response from God: “I have made thee mine”. The fact that the ecstatic inspiration flows from an active and lucid inquiry indicates that the alternate state has switched from hypnosis to reverie. Blissfully persuaded of his “assurance”, Hanson continues the dialogue by vowing to “spend” himself for God. In turn, he is granted a vision. Here again the theme of newness is correlated with unitive ideation: “God now gave me to see all creation, redemption, grace and glory in a new light: and everything led me to love and praise him”. Hanson’s dialogue with God facilitates the conscious emergence of a unitive moral ideal. The spontaneous onset of a trance state suggests that when the ideal first entered into his consciousness it was countered by a resistance. However, as the trance dissolves, and Hanson recovers his normal sensibilities, the ecstatic exchange permits the ego to reflect upon and assimilate the material gradually. The full impact of the insight is represented symbolically by a unitive view of creation in which all things are emblematic of God.
The ecstatic content of Thomas Joyce's justification combined both visual and auditory modes. He writes,

...I felt such a load as I was scarce able to bear. I looked down, and I thought I must drop into Hell forthwith: when in a moment I saw a great light, and heard a voice saying, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." This came twice, and I answered in my heart, "Yea, and I will rejoice". Since that time, I never lost the sense of God's love, nor ever yielded to any known sin (Arminian Magazine, 1781, p. 420).

Ruth Hall’s conversion was effected by an audible inspiration alone.

...being in great agony, I was crying to God to have mercy upon me, when I heard a voice (inwardly or outwardly I cannot tell,) "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." I could not believe it. I cried out, "Me, Lord! It cannot be me!" But it was repeated again and again, it may be twenty times, till I could not but believe it. I was quite overwhelmed with peace and love, and was unspeakably happy. From that moment I could never doubt at all, nor did I never the loose the love I then received (Arminian Magazine, 1781, p. 478).

Because the verbal material manifests as a spoken voice (by contrast, non-audible verbal inspirations are commonly "impressed" or "applied"), it magnifies the sense of presence, and lends further credence to the revelation. This, and the fact that the locution is insistently repeated, dispels her resistance and secures her belief.

As mentioned, individuals occasionally describe an incomplete manifestation of the spirit. For some, certain core characteristics of the new birth, those which were prescribed by Wesley and regularly reported by others, fail to materialize. This may be due to resistance, or it may simply reflect differences in temperamental dispositions across personalities. For example, when Alexander Mathers' heart was set at liberty, and his load taken away, he praised God from the ground of his heart: "all my sorrow, and fear, and anguish of spirit [was] changed into solid peace" (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 99). Yet, he immediately remarks that he had "no great transport of joy", thus intimating that his expectations were not entirely fulfilled. For J. B. of St. Hellier's, the normative
theological sequence of testimonies is actually reversed - the fruits of the spirit precede the witness of pardon.

...I saw by faith the Lord Jesus on the cross, and the blood streaming from his side. Immediately my load dropped off and I believed my sins were blotted out, though I had not yet a testimony from his Spirit, that I was a child of God. Yet I enjoyed a calm, serene peace, and had no fear either of death or hell (emphasis added; Arminian Magazine, 1788, p. 72).

In this instance we may safely infer that the testimony was missing as a result of a persistent conflict which was expressed in terms of physical exhaustion: “But the work of God in my soul, so weakened my body that I was obliged to take to my bed for some days” (p. 72).

Incomplete manifestations must be viewed in a larger psychological context. Most often, the transformative characteristics which Wesley attributed specifically to the new birth emerge intermittently over time. Wesley’s adherence to reformation theology led him and his followers to identify ecstasies which included the distinct sense of pardon as the decisive indicators of instantaneous justification. However, if we examine the experiences of Richard Moss, we find that the personality changes associated with justification are established successively in tandem with several ecstatic episodes. The first ecstasy which he reports in his narrative occurs during a service given by Wesley, whose very presence immediately elicits an idealizing transference in Moss. As the service proceeds, his infatuation steadily builds until he is literally enraptured.

When Mr. Wesley came out of the kitchen door, I rose up to look at him. I felt something I had never felt before. I thought, “I have read or heard of saints: Surely this is one.” He went up into the pulpit, but I could not keep my eyes off him. He prayed, and I thought, “Well, this is such a prayer as I never heard in my life.” Then he gave out a verse of hymn. Immediately I felt much love in my heart, and such joy, that I could not refrain from tears...Now I was happy: I was as in heaven: The hymn, the singing, all was heavenly round about me. And I knew, that till this hour, I had never known what happiness meant...I found all my prejudice vanish away, and I had such a love, both to the preachers and to all the people, as I cannot express (Arminian Magazine, 1798, p. 7).
After this event, Moss "could only talk of the things of God", and continually reproved the sins of his companions (p. 7-8). And yet, he continued "mourning after God", believing that he remained "under conviction". Several months commenced before he experienced a second ecstasy in which he received pardon.

In the midst of my prayer, my eyes being shut, I saw Christ by faith, as if he was standing by me, and I saw plainly the prints of the nails in his hands. All my burden dropped off. My fears and doubts and sense of guilt vanished away. I knew Christ was mine. I knew that God for his sake, had blotted out all my sins. I was filled with such a love to God, and such a joy, as cannot be uttered. All the love and joy I had felt before, was nothing in comparison of this. And I now no longer rejoiced I new not why; but I had a clear sight of the Love of God in Christ Jesus (p. 53).

For three days Moss "walked as one out of the body, in the broad light of God's countenance" (p. 53). In keeping with a developmental pattern which Wesley himself identified as a normal vicissitude in spiritual growth, Moss abruptly lost the sense of divine presence: "But when I waked the fourth morning, all was dark. My comfort and my God was gone".

I had no fear of death or hell; and I had continual power over outward sin (as indeed I had from the very hour when I first tasted that God was Love, at the Foundery.) But I could not see Christ; and therefore I was in sorrow and heaviness (p. 53).

Following an unspecified interval of time during which Moss was "pressed down to earth" by the "absence of divine comfort", and a sense of his "inward sins and temptations", he again attended one of Wesley's services.

In the middle of the sermon I felt my soul united to the Lord. I had closer communion with him than ever. I found his Spirit witnessing with my spirit, not only that I was a child of God, but that he would depart from me no more, that he would abide with me forever. All sorrow and doubt and fear fled away. I was filled with light and peace. I had such a solid, settled joy in the Holy Ghost, as I was a stranger to, till that very hour. I felt a fuller and stronger love to God than ever, as well as to all mankind. And from that time I never lost for a moment the Light of God's countenance (p. 54).
What we observe in this sequence of ecstasies is the *protracted* emergence and consolidation of a unitive ideal. Moss' acquisition of the witness and its fruits occurs progressively in a series of discrete revelations. In the first episode, an idealization that is focused upon the person of Wesley catalyzes a further process of sublimation. By the end of the sermon, Moss' affection is extended towards God, the preachers, and all the people present at the service. This enlarged sense of affiliation extinguishes his fear of death, and offers an identificatory source through which he is able to resist temptation, and act in vigorous accordance with a new set of ideals. After conscientiously applying himself in this manner, he eventually experiences a second ecstasy, a pardoning vision of the savior which represents his self-acceptance vis-a-vis the ego ideal. For three days, Moss is acutely aware of God's immediate presence in his life. However, the rapid onset of a depression attests to a resistance which requires further working through. Notwithstanding this temporary setback, Moss does not fully regress back into blind despair. He points out that he did not experience a resurgence of anxiety with respect to death and damnation, and was able to prevent himself from backsliding into sin. In other words, certain self-regulatory features of the positive superego have become durable despite his awareness that the previous intensity of his emotions have waned: “I could not keep my heart fixed in prayer. I could not love God. I could not love my neighbor. I felt peevishness and discontent” (p. 54) Moss' depressive trial culminates in yet another ecstatic conferral of self-acceptance. The insight that he has attained sufficient equanimity to console himself, that is, to tolerate his doubts without succumbing to old habits diametrically opposed to faith, is expressed symbolically in a communion with the Lord that is even more intimate, or “closer” than ever. Now, the permanency of the sense of presence (i.e., “And from that time I never lost for a moment the Light of God's countenance”) is coupled with an even greater abstraction of affect: “I felt a fuller and stronger love to God than ever, *as well as to all mankind*” (emphasis added).
In summary, the foregoing extracts reveal that the content and transformative effects of the justification ecstasy differed from individual to individual. In some cases it consisted primarily of an outpouring of extremely positive emotions which were associated with the autonomous and intuitive conviction of pardon. For others, visionary experiences reinforced the sense of acceptance. Furthermore, it was not uncommon that the phenomenological characteristics of the new birth were acquired episodically over a series of ecstatic interludes. However, even after accounting for these variables, we find that all the core psychological components listed in Wesley’s description of justification - those which coincide with the beta-cognition of peak experiences - find expression in the autobiographical narratives. These include forgiveness, joy, self-esteem; empathy, compassion, the intensification of conscience; abstractions of unitive love and an altered perception of the cosmos; the sense of presence; and increased initiative and commitment to a new set of values and ideals.

Theoretic Summary

All of the major components of faith which are doctrinally stipulated by Wesley, and reflected in the autobiographical narratives of his followers, coincide with Merkur’s definition of ecstasy as an autonomous or involuntary conviction of the reality of the numinous. The justifying reception of faith was depicted as both passive and instantaneous. It provided “perceptible inspiration”, an “experimental knowledge of God” characterized not only by an affective sense of pardon, but also by a cognitive dimension which typically involved discursive inspirations, imaginary pseudo-hallucinations and the intellectual vision of presence. Furthermore, although descriptions of trance are not absent in the autobiographical literature, the normative alternate states associated with Methodist ecstasies were reveries, in which the psychic content of the experience is known to be intrapsychic, and is therefore commensurate with the ego’s ability to engage in reality testing. In this way, ecstatic reverie went hand
in hand with Wesley’s synthesis of reason, Lockean empiricism and supernatural enthusiasm, as well as his commitment to a worldly, or “object related” spirituality.

The Wesleyan conception of faith is permeated through and through with various modes of unitive thinking, the most notable of which is the sense of divine omnipresence. This perceptual abstraction of the “eternal world”, the “invisible things of God”, instills a series of dramatic psychological effects which Wesley deemed “the fruit of the spirit”. Several authors have drawn comparisons between Wesley’s view of faith, and Maslow’s discussion of peak experiences. Maslow similarly refers to a unitive abstraction which is bound to a common set of ego-enhancing traits. I have argued that these features are indicative of the emergence of ego-ideals. More specifically, the transformative potential of these ecstasies is attributable to the way in which the alternate state provides a uniquely powerful avenue of accessibility to previously unconscious superego materials. Any number of internalizations capable of strengthening the ego through identification may remain in states of dormant inaccessibility due to fixations and defenses that block their proper manifestation. Hartmann and Loewenstein (1962) allude to a particular variation of this phenomenon:

In some cases the abolishment of the idealization of the parents will also interfere with, instead of strengthening, the child’s self-esteem and ego ideal development. In later life the loss of ideals, related either to objects or to factors of a more impersonal nature may lead to what one usually terms cynicism - behind which, however, another set of ideals may be hidden (frequently, e.g., truth values) (pp. 62-63).

Alternate states allow for a climactic externalization of these frozen materials. In observing the significant improvement of terminal cancer patients who had peak experiences while undergoing psychedelic psychotherapy, Pahnke (1969) writes:

I suggest that this experience has the potential for opening up positive experience that may have been previously closed or clogged. Our experiments have indicated that deep within every human being there are vast usually untapped resources of love, joy and peace (emphasis added; p. 15).
In the Methodist context, the work of mourning which occurs during the initial phase of repentance permits unconscious self and object images to emerge into consciousness during conversion. This position is similarly taken by Rizzuto, who writes, “For other individuals the elaboration of the God representation is enmeshed in the repression of the parental representations....In short, I understand conversion to be the ego-syntonic release from repression...of an earlier (or even present) parental representation linked to a God representation” (1979, p. 51). At this juncture, the favorable representations of the parent - those belonging to the positive pole of the split imago - become accessible to the “synthetic” or innate organizing functions of the ego (Blanck and Blanck, 1979, pp. 15-30). Representations of loving intimacy, not the least of which are the unconscious merger fantasies of early infancy, become subject to a process of abstraction and are thereby transformed into unitive ego ideals which form the basis of conscience.

My psychoanalytic formulation of this process, which places emphasis on the dynamic elaboration of ideals, may be compared to what Frick (1983; 1987; 1990) calls the “symbolic growth experience (SGE)”. Frick, who approaches similar phenomena from the perspective of humanistic psychology, defines SGEs as sudden developmental acquisitions, significant life moments in which “we create personal meaning by symbolizing our immediate experience in the interest of heightened consciousness and personal growth” (1983, p. 108).

Any experience containing symbolic potential for the individual clearly stands for something “beyond itself”. As we move deeper into the symbolic nature of the experience, its “objective” structure and content are transcended. The SGE, therefore, discloses hidden potentials within experience. The SGE enables us to perceive and extend experience metaphorically to establish ontological significance in our lives. Thus our experience is transformed to reveal unseen potentialities. It is through this transformation that the facts and events of experience become charged with emotional power and personal meaning...This symbolic dimension of experience becomes a major source of learning and a powerful catalyst for
dynamic personality change and growth... The perception of boundaries between person and environment is also erased during the SGE. The external and "objective" facts of experience fuse with deeply personal needs, meanings and values (pp. 111-13).

Eigen explicitly ties the foregoing phenomenon to the "growth of a supportive and stimulating ego ideal" (1993, p. 70).

The mind spontaneously creates ideal images which enter into varied points of tension and harmony with representations of material reality. The ability to sustain the tension between representations of ideal and material realities is an essential condition of creative growth and work. A vital ego-ideal provides an ideal pole of experience which attracts representations of material reality which are relevant for its purposes. Thus the ego ideal may come to act as a nodal point for the convergence and transformation of symbolic expressions of ideal and material experience (p. 78)

Both Frick and Eigen describe the alteration of perceptual-cognitive patterns which epitomize the ecstatic conferral of spiritual senses in Methodism. Unitive ideals foster a heightened symbolic awareness wherein particular concrete perceptions become conceptualized as evidence of divine immanence and, as a result, are cognitively enriched.
CHAPTER 6
INFLATION AND DEPRESSION

In an essay on typical psychological disturbances that accompany spiritual
illuminations, Assagioli (1990) identifies two kinds of complications which are
dynamically related to one another, and unfold sequentially. Firstly, spiritual
awakenings, or revelations of “higher” values “such as the ethical, the esthetic, the
heroic, the humanitarian, and the altruistic” (p. 38), sometimes “have the unfortunate
effect of feeding and inflating the personal ego” (p. 44). This can range from an
exuberant overestimation of the self and its powers, to “uncontrolled, unbalanced and
disordered behavior”, and an unrealistically zealous and fanatical ambitiousness”: “[one]
may be easily impelled by the excitement of the inner awakening to play the role of the
prophet or savior; [one] may found a new sect and start a campaign of spectacular
proselytism” (pp. 45-46). According to Assagioli, these grandiose reactions are due to a
confusion between potentiality and actuality. The ecstatic contemplation of ideals,
especially when they are apprehended for the first time, can be so overwhelming and
affectively compelling that individuals may all too easily assume that their personalities
have been permanently altered, and that no discrepancy remains between their actual
selves and an imagined state of perfection. The euphoria, however, eventually subsides
when the self faces up to its ineluctable shortcomings. At this juncture, a second
complication arises. There is a danger that disillusionment will foment an equally
powerful depression. Bitterly disappointed that the “rocks and rubbish, which had been
covered and concealed at high tide, emerge again” (p. 47), individuals are prone to doubt
or deny the “value and reality” (p. 47) of the recent experience. Sometimes the reaction
takes on pathological overtones, producing a state which “bears close resemblance to
psychotic depression or ‘melancholia’” (p. 47). The cluster of symptoms includes
despair, suicidal impulses, “an acute sense of unworthiness, a systematic
self-deprecation, and self-accusation” (p. 47), and a loss of will power and self-control.

Rambo, in his study of conversion, provides similar observations. He writes:

The battle within the convert usually continues. When people cannot
maintain a sense of euphoria and empowerment, an inevitable loss of
energy may initiate a new crisis. They may worry that their conversion
was not valid, and they may be plagued by old temptations and doubts.
For example, I met many converts to evangelical Christianity when I
taught at Trinity College in Deerfield Illinois, between 1975 and 1978. As
I observed these young converts I developed the notion of
“postconversion depression”, an inevitable tapering off from the
emotional peak of decisive commitment...The human reality seems to be
that the power of the conversion experience will eventually dissipate for
most people, and thus maintenance procedures become important to
protect a person either from severe depression or from abandoning the
new religious commitment altogether (p. 136).

Both Assaglioli and Rambo stress how individuals need to understand that the
transformation of ingrained personality traits is not instantaneous, but rather, a long-term
process requiring patience, effort and commitment. For Assaglioli, those who are
disillusioned should be reassured that the exalted state “could not, by its very nature, last
forever...” (p. 49).

It is as though he had made a superb flight to the sunlit mountain top,
realized its glory and the beauty of the panorama spread below, but had
been brought back reluctantly to his starting point with the rueful
recognition that the steep path leading to the heights must be climbed step
by step (p. 49).

The conscious manifestation of ideals and their integration into the personality
are independent variables. Feeling partially responsible for the misuse of LSD in the
1960’s, Maslow lamented the “big bang” theory of self-actualization (Krippner, 1972, p.
120). By this, he meant the repetitive induction of psychedelic peak experiences, or the
prolongation of exhilarating states without any actual integration of their content and
significance into the fabric of one’s life. He adduced the analogy of a man who, after a
momentous sexual experience, becomes disillusioned with his partner when she catches a
cold and her nose dribbles. The naive expectation that a relationship will always remain as exciting and seemingly effortless as it was in the first intoxicating encounters will necessarily breed dissatisfaction and lead to failure. In much the same way, by referring to Freud’s distinction between “insight” and “working through” (p. 120), Maslow implied that the long term consolidation of unitive values is painstakingly effected through continual self-reflection, as well as the application of ideals to the exigencies of ordinary life.

**Post-conversion Inflation**

Wesley regarded this post-conversion pattern of inflation and depression as a standard vicissitude in spiritual growth. For him, the overestimation of the self rested on a confusion between justification and the new birth on the one hand, and entire sanctification, on the other (1984-87, I: pp. 336). The former terms, more modest in their scope, granted power to overcome temptation, whereas the latter eradicated the very root of sin. In the days and weeks which followed justification, the natural tendency of individuals to be rapturously swept away meant that many lost sight of these distinctions. Their unchecked exhilaration led them to collapse the categories: “when the love of God is first shed abroad in our hearts...it is natural to suppose that we are no longer sinners, that all our sins are not only covered but destroyed...[some persuaded] themselves that when they were justified they were entirely sanctified” (I: p. 336).

I know there are also children of God who, being now ‘justified freely’, having found ‘redemption in the blood of Christ’, for the present feel no temptation. God hath said to their enemies, “Touch not mine anointed, and do my children no harm.” And for this season, it may be for weeks or months, he causeth them to ‘ride on high places’; he beareth them on eagles’ wings, above all the fiery darts of the wicked one. But this state will not last always...(II: p. 104)

When the candle of the Lord first shines on our head, temptation frequently flees away, and totally disappears. All is calm within: perhaps without, too, while God makes our enemies to be at peace with us. It is then very natural to suppose that we shall not see war any more. And
there are instances wherein this calm has continued, not only for weeks, but for months or years. But commonly it is otherwise: in a short time ‘the winds blow, the rains descend, and the floods arise’ anew...The evil which yet remains in the heart will then also move afresh; anger and many other ‘roots of bitterness’ will endeavor to spring up. At the same time Satan will not be wanting to cast in his fiery darts...Now when so various assaults are made at once, and perhaps with the utmost violence, it is not strange if it should occasion not only heaviness, but even darkness in a weak believer. More especially if he was not watching, if these assaults are made in an hour when he looked not for them; if he expected nothing less, but had fondly told himself.

The day of evil would return no more

The force of those temptations which arise from within will be exceedingly heightened if we before thought too highly of ourselves, as if we had been cleansed from all sin. And how naturally do we imagine this during the warmth of our first love! (II: pp. 212-213).

For Wesley, conversion inflation pertains to the conviction that one has already resolved the struggle between ideal aspirations and the narcissistic and instinctual currents which oppose them. Inflated believers assume prematurely that the spiritual warfare between the two opposing principals of nature and grace, between “the flesh lusting against the spirit” (II: p. 159) has been permanently laid to rest: “It is very natural to suppose that we shall not see war anymore”.

As we have already seen in the previous chapter, the autobiographical narratives show that, along with the particular kind of inflation which Wesley describes, there were additional behavioral phenomena that possessed a distinctly manic quality. For example, several report that directly after being justified, they were temporarily unable and unwilling to sleep. Prince, in an early study on sudden religious conversions, also noted this pattern. He refers to the case of Miss B., a woman who suffered from a host of physical ailments, and who had recently experienced a “sudden change in her personality” (1906, p. 44) as a result of a conversion to Catholicism. Prince writes:

On examination I found her to be in a high state of mental exhilaration, because, as she averred, she was cured at last. All her symptoms had
vanished, and she experienced a feeling of well-being and physical health. She believed herself well, and plainly interpreted every event through her dominant idea of physical, if not spiritual “conversion” to health... The recovery of her health would allow her to follow a religious life in accordance with her ideals. Her condition was one of ecstasy. Although she had not slept more than an hour a night for several nights, nevertheless she was not a bit tired, although under ordinary circumstances she would have been a physical wreck.

Psychologically, this new mental condition plainly afforded an opportunity to observe an example of that state of exaltation into which notoriously so many religious enthusiasts have fallen when the feeling of a new spiritual life was awakened in them (emphasis added; p. 45).

Miss B.’s inflated insistence that her symptoms were miraculously cured, and the fact that her prolonged sleeplessness did not affect her bodily strength, indicates that a manic component had infiltrated the conversion.

Returning to Methodism, Benjamin Rhodes writes that, upon being justified, he beheld the truths of Christianity “in the clearest light”, and entertained a “deep sense of a present God”, whom he approached “with reverential awe, confidence, gratitude, and love...” (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 362).

In this happy season, my joy frequently prevented my sleep, while my soul was taken up with him, who is altogether lovely: and in the exstasies of joy, in the stillness of the night, I often sung my great Deliverer’s praise. All things earthly appeared so empty, that I thought nothing here below worth a thought only as it tended to promote my eternal interest: I only desired grace and glory. I then began to conclude, that my adversaries were quite overthrown; and that I had only to march forward, and take possession of the “Land of Promise”: I therefore pressed forward rejoicing for some months. At length, through unwatchfulness, and giving way to levity, my comforts gradually diminished till, imperceptibly, I was then drawn into a wilderness state; and though I was diligent in the outward means, yet I had lost the pleasing sensations which I formerly had found therein (p. 362).

Rhodes explains that “exstasies of joy” which came “in the stillness of the night” were so stirring that they prevented him from sleeping. Instead of resting, he felt compelled to sing his “great Deliverer’s praise”. Note that these “exstasies” presuppose a stark dichotomy between the eternal heavens, and the lower “earthly” sphere which is disparagingly portrayed as “empty” and not “worth a thought”. Furthermore, Rhodes also
assumes that his previous conflicts and doubts were finally allayed, and that he had attained the equivalent of entire sanctification: “I then began to conclude, that my adversaries were quite overthrown”. This constellation of features - hyperarousal, idealization coupled with splitting and devaluation, and inflation - all point to a manic defense (Segal, 1974, pp. 82-91; Klein, 1988, pp. 278, 349; Hinshelwood, 1991, pp. 344-346). Rhodes’ disdainful rejection of the created world is an extension of the denial of his inner “adversaries”, the splitting off of certain unacceptable feelings and impulses which have yet to be worked through. Thus, his exclusive identification with the higher realm of “grace and glory” compliments and reinforces the belief in his own perfection. Because he is inflated in this way, Rhodes feels less obliged to engage in prayerful self-examination. This neglect is consistent with the defensive function of the inflation - to ward off an awareness of residual conflict which, if brought into consciousness through meditative introspection, would prompt a renewed depression. Ironically, Rhodes’ failure to exercise his faith via watchfulness eventually leads to a dissipation of his “comforts” and “pleasing sensations”.

Sleeplessness was sometimes accompanied by loss of appetite. Upon being pardoned, Thomas Rankin was so overwhelmed with the love of God that he thought he “should then have died”: “I was so swallowed up in the love of God all that day, and for many days and nights following, that the desire of food and sleep departed from me” (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 189). Loss of appetite was frequently rationalized as a substitution of spiritual for physical nourishment. Hester Ann Rogers, for example, writes that her justification doubled her bodily strength, even though she could “neither eat nor sleep for many days and nights”: “The love of God was now my meat and drink” (1832, p. 32). Similarly, after John Nelson found peace, he was “so filled with the manna of redeeming love” that he had “no need of the bread that perisheth for that season” (pp. 19-20). Once again, the denial of basic bodily needs, along with the theme of self-sufficiency (i.e., God’s manna is enough), points to a manic splitting off of the
degraded and dangerous realm of the flesh, which, after all, is the locus of the passions that are inimical to the love of God.

As seen in the previous chapter, two other closely related phenomena that frequently occur after justification, and which are also suggestive of a manic defense, are the exaggerated urgency of the convert's need to rebuke sin and evangelize, and the naive overestimation of other people's willingness to be persuaded by what appears to be a self-evident truth (e.g., Corderoy, 1873, p. 16; Arminian Magazine, 1789, p. 462). For Morentz, these reactions, which he deems the "noisy" stage of conversion, are predicated on feelings of relief, exhilaration and optimism which naturally flow from the misguided conviction that one's conflicts have been forever resolved.

The noisy stage is a very active stage. People are eager to do things. They are expansive and giving. They want to tell everybody so that everybody can have the same experience. They see their present state as a new life that will go on forever (1987, p. 258).

My use of the term "manic" as a means of describing certain effects and aftereffects of unitive ecstasies is by no means unprecedented. Rammage has also made use of the concept in connection with Methodist justification. He suggests that the formerly depressed convert's swing into elation resembles the state of "hypomania", which "is a feature of the less serious forms of manic-depressive psychosis" (Rammage, 1967, p. 163). The analogy is valid given that depression both precedes and succeeds the period of inflation. Ostow, for example, speaks of "paradoxical hypermotivation", a term which subsumes hypomania and mania, and is characterized by increased activity and the use of specific defenses such as denial, projection and identification. The hypermotivation is deemed paradoxical precisely because it serves as a defense against depression (1975, pp. 397, 399).

Moreover, a whole series of psychoanalytic writers have not hesitated to draw connections between aspects of mania and religious ecstasy. For Lewin (1951) and Linn and Schwartz (1958), mystical experiences are intrinsically pathological. Instigated by
severe emotional conflict, they are the product of a regression to the early oral period of development. Because unitive ecstasies obliterate the space between the ego and the superego (represented by these authors as the idealized maternal breast), they create the necessary conditions for manic denial. A rather similar argument was advanced by Hartocollis (1974; 1975), who tried to demonstrate that mystical experiences are motivated by the fear that aggression will lead to the destruction of internal good objects. Thus, in as much as mystics are attempting to flee from their own hostility, the mystical quest is understood as a massive reaction formation, a passive-regressive fusion of self and nurturing breast. Prince and Savage (1965) made an important contribution to the psychoanalytic understanding of mystical states by employing Kris’ notion of regression in the service of the ego, thereby providing a plausible link between some features of the psychoses and mystical states without necessarily assimilating the latter category to the former and all of its morbid implications. They hold that, for some, ecstatic bliss may function as a manic denial of pain. In the same way, Modell (1968) claimed that merger with the good object in religious mysticism could be a form of manic denial. Auberbach (1987) suggests that the mystical “dream of perfect harmony” (p. 512) counterparts the dark night of the soul in the same way that mania counterparts depression. He holds that for many mystics, the dark night - the conviction that one has been abandoned by God - is a forum for the belated expression of grief over losses that were suffered earlier in life and were insufficiently mourned. More specifically, Auberbach, who takes recourse to the Kleinian view of idealization as a defense against hostility, states that periods of mystical illumination may reflect a defense against “hatred of the lost person for disappearing, and irrational fears that the lost person will retaliate” (p. 512). Fauteux offers a perspective that is comparable to Auberbach’s and thus presupposes the manic defense. Using Mahler’s model of ego development, Fauteux explains mystical unity as a regression to the symbiotic phase of undifferentiated unity with the mother. The regression, “which recreates a psychological paradise characterized by the exclusive
presence of good libidinal feelings and images” (p. 75), is secured by a complete splitting off of the aggression which threatens to destroy the gratifying maternal image and undo the state of oneness.

The wholesale pathologization of unitive ecstasies is theoretically myopic and diagnostically limited. For example, Lewin’s claim that mystical states are, by definition, specimens of the manic defense, is a simplistic overgeneralization which does not do justice to the empirical complexity of the data. The blanket application of this label presupposes that apart from the defense, which is regarded as comparatively primitive, there are no redeeming, or unequivocally adaptive qualities involved. Yet, in the previous chapter, we have seen how justification ecstasies are a medium through which ego ideals are presented to consciousness and thus promote a whole series of positive traits which clearly vitalize the ego. The reduction of these potentially integrative phenomena to by products of a defense ignores the cardinal principal of multiple function (Waelder, 1930).

In other words, as is the case with all other aspects of psychic life, the nature and uses of ideals are variable and overdetermined. Although paradoxical, certain functions of idealization may be used simultaneously, as both a source of strength to the ego - augmenting a poor sense of identity, providing hope, purpose, courage and initiative - as well as a defense against unacceptable hostility or sexual feelings. It is therefore unfortunate that certain schools of psychoanalytic thought have become polarized by singling out particular facets of the idealization process (e.g. Kleinians tend to focus on splitting and the denial of aggression, while self-psychologists emphasize the therapeutic growth potential of idealizing transferences). However, we find that even Klein herself was not unaware of the adaptive and integrative role of otherwise defense driven idealizations. Her comments pertain to the universality of the manic defense in the early development of the ego. Idealization, omnipotence and denial “enable the early ego to assert itself to a certain degree...and thus to make further advances in development” (1988, p. 349).
...the ego has over and over again recourse to that mechanism - so important for the development of relations to objects - namely, a splitting of its imagos into loved and hated, that is to say, into good and dangerous ones. *Ambivalence, carried out in a splitting of the imagos, enables the young child to gain more trust and belief in its real objects and thus in its internalized ones - to love them more and to carry out in an increasing degree its phantasies of restoration of the loved object* (emphasis added; p. 350).

The shaken belief in good objects disturbs most painfully the process of idealization, which is an essential intermediate step in mental development (p. 355).

Klein implies here that, in normal development, splitting and idealization are not only used to ward off destructive rage. The identification with the good object additionally strengthens the ego, so that it acquires greater confidence in its own goodness, and can therefore begin to assimilate the more painful aspects of psychic experience. Thus, Steiner points out that although manic idealizations entail a temporary distortion of reality, they may ultimately facilitate a diminution of splitting: "...the periods of integration, which at this stage take place in relation to good objects, can be seen as precursors of the depressive position" (1993, p. 29). It is more realistic to assume that healthy and morbid structures are not mutually exclusive, but exist in a fluid and dynamically interwoven relation to each other (cf. Brenner, 1982). Eigen echoes this idea when he states, "Much excellent psychoanalytic literature...has followed Freud in deciphering the pathological element in attachment to ideal states, relatively neglecting their healing aspect" (1993, p. 62).

For this reason, I would suggest that, in some instances, unresolved unconscious conflicts directly attach themselves to otherwise healthy and non-conflicted ideals (i.e., beta-cognition) and convert them into complex neurotic compromise formations. Thus, these "unitive distortions" (Haartman, 1998b) may enhance certain facets of psychological functioning while they concurrently reinforce other dissociative trends. This conception illuminates the data we are presently considering. The manic patterns
found in Methodist and other forms of conversion may be regarded as defensive
exaggerations or pathological transformations of various integrative functions which are
consolidated in the ongoing rapport between the ego and the ego ideal. Specifically,
self-esteem may become distorted into conceit or grandiosity, initiative into compulsion,
hope into rigid certainty, and trust and safety may devolve into omnipotence. The
pathological magnitude of any unitive experience could be assessed by at least two
indexes: the degree of exaggeration of any particular distortion and the spread of
distortion across a number of discrete items such as self-esteem, empathy, trust,
initiative, abstraction etc.

Commenting on psychedelically induced peak experiences, Grof describes the
equivalent of a unitive distortion, a pattern of response to peak experiences which, like
the data presented above, is consistent with the manic defense. His account clearly
emphasizes the way in which latent and unintegrated materials augment the specifically
therapeutic dimensions of the ecstasy. In the following extract, the abbreviation “BPM
IV” refers to states of unitive consciousness which follow the resolution of depressive
crises and/or anxiety attacks.

In an individual who has completed the death-rebirth sequence and
stabilized under the influence of BPM IV, the feelings of joy and relief are
accompanied by deep emotional and physical relaxation, serenity and
tranquillity. Occasionally, it can be observed that the feelings of
liberation and personal triumph are accentuated and exaggerated to the
point of becoming a caricature. The behavior of a person in this state has
a driven and manic quality; he cannot sit or lie quietly, runs around
advertising loudly the overwhelming beauty and significance of his
experience, wants to arrange a big party to celebrate this event, and makes
grandiose plans for changing the world. This situation indicates that the
experience of rebirth has not been fully completed. Such an individual is
already experientially tuned into BPM IV but is still under the influence of
unresolved elements...particularly anxiety and aggression (1976, p. 140).
Post-conversion Depression

Because post-conversion inflation and mania are indices of conflict, it is not surprising that unintegrated material which is inconsistent with unitive ideals will eventually force its way into awareness and initiate a fresh depression. However, in terms of the developmental thrust of Wesley's model, this resurgance of melancholy is not merely cyclical as is the case in the manic-depressive psychoses. It is not a simple reversion to the previous state of desolation. Ideally, believers now possess novel leverage in the struggle against despair. In Methodist terms, they have recourse to the witness of pardon. To phrase this in a psychoanalytic manner, the emotional and cognitive residues of the conversion ecstasy, the memory of the definitive instant in which it occurred, and its undeniable aftereffects, serve as transitional objects which further empower the therapeutic alliance, thus ensuring that the outcome will be psychologically productive. According to Horton (1973, 1974), unitive ecstasies, or mystical states of consciousness, conform to Winnicott's notion of transitional phenomena. Horton reviews several case histories of severely depressed patients who were suicidal. In each instance, self-destructive behavior commenced after the loss of a symbiotic attachment. Following either psychedelically induced or spontaneously occurring mystical experiences, these individuals' suicidal activities were given up. Horton makes no mention of the role of ego ideals. Instead, he adhered to the then-common psychoanalytic view that varieties of mystical unity are adaptive regressions to primary narcissism: "residues of primary narcissism may represent the human being's last refuge in life's storms...one alternative to suicide may be the mystical state" (1973, p. 296). He claims that in their capacity as transitional phenomena, mystical experiences can be reliably soothing and provide a holding space for maturational growth.

The current round of sorrow is regarded by Wesley as a further refinement of Christian character, a fiery trial that brings forth "peaceable fruit" (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 200).
In psychological terms, this refinement is consistent with maturationally adaptive ego structures that not only enhance impulse control - a further mastery of aggression, anxiety and grief - but are also consonant with superego directives. The establishment of these superego syntonic structures in the ego promotes a more constant degree of acceptance by the ego ideal, which, in turn, leads to object constancy, or, as Wesley puts it, an abiding or uninterrupted sense of pardon (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, pp. 312-313). Let us turn to Wesley’s writings in order to examine more closely this particular work of mourning.

In his elucidation of the *Sermon on the Mount*, Wesley gives an extended discussion of the dual periods of inflation and mourning which typically follow the new birth. In essence, when believers receive the witness of pardon, their conviction of inbred sin grows “deeper and deeper everyday” (Wesley, 1984-87, 1: p. 482). Because “the sin which still remains in one’s heart is no longer imputed to one’s condemnation”, forgiveness serves as the very vehicle through which repentance, or self-knowledge, becomes even more profound.

The more we grow in grace the more do we see of the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ... the more do we discern of our alienation from God, of the enmity that is in our carnal mind, and the necessity of our being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness (1: p. 482-83).

A new believer, however, has “scarce any conception of this...” (1: p.483).

Sin is so utterly bruised beneath his feet that he can scarcely believe it remaineth in him. Even temptation is silenced and speaks not again; it cannot approach, but stands afar off. He is borne aloft on the chariots of joy and love; he soars ‘as upon the wings of an eagle’. *But our Lord well knew that this triumphant state does not often continue long. He therefore presently subjoins, ‘Blessed are those who mourn; for they shall be comforted’* (Emphasis added; 1: p. 483).

Now a dark night ensues, and one who was so recently enamored of the
immediate presence of God loses “the joy of his countenance” (I: p. 485) and mourns in his absence.

But [God] now ‘hides his face, and they are troubled’; they cannot see him through the dark cloud. But they see temptation and sin - which they fondly supposed were gone never to return - arising again, following after them amain, and holding them on every side. It is not strange if their soul is now disquieted within them, if trouble and heaviness take hold upon them. Nor will their great enemy fail to improve the occasion; to ask, ‘Where is now thy God? Where is now the blessedness whereof thou spakest? The beginning of the kingdom of heaven? Yea, hath God said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee?” Surely God hath not said it. It was only a dream, a mere delusion, a creature of thy own imagination. If thy sins are forgiven why are thou thus? Can a pardoned sinner be thus unholy?’ And if then, instead of immediately crying to God, they reason with him that is wiser than they, they will be in heaviness indeed, in sorrow of heart, in anguish not to be expressed (I: p. 484).

The decline of the sense of presence occurs in unison with the resumption of an awareness of sin and temptation. In the foregoing passage, Wesley is quick to focus upon the temptation to doubt, a state of mind which is personified in demonic terms and elsewhere portrayed as Satan’s “fiery darts” (II: p. 212). The waning of the initial state of exaltation and the disappointing resurgence of “sin”, of improper affects, impulses and ideas, all of which were believed to have been overcome, cause believers to be dubious of their spiritual status and to question whether they had been deluded in thinking they were actually justified. “Is it possible”, they are made to ask, “that one who is pardoned can be so bereft of God and so assailed by temptation?” Wesley soundly advises believers to refrain from “reasoning with the Devil”. In other words, he understood that to engage in an obsessional debate would only exacerbate their anguish. Instead of invoking the castigations of the bad parental introject (e.g. “you are not pardoned”), Wesley again recommends a turn towards the therapeutic alliance: do not reason but “cry” to God. The effort to endure the frustrations and anxieties that are attendant on the apprehension of sin, as well as the acute feelings of loss, ultimately lead to spiritual gain: “[they] bringeth forth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby” (I: p. 485).
‘Blessed’ therefore ‘are they that’ thus ‘mourn’ if they ‘tarry the Lord’s leisure’, and suffer not themselves to be turned out of the way by the miserable comforts of the world; if they resolutely reject all the comforts of sin, of folly, and vanity; all the idle diversions and amusements of the world, all the pleasures which ‘perish in the using’, and which only tend to benumb and stupefy the soul, that it may neither be sensible of itself nor God. Blessed are they who ‘follow on to know the Lord’, and steadily refuse all other comfort. They shall be comforted by the consolations of his Spirit, by a fresh manifestation of his love: by such a witness of his accepting them in the Beloved as shall never more be taken away from them. This ‘full assurance of faith’ swallows up all doubt, as well as all tormenting fear, God now giving them a sure hope of an enduring substance and ‘strong consolation through grace’ (I. p. 485).

In steadfastly refusing to mollify the depression by turning to the “comforts of the world...of sin”, that is, by refraining to “rebel”, or act out the underlying aggression which lies at the root of the melancholy and doubt, one is blessed by the return of the comforter, the witness of pardon and acceptance. Wesley holds that at this juncture the manifestation of good conscience becomes an abiding disposition: it “shall never more be taken away from them”. Thus, in this ideal developmental sequence, as one prevails through the depression, the equivalent of object constancy is achieved with respect to the positive superego (cf. McDevitt and Mahler, 1989). Forgiveness, or self-acceptance, becomes essentially permanent, in spite of the persistence of psychic conflict and ambivalence. As we shall see in the following chapters, it is for this reason that one can now begin to engage in sustained introspective meditation without the immediate threat of incurring a debilitating depression or an anxiety attack.

Wesley continues to provide material that is consistent with the idea that the post-conversion depression leads to a further consolidation of the positive superego. Firstly, after the depression passes, another kind of mourning which existed previously, now comes to the fore. Concern for the self in relation to God’s judgment is replaced by concern for the welfare of others.
But although this mourning is at an end, is lost in holy joy, by the return of the Comforter, yet is there another, and a blessed mourning it is, which abides in the children of God. They still mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: they 'weep with them that weep'. They weep with them that weep not for themselves, for the sinners against their own souls. They mourn for the weakness and unfaithfulness of those that are in some measure saved from their sins (I: p. 486).

Secondly, the recovery of the witness promotes "meekness", a term which, as seen in the previous chapter, refers to self-composure and equanimity, the ability to regulate and temper one's emotions. Christian meekness "keeps clear of every extreme...it balance[s] the affections" (I: p. 489); it is a "due composure of mind...a calm acquiescence in whatsoever is [God's] will concerning us".

When we consider it more strictly with regard to ourselves we style it patience or contentedness. When it is exerted toward other men then it is mildness to the good and gentleness to the evil (I: p. 490).

In the same way that the values and the goal orientation of the ego ideal provides a direction for sexual and aggressive drives (Lederer, 1964, p. 28), thus playing a significant role in the process of sublimation, the meek do not "extinguish" their passions, but rather employ them towards "wise" and "noble" ends (Wesley 1984-87, I: p. 490). Reminiscent of the "neutralization" metaphor in ego psychology, the idea that sublimation occurs via the "confluence of sexual and aggressive drives" (Giovacchini, 1987, p. 278), Wesley holds that when hate, anger and fear are "regulated by faith and love", they can be usefully engaged against sin.

The emergence of maturational structures in the ego is associated with an increased ability to withstand the temptations that ensue during the second dark night. Wesley provides a general overview of this process in his sermon On Patience.

...yet we shall surely 'fall into divers temptations' - temptations innumerable as the stars of heaven, and those varied and complicated a thousand ways. But instead of counting this as a loss, as unbelievers do, 'count it all joy; knowing that the trial of your faith', even when it is 'tried as by fire', 'worketh patience'. But 'let patience have its perfect work, and ye shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing'...[patience] is a
gracious temper wrought in the heart of a believer by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God, in the manner and for the time that pleases him (1984-87, III: p. 171).

Patience, or impulse control, is a product of the “middle way”.

We thereby hold the middle way, neither... ‘despising’ our sufferings, ‘making little’ of them, passing over them lightly, as if they were owing to chance, or second causes; nor, on the other hand,...affected too much, unnerved, dissolved, sinking under them. We may observe, the proper object of patience is suffering, either in body or mind...The patient believer is preserved from falling into either of these extremes by considering who is the Author of all his suffering, even God his Father (III: pp. 171-172).

Temptation must be endured lucidly and calmly in order for it to bear fruit. In this sense, the middle way describes a position between the manic denial of psychic pain and depressive breakdown. It is interesting that in the previous sermon of this series (III: p. 158), Wesley cites I Corinthians 10:13: “[God] will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”. In essence, this view coincides with a fundamental psychoanalytic assumption that is native to classical theory, and runs through ego as well as self psychology - the idea that tolerable doses of frustration catalyze the growth of psychic structures. In turn, the “work of patience” promotes meekness, as well as “peace - a sweet tranquillity of mind” (III: p. 172). Moreover, “this peace”, Wesley writes, “often rises into joy...triumph and exaltation”, as well as courage, zeal and activity (III: p. 173-174). Thus, the establishment of structures which bolster impulse control ensures that the ego will be even better equipped to conform to the standards of the ego ideal. The work of patience - the ability to bear pain and frustration, to both soothe and enliven the self - points to an intensification of the positive superego in response to what we may deem the “rehabilitation” of the ego. In fact, the increasing durability or permanence of these emerging ego structures, what Wesley deems the “perfect work” of patience (I: p.
173), is proportionally related to the degree of superego object constancy, that is, the constancy of self-esteem via the ego ideal’s conferral of acceptance.

These dynamics, all of which underlie the attainment of an uninterrupted sense of pardon, parallel the development of “superego autonomy” at the close of the oedipal phase. In the successful working through of the oedipal dilemma, the child must also relinquish grandiosity and learn to tolerate frustration, aggression and loss. As Jacobson shows, one of the most important outcomes of this process is “a more enduring and stable libidinal cathexis” of the self-representation (1964, p. 132). A high level of self-esteem, now regulated internally by the harmonious relations between the ego and the ego ideal, is coupled by the stabilization of a basic mood, a “limited margin” of affective vacillations which are “apt to withstand to some extent psychic or even physical injuries to the self” (p. 132). For Jacobson, this is a “safety device of the highest order” in that it protects the child from dangerous inner and outer stimuli, as well as from narcissistic harm (p. 133). Analogously, in Wesley’s developmental model, the previous vacillations between inflation and melancholy are replaced by emotional equilibrium (i.e., meekness). Here, Jacobson’s “stabilization of a basic mood” corresponds to the continual witness of the Holy Sprit, the abiding sense of good conscience. This is the “safety device”, so to speak, which facilitates systematic introspection.

Wesley himself seems to have intuited the spiritual equivalent of object constancy, and its role in the vicissitudes of depression, when he differentiated between two distinct kinds of melancholy. “Darkness”, the more dire form of the two, is principally defined as a complete loss of faith. In this state believers, “come into a ‘waste land and howling desert’, where they are variously tempted and tormented” (1984-87, II: p. 205). He points out that some have deemed this “a wilderness state”, “in allusion to the case of the Israelites...” (II: p. 205). As Wesley’s description indicates, darkness represents an entire obliteration of the ego enhancing properties of the unitive ideal.
They that are ‘in the wilderness’ have not now that divine ‘evidence’, that satisfactory ‘conviction of things not seen’, which they once enjoyed. They have not now that inward demonstration of the Spirit which before enabled each of them to say, ‘The life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me’. The light of heaven does not now ‘shine in their hearts’, neither do they ‘see him that is invisible’; but darkness is again on the face of their souls, and blindness on the eyes of their understanding. The Spirit no longer ‘witnesses with their spirits that they are the children of God’...Hence, secondly, proceeds the loss of love...Accordingly they that are deprived of their faith are deprived of the love of God also...And as their love of God is ‘waxed cold’, so is also their love of their neighbor. They have not now that zeal for the soul’s of men, that longing after their welfare, that fervent, restless, active desire of their being reconciled to God...But after a suspense perhaps of many days, anger begins to regain its power. Yea, peevishness and impatience thrust sore at them, that they may fall...In consequence of the loss of faith and love follows, thirdly, loss of joy in the Holy Ghost. For if the loving consciousness of pardon be no more, the joy resulting therefrom cannot remain...With loss of faith and love and joy there is also joined, fourthly, the loss of that peace which once passed all understanding. That sweet tranquillity of mind, that composure of spirit is gone. Painful doubt returns...And these doubts are again joined with servile fear, with that ‘fear’ which ‘hath torment’. We fear the wrath of God, even as before we believed...For loss of peace is accompanied with loss of power...the power over sin (II: pp. 206-208).

In sum, darkness is a result of various kinds of unrepented sin. Consequently, darkness is alleviated by introspection, by a conscious identification and acknowledgment of one’s wrongdoing so that it can be presently corrected and atoned for (II: pp. 208-214). With respect to the “torment” (II: p. 205) that accompanies this loss of faith, Wesley rejects the mystical understanding of the purgative nature of darkness, a view that was advanced, for example, by his former spiritual mentor, William Law (II: p. 205, see footnote 121). Wesley writes,

‘But is not darkness much more profitable for the soul than light? Is not the work of God in the heart most swiftly and effectually carried on during a state of inward suffering? Is not a believer more swiftly and thoroughly purified by sorrow than by joy? By anguish and pain and distress and spiritual martyrdoms than by continual peace?’ So the mystics teach; so it is written in their books - but not in the oracles of God. The Scripture
nowhere says that the absence of God best perfects his work in the heart! Rather his presence, and a clear communion with the Father and the Son...Joy in the Holy Ghost will far more effectually purify the soul than the want of that joy; and the peace of God is the best means of refining the soul from the dross of earthly affections (II: pp. 219-220).

One is saved not by “despair” and “unbelief”, but by “faith” and “hope” (II: p. 220). Wesley’s polemic underscores the fundamental notion that psychic integration is advanced by an identification with the positive object representations that constitute the ego ideal, rather than those associated with the punitive introject. What is more, his whole discourse on darkness valorizes personal responsibility, a critical ingredient which he regarded as conspicuously absent in the mystical rationale. Because the “most usual cause of inward darkness is sin of some kind or another”, Wesley logically concludes that God “never deserts us...it is we only who desert him” (II: p.208).

In contrast to darkness, “heaviness”, the other species of melancholy, is characterized by a greater degree of object constancy. “Darkness”, Wesley states, “is one thing; heaviness is another” (II: p. 222). The crucial distinction resides in the fact that the latter does not eventuate in a loss of faith. Metaphorically, instead of impenetrable darkness, Wesley speaks of the partial opacity of dark clouds, a temporary obscurrence or diminution of faith (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 312; Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 484). Again, in terms of the trajectory of his developmental model, it is specifically melancholic heaviness that succeeds the period of inflation. Because of the preservation of faith, or the dynamism of the ego ideal, heaviness may be used to the believer’s advantage in a way that has been delineated above. Wesley’s description of heaviness is predicated on the scriptural authority of St. Paul.

I am in the first place to show what manner of persons those were who to whom the Apostle says, ‘Ye are in heaviness.’ And, first, it is beyond all dispute that they were believers at the time the Apostle thus addressed them. For so he expressly says, verse five: Ye ‘who are kept through the power of God by faith unto salvation’. Again, verse seven, he mentions ‘the trial of their faith, much more precious than that of gold which perisheth’...Neither did their heaviness destroy their peace, the peace that
passeth all understanding, which is inseparable from true, living faith... The persons to whom the Apostle here speaks were also full of a living hope... So that notwithstanding their heaviness they still retained an hope full of immortality... Their heaviness therefore was not only consistent with living hope, but also with 'joy unspeakable'. At the same time they were thus heavy they nevertheless rejoiced with 'joy full of glory'.

In the midst of their heaviness they likewise still enjoyed the love of God which had been shed abroad in their hearts... They retained the same power over sin. They were still 'kept' from this 'by the power of God'. They were 'obedient children'. It did in no way impair, much less destroy, any part of the work of God in their hearts (II: pp. 223-224).

Darkness proper is the result of outward sin: it represents the onset of a bad conscience which ensues in response to deeds actually committed. Heaviness, on the other hand, is caused by temptations which, at most, create distressing effects by precipitating a depression. Although temptations present a specific intention or desire for action, the believer possesses enough faith to refrain from committing them. The restraint bestowed upon those undergoing heaviness, the willfulness that is deemed "power over sin", is rooted in the preservation of faith.

Thus, to return to the idea that the depression which succeeds the period of inflation engenders both ego structures and a further consolidation of the positive superego, we now find that the process is somewhat more complex than I have previously indicated. There is yet another variable which must be added to our understanding. In the ideal scenario that Wesley describes, the unitive ecstasy - or, to be precise, *ecstasies* - which mark an individual's justifying conversion provide a provisional degree of object constancy which is subsequently "exercised", and thereby increased during the "fiery trial". I have already alluded to this idea when I spoke of the memories and aftereffects of the conversion experience as transitional objects that contribute to a productive outcome.

In order to illustrate this process, I would like to return to a set of data already adduced in the previous chapter. Richard Moss was justified during a service at Short's
Gardens. Closing his eyes in the midst of prayer, he beheld Christ hanging on the cross. At this instant, Moss' "burden dropt off" and his "fears and doubts and sense of guilt vanished away" (Arminian Magazine, 1798, p. 53). He was then "filled with such a love to God, and such joy as cannot be uttered". Moss entered into a brief period of inflation characterized by the immediate sense of presence and the conviction that he was now sanctified. "For three days I walked as one out of the body, in the broad light of God's countenance. And then I said in my heart, 'I shall never be moved: Neither shall I see war any more'" (p. 53). His elation, however, was terminated abruptly.

But when I waked in the fourth morning, all was dark. My comfort and my God were gone. I had no fear of death or hell; and I had continual power over all outward sin as indeed I had when I first tasted that God was Love at the Foundery.) But I could not see God; I could not see Christ: and therefore I was in sorrow and heaviness (p. 53).

At the start of the passage, Moss states that "all was dark". However, the way in which he describes his state of mind during this early phase of the depression clearly coincides with heaviness, a term which he then uses to conclude the extract. Moss complains of a "loss of comfort" which accompanies the sudden disappearance of the sense of presence. More importantly, we see that a provisional degree of object constancy is retained. He continues to be free of the fear of "death and hell" and maintains "power over all outward sin". Indeed, Moss indicates that this power, or, impulse control, was established during an ecstasy which occurred at the Foundery and preceded his more recent justifying vision. In that episode, the first in a series of ecstatic interludes, Moss was initially enraptured by Wesley's captivating presence (p. 7). He subsequently experienced an intense happiness and an affection which grew to encompass the entire entourage of preachers, as well all those in attendance at the service. Moss responds to his current feelings of "sorrow and heaviness" by trying "every means of recovering the Light" (p. 53).
I poured out my soul in prayer. I read and heard God’s Word at every opportunity. But still I could not find God. Then I doubted, whether my sins were forgiven or no, altho’ I did not dare to deny it. Then I thought, it might help me to join with the children of God. So, on Mr. Wright’s recommendation, I was admitted into the Society (p. 53)

Even as he exercises his faith through prayer and scripture, and dutifully enlists as a member of the Methodist society, Moss’ heaviness takes an incremental turn for the worse when he begins to doubt whether his sins were really forgiven. This prompts him to engage in ritual mourning, or, more precisely, masochistically exaggerated fasting.

I resolved to leave nothing undone that was in my power. I used all the ordinances of God. I never ate a full meal, so that I was hungry from the beginning of the week to the end. From Thursday noon till Saturday noon, I tasted no food at all. Insomuch, that I was quite worn away, and grown so weak, that I could scarcely walk (p. 53).

The strain of Moss’ unconscious aggression is now intensified to such a degree that his frustration threatens to radically undo the diminishing constancy of the ideal.

All this time I was pressed down to earth, on the one hand, by a sense of the absence of divine comfort, and on the other, by a sense of my inward sins and temptations of every kind. I could not meditate on God, as in times past. I could not keep my heart fixed in prayer. I could not love God. I could not love my neighbor. I had lost every good temper. I felt peevishness and discontent. I wished I never had been born or, that my soul and body might die together. I was weary of life, and would have starved myself to death; only for offending God. For the thought of this I could less bear than any other. I had rather have suffered all things, even to eternity, than to commit sin, or omit any the least outward duty (p. 54).

During this time, when Moss attempted to pray, his resistances would intervene and manifest as a sense of demonic presence.

It seemed as though the enemy were just by me, ready to swallow me up. Sometimes I imagined he leaped upon my shoulders, till my flesh crept upon my bones. Sometimes when I was in bed he seemed to be upon me, with a vast weight (p. 54).

When measured by Wesley’s criteria, these extracts show that Moss’ heaviness had increasingly given way to darkness, although, strictly speaking, he does not, at any point, backslide into sin. Therefore, although feeble in comparison to his state of mind at
the outset of the depression, he manages to preserve some basic semblance of faith. For example, excruciating ruminations on eternity and the problem of God's existence would eventually drive him to prayer. It was then that he received consolations: "...and therein it pleased the Lord generally to relieve me for the present" (p. 54). Moss' phrasing implies that there was, at very least, one period of relief. He states that he "continued with no settled comfort and peace" (emphasis added; p. 54). His depression finally dissipates while listening to Wesley preach at West-Street. "In the middle of the sermon", he writes, "I felt my soul united to the Lord". At this point, the witness of pardon becomes steadfast.

I had closer communion with him than ever. I found his Spirit witnessing with my spirit, not only that I was a child of God, but that he would depart from me no more, that he would abide with me for ever. All sorrow and doubt and fear fled away. I was filled with light and peace. I had such a solid, settled joy in the Holy Ghost, as I was a stranger to, till that hour. I felt a fuller and stronger love to God than ever, as well as to all mankind. And from that time I never lost for a moment the Light of God's countenance (p. 54).

In the previous chapter, my analysis of these extracts emphasized how a sequence of discrete ecstatic episodes served as a vehicle for the successive emergence and consolidation of a unitive ideal. I would like again to point out how the ecstasies convey a series of abstractions which are increasingly generalized or broadened in their scope of inclusion. In the first instance, Moss' idealization of Wesley is transformed into a love for God, the preachers and the entire congregation. During the third ecstasy, the abstraction becomes, for all intents and purposes, maximally extended: "I felt a fuller and stronger love to God than ever, as well as to all mankind". This marks both the termination of the depression and the attainment of a permanent witness. In effect, even though the pain of Moss' sufferings is depicted as extreme, he manages to exercise his admittedly weakened faith so that, with the help of his resolve and the occasional divine consolation, he retains outward power over sin and consciously endures the vagaries of
temptation - grief, doubt, perplexity and even demonic anxiety. If we are to take him at
his word and assume that, from this point forward, he “never lost the light of God’s
countenance”, we may reasonable conclude that the persecutory nature of his aggression,
plainly exemplified by the horrifying presence of the “enemy”, had been significantly
modified in the process. Moss demonstrates to himself that his love proves stronger than
his hostility, thus divesting it of its fearsome qualities. Returning to Jacobson’s notion of
superego autonomy, which presupposes the development of object constancy, we see that
the limited margin of affective vacillations and the stabilization of a basic mood is
similarly associated with an abstraction, a uniform articulation of inner standards.
Recall that for Moss, the ongoing incubation of a unitive ideal, one that culminates in an
equally generalized moral standard - a love for mankind - appears in the beginning as an
idealization of a single individual. Kernberg, whose formulations build on Jacobson’s
thinking, holds that, in normal development, the depersonification and abstraction of
superego components go hand in hand with the increasing synthesis of self and object
images, which are initially concrete and polarized in terms of good and bad (1966, 1976).
As this process unfolds, libidinal and aggressive drive-affect components are brought
together. Their raw intensity is attenuated into more stable affective schemas and
emotional turbulence decreases. Moss’ faith enables him to tolerate an otherwise
intolerable onslaught of psychic pain, and his patience is rewarded by the toning down of
the archaic character of the bad object representation. The depersonification and
integration of these concrete and polarized objects - the idealization of Wesley versus the
demon who leaps upon his shoulders and makes his skin crawl - culminates in an
abstracted superego value.

**Autobiographical Accounts of Inflation and Depression**

Overall, additional data taken from Methodist autobiographies corroborate the
post-conversion sequence of inflation and depression as spelled out by Wesley. They
also point to certain degrees of variability which again are attributable to differences in
personality. To begin with, we observe that the length of time which ensues between justification and the second depression can be rather brief or considerably protracted. For example, after being justified, Thomas Hanson "could not hold [his] tongue from speaking of the things of God" (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 481). His jubilance, however, was short lived.

A few days after my happy conversion, I felt anger at one who persecuted us. Soon after my peace left me. Then the tempter said "He that is born of God sinneth not. But thou hast sinned: therefore thou art not born of God. Thou hast deceived thyself." I was then a great measure ignorant of his devices: so gave up my shield: and was in the depth of distress, ready to chuse strangling for near two hours (p. 481).

Catherine Corbett, on the other hand, describes an entirely different scenario. She writes, "For two years after [justification], I felt nothing but love; no trial, no temptation, did the adorable Jesus suffer to disturb me, but all were made easy" (Arminian Magazine, 1781, p. 538) It was only when she became convinced that she lacked "full Sanctification" that Corbett reverted to ritual mourning: "And I fought it with all my might, crying day and night, that God would sanctify me wholly" (p. 538).

Various writers offer some explanation of the factors which triggered or precipitated their depression. For example, we would expect that the proscribed expectation of a second depression, reinforced by the observation of fellow peers and class members who assiduously monitored and encouraged each other's spiritual progress, would itself function as a suggestive catalyst. This process of mutual identification is confirmed in Thomas Mitchell's narrative. Following his conversion, Wesley placed Mitchell and several others into a class. All of Mitchell's companions eventually "fell back" (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 315). "Before this", he writes, "I thought my hill was so strong, that I could never be moved" (p. 315)

But seeing so many fall into sin, I began to see danger in my way. I began to feel an evil heart of unbelief, and was fully convinced, that there must be a farther change in my heart, before I could be established in grace.
Afterward I removed to Kighley, and had many opportunities of hearing, and profiting by Mr. Grimshaw. But feeling my corruptions, with strong temptations, I fell into great doubtings. I was almost in despair, full of unbelief. I could scarce pray at all. I was in this state near half a year, finding no comfort in anything (pp. 315-316).

The influence of suggestion and identification is also apparent in John Atlay’s narrative. For three weeks after his justification, Atlay was “unspeakably happy in God, and thoroughly devoted to him” (Arminian Magazine, 1778, p. 579) His soul was “All Joy, Praise and Prayer, without intermission” (p. 579). Atlay’s sister then informed him of a “much esteemed” (p. 579) friend who had recently lost his joy. Atlay responds by drawing an analogy between the inflation-depression pattern, and Christ’s temptation on the Mount, an event which followed his baptism in the spirit: “Ah, poor Johnny! the devil has deceived, as he has many. He has taken him up to the Mount; but he will throw him down, and not leave a whole bone in him” (p. 579). Furthermore, Atlay plainly identifies with his friend’s misfortune.

...immediately I was struck with Horror: I thought, “He is a better judge than me: certainly I am deceived”. I was stripped of all. My Love and Joy were gone, and for some weeks I was in the Blackness of despair; and, for fear of being a stumbling block to others, I should have put an end to my wretched Life (p. 579).

We have just seen that Thomas Hanson lost his peace when he became aware of his anger. This kind of trigger is fairly typical. A uniquely vivid example of the eruption of hostility is provided by John Unser. In a letter written to Wesley, Unser reveals that, for approximately two months after receiving justification, he was “full of love to God and Man” (quoted in Rack, 1989, p. 426). Soon after, he became oppressed by feelings of “hatred”.

the scene is quite altered and things has now another face; now all things are past away, behold all things are now become old. But not indeed properly, for I never before felt such a Hell as I now feel. I now am as very a devil as ever was or will be confined in the Everlasting chains of darkness. I now hate God, hate my brother, hate my children, hate all that is good, and what adds much to my sorrow in it, I know God and the
Father and our Lord Jesus Christ love me...I am as proud as Lucifer, as covetous as mammon, as hateful as Beelzebub and as lustful. As for my wife, I take no more notice of her

Than I do of the spider’s web
Swept from the wall by the giddy Maid...

Dr. Sir, what shall I do in this condition? I am just upon the point of breaking off from God, of declaring for the Devil (p. 426).

As indicated earlier, the ecstatic contemplation of unitive ideals is so acutely gratifying that it temporarily obscures the distinction between the potential and actual state of the self. The inflated misconception that one is already fully sanctified typically leads to a decline in “watchfulness”, the self-conscious introspection of impulses and intentions. The lapse in critical self-awareness allows “sinful” inclinations to pass unchecked into consciousness, or they may be expressed unwittingly in certain actions or omissions of duty. Overtime, such cumulative failures of responsibility result in a diminution or a total disappearance of faith. Richard Rodda describes this process in the following extract.

Many times that text ran in my mind, I shall never be moved; the Lord of his goodness hath made my hill so strong. I thought my enemies were all dead, and that my warfare was accomplished. How little did I know at that time of the Christian-Conflict? or the deep import of these words, “unto you is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but to suffer for his sake.”

Through unwatchfulness I fell into levity (a befitting evil) and Satan strove to tear away my shield; but though God suffered him not to do it, yet my joy was greatly damped. My unwatchfulness cost me many an aching heart; and I found I had most need to watch when in company with Professors; where, not suspecting harm, I was often overtaken before I was aware (Arminian Magazine, 1784, p. 353).

John Haime expresses himself similarly.

I was truly free; and had I had any to guide me, I need never more have come into bondage. But I was so ignorant, I thought I should know war no more. I began to be at ease in Sion, and forgot to watch and pray, ‘till God laid his hand upon me again’. I then again went mourning all the day long…” (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 212).
J. B. of St. Hellier’s account of her “conflict”, her struggle to overcome the
temptation to doubt, plainly exemplifies Wesley’s understanding of the “middle way”.
Her faith enables her to remain fully cognizant of anxiety without either succumbing to a
depression, or the urge to seek premature relief through profane distraction.

Tuesday, 16. I was strongly assaulted by the enemy of the soul: but my
faith, instead of being weakened was much confirmed by the conflict.
Thursday 18. He endeavored to make me doubt. I retired to my closet,
and prayed with uncommon ardor: I did not ask to be delivered from the
conflict, but that I might not be overcome by it. While I prayed, I found
great power to resist the enemy; and when the Lord gave the victory, the
joy was inexpressible (Arminian Magazine, 1788, p. 295).

Margaret Jenkins’ experience does not strictly line up with Wesley’s model in
that her depression was staggered. It manifested on two separate occasions after her
conversion. Even so, her narrative, like that of Richard Moss, documents a transition
between periods of emotional turbulence (which follow closely on the heels of an ecstatic
conversion) and the eventual arrival at a more stable emotional disposition. Her inflation
begins at the very moment in which she is ostensibly justified.

I felt myself clean every whit; nor could I make myself sensible that ever I
had sinned...But I forgot I was to come daily, and wash in the fountain
open for sin and uncleanness. I went on, as if I had Grace enough to carry
me to my journey’s end. So foolish and ignorant was I! (Arminian
Magazine, 1778, p. 228).

Jenkins admits that her ensuing neglect of watchfulness and prayer was met with
a depression and a renewed sense of sinfulness.

But now the Lord shewed what I was by nature, more than ever: so that I
groaned under the intolerable weight of inbred Sin; and I had many a dry
and barren Day; I believe because I did not watch unto prayer (p.
228-229).

At a time when she was all but ready to “give up her confidence” (p. 229) Jenkins
is “rejuvenated” by an ecstatic awareness of God’s omnipresence.
But it was not long, before I was again surprised, as it were, with a fresh Sense of his love, and a clear sight of the way I should walk in...I had such a clam Peace, and such an inward intimate Communion with the Lord, that when I sat down to work, I seemed to be compassed about with the immediate Presence of God: so that I sometimes cried out, “I am a child of a hundred years old!” The Lord now taught me many things, and led me by a way I had not known (p. 229).

The first round of depression appears to have facilitated some development in terms of the positive superego. The abstraction of omnipresence is combined with moral directives which manifest, according to her phrasing, as autonomous inspirations: “[I had] a clear sight of the way I should walk in...The Lord now taught me many things, and led me by a way I had not known”. In time, however, Jenkins falls prey to another depression whose character matches Wesley’s description of heaviness.

The following winter, I fell into grievous distress of Soul, that I cannot describe; neither did anyone I conversed with, understand me. I was not in Doubt or Fear: but the enemy suggested grievous things to me. I find some have been in the same way since. Now I know Satan had me, to sift me as wheat. I prayed to the Lord, that my faith might not fail; and I found myself willing to bear it as long as the Lord would suffer it (p. 229).

The specific nature of the depression is not disclosed. What is clear is that the recent consolidation of her faith gives her enough confidence to withstand the enemy’s “grievous suggestions”. Jenkins is both willing and able to receive, or “bear” her sufferings. In accordance with Wesley’s description of the middle way, Jenkins permits herself to be “sifted as wheat”, but does so without falling into doubt and anxiety. Her calm resignation in the face of temptation leads to a relatively permanent acquisition of the witness. One morning, while listening to a “dear and worthy minister of Christ”, Jenkins has “an immediate sight of [her] savior upon the Cross”.

My soul was directly set at Liberty, and I went away, praising God with an exceeding great joy. I have been many times since under grievous temptations: but never like this, nor my Deliverance ever so glorious. The more I see of Jesus’ Love, the more I see of my own vileness: so that I can say, “Lord thy compassion never fails, and therefore I am not in Hell!” (p. 229).
Overall, Jenkins’ conversion narrative departs from the Wesleyan norm in at least two ways. Firstly, as mentioned, she experiences two bouts of depression before her sense of forgiveness becomes abiding. Secondly, the extracts suggest that her initial conversion and post-conversion ecstasies did not specifically articulate the witness of pardon until she finally beheld the vision of the crucified savior - a vision regularly associated with justification. The previous sanctification imagery connected to her inflation naturally convinced her that the witness had already been given implicitly. Jenkins’ experience thus corresponds to what I have previously referred to as an “incomplete manifestation of the spirit”. This, along with the double sequence of depression, indicates that some form of resistance was at work in the process. These idiosyncratic qualifications aside, Jenkins’ struggle with temptation eventually culminates in the doctrinally prescribed outcome. From here on in, she possesses a first-hand conviction that the Lord’s compassion “never fails”. Although, from time to time, she continued to be “grievously tempted”, these trials were never as overwhelming as those which she had presently undergone. The gradual refinement and stabilization of her emotions, that is, the elimination of the affective swings which typically occur after conversion, is accompanied by another phenomena associated with the positive superego: a greater capacity for ambivalence. After her depressions subsided, she was able to apprehend her own “vileness”, or sin, without loosing sight of the love of Jesus. Indeed, she could now say, “Lord, thy Compassion never fails, and therefore I am not in Hell!”

Theoretic Summary

The ecstasies which marked Methodist justification may be regarded as sublimations of previously inaccessible representations of positive parental images which manifested in the form of abstract ideals. Both the exhilaration of re-establishing a conscious rapport with these deeply moving images, and the enormous relief of temporarily mastering both the persecutory and depressive anxieties of the desolation phase, led the newly converted to overestimate their spiritual status. The intoxicating
apprehension of religious ideals created the illusion that the self had been permanently altered in their image, and that no further discrepancy remained between the ego and the ego ideal. Wesley understood this inflation as a confusion between justification and the new birth, and entire sanctification. The illusion was fostered by the transient disappearance of temptation. Furthermore, Methodist autobiographies reveal that post-conversion inflation was commonly associated with certain "manic" trends including loss of sleep and appetite, the exaggerated urgency of the need to convert others, and the naive over-estimation of the willingness of others to be persuaded.

The characteristics of inflation, which I have designated as "unitive distortions", are also indicative of a defense against an inevitable depression or deflation. The techniques of ritual mourning utilized during the repentance phase, served to bring an unconscious conflict into conscious awareness. The positive pole of the split imago became the raw material for the formulation of ideals, while the negative pole of representations, those fraught with the painful legacy of parental authoritarianism, bereavement and judgment fear, were temporarily split off from awareness. In most instances, it was only a matter of time before their influence was re-asserted in the form of a renewed depression. Wesley, however, understood that this depression allowed believers to exercise their faith, therefore providing yet another opportunity for spiritual growth.

By recourse to the aspects of faith that remained dimly accessible throughout the period of heaviness (i.e., the ego enhancing facets of the ego-ideal), believers were enabled to strengthen certain facets of their egos. In maintaining what Wesley deemed "the middle way", a state of relatively poised equanimity between emotional denial and depressive breakdown, and in refusing to mollify the depression by turning to profane distractions, believers acquired new abilities in the area of impulse control. An internal dialectic came into play. The creation of structures which coincided with the imperatives of the ego ideal in turn garnered a constant sense of superego approval, which in
theological terms is the permanent witness of pardon. The ego, in actively demonstrating its trustworthiness to its ideals (a procedure assisted by the fading allure of those very ideals), was rewarded by a reciprocal conviction in the goodness and reliability of the superego. Thus, the various psychic gains which were made by undergoing the trial of heaviness - the permanency of the witness and a strengthening of the fruits (the balancing of the affections, the composure of mind, etc.) - resulted in a further mitigation of the split imago, a decrease of ambivalence, doubt, frustration and anger.
In 1913, Poincare outlined four stages of the creative process which he deemed investigation, impasse, illumination, and verification (In Fauteux, 1994, p. 230). Incorporating a dialectic between conscious and unconscious forms of mental activity, this sequence became a paradigm for depth psychological approaches to the problem of inspiration. A decade later, Wallas (1926), who introduced what is perhaps the best known stage model of creativity, identified four specific phases similar to the classifications listed by his predecessor: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. During preparation, a problem is identified and the conscious mind garners as much material as possible to find a solution. When a satisfactory answer can not be formulated, current hypotheses are pushed to a limit until their possibilities are exhausted, and the problem is temporarily put aside. The ideas are then incubated outside of awareness, where a novel solution is developed and passively revealed to consciousness in a moment of illumination. When the idea initially appears, it is accompanied by an enthusiastic feeling of certainty. In the final phase of verification, consciousness resumes an active role: "...the sense of certainty yields to critical analysis and the inspirations are re-examined, tested, and revised, crafted, or otherwise employed in conscious reasoning and behavior" (Merkur, 1999b, pp. 147-148).

Wallas' model essentially pertained to intellectual problems. Influenced in part by James' work on the relation between religious illuminations and subconscious activity, Batson and Ventis (1982) argue that Wallas' stages apply equally well to the resolution of personal and existential problems. Focusing primarily on the rearrangement of cognitive representations of reality, the former transformed the latter's categories into the following: existential crisis, self-surrender, new vision, and new life. Batson's and Ventis' commentary on the new life is of particular interest. They write, "Analogous to
Wallas' verification stage, a dramatic shift in reality should work to produce a dramatic shift in behavior as well. In theological terms, "revelation should lead to sanctification" (emphasis added; p. 85).

Fauteux's study of the reparative nature of unitive states (1994) advances the same view. The work relies heavily on Kris' notion of "regression in the service of the ego" (1952) which, in turn, is also indebted to Wallas' model. In short, Kris claimed that in healthy instances of creativity, the ego voluntarily regresses so that secondary process thinking may be imaginatively reconfigured by the non-rational play of the primary process. Kris distinguished two stages of creativity: inspiration and elaboration. With respect to the latter, Fauteux writes,

The inspiration stage of creativity is prevented from disintegrating into childish fixation or fear through the artist's expression of that which was inspirational. Kris called this the "elaboration" stage of creativity... Through expressing or elaborating what inspired her, the artist lifts what she experienced out of the precarious unconscious and away from the fixation or psychosis. She expresses her experience in a particular medium, and in the process gives shape to or "grabs hold of" - rather than feeling overwhelmed by - the possibly disturbing or uncontrollable unconscious processes (p. 1994, 89-90).

Echoing Batson's and Ventis' discussion of the new life, Fauteux underscores the idea that the inspiration phase, which when applied to contemplative practices corresponds to ecstatic illuminations and mystical union, must be actively engaged and systematically elaborated upon in order to be reparative (1994, p. 158-191). The raw materials of the illuminations are subsequently recruited by the reality orientation of the secondary process; their meanings are rationally clarified and differentiated, then finally applied to worldly practice.

All of these variations of Poincare's original categories delineate a fundamental principle already evinced in previous chapters. The revelatory character of conversion ecstasies is not transformative in and of itself (cf. Deikman, 1967). Although it may provide periods of temporary integration (or pseudo-integration, depending upon the
degree of distortion), in most instances, further work is essential if long term psychic change and healing is to occur. Indeed, Starbuck, at the turn of the century, had already stated as much. He portrays conversion as “the opening up of an ideal that has to be actualised - a vivid foretaste of a life that may become one’s own” (emphasis added; 1911, p. 354). “Conversion is most frequently an awakening to some truth; but it is a truth which is yet only perceived and has not yet been worked over into conduct. It remains for the person to make at least a fraction of the ideal a part of himself - to grow towards it” (emphasis added; pp. 363-364). For Starbuck, the intervening translation, or “elaboration” of truth into conduct, constitutes the essence of sanctification.

Again, both Maslow and Merkur insist that peak experiences and self-actualization are independent variables that can be differentiated on the basis of Freud’s distinction between “insight” and “working through”. For Freud, these terms refer primarily to repressed instinctual derivatives stemming from the id. In line with notion that superego materials may also be resisted, Merkur argues that the manifestation of ego ideals during conversion is separate from their prospective integration within the ego, or more specifically, “within the sense of self” (1996a, p. 2).

Maslow portrays these distinctions along phenomenological lines. Peak experiences are “poignant emotional discharges” analogous to “sexual orgasm” (Quoted in Krippner, 1972, p. 113). Characterized by an “autonomic burst”, they are climactic and transient (p. 113), and therefore linked to dramatic emotional shifts: “The ascending to a great height sort of implies the descending into a valley...” (p. 114). In contrast, the “plateau experience” is a “precipitation” of the former. “This type of consciousness has certain elements in common with peak experience - awe, mystery, surprise, and esthetic shock. These elements are present, but are constant rather than climactic” (p. 113). The plateau experience involves a simultaneous recognition of the miraculous and the ordinary - that which is common place becomes “mythic, poetic and symbolic” (p. 113).
However, in contrast to the spontaneous fervor of peak experiences, Plateau experiences are inherently serene, and voluntarily induced.

Another aspect I have noticed is that it's possible to sit and look at something miraculous for an hour and enjoy every second of it. On the other hand, you can't have an hour long orgasm. In this sense, the plateau type of experience is better. It has a great advantage, so to speak, over the climactic, the orgasm, the peak (p. 114).

It is far more voluntary than peak experience are. One can learn to see in this Unitive way almost at will. It then becomes a witnessing, an appreciating, what one might call a serene cognitive blissfulness... (Maslow, 1970, p. xiv).

Pahnke suggests that the plateau experience is an outcome of personal growth, while the peak experience serves “as an opener” (Quoted in Krippner, 1972, p. 118). This view is shared by Maslow.

A transient glimpse is certainly possible in the peak-experiences... to take up residence on the high plateau of unitive consciousness, that is another matter altogether. That tends to be a lifelong effort... The “spiritual disciplines”, both the classical ones and the new ones that keep on being discovered these days, all take time, work, discipline, study, commitment (Maslow, 1970, p. xvi).

The plateau experience represents “the way the world looks if the mystic experience really takes” (Quoted in Krippner, 1972, p. 115). All of the features which Maslow places at the forefront - sustained effort, personal growth, volition, calm, the simultaneous perception of the sacred and the ordinary (cf. Cleary and Shapiro, 1995) - parallel the notion that ecstatic insights have, overtime, become incorporated into the ego. They are harmonized both in terms of perception (i.e., reality testing) and will.

Maslow states,

If your mystical experience changes your life, you go about your business as the great mystics did. For example, the great saints could have mystical revelations, but also could run a monastery. You can run a grocery store and pay the bills, but still carry on this sense of witnessing the world in the way you did in the great moments of mystic perception (Quoted in Krippner, 1972, pp. 115-116).
As we shall see, the ability to "carry on this sense of witnessing" while participating in worldly endeavors, is an exact description of "the practice of the presence", the perfection of which Wesley regarded as the crux of sanctification. In this state, one's everyday activities do not obscure or "dissipate" (1984-87, III: pp. 117-125) the illumination, but, on the contrary, become an inherent part of its expression. For Wesley, the practice of the presence, a discursive meditation which requires one to imaginatively maintain a sense of God's immediate proximity in all things, is key to the final phase of spiritual development. *It may be likened to the elaboration, or working through stage of the creativity sequence.* Indeed, all of the discreet stages in Wesley's model may be, more or less, reasonably aligned with those identified by Batson and Ventis. The desolation phase, which comes to a decisive close when, in spite of their aggression and anxiety, individuals can give themselves over to God, subsumes both categories of "existential crisis" and "self-surrender". The passive emergence of unitive ideals during justification coincides with "new vision" (e.g., the creative solution), while the practice of the presence, in combination with another type of meditation - introspective self-examination, or "watching" - corresponds to "new life".

In the Wesleyan tradition, sanctification entails the elimination, or the working through of "sinful" desires fueled by aggression and narcissistic pride. They are replaced by an altruistic sensibility, which, when actively pursued and realized in daily practice, instills a deep feeling of satisfaction. In short, all of the psychic benefits that are gleaned by the ego's actual conformity to a set moral standards is so much more emotionally gratifying than the repetitive frustrations and painful self-recriminations that stem from a persistently conflicted attachment to punitive objects. It is primarily through the systematic use of the practice of the presence and introspection, two techniques which are bound to an all-inclusive style of personal conduct, that the final phase of coming to grips with the modal traumas of childhood is brought to bear.
But how exactly is this procedure effected? We are already familiar with the axiomatic notion that peak experiences associated with conversion are subsequently used to achieve further spiritual growth. Thus Wesley writes, "It is plain, all these fruits of love are means of increasing the love from which they spring; and of consequence they increase our happiness in the same proportion" (1984-87, III: p. 190). Similarly, Maddox's study of Wesleyan theology emphasizes the co-operant nature of grace, or the dialectic between the passive reception of the spirit and active responsibility on the part of the believer.

Another way that Wesley expressed his conviction of the vital contribution of tempers to actions was that holiness must become a "habitual disposition of the heart" if it is to be manifest in our lives. Such language warrants the recent claim of several Wesley scholars that his model of Christian life is best portrayed in terms of a "character ethic" or "virtue ethic", where meaningful moral actions are grounded in nurtured inclinations (character dispositions). The crucial implication of this claim is that Wesley's "holy tempers" would not simply be infused by God's sanctifying grace in instantaneous completeness; they would be developing realities, strengthened and shaped by our responsible participation in the empowering grace of God. The dimension of a gradual "growth in grace" would be integral to sanctification (emphasis added; 1994, p. 179).

In terms of unitive thinking, so central to the experience of grace, we find that Fauteux's understanding of the transformative potential of mystical states, and the way they are utilized to overcome "developmental failures", is extremely germane to the Methodist material. Even though, in one sense, his model is theoretically questionable (i.e., he continues to adhere to an outmoded ego-psychological view of mysticism as a regression to an early period of symbiotic unity between infant and mother), Fauteux's explanation of the therapeutic dimension of unitive experience is insightful. Ecstatic unity is viewed in Winnicotian terms as a "holding environment" (Winnicot, 1971, p. 238) which restores basic trust. Union with God, whose beneficence is felt to be abiding and reliable, "makes the person feel, as in the holding environment of infancy, that when
frustrations and unanticipated problems arise, he can express the anxiety and previously forbidden feelings, and God will not vanish” (Fauteux, 1994, p. 144). In other words, as a safe maternal space, symbiosis is a vehicle through which repression is diminished and “pernicious impulses” can be explored. Like Rammage on Methodist conversion (1967, p. 234), Fauteux makes use of a clinical analogy. He argues that the establishment of a symbiotic “self-object” relationship with the therapist produces sufficient courage to confront and resolve “repressed conflicts and hidden needs” (1994, p. 147). This is ensured by the assurance that the therapist “will not judge, condemn, and especially not abandon [the patient] for expressing the secret feelings...he previously resisted”. In much the same way, the individual’s psychic representation of God as an object of transference (cf. Rizzuto, 1979, p. 87-173), helps “rid the ego of its defensive resistance to unconscious processes” (Fauteux, 1994, p. 147). Interestingly, Fauteux points out that even Freud acknowledged a connection between mystical practices and psychoanalytic technique:

Certain practices of the mystics may succeed in unsettling the normal relations between the different regions of the mind, so that, for example, the perceptual system becomes able to grasp the relations in the deeper layer of the ego and in the id which would otherwise be inaccessible to it...we must admit that the therapeutic efforts of psychoanalyses have chosen much the same method of approach (quoted in Fauteux, pp. 147-148).

On the one hand, Fauteux’s argument dovetails rather elegantly with Wesley’s portrayal of the final stage of spiritual maturation. The latter states that the permanence of the witness is the very condition through which believers are enabled to engage in an exercise that is, for all intents and purposes, equivalent to a process of dynamic uncovery, or, as Freud puts it, grasping “the relations in the deeper layer of the unconscious...”. The durability of pardon, or the individual’s conviction that God will not condemn and abandon, promotes a further discovery of heretofore inaccessible materials. Recall that,
for Wesley, the receiving of the "continual witness" of pardon convinces believers that "they are the children of God" (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 313).

Then they are indeed meek and gentle and teachable, even as a little child. And now first do they see the ground of their heart, which God before would not disclose unto them, lest the soul should fail before him, and the spirit which he had made. Now they see all the hidden abominations there, the depths of pride, self-will, and hell; yet having the witness in themselves: thou art an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ; even in the midst of this fiery trial, which continually heightens both the strong sense they then have of their inability to help themselves and the inexpressible hunger they feel after a full renewal in his image, in righteousness and true holiness (p. 313).

Yet, for all its merits, Fauteux's study lacks any specific data on how the technique of uncovery is actually accomplished. The omission raises a crucial question in that, unlike the clinical situation, the religious object of transference is not a separate person but an internal constituent of the believer's own psyche. An examination of Wesley's treatment of the practice of the presence allows us to fill in this missing gap. Before doing so, however, we need to understand the general characteristics of the technique, and how it is represented by contemplatives outside of the Methodist tradition, all of whose writings predated and thus influenced Wesley.

The Practice of the Presence

The practice of the presence is a meditation technique in which one imaginatively summons a continual sense of God's being in and through all things. It is typically portrayed as a form of "recollection", a "resituating of the self toward God" (Maas, 1990, p. 259). All the disparate strands of events and circumstances are reconceptualized as opportunities for a meaningful and thus, providential dialogue with the divine. The best known treatment of the technique, one which Wesley himself studied and included in his voluminous Christian Library, is entitled The Practice of the Presence of God (1977). This is a fragmentary compilation of letters and other writings by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, a 17th century French Carmelite monk. In it, he portrays the meditation

229
as a "constant conversation" with God (Delaney, 1977, p. 28), an exercise which "permeates" every moment of the day so that "all we do becomes prayer" (Nouwen, 1977, p. 12). The practice is inherently object related in that it promotes an intense attachment to an imaginative and invisible presence.

[Brother Lawrence explained] that we needed only to know God intimately present in us, to address ourselves to Him at every moment, to ask His Aid, to discern His will in doubtful things, and to do well those things we see clearly He is demanding of us, offering them to Him before doing them and giving Him thanks for having done them for Him after we have done them...[Brother Lawrence] found the best way of reaching God was by doing ordinary tasks, which he was obliged to perform under obedience, entirely for the love of God and not for the human attitude toward them (Lawrence of the Resurrection, 1977, pp. 48-49).

To my knowledge, there has been no study of the historical transmission of the practice in major Western traditions. Although, for example, the Carmelites viewed it as an extension of St. Paul's injunction to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5: 17; Maas, 1990, p. 259), there is no solid evidence to suggest that he was actually referring to the same practice which Brother Lawrence, along with the Quietist writers, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Jeremy Taylor and others describe. Therefore, in lieu of a formal genealogy, I have collated materials from a series of texts within the Christian tradition, in order to identify the main phenomenological features of the practice of the presence, and to pinpoint some notable variations in technique.

With the exception of the Quietistic approach, which coupled the practice with "stillness", or the trance based cessation of all activity (cf. Molinos, 1883, p. 43, 106), the majority of writers incorporate the exercise into the bustle of ordinary daily activities. Brother Lawrence writes,

I adored Him as often as I could, keeping my mind in His holy presence and recalling it as often as it wandered...I did this during the day as often as I did it during the formal time specifically set aside for prayer; for at all times, at every hour, at every moment, even in the busiest times of my
work, I banished and put away from my mind everything capable of diverting me from the thought of God (1977, p. 87).

Thus, in as much as the meditation promotes a mild alternate state resembling Maslow’s plateau experience, which is then perpetuated even as one goes about one’s life, the practice of the presence may be classed as a form of reverie. The continued involvement of what Shor refers to as the “basic reality orientation” (1972a; 1972b), of the various core ego functions which, in states of hypnotic trance, are subject to repression, has crucial implications for Wesley’s particular use of the practice. Not only does reverie maintain an object related stance towards the external world, the ego remains free to engage in lucid introspection, a procedure which is essential to Wesley’s working through process.

In virtually all of the treatments which I have surveyed, the authors refer to the gradual refinement, or, to use cognitive terminology, “automatization” of the properly recollected state of mind. In the beginning, the concentrative act of sustaining the sense of presence is staggered and fragmented. Mental distractions interfere with the continuity of attention. Again and again, one must deliberately draw one’s focus back to the exercise. Over time, however, persistence in these efforts is rewarded by a relatively effortless and uninterrupted sense of the presence. This refinement is adduced by Lorenzo Scupoli, a 16th century Italian Priest.

There is yet another form of prayer, which is called standing in the presence of God, when the man who prays is wholly concentrated in his heart and inwardly contemplates God as being present to him and within him...Such a state comes when a man becomes deeply immersed in prayer by word, mind and heart. If a man prays in the right way and for a long time, these states come to him more and more often, and finally this state can become permanent; then it is called walking before God and is constant prayer (emphasis added; quoted in Cohen and Phipps, 1992, p. 10).

The following series of common characteristics demonstrate what all authors regard as the spiritually beneficial effects of the practice. For our purposes, it should be

231
noted that these categories have distinct affinities with functions of the positive superego: self-soothing, self-observation, the capacity to sustain loss and solitude, and the ability to feel gratitude, as well as concern for others. This again has obvious implications for Wesley’s approach, since the practice of the presence leads to a further consolidation of ego ideals. Moreover, Lee and Martin, writing from a self-psychological perspective, state that the practice can provide a wholesome self-object experience which facilitates the growth of self-regulating structures: “...the subjective experience of having a nourishing, sustaining presence ‘inside’ seems to have brought great comfort and been of immeasurable help to countless human beings throughout history” (1991, p. 244). “Such a phrase ‘as the presence of God’”, they continue, “often seen as pious posing and not easily understood by persons in a secular age, seems to have been a religious way of expressing the valuable experience of structuralization” (pp. 244-245).

The exercise is typically seen as a means of calming the mind and centering one’s attention. Jeremy Taylor, the 17th century Anglican divine, states that “it helps to recollection of mind, and refrains the scatterings and looseness of wandering thoughts” (1857, p. 39). This is especially so when the practice becomes automatized. For example, according to Lorenzo Scupoli,

Frequent repetition, becoming established, collects the mind into one, standing in the presence of the Lord. Establishing this order within is accompanied by warmth of heart and by repelling other thoughts, even simple and not only passionate ones (emphasis added; 1963, p. 159).

Invoking the sense of presence presupposes the idea that one is being observed by God. In his spiritual exercises, St. Ignatius, who refers to the practice as the “contemplation to attain love”, provides the following instruction: “Here it is to see myself as standing before God our Lord, and also before the angels and saints, who are interceeding for me” (1992, p. 94). Taylor writes,

...in these and all other actions of our lives we always stand before God, acting, and speaking, and thinking in his presence, and that it matters not
that our conscience is sealed with secrecy, since it lies open to God, it will concern us to behave ourselves carefully, as in the presence of our Judge (1857, pp. 3-4).

Taylor’s extract shows that the fantasy of God’s scrutiny becomes naturally aligned with self-observation and increases critical awareness of one’s actions. Commenting on Brother Lawrence, Maas explains that not only is the “soul’s gaze humbly and trustfully fixed on God”, one also places oneself before the “supremely patient and loving” gaze of the almighty (1990, p. 261). “This meant that nothing [Brother Lawrence] said or did could be separated or hidden from God: conversely, everything he did became part of that Divine-human dialogue” (p. 261). Moreover,

In the case of recollection, it is particularly easy to see how the practice of this prayer...over a period of time would begin to have ethical consequences...Are there things you would do alone that you would definitely not do in the presence of others? What would it mean, practically speaking, to live as if you were perpetually companioned by infinite Love? Doesn’t it seem reasonable to expect that the more recollected we are, the more likely the quality of our actions will be affected? (p. 263).

Divine presence promotes a clearer sensitivity to matters of providence. Feeling themselves to be at all times enveloped by God’s beneficent embrace, believers attain a heightened sense of comfort, trust, and protection. Brother Lawrence, for example, shows how the practice of the presence provided confidence and a conviction of competence in performing difficult tasks.

[He explained that] he had recently been sent to Burgundy to buy wine, that this was difficult for him since he had no head for business matters, was lame in one leg and could not get about on the boat except by hobbling from one cask to another but that he had let none of this bother him...That he said to God that it was His business he was on, and that afterwards he found out everything went smoothly and he had done well. That the previous year he was sent to Auvergne for the same purpose; that he did not know how the business was accomplished, but accomplished it was and very well indeed (1977, p. 41)
...when he had outside business to attend to, he did not think of it ahead of time, but when it was time to take action...God showed him, as in a mirror, what he should do. That for some time he had been pursuing this course of not expecting difficulties; that before experiencing God's prompt aid in his affairs he had worried about them ahead of time (p. 46).

For Francis Fenelon, a French Quietist of the 17th century, the practice expels obsessional preoccupation with inevitable temptations, thereby restoring mental composure.

The second rule is, when tempted, always to turn to God, and not disquiet ourselves by considering whether we have not already in part consented, so as to interrupt the immediate tendency of heart to God. By examining too closely whether we have not been guilty of some infidelity, we run the risk of being again involved in the temptation...The practice of the presence of God, is of all others the most sovereign remedy, it comforts, supports and calms us; we must not be surprised even at the most shameful temptations (emphasis added; 1822, pp. 162-163).

Thus, as Taylor shows, the sense of presence is relied upon as a means of enduring all manner of hardships.

[The practice of the presence] produces a confidence in God, and fearlessness of our enemies, patience in trouble, and hope of remedy, since God is so nigh in all our sad accidents, he is a disposer of the hearts of men and the events of things, he proportions our trials, and supplies us with remedy, and where his rod strikes us, his staff supports us. To which we may add this, that God, who is always with us, is especially by promise with us in tribulation, to turn the misery into a mercy, and that our greatest trouble may become our advantage by entitling us to a new manner of the Divine presence...he is with us in our natural actions to preserve us, in our recreations to restrain us, in our public actions to applaud or reprove us, in our private to observe us, in our sleeps to watch by us...(1857, pp. 35-36).

In the foregoing passage, the notion that God "proportions our trials" reveals how the sense of presence provides a self-object function by enabling the individual to tolerate the stresses that stem from a variety of difficulties and misfortunes. Because it is connected to an idealizing transference, the presence assists in enabling one to contain and process disorganizing emotions, to feel that they are manageable, or "proportional"
to one's own psychic capacities (cf. Kohut, 1977). The same principal is found in Brother Lawrence's work.

No matter what troubles and ills come our way, they are to be willingly and indeed joyously endured since they come from God, and God knows what he is doing... God never tests us beyond our ability to endure and, as a matter of fact, bestows upon us graces that will enable us to endure as we show our acceptance of whatever He sends our way (p. 28).

Here we see how the exercise promotes a "synchronistic" state of mind by transposing the significance of events into personally meaningful instances of providence (Merkur, 1999, p. 150). Events are viewed as expressions of divine intentionality, a dialogical address or invitation to fulfill the will of God. Faber traces the subjective perception of meaningful coincidences back to early infancy: "...the first and most significant synchronicity that we experience as humans is rooted in the caretaker's ability to be there (in time), as the infant expresses his discomfort. When the caretaker meets the infant's needs, answers the infant's frustration, affective attunement results..." (1996, p. 106). Similarly, an experience of divine-human attunement ensues when one's "troubles and ills" are viewed as spiritual opportunities apportioned by God. This modifies feelings of frustration and anxiety. When one extrapolates the sense of presence to all persons, places and things, untoward circumstances are then situated within a larger self-object milieu, thereby creating the "graces that will enable us to endure". For example, Scupoli writes,

...urge [yourself] to feel that the affliction you suffer at this moment is either a means by which the Lord puts you to the test, or a purifying penance He imposes on you, or that He presses you to repent... As soon as the heart begins to have one such feeling, the pain immediately abates... These feelings in the troubled heart are as oil on the waves of the sea: the waves are stilled and there is great calm... I do not mean that feelings of sorrow will never assail you: they will come, but will at once retreat, as waves from a mighty-cliff (1963, p. 100)

The practice also enables one to deal with grief over loss. In one of his letters, Brother Lawrence writes,
If Mr. de N- can take advantage of the loss he has suffered and put his trust completely in God, He will soon give him another friend more powerful and more favorably inclined...think often of God, by day, by night, in all your pursuits and duties; even during your recreations (1977, 82).

By emphasizing the theme of ceaseless companionship, Maas argues that the exercise can serve as a means to overcome loneliness and fears of abandonment. All of one's experiences are lovingly shared and mirrored by a divine other who is experienced as an "endless source of delight and wonder" (1990, p. 263-264). This idea is particularly significant given the prevalence of separation and bereavement issues among the early Methodist population. For example, Bowlby (1980, pp. 161, 166-167) claims that in some cases of unresolved mourning the lost object is experienced in the form of a palpably felt presence. Methodist autobiographies attest to ecstasies involving the intellectual vision of presence which occur spontaneously during periods of loss or separation from loved ones (e.g., Arminian Magazine, 1795, p. 266; Carvosso, 1835, pp. 57, 103-106). Thus, the practice of the presence may have been particularly amenable to individuals whose capacity to be alone was compromised by undue separation anxiety.

Finally, the exercise fosters an altruistic regard for others. In his Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius describes a prayer which he refers to as the "Contemplation to Attain Love". The prayer, which is commonly referred to by Jesuits as the practice of the presence, is a discursive meditation done while sense perceiving the environment. It is used on a short term basis during the intense process of an Ignatian retreat. St. Ignatius' instructions accentuate the cultivation of gratitude.

Love consists in a mutual communication between the two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has...and the beloved in return does the same to the lover...Each shares with the other...I will call back into my memory the gifts I have received - my creation, redemption, and other gifts particular to myself. I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much he has given me of what he possesses...I will consider how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth...I will
consider how all good things and gifts descend from above... (1992, pp. 94-95).

Scupoli makes the same point. He writes,

And the place to receive and store [God's] blessings in you is a grateful heart... Giving heed to my words, you will ask: 'How can I set the feeling of gratitude alight in myself and always keep it?' Examine all God's favors to mankind - to our race - and to you yourself, and go over them frequently in your thought, rehearsing them in your memory... (1963, p. 181).

As mentioned, Maas contends that dwelling in the continual presence of another has ethical consequences.

...the changes that occur are much more likely to be small and subtle ones: fewer outbursts of temper, more frequent impulses to offer help to someone in need, a willingness to show warmth when you would prefer to give the cold shoulder. The resources for giving more love don't come from within us; they come as a consequence of our dwelling in the presence of Love, and the more we dwell in this presence, the freer we are from our own emotional responses (1990, p. 263).

Because divine presence can be understood as a self-object transference, as a partially projected or externalized superego, the practice also promotes a certain degree of regressive dependency which centers on the necessity of surrendering to God. The development of trust is commonly associated with an all-embracing reliance upon God, and the disavowal of autonomy. The extent of the regression, however, differs according to the varying emphases of particular writers, not to mention the personalities of the practitioners themselves. Furthermore, a distinction should be made between actual loss of autonomy in the behavioral sphere, and a subjective shift in one's identity and self-perception. In the latter case, individuals may objectively retain their autonomy, but view their actions in dependent terms, as predicated upon the strength given by the Spirit). Finally, in both James' (1985, pp. 53-77) and Merkur's (1999, pp. 95-102) phenomenological surveys of the sense of presence, there is no overt indication of this
kind of regression. We must therefore conclude that the phenomenon is an independent variable that is not intrinsic to the sense of presence.

The compromise of autonomy is especially apparent in Brother Lawrence's treatment of the practice:

[According to Brother Lawrence, one must] abandon oneself completely to God. Over and over in his letters and conversations he stresses the importance of complete trust and confidence in God's goodness and mercy. "We must trust God once and for all and abandon ourselves to him alone", "It is necessary to put our complete trust in God," "we should surrender ourselves in things temporal and in things spiritual, entirely and with complete abandonment to God", "we have a God of infinite goodness who knows what we need" are just a sampling of the exhortations running throughout the entire work (Delaney, 1977, p. 28).

[Brother Lawrence's] instructions to "act very simply with God, and speak to him frankly, while asking His help in things as they occur", are a blow to our sense of maturity, independence, and self-esteem. It is as if the call to recollection were a call to a naive and unsophisticated "littleness" (Maas, 1990, p. 264).

The regressive dimension appears to be bound up with the dynamics of unitive distortions. For Brother Lawrence, dependence is tied to innate sinfulness. Although he places special emphasis on God's infinite mercy and willingness to forgive, his experience of the presence is, nevertheless, overdetermined by a sense of guilt which significantly compromises his self-regard.

...my soul has been with God for more than thirty years...yet I think it is proper that I indicate to you how I consider myself to be before God who I consider as my King.
I regard myself as the most wretched of all men, stinking and covered with sores, and as one who has committed all sorts of crimes against his King (1977, p. 69).

In this instance, guilt produces an abject form of dependence, an affective addiction, as it were, to God's sustaining presence: "and while I am thus with him I fear nothing; but the least turning away from him is hell for me" (pp. 61-62).
As far as variations in technique are concerned, all of the authors, with one exception, portray the presence in a decidedly benevolent light. There is no overt articulation of God's punitive and otherwise fearsome qualities. However, this is not entirely so with Jeremy Taylor. Although he makes a point of stating that God's mercy ultimately "triumpms" over his justice (1857, p. 47), he also recommends that one solemnly contemplate God's judgment and his wrath. In contrast to other descriptions of the practice, Taylor plainly condones anxiety as one of several emotions which promote holy living.

And certainly, if men would always actually consider, and really esteem this truth, that God is the great Eye of the World, always watching over our actions, and an ever-open Ear to hear all our words, and an unwearied Arm ever lifted up to crush a sinner into ruin, it would be the readiest way in the world to make sin to cease from among the children of men...This thought by being frequent will make an habitual dread, and reverence towards God, and fear in all thy actions. For it is a great necessity and engagement to do unblameably, when we act before the Judge, who is infallible in his sentence, all-knowing in his information, severe in his anger, powerful in his providence, and intolerable in his wrath and indignation (pp. 33-34).

Secondly, for the majority of writers, the practice of the presence is a discursive exercise which requires an imaginative elaboration of thoughts and inspirations concerning the ever present being of God. For the most part, one's consciousness remains alert and diligently engaged with external reality. Consequently, the meditation fosters a transitional blend of internal and external worlds. By recourse to their own internal representations of deity, practitioners reflect on all aspects of reality as manifestations of the divine. For example, St. Ignatius writes,

I will consider how God dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence; and finally, how in this way he dwells also in myself, giving me existence, life, sensation, and intelligence; and even further, making me his temple, since I am created as likeness and image of Divine Majesty...I will consider how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth; that is, he
acts in the manner of one who is laboring. For example, he is working in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle and all the rest - giving them their existence, conserving them, concurring with their vegetative and sensitive activities, and so forth (1992, p. 95)

Taylor instructs his readers in the same way.

Let every thing you see represent to your spirit the presence, the excellency and the power of God, and let your conversation with the creatures lead you unto the Creator; for so shall your actions be done more frequently with an actual eye to God’s presence, by your often seeing him in the glass of the Creation. In the face of the sun you may see God’s beauty; in the fire you may feel his heart warming; in the water his gentleness to refresh you; he it is that comforts your spirit when you have taken Cordials: it is the dew of Heaven that makes your field give you bread; and the breasts of God are the bottles that minister drink to your necessities (1857, pp.34-35).

The Quietest writers, on the other hand, eschewed the discursive technique. They sought to eliminate the will in order to achieve a passive indifference to salvation. For this reason, representational thought was viewed as counter-productive because of the immediate link between the senses and bodily desire. According to the French 17th century Quietist, Miguel Molinos, the “most secure” kind of prayer is “abstracted from the operations of the imagination” (1883, p. 42). These operations are “always exposed to the tricks of the devil, and the extravagances of melancholy and ratiocination, wherein the soul is easily distracted”. The Quietist appropriation of the practice of the presence introduced a dissociative and world renouncing component: “Our indifference to the affairs of this world must give them a dream like quality” (Scupoli, 1978, p. 23). In this context, a non-discursive prayer was used to induce a state of hypnotic trance characterized by the cessation of both thought and bodily-motor activity. Consider the following two extracts taken from Molinos’ Spiritual Guide:

...but how well is time employed when the soul is dead, dumb, and resigned, in the presence of God, there without any clatter or distraction to receive the Divine influences (1883, p. 43).
The bottom of your souls, you will know, is the place of our happiness. There the Lord shows us wonders. There we engulf and lose ourselves in the immense ocean of His infinite goodness, in which we are kept fixed and immovable...(emphasis added; p. 106).

Apart from these variations, Wesley’s depiction of the practice includes all of the normative characteristics listed above. He too portrayed the exercise as a discursive technique which was applied to all facets of daily activity. The meditation was an acquired skill that enhanced self-observation, and, with frequent repetition, eventually became automatized, or “ceaseless”. Moreover, Wesley held that the practice nurtured the self-regulatory dispositions or traits associated with the fruits of the spirit: basic trust, mental calm, confidence and competency; the ability to tolerate loss, altruism and gratitude. In the following chapter, we will examine these, as well as other essential features of Wesley’s meditative scheme, and show how they facilitated the long term personality changes associated with sanctification.
CHAPTER 8
WATCHING AND PRAYING: THE MEDITATIVE CORE OF SANCTIFICATION

John Wesley's commitment to prayer and meditation owes largely to the influence of his mother (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 90). As a result of her own Puritan background, Susanna Wesley placed great value in "meditation, prayer, self-examination and Holy Communion": "In the Puritan circles in which Susanna was reared, meditation was a hallmark of all serious piety" (Monk, 1966, p. 139). Her father, Dr. Annesley, who insisted on the necessity of daily meditation, makes reference to the practice of the presence in his devotional writings. He states, "Did you but once a day...solemnly place your selves in God's presence; beg of him the fixing and flowing of your thoughts, that your thoughts might be graciously fix'd, yet as graciously enlarged..." (quoted in Monk, 1966, p. 140). In letters to her children, it is apparent that Susanna too was not unfamiliar with the practice. For example, in a letter to John's elder brother Samuel, she writes,

...endeavor to get as deep an impression on your mind as is possible of the awful, constant presence of the Great and Holy God. Consider frequently that wherever you are, or whatever you are about, he always adverts to your thoughts and actions, in order to a future retribution. He is about our bed, and about our paths, and spies all our ways. And whenever you are tempted to the commission of any sin, or the omission of any duty, make a pause, and say to yourself, what am I about to do? God sees me (Arminian Magazine, 1788, pp. 36-37).

In the foregoing passage, Susanna's account of the presence is similar to Jeremy Taylor's, in that it highlights a certain dread of God's "awful" judgment gaze. However, she portrays a different aspect of the presence in another letter to John - one that imparts a more joyous, as opposed to an admonishing, tone.
[God] is so infinitely blessed, that every perception of His blissful
presence imparts a vital gladness to the heart. Every degree of approach
toward Him, is in the same proportion a degree of happiness. And I often
think that were he always present to our minds, as we are present to Him,
there could be no pain or sense of misery (Arminian Magazine, 1778, pp.
84-85).

Furthermore, both Susanna and her father stressed daily self-introspection, the
examination of one’s conduct and conscience. Like his forebears, John Wesley also
combined the practice of the presence with introspection, except that in his mature work
(i.e. his writings after 1738), he urged that the combination of these two techniques be
avoided until one had received the experimental sign of God’s justifying pardon.

Beginning in the mid-1720’s, the Oxford holy club, founded by John Wesley and
his brother Charles, relied heavily on various meditation practices as a means to foster
piety and virtue. At this time, the exercises they employed were mainly introspective,
and “inextricably tied to the whole process of self-examination” (Heitzenrater, 1989, p.
100). Via a set of standardized questions aimed at monitoring one’s manners, actions
and intentions, the Oxford Methodists carefully measured their “holiness” according to
exemplary standards conveyed in such texts as Jeremy Taylor’s Holy Living and Thomas
a -Kempis’ The Imitation of Christ (p.101). The list of daily inquiries included the
following:

Did I in the morning plan the business of the day?
Have I been simple and recollected in everything?
Have I been or seemed angry?
Have I used ejaculations once an hour? (p. 90).

In addition to the more general and fixed round of daily questions, Wesley
employed another scheme similar to that found in St. Ignatius’ spiritual exercises (p. 91).
Wesley assigned special virtues for every day of the week, each equipped with a further
class of corresponding questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Virtue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Love of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Love of Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

243
Wednesday: Mortification and Self-denial
Thursday: Resignation and Meekness
[Friday: Mortification and Self-denial]
Saturday: Thankfulness (p. 91).

As Heitzenrater states, "...the questions were designed to use the examination of one’s performance as a measure of the development of virtue, and thus to gauge the inclination of one's heart and affections, an unfailingly inward focus" (p. 91).

Already in 1729, Wesley and his group also appeared to be engaging in something that approximated the practice of the presence. Wesley writes, "...at all times and places one should make fervent returns to the mind of God" (quoted in Tuttle, 1989, p. 75).

However, as his printed sermons indicate, it was not until the start of the first Methodist revival proper (i.e., 1738 and beyond), that the practice of the presence, as portrayed, for example, by Brother Lawrence, became a prominent feature of Wesley’s spiritual vision. This may, in part, be due to the fact that during the height of the first revival, he began to publish edited versions of Christian mystical texts (Whaling, 1981, p. 10), many of which endorsed the practice as way of achieving unbroken communion with God (Rack, 1989, pp. 102-103, 401; Tuttle, 1989, pp. 42, 149-150). Interestingly, Tuttle argues that it was no earlier than 1764 when Wesley began to emphasize “prayer more and more in [the] mystical sense as a continuous state of mind...as an uninterrupted communion - the practical result of praying without ceasing” (1989, p. 157). This assertion requires qualification. The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God, a sermon which Wesley penned in 1748, is a discussion of how one retains God’s pardoning presence once it is acquired. Though “the practice of the presence” does not appear as a specific locution, there can be no doubt that he is pointing to the necessity of the technique as the most reliable way of preserving one’s faith. For example, after describing how the soul becomes sensible of God’s omnipresence, or the “invisible world” which “encompasses” the believer “round about”, he goes on to say that this awareness is “continually”
perpetuated "by love, by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving" (1984-87, I: p. 434). In the conclusion of the work, Wesley states,

[The life of God in the soul] necessarily implies the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit: God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, the re-action of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; and an unceasing return of love, praise and prayer...(emphasis added; I: p. 442).

In this passage, the basic fundamentals of the practice as a dialogue with the "unceasing presence of God" are inscribed through a metaphor of mutual respiration between the believer's soul and God's Holy Spirit. Tuttle's claim gives the mistaken impression that the practice of the presence was not central in Wesley's earlier writings. In light of the evidence, I argue that the discrepancy is terminological. If we define the practice from a purely phenomenological standpoint, it is plain that Wesley endorsed it prior to 1764. We must keep in mind that he distinguished between various kinds of prayer: private, public, ejaculatory, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and contemplation (Heitzenrater, 1989, p. 98; Trickett, 1989, p. 364). Given his rejection of Quietistic modes of contemplation, it is understandable that he at first refrained from dubbing the practice as a "continual prayer", for fear that it would inadvertently condone, by association, the passivist and other-worldly nature of Quietist ideology.

Leaving aside questions of terminology, the practice of the presence was key to Wesleyan spirituality. As Whaling states, Wesley's "main concern was for spirituality itself, for knowing God in the heart by faith, for practicing the presence of God, for seeking after perfect love" (1981, p. 8). In sum, the exercise was a means through which the memory and mindset of the conversion ecstasies were voluntarily revived, prolonged and, most importantly, engaged in living practice. Consequently, the unitive values of Christian conscience, which originally emerged as emotionally laden abstractions, were "concretized" and "verified" through disciplined application. The process of gradual
sanctification consisted in the ongoing consolidation of these values, the attempt to achieve a convergence, or a congruence, of intention and deed. The meditative procedures of the practice of the presence - “praying” - and introspection - “watching” - were the primary facilitators of psychic integration, what Wesley deemed “growth in grace”.

Are you already happy in him? Then see that you ‘hold fast’ ‘whereunto you have attained’! ‘Watch and pray, that you may never be ‘moved from your steadfastness’. ‘Look unto yourselves, that ye lose not what you have gained, but that ye receive a full reward’. In so doing, expect a continual growth in grace, in the lovable knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (Wesley, 1984-87, III: p. 102).

For Wesley, the practice was specifically intended to advance the spiritual insights and temperamental shifts of the new birth. It was therefore a way of “holding fast” to the fruits of the spirit. Moreover, the conversion ecstasies provided an experiential glimpse of God’s omnipresence, and therefore generated a working model, a cognitive-affective schema for the imaginative elaboration of divine immanence. For these reasons, Wesley stipulated that individuals should only begin the practice after they had been justified. In his sermon On Dissipation, he voices his disagreement with William Law, who recommended that the practice be employed as a method of conversion (III: p. 123, see footnote 39). Wesley here maintains that “the exercise of the presence of God” is not suitable for those who are as yet “unawakened” and “unconvinced of sin” (III: p. 123).

...this certainly should not be first, but rather one of the last things. They should begin with repentance, the knowledge of themselves, of their sinfulness, guilt and helplessness. They should be instructed next to seek peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then let them be taught to retain what they have received, to ‘walk in the light of his countenance’: yea, to ‘walk in the light, as he is in the light’, without any darkness at all, till ‘the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth’ them ‘from all sin’ (emphasis added; III: pp. 123-124).
Retaining what one has received was inseparable from the recollection of mind, the focusing of one’s thoughts upon God, and this, in turn, required that all of one’s actions as well be holistically drawn into the prayer.

In order to preserve this humble, gentle love, it is needful to do all things with *recollection of spirit*, watching against all *hurry* or dissipation of thought, as well as against pride, wrath, or surliness. But this can be no otherwise preserved than by ‘continuing instant in prayer’, both before and after he comes into the field, and during the whole action; and by doing all in the *spirit of sacrifice*, offering all to God, through the Son of his Love (II: p. 317).

Wesley held that recollection, or being “simple” in all one says and does, is equivalent to “what those pious men who are usually styled mystics” meant by the term “introversion” (III: pp. 125).

Now, the attending to the voice of Christ within you is what they term ‘introversion’. The turning of the eye of the mind from him to outward things they call ‘extroversion’. By this your thoughts wander from God, and you are properly dissipated; whereas by introversion you may be always sensible of his loving presence. You continually hearken to whatever it pleases your Lord to say to your heart. And if you continually listen to his inward voice you will be kept from all dissipation (III: pp. 124-125).

Thus, the introverted recollection of thoughts, ever focused upon God, spans all forms of action, including encounters with other people. Believers who “begin with a single eye” continue “‘looking at Jesus, and talking with him all the time they are with their neighbor’” (I: p. 342). Eventually, deliberate attempts at recollection become automatized, so that prayer is unceasing. “But above all”, writes Wesley, “when once you have learned the use of prayer, you will find that...through every space of life it [will] be interfused with all your employments, and wherever you are, whatever you do, [it will] embrace you on every side” (III: p. 274).

Recollection creates a shift in temporal awareness. The meditation redirects one’s attention to the particularities of circumstances presently at hand. This principal was
already confirmed by the Quietists. Fenelon, for example, states, “It is one of the greatest rules in the spiritual life to confine our attention to the present moment, without looking any farther” (1822, p. 134). Similarly, in a letter of spiritual counsel written to Philothea Briggs, Wesley states, “It is not always a defect to mind one thing at a time. And an aptness to do so, to employ the whole vigor of the mind on the one thing in hand, may answer excellent purposes” (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 163). The restriction of attention to the present moment was reinforced by Wesley’s theological stance. In The Repentance of Believers, he argues that while faith grants the power that enables individuals to refrain from committing sin, sin still “remains in our hearts” and “cleaves to our words and actions” (1984-87, I: p. 341). In line with the reformed tradition, he emphasizes the “utter helplessness” (I: p. 345) of believers, even after they have been born anew.

...they are no more able now of themselves to think one good word, or do one good work, than before they were justified; that they have still no kind or degree of strength of their own, no power either to do good or resist evil; no ability to conquer or even withstand the world, the devil, or their own evil nature. They ‘can’; it is certain, ‘do all these things’; but it is not by their own strength. They have no power to overcome all these enemies; ‘for sin hath no dominion over’ them. But it is not from nature, either in whole or in part; it is the mere gift of God’. Nor is it given all at once, as if they had a stock laid up for many years, but from moment to moment (I: p. 345).

Due to the persistence of sinfulness, an inalienable condition of the flesh, righteousness was regarded as a grace in which one participated, as opposed to an innate trait which one possessed and identified with as one’s own. Grace was bestowed through faith, and one’s faith was renewed “from moment to moment” (I: p. 349) by the constancy of contemplation.

By the same faith we feel the power of Christ every moment resting upon, whereby alone we are what are what we are, whereby we are enabled to continue in spiritual life, and without which, notwithstanding our present holiness, we should be devils the next moment (I: p. 349).
As a meditative procedure, the moment to moment recollection of thought fostered what Wesley deemed a state of "introversion", a mild form of reverie with effects that were observable and conspicuous. For example, in *A Short Account of the Life and Death of the Reverend John Fletcher*, Wesley states the following:

It was [John Fletcher's] constant endeavor to maintain an uninterrupted sense of the presence of God. In order to this, he was slow of speech, and had the greatest government of his words. Indeed he both acted, and spoke, and thought, as under the eye of God. And thus setting God always before him, he remained unmoved in all occurrences; at all times and on every occasion possessing inward recollection. Nor did I see him diverted therefrom on any occasion whatever, either going out or coming in, whether by ourselves or in company. Sometimes he took his journeys alone; but above a thousand miles I have traveled with him; during which neither change of company, place, nor the variety of circumstances which naturally occur in traveling ever seemed to make the least difference in his firm attention to the presence of God. *To preserve this uniform habit of soul, he was so watchful and recollected that, to such that were unexperienced in these things, it might appear like insensibility* (Emphasis added; Wesley and Wesley, 1981, pp. 155-156).

Fletcher's recollection was apparent not only in his unhurried manner of speaking, but also in a demeanor that seemed outwardly detached to those unfamiliar with the practice of the presence. Wesley implies that what is mistakenly construed as "insensitivity", is more accurately viewed as the necessary effect of a contemplative preoccupation with the presence, an external indication of an alternate state of consciousness whose intensity was not so great as to preclude continued commerce with the world.

The provision of spiritual senses which enabled believers to see the invisible world was initially a passive event. However, Wesley also instructed his followers to exercise these senses, to *actively contemplate the omnipresence of God*.

...we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature; that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical atheism; but with a true magnificence of thought survey heaven and earth all that is therein as contained by God in the hollow of
his hand, who by his intimate presence holds them in being, who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is in a true sense the soul of the universe (1984-87, I: pp. 516-517).

Such contemplation required that every action be understood as part of a devotional dialogue expressive of God’s presence. Through this means, the unitive ideals of conscience were effectively extended to all aspects of life. “For it is a great mistake”, Wesley states, “to suppose that an attention to those outward things whereto the providence of God hath called us is any clog to a Christian, or any hindrance at all to his always seeing him that is invisible” (I: p. 544). On the contrary, believers “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; having only one eye of the soul which moves around on outward things, and one immovably fixed on God” (I: p. 544). Consequently, the profanity of worldly endeavors was deliberately sacralized as a necessary feature of ceaseless prayer.

It was not enough simply to transact one’s business with diligence, justice and mercy: “This is well, but a Christian is called to go still farther - to add piety to justice, to intermix prayer, especially the prayer of the heart, with all the labor of the hands” (III: p. 269). Wesley continues,

If you act in the Spirit of Christ you carry the end you at first proposed through all your work from first to last. You do everything in the spirit of sacrifice, giving up your will to the will of God, and continually aiming, not at ease, pleasure, or riches; not at anything this short enduring world can give; but merely at the glory of God. Now can anyone deny that this is the most excellent way of pursing worldly business? (III: p. 269).

As mentioned, Wesley portrayed the practice of the presence as a mutual respiration between the Holy Spirit and the soul of man. The “unceasing return of love, praise and prayer” was a way of maximizing devotion. The metaphor represents a dynamic cycle of intrapsychic reciprocity between the ego and the superego.

[There is] a continual action of God upon the soul, and the reaction of the soul upon God...we may...infer the absolute necessity of this reaction of the soul...in order to the continuance of the divine life therein. For it plainly appears God does not continue to act upon the soul unless the soul re-acts upon God...But if we do not then love him who first loved us; if we
will not harken to his voice; if we turn our eye away from him, and will not attend to the light which he pours upon us: his Spirit will not always strive; he will gradually withdraw...He will not continue to breath into our souls unless our souls breathes towards him again (1: p. 442).

Recollection and the prayerful pursuit of ideal standards is met with the approval of the ego ideal, the emotional content of which, only serves to heighten the sense of presence. In turn, a good conscience increases gratitude, thereby compelling the believer again to “rejoice” and to do what is “good and acceptable” in the eyes of God (1: p. 266). Conversely, the failure to exercise one’s love interrupts the object relationship that is continuously maintained by the practice. One’s self regard is then threatened by the superego’s disapproval, and an inevitable dissipation of the sense of presence ensues.

...for as by works faith is made perfect, so the completing or destroying the work of faith, and enjoying the favor, or suffering the displeasure of God, greatly depends on every single act of obedience or disobedience (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 364).

In his autobiographical narrative, Richard Rodda provides a straight-forward example of the action-reaction principle. Following a two year period of post-conversion depression, Rodda finally regained “a clear sense of [God’s] forgiving love”. He writes,

There was not the least doubt remaining of my acceptance through the Beloved. For many days and weeks, I was enabled to rejoice in God my Savior. Every duty was profitable, as it conveyed to me fresh tokens of the divine favor. My understanding was open to behold the power, wisdom and goodness of God; in creating, upholding and governing the world. I saw the whole world was full of his majesty and glory (Arminian Magazine, 1784, p. 302).

In this passage, we see how the rhythm of internal reciprocity between ego and superego matches Wesley’s notion of combined respiration. The sequence begins with Rodda’s recovery of the witness as given by God. In response, he “rejoices” and finds that he is eagerly determined to abide by the law. As a result, his own self-acceptance is again reconfirmed by “fresh tokens of divine favor”. What is more, in feeling internally
at peace with himself, Rodda experiences a strong sense of divine immanence: “I saw the whole world was full of his majesty and glory”.

An extremely important facet of the action-reaction principal pertains to interpersonal relations, in that the perpetuation of the witness, as embodied in the sense of presence, is also ensured by “good works”. The whole notion of service to others, which is regarded as an indispensable part of prayer, is predicated on unitive thinking.

[A believer] doth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of all men. He rejoices to ‘deal his bread to the hungry’, and to ‘cover the naked with a garment’. Is any a stranger? He takes him in and relieves him according to his necessities...And all this he does, not as unto man, but remembering him that hath said, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (emphasis added; Wesley, 1984-87; I: p. 519).

Because all creatures participate in God, service rendered to others is service rendered unto God, and it is therefore a continuation of the prayer that sustains the object relationship:

So shall ‘the merciful obtain mercy’; not only by the blessing of God upon all their ways, by his now repaying the love they bear to their brethren a thousand fold into their own bosom, but likewise by an ‘exceeding and eternal weight of glory’ in the ‘kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world’ (I: p. 507).

I have argued that justification ecstasies are vehicles through which unitive ideals of conscience are made apparent to consciousness. Unitive abstractions are derived from, and therefore, sublimations of, concrete internal object representations. The sense of divine presence encapsulates these two poles of the developmental spectrum. On the one hand, it is the symbolic embodiment of abstract altruistic values expressed in the omnipresence of an “invisible” God whose love (i.e., “the law”) pervades the entirety of creation. At the same time, the consolidation of these values occurs within a dynamic, that is to say, dialogical object relation that can be classed as a form of “personal mysticism” (Merkur, 1993, p. 20). In Buber’s terms (1958), the presence is conceived of
and addressed as a personal “thou”. The practice of the presence is, in actuality, the practice of conscience, the realization of an inclusive whole object relationship.

God’s command to pray without ceasing, is founded on the necessity we have of his grace, to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it than the body can without air. Whether we think of or speak to God, whether we act or suffer for him, all is prayer, when it is done in simplicity, according to the order of God, without either adding to or diminishing from it by his own choice. Prayer continues in the desire of the heart, tho’ the understanding be employed on outward things. In souls filled with God, the desire to please God is a continual prayer (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 370).

Psychologically speaking, all of the ego-enhancing benefits that derive from this bond are further complimented by the fact that the presence is an imaginary other. At least in one important respect, the transference relationship to God offers a relatively unique forum for maturational growth, one that differs from that offered by real attachment figures. For example, insecure individuals often undermine opportunities for secure relationships by repeating core conflictual issues which elicit impatience, rejection and withdrawal in their partners. Writing from the perspective of attachment theory, Kirkpatrick suggests that these inevitable repetitions may be by-passed by a “perceived relationship with God” (1995, p. 455). Such an imaginary yet compelling relationship “characterized by the desired level of intimacy can be maintained over time without being undermined by either ‘partner’s behavior’”. One may be able to establish a growth enhancing attachment “without inadvertently undermining the process through previously established, counterproductive patterns of behavior”. According to Kirkpatrick, the experience of God as a “haven of safety” can give rise “to the same feelings of comfort and security provided by secure human attachments”. This formulation coincides with the self-object function of the presence.

The integration of conscience is secured by an all-encompassing and ceaseless mode of prayer. Wesley understood, however, that in order for the practice to be fully
effective, it had to be supplemented by another form of meditation - introspection, or “watching”. In fact, the two techniques were synergistically aligned: as both a haven of safety and a symbolic manifestation of ideals, the sense of presence was an indispensable point of departure for the often frightening prospect of self-examination. In essence, the sense of the presence not only brought solace and courage to those fearful of becoming more fully cognizant of their sin, but furthermore, as a manifestation conscience, it provided self-evident criteria for a coherent and goal directed exploration of one’s motives, feelings, desires and inclinations.

**Meditative Introspection**

In Christian contemplative tradition, the purgative path was the first of three stages in the practice of mysticism. Wesley relocated but otherwise retained the systematic examination of sin, which is a traditional aspect of the purgative path. One of the earliest instances of this meditative exercise is documented in Evagrius Ponticus’ *The Praktikos*, a fourth century monastic text devoted to prayer. Using language reminiscent of Buddhist insight meditation, Ponticus urges the reader to develop a finely-tuned awareness of the ebb and flow of one’s thoughts and passions. Those who aspire to the knowledge of God must acquire mental skills in order to recognize the mercurial nature of sin - the demonic “impurities” and “blasphemies” that impede holy contemplation.

If there is any monk who wishes to take the measure of some of the more fierce demons so as to gain experience in his monastic art, let him keep careful watch over his thoughts. Let him observe their intensity, their periods of decline and follow them as they rise and fall. Let him note well the complexity of his thoughts, their periodicity, the demons which cause them, with the order of their succession and the nature of their associations. Then let him ask from Christ the explanations of these data he has observed. For the demons become thoroughly infuriated with those who practice active virtue in a manner that is increasingly contemplative. They are even of a mind to “pierce the upright of heart through, under cover of darkness” [Ps 10:3].

254
Watch carefully and you will discover the two swiftest demons - they are nearly more swift than the speed of thought. Their names: the demon of impurity and the demon of blasphemy against God. Now this latter's attack has a short life-span, and the former will be unable to stand in the way of our contemplation of God if he is unable to stir up in us thoughts filled with passion (1981, pp. 29-30).

Generally speaking, in the Buddhist context, the religious aim of insight meditation is to acquire a first-hand appreciation of the illusory nature of the self. Although Christian contemplative traditions are similarly concerned with eradicating narcissism and cultivating moral virtue, they do not approach the problem by dismantling the self-representations of the ego (cf. Engler, 1984, pp. 46-47). Nevertheless, the foregoing extract lists a set of mental disciplines that are comparable to those involved in insight meditation. Contemplatives are to track the emotional intensity, duration and associative nexus of their thoughts, many of which are so fleeting, or "swifter than the speed of thought itself", that they tend to go unnoticed unless brought under disciplined scrutiny.

Scupoli also refers to a technique that, like Buddhist insight meditation, requires affective equanimity and an impassioned kind of introspection. "Bare witnessing", as it is deemed in Buddhism, is a refined, non-judgmental awareness of whatever is occurring in consciousness (Rubin, 1992, p. 97). In the following extract, Scupoli advocates the same approach:

The reason why we have wrong judgment of the things we mentioned earlier is that we do not look deeply into them to see what they are, but conceive a liking for them or a dislike of them from the very first glance, judging by appearances. These likes and dislikes prejudice our mind and darken it; and so it cannot form a right judgment of things as they really are. So, my brother, if you wish to be free of this prelest in your mind, keep strict attention over yourself; and when you see a thing with your eyes, or visualize it in your mind, keep a firm grip on your desires and do not allow yourself at the first glance either to conceive a liking for the thing or a dislike for it, but examine it in a detached way with the mind alone. Unobscured by passion, the mind then remains in a state natural to it, which is free and pure, and has the possibility to know the truth and to penetrate into the depths of a thing, where evil is often concealed under a
deceptively attractive exterior and where good is sometimes hidden under a bad appearance (1963, p. 35).

Both Ponticus and Scupoli describe a procedure in which practitioners who wish to know and master their sinful natures, must attempt to stand outside their instinctual willfulness in order to engage in objective self-observation. Wesley knew not only the general self-examination practices of the early Church Fathers, Thomas a-Kempis, the Puritan writers etc., but he also read Scupoli.

As far as Wesley was concerned, repentance, or the self-observation of sin, was not simply restricted to the crises of desolation which preceded justification. Although the new birth endowed believers with the motivational power to resist temptation, the being of sin continued to inhere in the flesh. Repentance, as “true self-knowledge and authentic contrition” (Outler, 1984a, p. 217) did not subside with the acquisition of the witness. On the contrary, progress in sanctification went hand in hand with an ever deepening understanding of one’s divided nature. “Indeed”, writes Outler, “since repentance means self-knowledge, the farther Christians are along their way to sanctification, the more sensitive they are to their shortfalls in faith, hope and love” (p. 217). Mirroring Ponticus’ description of the elusive yet ever-present influence of sin upon one’s mind, Wesley states,

Can we fix any bounds to them? Do they not diffuse themselves through all our thoughts, and mingle with all our tempers? Are they not the leaven which leavens, more or less, the whole mass of our affections? May we not, on close examination of ourselves, perceive these roots of bitterness continually springing up, infecting all our words and tainting our actions? (emphasis added; 1984-87, I: p. 665).

In the same vein, while commenting on the necessity of “continual watchfulness” in his treatise on Christian Perfection (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 371), he writes,

As the most dangerous winds may enter at little openings, so the devil never enters more dangerously than by little unobserved incidents which seem to be nothing, yet insensibly open the heart to great temptation (p. 371).
Wesley directed his followers to know themselves as they are known by God, to continually pray that God reveal the “depth of inbred sin” (1984-87; 1: pp. 245). Watchfulness destroys “the whole body of sin”: “Thou shalt be ‘cleansed from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit’” (l: p. 246). The relationship between watchfulness and sanctification is straightforward. The “little openings” and “unobserved incidents” which previously evaded conscious recognition, are, as a result of refined mental acuity, brought directly into awareness where, with the assistance of the sense of presence, they can be actively repudiated via the vitalizing initiative provided by conscience. In this regard, Wesley understood that the practice of the presence, which underscored the idea that God’s gaze was continually focused on the soul of the believer, augmented self-observation. Simply put, God became a co-observer in the process of introspection. “If after having renounced all, we do not watch incessantly, and beseech God to accompany our vigilance with his, we shall be again entangled and overcome” (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 371).

The synergistic tie between introspection and the practice of the presence rested on a sound psychological basis which found its theological rationale in Wesley’s understanding of the necessary interdependence of faith and repentance (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 116; Maddox 1994, pp. 165, 174). Wesley made a qualitative distinction between two kinds of repentance. Prior to justifying faith, knowledge of sin was not accompanied by the conviction of God’s acceptance. With faith and the witness, one “retains the confidence of one’s renewed pardoning relationship with God, even as it acknowledges continuing sin and need” (Maddox, 1994, p. 165). As forgiveness, faith granted self-acceptance and trust, thereby assuaging the guilt-ridden consciousness of God’s condemnation and wrath. The uncovery of sin could now be pursued with even greater calm, persistence and precision. Faith and repentance “answer each other” (Wesley, 1984-87, L: p. 349), in that the former empowers the latter. Stated in terms of actual technique, the practice of the presence provided a space of psychic safety wherein
introspection could proceed unhindered by doubt. Enhanced self-esteem made self-criticism tolerable with the immediate risk of depression. The dialectic play between introspection and presence is captured in the notion that self-knowledge increases proportionally to the knowledge of God "and the experience of his love" (II: p. 231). For Wesley, faith is implicated in a depth psychological recovery or unveiling of the hidden self, and it is faith alone which expedites the process by removing the resistance of fear.

...is there no condemnation to them which 'walk after the Spirit' by reason of inward sin still remaining, so long as they do not give way thereto; nor by reason of sin cleaving to all they do? Then fret not thyself because of ungodliness, though it still remain in thy heart...be not afraid to know all the evil of thy heart, to know thyself as thou art known...Let thy continual prayer be:

Show me, as my soul can bear,  
The depth of inbred sin  
All the unbelief declare  
The pride that lurks within

But when he heareth thy prayer, and unveils thy heart, when he shows thee thoroughly what spirit thou art of; then beware that thy faith fail thee not, that thou suffer not thy shield to be torn from thee...But still, 'let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid'. Still hold fast, 'I' even I, 'have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'. And 'as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is his love higher than even my sins'...Thou shalt love him that loveth thee, and it sufficeth: more love will bring more strength (I: pp. 245-247).

Another aspect of the dialectic between presence and introspection is the fact that a more intimate acknowledgment of sin strengthens the desire to increase one's faith. Here again, we see how the two meditative techniques mutually reinforce each other:

...they are continually ashamed of their wandering thoughts, or of the deadness and dullness of their affections - yet there is no condemnation to them still, either from God or from their own heart. The consideration of these manifold defects only gives them a deeper sense that they have always need of that blood of the sprinkling which speaks for them in the ears of God, and that advocate with the Father who 'ever liveth to make
intercession for them’. So far are these from driving them away from him in whom they have believed, that they rather drive them closer to him, whom they feel the want of every moment (I: p. 240).

It is good to have a piercing sense of [sin], and a vehement desire to be delivered from it. But this should only incite us the more zealously to fly every moment to our strong helper, the more earnestly to press forward to the mark, the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. And when the sense of our sin most abounds, the sense of his love should much more abound (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 336).

The combination of presence and introspection, both of which were underwritten by the theological categories of faith and repentance, provided a crucial opportunity to bring together in consciousness the severed halves of the split imago, and in this way, to forge a rapprochement between opposing self and object representations. While introspection was devoted to unearthing the wicked child - angry parent constellation, with its chaotic web of rage, guilt, stymied will and helplessness, the practice of the presence roused the corrective vitality of the positive superego in an attempt to “purify” the former. Consequently, the chronic effects of cumulative traumata were placed in a more tolerable psychic milieu, where they could be re-evaluated and mastered by a mindset infused with self-acceptance, concern, empathy and uncompromised initiative.

Thus it is that in the children of God repentance and faith exactly answer each other. By repentance we feel the sin remaining in our hearts, and cleaving to our words and actions. By faith we receive the power of God in Christ, purifying our hearts and cleansing our hands. By repentance we are still sensible that we deserve punishment for all our tempers and words and actions. By faith we are conscious that our advocate with the Father is continually pleading for us, and thereby continually turning aside all condemnation and punishment from us. By repentance we have an abiding conviction that there is no help in us. By faith we receive not only mercy, but ‘grace to help in every time of need’. Repentance disclaims the very possibility of any other help. Faith accepts all the help we stand in need of from him that hath all power in heaven and earth. Repentance says, ‘Without him I can do nothing’; faith says, ‘I can do all things through Christ strengthening me’. Through him I cannot not only overcome, but expel all the enemies of my soul (Wesley, 1984-87, I: pp. 349-350).
The sense of presence stabilizes the unsettling effects of self-observation. Even so, emotional equanimity may give way to vicissitudes not unlike those which follow the new birth. Believers may err in the direction of "presumption", a form of inflation predicated on denial, or they may lapse into a depressive "despair" of ever attaining sanctification. These are the demonic pitfalls of systematic meditation. In terms of denial, Wesley writes:

Presumption is one grand snare of the devil, in which many of the children of men are taken. They so presume upon the mercy of God as utterly to forget his justice. Although he has expressly declared, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' yet they flatter themselves that in the end God will be better than his word. They imagine that they may live and die in their sins, and nevertheless 'escape the damnation of Hell' (III: p. 211).

Presumption involves a more subtle form of denial than the intoxicating inflation which ensues after justification. In this instance, believers do not entertain the mistaken assumption that they are already sanctified; sin is acknowledged, but its significance is disavowed. Presumption simplifies the theological equation: the presumptuous assume not only that they are forgiven, but that their sinfulness is of such little consequence that they fully deserve to be acquitted (I: p. 345).

Interestingly, Wesley's treatment of denial is not nearly as extensive as his analysis of despair - this may be due to the fact that depressive crises were more frequently induced by introspection. In a sermon entitled Satan's Devices, he takes up the problem of doubt as one of the ways the devil "endeavors to destroy the work of God in the soul" (II: p. 140). The sermon is both a description of the struggle with the bad object, and an instruction manual on how to overcome the struggle by appealing to the positive image of God via the practice of the presence.

The first of the two main depressive reactions to self-examination is the dampening of joy. According to Wesley,

[Satan] endeavors to damp our joy in the Lord by the consideration of our own vileness, sinfulness, unworthiness; added to this, that there must be a
far greater change than is yet, or we cannot see the Lord...that subtle adversary often damps the joy we should otherwise feel in what we have already attained, by a perverse representation of what we have not attained, and the absolute necessity of attaining it. So we cannot rejoice in what we have, because there is more which we have not...Likewise, the deeper conviction God works in us of our present unholiness, and the more vehement desire we feel in our heart of the entire holiness he hath promised, the more are we tempted to think lightly of the present gifts of God, and to undervalue what we have already received because of what we have not received (II: p. 141).

Here, despair sets in as a result of the perceived disparity between the ego and the ego ideal, between one’s “corruption” and “the height of the glory of God” (II: p. 144). In effect, perfection is drawn into the traumatizing lure of evangelical nurture. As a result, the optimistic promise of redemption is turned into an impossible authoritarian demand. The ego ideal is then distorted by the bad-object and made into a “perverse representation” whose effect is to focus attention on one’s shortcomings, on what one has not attained, and “the absolute necessity of attaining it”. The authoritarian distortion of the ideal, and the futility it invokes, spark a devaluation of faith so that one is deprived of a valuable sense of satisfaction.

The demise of joy is predictably accompanied by a loss of “peace”, and the now familiar revival of doubt concerning justification.

If [Satan] can prevail thus far, if he can damp our joy, he will soon attack our peace also. He will suggest, ‘Are you fit to see God? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity...How is it possible that you, unclean as you are, should be in a state of acceptance with God?...How can you presume then to think that all your sins are already blotted out? How can this be until you are brought nearer to God, until you bear more resemblance to him?’...[This will] bring you back by insensible degrees to the point from whence you set out first: even to seek for justification by works, or by your own righteousness; to make something in you the ground of your acceptance, or at least necessarily previous to it (II: pp. 141-142).

When the supportive influence of the positive superego is no longer available, the upsurge of anxiety dictates a return of the obsessive defense. “Justification by works, or your own righteousness” describes action that is executed by an urgent need for control.
In other words, personal righteousness refers to behavior that is not subjectively aligned with the work of the spirit. Instead, such action is again carried out in the shadow of the disapproving parent, and, for this reason, it can not garner the calming approval of the benevolent ideal.

*When a depressive crisis occurs, believers should simply resume practicing the presence in order to soothe themselves.* The observation and acknowledgment of sin necessarily invites the censure of the archaic superego. The anxiety of punishment, expressed in threats of abandonment and damnation, can become so overwhelming as to disrupt the mental calm necessary to maintain the practice of the presence. With the return of depression, unitive ideals are subject to punitive distortion. By foregoing the compulsion to reason with the devil, or to engage in obsessive actions, the gravitational pull of the bad object is resisted and replaced by the therapeutic alliance. This creates a significant emotional shift that dispels the onslaught of self-accusation.

...the more you are tempted to give up your shield, to cast away your faith, your confidence in his love, so much the more take heed that you hold fast that whereunto you have attained. So much the more labor to 'stir up the gift of God which is in you.'...Thus, being filled with all peace and joy in believing, press on in the peace and joy of faith to the renewal of thy soul in the image of him that created thee. Meanwhile, cry continually to God that thou mayest see that prize of thy high calling, not as Satan represents it, in a horrid dreadful shape, but in its genuine native beauty, not as something that *must* be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what *may* be, to lead thee to heaven. Look upon it as the most *desirable* gift which is in all the stores of the rich mercies of God. Beholding it in this true point of light, thou wilt hunger after it more and more: thy whole soul will be athirst for God, and for this glorious conformity to his likeness (II: p. 149).

Once a rapport is re-established with the positive superego, the coercive distortion of the ideal subsides. Sanctification is no longer represented in a "horrid dreadful shape"; it ceases to be experienced as an intimidating command - something that "must be" realized to avoid hellfire. The fantasy of achieving perfection regains its ego-syntonic character, a goal that is genuinely desired and voluntarily chosen by the ego: it is "the
most desirable gift”, something that “may” be. The movement from an authoritarian injunction to a desired promise of success in the future not only instills a feeling of mastery or trust in one’s own abilities, it also allows one to reposition the self in relation to time. By definition, hope is significantly disrupted by anxiety. An impending threat paralyzes ego functions and makes it is impossible to entertain an optimistic vision of self-development. On the other hand, Loewald (1962) and Lederer (1964) maintain that the longed for ideals of the positive superego compel the ego to imaginatively project itself forward in time, in anticipation of the gratifying fulfillment of those ideals. By refocusing on the sense of presence, a favorable conception of the self as an evolving entity is restored.

...the more you feel of your own vileness the more you rejoice in the confident hope that all this shall be done away. While you hold fast this hope, every evil temper you feel, though you hate it with a perfect hatred, may be a means, not of lessening your humble joy, but rather of increasing it. ‘This and this’, may you say, ‘shall likewise perish from the presence of the Lord. Like as the wax melteth at the fire, so shall this melt away before his face.’ (Wesley, 1984-87, II: p. 147).

Finally, the practice of the presence revives the all too important witness of divine pardon.

...the more vehemently he assaults your peace with that suggestion: ‘God is holy; you are unholy. You are immensely distant from that holiness without which you cannot see God...’ - take the more earnest heed to hold fast that, ‘not by works of righteousness which I have done’ I am ‘found in him’. I am ‘accepted in the beloved’, ‘not having my own righteousness’ (as the cause either in whole or in part of our justification before God), ‘but that which is of God by faith’. O bind this about your neck; write it upon the table of thy heart...So shall the sense of the sinfulness you feel on the one hand, and of the holiness you expect on the other, both contribute to establish your peace, and to make it flow as a river (II: p. 148).

Here again, the foregoing passages make clear how Wesley was convinced that growth in grace was not advanced by darkness, that is, by the depressive trials which arose whenever the effects of the punitive introject were more dominant than those which
flowed from the therapeutic alliance. The mystical notion of the dark night of the soul did not play a role in Wesley’s understanding of spiritual transformation since the former did not contribute to the consolidation of Christian values (Tuttle, 1989, pp. 106-111). Wesley believed that rendering heartfelt service to God and all his living manifestations was intrinsically delightful to the soul of true believers. Nurturing these sensibilities to the point of perfection was emotionally incompatible with the recurring phases of self-recrimination and dread. Because he held that forgiveness and self-acceptance were the only conditions conducive to real characterological change, Wesley exclusively endorsed the work of the witness, the identification with the ideal. He was all too aware that introspection was a hazardous endeavor, that afflictions of doubt were virtually inevitable, but he did not valorize these crises, nor did he regard them as God-given: “God afflicts, but he never brings darkness” (quoted in Tuttle, 1989, p. 147). In reversal of the mystical position, Wesley claimed that believers themselves were responsible for any bouts of uncertainty - they were neglecting the active perpetuation of faith. As Tuttle points out, darkness stemmed from a failure “to return to the source of strength” (p. 147).

In a published extract of Bathsheba Hall’s diary, which appeared in the Arminian Magazine, she writes, “There is a season wherein [Christians] are called to inward crucifixion, a being stripped of all sensible enjoyment”. Wesley found it necessary to insert the following editorial comment (1781, p. 198):

I cannot find this in the Bible. I do not believe it. We are called of God, to rejoice ever more. I know those that have done so for many years: and the joy of the Lord was their strength. Tis true, nervous disorders may strip us of this joy: and then God will bring good out of evil. But otherwise we have no more need to be stripped of joy in the Holy Ghost, than of peace or righteousness. We ought therefore to be dejected, that is, grieved and ashamed before God, when we are stripped of all sensible enjoyment of God. It is not his will which is the cause of this, but our own: he would have us always happy in him (p. 198).

The synergism between the unitive presence and the ego’s self-observation, along with the dual complications of presumption and despair, find analogous representation in
the meditative practices of Theravadin Buddhism (Epstein, 1986). Some of the 
correspondences to the psychology of Methodist transformation are rather striking. For 
example, Epstein writes,

One of the distinctive characteristics of Buddhist psychology (particularly in the Theravadin tradition) is that it clearly postulates an ideal personality, the arahat, that represents the fruition of meditation practice... The ideal personality is conceived as one in whom even the potential for the arising of unwholesome mental factors, such as greed, hatred, conceit, envy or doubt, does not exist... in order for this ideal to be reached, there must occur a transformation of those psychic structures that embody the individual’s internalization of the ideal. In other words, meditation must inevitably affect those aspects of the self that derive from the infantile experience of the ideal so that the Buddhist ideal may be realized... the actual practice provides a means whereby those narcissistic remnants that inevitably persist are seized and redirected (pp. 145-146).

In analyzing the meditative transformations of narcissism in the Theravadin school, Epstein refers to the “traditional Buddhist division of meditation techniques into ‘concentration’ and ‘insight’ practices” (p. 149). As mentioned, the former technique is an “attentional strategy”, a “moment to moment awareness” of “thoughts, feelings, images, sensations and even consciousness itself” (p. 149). By contrast, concentration practices involve a “one-pointed attention to a single object” and typically culminate in “absorption or trance states”. Although there are important differences, the functional combination of concentration and insight bears striking resemblance to the relation between presence and introspection. “The Buddhist meditative path”, writes Epstein, “demands a delicate interplay of the two techniques and consists of a series of alternating plateaus that reflect the affective concomitants of first one strategy and then the other” (p. 149). In this approach, “the emphasis is continually on balancing the forces of concentration and insight, as if the stabilization and gratification of the former allows one to withstand the destabilization of the latter” (p. 154). Concentratve ecstasies of merger produce feelings of contentment, tranquillity, rapture and wholeness: “They promote
stability, equanimity and equilibrium and are essentially anxiolitic in that they directly counteract mental states of anxiety...and evoke states of well being” (p. 150).

The variety of concentrative ecstasies differ from the normative presence experiences in Methodism in that the former are not necessarily deistic in nature, and involve hypnotic states as opposed to reverie. And yet, they both play a similar role by providing unitive consolations which mitigate the “terrors” (p. 152) of self-examination. Moreover, Epstein argues that concentrative meditation is used “as a means of contacting the ego-ideal for ontological security and holding” (1989, p. 69). “The concentration practices clearly promote unity of ego and ego ideal by encouraging fixity of mind in a single object” (1986, p. 152). In both the Theravadin and Methodist traditions, the ideational content of adverse reactions are largely determined by their respective ideologies. Although the range of affective states are comparable (i.e. persecutory panic, depression, malaise, etc.), Buddhist practitioners suffer from resistances that arise in realizing the “groundless” and “impermanent” character of self-representations, what Epstein calls the “illusory ontology of the self” (p. 153). Methodist anxiety, on the other hand, is centered on issues of divine rejection and damnation. In both of these traditions, however, complications are abated through meditative exercises that appeal to unitive fantasies stemming from the ego ideal.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the dialectic of Theravadin insight and concentration also yields vicissitudes that correspond to the problems of presumption and despair in Methodism. In the following extract, Epstein uses the term “ideal ego” to refer to the core of infantile narcissism:

Yet if the ego-ideal is strengthened without simultaneous insight into the nature of the ideal ego, the experience of the concentration practices may fuel an increasing sense of self-importance or specialness that can paradoxically strengthen the hold of the ideal ego. Individuals affected by such a dynamic may become self-righteous...When the ideal ego is investigated without sufficient support from the ego-ideal, however, other effects occur. Without the stabilization of the concentration practices,
those who undertake a too vigorous regime of the insight practices may become vulnerable to a range of fears, anxieties and inadequacies that can prove overwhelming to some. Those practitioners who become morbidly preoccupied with emptiness, show a lack of enthusiasm for living...Failing to experience union or the exaltation that such union engenders, and failing to satisfactorily project their image of perfection onto objects that can then stimulate their intrinsic capacities for love, they become serious, dry and rigidified (emphasis added; pp. 154-155).

Judged from a mental health perspective, it was to Wesley’s credit that he brought together two distinct forms of meditation that were so germane to each other. The fusion of techniques, one derived from the introspective exercises so assiduously practiced by the Oxford Holy Club, and the other, inspired by the Moravian doctrine of the immediate witness, was, in Wesley’s age, a decidedly original and valuable innovation. This can be measured by the fact that in Puritan spirituality, a tradition steeped in relentless self-examination, there was no comparable systematic strategy to combat the infamous and widespread crises of doubt. Most of the spiritual manuals published during the period of Puritan ascendancy were devoted to this very problem (Lovelace, 1989, p. 313; Rubin, 1994, p. 35). The Calvinistic core of Puritan theology demanded that the examination of sin be coupled with a search for the “experiential evidence of regeneration” (Lovelace, 1989, p. 313), the signs of election, and the mutually exclusive force of these opposed endeavors - the one undermining the other - logically dictated the inevitable swings into melancholia. This was precisely Wesley’s own dilemma during his Oxford days, when he courted the double bind of acquiring holy sincerity by keeping careful and honest track of his very failings in this regard. The acute awareness of his shortcomings drove him into increasingly rigid and virtually hypochondriacal regimes of self-scrutiny which, in turn, only exacerbated his uncertainty and brought little respite (Heitzenrater, 1995, p. 53; Rack, 1989, p. 95; Steele, 1994, p. 108). In years to come, Wesley would identify this vicious circle of obsessional defenses as the futility of relying upon one’s own righteousness.
The psychological genius of his later model lay in his insistence that continual watchfulness should commence only when one already has the irrefutable evidence of regeneration. Cohen states that “nothing in seventeenth-century Puritan theory compares to the precision with which John Wesley and his contemporaries ticked off the exact moment of their conversions” (Cohen, 1986, p. 99). For Methodists, the evangelical emphasis on pin-pointing discrete instances of ecstatic conversion had the benefit of ensuring that any further self-examination was securely grounded in a convincing and presumably enduring sense of divine assurance. For this reason, Wesley warned believers against “resting” in incomplete manifestations of the spirit. Nothing less than the unequivocal witness of pardon was necessary to ward off the “perils” of watchfulness.

...let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, of love - and those not delusive, but really from God - long before we have the witness in ourselves, before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits that we have ‘redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins’. Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the preventing grace of God) before we are ‘accepted in the Beloved’, and consequently before we have a testimony of our acceptance. But it is by no means advisable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, ‘Abba, Father!’...without this we cannot retain a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 298).

In sum, the practice of the presence continually accentuated the witness of pardon, thereby granting believers the courage to apprehend their ambivalence with a minimal likelihood of stirring a debilitating depression. In the mid-1930’s, Strachey published a landmark paper in which he claimed that in the analytic situation, the analyst functions for the patient as an auxiliary superego (1934). In effect, the patient identifies with and gradually internalizes the analyst's acceptance of the transference, thereby augmenting the harshness of the patient’s superego. The analyst’s benevolence and
commitment to "objective" self-understanding undermines the inhibiting regime of the archaic superego so that the development of a more lenient conscience gives the patient permission to gain insight. Strachey, of course, located this therapeutic action in the patient's transference on to the analyst. I am arguing that, in Wesley's model, an analogous process unfolded in relation to the individual's transference onto God, a transference shaped by the facilitating influence of the positive superego.

Furthermore, the sense of presence bolstered introspection by enhancing the normally self-evident criteria of a "good conscience" (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 304), which formed the subjective basis of pardon. We have already discussed how the ecstatic manifestation of unitive ideals led to an intensification of conscience. The expansion of individuals' moral sensibilities, so constitutive of the invisible knowledge of God, provided the cognitive-affective basis for a coherent and goal directed examination. It both magnified and illuminated their vision: "And how much sin, if their conscience is awake, may they find cleaving to their actions also?" (I: p. 342).

...the joy of a Christian does not arise from any blindness of conscience, from his not being able to discern good from evil. So far from it that he was an utter stranger to this joy till the eyes of his understanding were opened, that he knew it not till he had spiritual senses, fitted to discern good and evil. And now the eye of the soul waxeth not dim. He was never so sharpsighted before. He has so quick a perception of the smallest thing as is quite amazing to the natural man. As a mote is visible in the sunbeam, so to him that is walking in the light, in the beams of the uncreated sun, every mote of sin is visible. Nor does he close he close the eyes of conscience anymore. That sleep is departed from him. His soul is always broad awake: no more slumber or folding of the hands in rest! he is always standing on the tower, and hearkening what his Lord will say concerning him; and always rejoicing in this very thing, in 'seeing him that is invisible' (I: p. 311).

It is by faith that beholding 'the light of...the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ we perceive, as in a glass, all that is in ourselves, yea the inmost motions of our souls (I: p. 304).
Wesley’s writing suggests that the refinement of self-observation, along with the intensification of conscience, not only makes ambivalence more apparent to consciousness, but also reveals the specific defenses used to suppress it. When the “law unveils sin and brings it into the light of day” (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 77), the ego’s rationalizations become apparent: “being stripped even of the poor plea of ignorance, it loses its excuse, as well as its disguise, and becomes far more odious both to God and man” (emphasis added; quoted in Lindstrom, 1946, p. 77). In ego psychological terms, the insights concerning both impulses (i.e., sin) and defenses (i.e., disguise) is thematically consistent with Wesley’s use of a spatial metaphor and the notion that hidden depths of desire are successively uncovered and brought into awareness.

**Psychic Integration and Characterological Change**

The sense of presence was instrumental in the dynamic discovery and clarification of sin. Yet, however crucial, insight alone cannot promote characterological change. How exactly did the practice of the presence contribute to the process of working through? To answer this question we must firstly consider the axiomatic notion that faith gave believers the strength to overcome the power of sin. According to Wesley, the meditative perpetuation of faith literally expels the force of temptation.

But ‘whosoever is born of God’, while he abideth in faith and love and in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, not only ‘doth not’, but ‘cannot’ thus ‘commit sin’. So long as he thus believeth in God through Christ and loves him, and is pouring out his heart before him, he cannot voluntarily transgress any command of God, either by speaking or acting what he knows God hath forbidden - so long that ‘seed’ which ‘remaineth in him’ (that loving, praying, thankful faith) compels him to refrain from whatsoever he knows to be an abomination in the sight of God (1984-87, I: p. 436).

But so long as he feels nothing but love animating all his thoughts, and words and actions, he is in no danger: he is not only happy, but safe, under the shadow of the Almighty. And, for God’s sake, let him continue in that love as long as he can... (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 338).
As long as one continued to pray, the motivational impetus of unitive ideals minimized the threat of succumbing to temptation. The enormously satisfying effect of the mild alternate state of presence, and the pleasure derived from self-esteem, outweighed the cruder gratification of narcissistic needs and aggressive impulses. This helped to preserve an exclusively observational stance where one could confidently reject the lure of these particular urges. Conversely, any extensive lapse in the practice of the presence ruptured the protective space between bare observation, and the pull towards action. When the willfulness to pray is replaced by the imaginative content of the temptations, the rapid spread of desire diminishes faith, eclipses the sense of presence, and leaves the individual vulnerable to backsliding. This sequence of “dissipation”, or the “scattering of one’s thoughts”, is portrayed in the following extract:

You see the unquestionable process from grace to sin. Thus it goes on, from step to step. (1). The divine seed of loving, conquering faith remains in him that is ‘born of God’. ‘He keepeth himself’, by the grace of God, and ‘cannot commit’ sin; (2). A temptation arises, whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil, it matters not; (3). The spirit of God gives him warning that sin is near, and bids him more abundantly watch unto prayer; (4). He gives way in some degree to the temptation, which now begins to grow pleasing to him; (5). The Holy Spirit is grieved; his faith is weakened, and his love of God grows cold; (6). The Spirit reproves him more sharply, and saith, ‘This is the way; walk thou in it’. (7). He turns away from the painful voice of God and listens to the pleasing voice of the tempter; (8). Evil desire begins and spreads in the soul, till faith and love vanish away; (9). He is then capable of committing outward sin, the power of the Lord being departed from him (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 440).

When dissipation does not devolve directly into sin, believers tend to resort to an obsessive defense, an embattled dialogue between the ego and the punitive introject. As mentioned, this strategy of self-reliance is commonly referred to as “reasoning”. It offers no relief since any attempt to overcome guilt in the absence of the witness produces a cycle of futile appeals and doubt. If one reasons instead of focusing attention on God’s presence, the indisputable testimony of a good conscience cannot intervene to allay the anxiety. For example, Robert Roe writes, “When I reason, I have no power, when I
[exercise the] the faith I have; and when temptations are offered; immediately faith repels them...If I were to reason for a moment I should be miserable" (*Arminian Magazine*, 1784, pp. 247-248).

Even when concentrative focus is successfully maintained, Wesley conceded that the effort to resist temptation still involved some degree of displeasure. To forego the natural inclinations of the will was inherently frustrating, notwithstanding the consolations of faith. Instinctual renunciation was regarded as a subjection, or "crucifixion" of the flesh (Wesley, 1984-87, I: p. 329): "A cross is anything contrary to our will" (II: p. 243). We will recall that during the post-justification period of depression, a tolerable dose of frustration actually makes the ego stronger and more resilient. Essentially, the same principle of spiritual growth applies to the idea of crucifixion.

The Lord then sits upon the soul 'as a refiner's fire', to burn up all the dross thereof. And this is a cross indeed; it is essentially painful; it must be so in the very nature of the thing. The soul cannot be thus torn asunder, it cannot pass through the fire, without pain (II: p. 244).

Bathsheba Hall, for example, states that she "still frequently felt anger" and wished "to feel [her] enemies until they were destroyed" (*Arminian Magazine*, 1781, p. 37). Here again, the ability to experience frustration lucidly, without falling into either extreme of presumption or despair, garnered the approval of the positive superego and promoted a more forgiving attitude towards ambivalence, as well as feelings of mastery and self-control. Thus, Wesley regarded the sufferings of temptation as "an occasion of thanksgiving" because "the consolations of the Holy One so increase as to overbalance them all" (Wesley, 1984-87, III: pp. 165-166).

Although they feel the root of bitterness in themselves, yet are they endued with power from on high to trample it continually under foot, so that it cannot 'spring up to trouble them': insomuch that every fresh assault which they undergo only gives them fresh occasion for praise, of
crying out, ‘Thanks be unto God, who giveth the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord’ (I: p. 236).

In as much as temptations were viewed as being spiritually productive, the evidence suggests that the strengthening of the ego - the development of holiness - was measured in terms of the transformation of impulses. Lee points out that “Wesley anticipates modern psychology in his recognition that instinctive attitudes may be sublimated” (1936, p. 195). In A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Wesley explains how appeals to Christ during the moment of temptation literally alter the impulse by inverting its meaning and emotional content. Pride turns into humility, anger into love, impatience into patience, etc. How can we account for these “sublimations” without falling back on the obsolete hydraulic model of psychic energy?

In between discussing the merits of self denial, and the necessity of unceasing prayer, Wesley writes the following:

The bearing men, and suffering evils in meekness and silence, is the sum of a Christian life. God is the first object of our love; its next office is to bear the defects of others. And we should begin the practice of this amid our own household. We should chiefly exercise our love toward them who most shock, either our way of thinking, or our temper, or our knowledge, or the desire we have that others should be as virtuous as we wish to be ourselves (Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 369).

In this passage, Wesley explains how the temptation of intolerance is used as a means to acquire kindness and patience. The realization of such sentiments requires an adjustment of perspective. Wesley describes an implicit sequence of mental events. A charitable disposition towards others arises only after a contemplation of the source of love: “God is the first object of our love; its next office is to bear the defects of others”. When the sense of presence is foremost in one’s mind, the whole array of positive emotions associated with divine acceptance are magnanimously extended to others. In this particular instance, there is a subtle, yet crucial articulation of a shift in self-observation, one that, in keeping with the practice of the presence, stems from the
super-ego, that is, from the self-observation function that is carried out by conscience (Freud, 1933, pp. 59-60, 66). By prayerfully invoking God’s presence, feelings of intolerance are re-evaluated, in fantasy, from the perspective of the ideal other. Put differently, the experiential witness of pardon allows for an imaginative appreciation of God’s acceptance of the self, even in light of one’s shortcomings. The identification with God’s “objective” stance, a view which transcends the ego’s usual perspective, encourages one to experience others in an equally empathic and forgiving manner.

Thus, the so called sublimation of impulses can be understood as the result of a shift in self-observation which presupposes a turn to the positive superego. Temptation is welcomed as an opportunity for change, an occasion to understand, manage and finally dispose of troublesome inclinations by aligning oneself with the motivating forces of conscience, and by adopting the personified perspective of loved and admired ideals. At first, the procedure is entirely voluntary - a conscious and deliberate act of will.

Consider, for example, the following extract from the journal of John Nelson:

I then began to tell [Mr. Ingham] what I had seen at London under Mr. Wesley’s preaching. He said, He pitied poor Mr. Wesley, for he was ignorant of his own state; and he spoke as if he believed Mr. Wesley to be an unconverted man; at which words my corrupt nature began to stir. But it came to my mind, “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;” and I lifted up my heart to the Lord, and my mind was calmed in a moment (John Nelson, 1842, p. 50).

In stating that his “corrupt nature began to stir”, Nelson shows that he is quite aware of his indignance towards Ingham. Nelson then recalls an appropriate verse of scripture, and lifts up his heart to the Lord. His decision to actively repudiate his anger by turning to God restores his composure: “and I was calmed in a moment”.

When practice of the presence becomes automatized, or “ceaseless”, the shift in self-observational perspective also occurs automatically and therefore proceeds independently of conscious deliberation. Long term characterological change, or Sanctification, is achieved when the dictates of conscience are stably incorporated into
the ego as preconscious schemas. Ideally, these schemas are durable and comprehensive in scope - they are applied globally.

One commends me. Here is a temptation to pride. But instantly my soul is humbled before God. And I feel no pride, of which I am as sure as that pride is not humility.

A man strikes me. Here is a temptation to anger. But my heart overflows with love. And I feel no anger at all, of which I can be as sure as that love and anger are not the same.

A woman solicits me. Here is temptation to lust. But in the instant I shrink back. And I feel no desire or lust at all, of which I am as sure as that my hand is hot or cold...In the instant the soul repels the temptation, and remains filled with pure love.

And the difference is still plainer when I compare my present state with my past, wherein I felt temptation and corruption too (emphasis added; Wesley and Wesley, 1981, p. 352).

An example of an automatized turn to the superego is found in Richard Moss’ autobiographical narrative. By Methodist standards, Moss’ spiritual development is exemplary in the way it represents, in sequence, all of the stages described by Wesley. Early in the narrative, Moss repeatedly tries to restrain his carnal desires - drinking, gambling, falling into “ill company” and associating with “loose women” (Arminian Magazine, 1798, p. 48) - but his inability to remain consistently “resolute” drives him into despair. After acquainting himself with the Methodists, and listening to Wesley preach, he experiences a desolation, and ritually mourns his way towards an ecstatic conversion. Justification is followed by inflation which gives way to a depressive crisis of doubt. Finally, another unitive ecstasy persuades him not only of his forgiveness, but that the witness of pardon will be abiding. At this juncture, Moss begins practicing the presence of God: “I did all my business without distraction. Nothing interrupted or hindered my intercourse with God” (p. 55). In time, he receives a vision of the trinity, which signifies his sanctification (p. 56). The narrative comes to close with the story of how he overcomes his reluctance to preach.
...I walked over one day with Mr. Downes, to Burnup-field. I began to speak with him; but he said, "Pray, do not speak, for I want to meditate by myself." Soon after that scripture was strongly fixt upon my mind, wherein Mary is said, to have washed Christ's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. And presently I was pressed in spirit, to preach on those words. I was surprised, having never had such a thought in my life. I strove to put it out of my mind, but could not: It followed me all the way; and I saw the meaning of the words, and of the whole passage, as I have never done before (pp. 56-57).

When they arrived at Burnup-field, Downes "preached as usual" (p. 57), but was taken ill the next day. Downes convinces Moss to preach in his stead, and with great trepidation, Moss presented his discourse on the meaning of Mary's ministrations. To his surprise, he "found much of the Love of God in speaking, and no want either of matter or words" (p. 57). In light of Moss' immanent turn to preaching as a vocation, we may assume that he identified with Downes and valued his companionship. Moss' attempt to initiate a dialogue is abruptly refused by the preacher, who prefers to meditate in silence. It is significant that Moss does not mention any feelings of hurt, disappointment, or anger in being rebuffed. In short, he appears not to have been consciously "tempted". On the other hand, the content of scripture which was immediately and "strongly fixed upon his mind" is rather telling. Moss' reaction consists of an association to Mary humbly washing the feet of Christ, and wiping them with her hair. The spontaneous image of Mary's pious subservience allows us to infer the missing gap in Moss' response. Keep in mind that according to Wesley, when temptations assail those who are only partially perfected, they must willfully resume the practice of the presence to ensure that temptation will give way to holy sentiments. According to the logic of increasing grace, that is, the movement from imperfect to perfect or automatized prayer, if Moss had found himself in a similar situation earlier on in his development, his wounded narcissism would have intervened directly and forced him to deliberately intensify his prayer. In the present instance, however, feelings of indignance and hurt are by-passed. The shift in observational perspective is instantaneous. It is triggered reflexively in the preconscious. What is more,
not only is Mary’s submissiveness a corrective to the initial impulse, it also preserves Moss’ positive identification with Downes, the preacher, and accomplishes an important work of sublimation. As the two men continue walking to the field, Moss silently elaborates upon the content of the inspiration, feeling strangely compelled “to preach on those words”. Guilt and resentment do not compromise his push towards autonomy. The following day, Moss delivers his sermon publicly, and this marks the beginning of his career as a circuit preacher.

**Autobiographical Accounts of Watching and Praying**

Unfortunately, in the Methodist autobiographical narratives, most references to the practice of the presence and introspection do not provide a great deal of information. They are typically brief and encapsulated. This has to do with the fact that the richest sources of personal data are the relatively condensed life histories which appeared in *The Arminian Magazine*. Although more elaborated day to day entries taken from diaries were occasionally published, the narrative length of the standard format tended to preclude lengthy accounts of the relation between meditation and spiritual growth. As a result, extensively detailed depictions of meditative experiences are more or less exceptional. The abbreviated descriptions, however, are extremely common in the literature. Furthermore, given Albin’s finding that 33.2% of Methodist sanctification ecstasies are represented as having occurred in the context of “various types of prayer” (1985, p. 278), we may conclude that “watching and praying” was taken seriously by a substantial number of Wesley’s adherents. Let us examine the data.

After a short lived crisis of doubt which followed his justification, Thomas Hanby’s “former peace, love and joy” returned to him in a moment (*Arminian Magazine*, 1780, p. 481). The distress of losing the witness made him appreciate the necessity of holding fast to his faith.

*My sore trial taught me more watchfulness. After this I walked in great love, and peace, for near two years, buying up every opportunity for*
prayer, hearing and reading... Oh! what a struggle had I between my unfitness and my love for God (pp. 481-482).

This extract is a fairly typical example of the generic and unelaborated style of description. Hanby informs us that his trial encouraged him to be more watchful and contemplative. In doing so, he comprehends the duality of his love and his "unfitness", or sinfulness. A similar pattern is seen in John Mason's narrative, only in this case, he lingered in a post-conversion "darkness" for five years before recovering the "peace and love of God" (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 653). He writes:

I was watchful, and spent much time in prayer: the word of God was my daily companion, and it was spirit and life to my soul. My faith was now strengthened: my love to God and man increased abundantly. The Lord held me by my hand, and fed me with the bread of life. He gave me to drink of the water of the river of life, and I was happy all the day long. Such was the blessing I continually enjoyed, I lived near God, keeping Jesus in my view, as my life, my pattern, and my all (emphasis added, p. 653).

In a post-script to his autobiographical narrative, William Hunter gives a short summary of the events which preceded his sanctification. Here again, unequivocal references to watchfulness and prayer are presented without any intimate description of the vicissitudes he underwent before he was perfected: "It would be tedious to relate the various exercises I went through for several years..." (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 596). Nevertheless, he states:

[After being justified] it pleased Infinite Wisdom to open a new scene to me: I began to be exercised with many uncommon temptations, and felt my own heart ready to comply with the same... I began to call in question the work of grace in my soul. O, the pain and anguish I felt for weeks together! Yet all this while I was very earnest with the Lord, my soul clave to him and I often said, Though he Slay me, yet will I trust in him. Under this exercise I learned several things: As first, that my nature was not so much changed as I thought: I found many things in me which opposed the grace of God; so that without continual watching and prayer, I was capable of committing the very same sins which I had been guilty of before. 2. I began to be more acquainted with Satan's devices, and found power from God to resist them. 3. I had very affecting views of Christ, as my great high-priest who was touched with a feeling of all my infirmities.
4. The scriptures were precious to me, and I found great comfort in reading them. And lastly, I was conscious of a need of a far greater change in my nature than I had yet experienced...yet I found my mind at times deeply engaged in prayer to be saved from all sin (pp. 594-595).

Note that Hunter “had very affecting views of Christ”, who was touched with a feeling of all [his] infirmities”. Here the sense of loving presence is clearly personified and experienced as an empathic self-object who is both moved by, and appreciatively supportive of Hunter’s efforts to subdue his corruptions. For Charles Perronet, the practice of the presence also takes the form of a highly personalized object relationship:

I talked with him; he seemed to look upon me with precious smiles; became my delightful abode; gave me promises, and made all my existence glory in himself, fixing all my desires upon his Love, and the glorious display of his own person. I could relish only Jesus: to have been a moment with him, I would have given up all besides. I was so engaged with Christ, that the thought he had been despised on earth, drowned my eyes in tears: and the thought that he now possessed all fullness, so satisfied my largest desires that I had no choice whether to exist or not: whatever was myself was no more. It seemed to make no part of my happiness. All centered in Jesus and him alone (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 202).

In this instance, the personification of presence is imaginatively rooted in the humanity of Christ. Perronet speaks to Jesus, who, in return, grants him “precious smiles” and “promises”. Through the play of mutuality, which fosters trust, self-regard and gratitude, Perronet experiences a profoundly empathic tie to Jesus, whose sufferings move Perronet to tears. The intense involvement with the presence of Christ goes hand in hand with the crucial shift in self-observation, a movement away from the perspective of the self to that of the ideal other. Because Perronet’s own narcissistic needs for mirroring and support are taken care of, there is no mention of any anxious or morbid self-involvement, only an eager devotion to Jesus: “All centered in Jesus and him alone”. Indeed, Perronet’s relationship to Christ is so all-encompassing that the practice of the presence is extended into his dream life as well:
I seemed in my sleep to be often with Christ. I carried him as an infant in my arms. I heard him speak. I walked with him, and saw him work miracles. I helped to support him in his agony: saw him crucified and was crucified with him. I saw the approaches of the last day, and the trumpet’s found. Another time we all stood before Jesus. I cried in an agony to be made fit. I was made so and rejoiced (p. 211).

William Carvosso’s spiritual memoir contains several references to watching and praying. In presenting the “remarks” of a certain “Mr. Bramwell”, we see how Carvosso aspired “to be taken into God” (1835, p. 122), which he understood as a state of ceaseless prayer:

...The following remarks of Mr. Bramwell are striking, and deserve particular notice: - “Justification is great; to be cleansed is greater; but what is justification, or being cleansed, compared with being taken into God? The world, the noise of self, - all is gone; and the mind bears the full stamp of God’s image. Here, we talk and walk, and live; doing all in Him and to Him; - continual prayer, and turning all into Christ, in every house, in every company; all things by him, from Him, and to Him” (pp. 122-123).

Carvosso continues with his own commentary:

O! I long to be more filled with God. Lord, stir me up to be more in earnest! I want to be more like Jesus. My soul thirsteth for Thee, O God. I see nothing will do but being continually filled with Thy presence and glory. I know all that Thou hast is mine, but I want to feel a closer union. Lord, increase my faith! (p. 123).

Carvosso’s description of faith clearly presupposes the practice of the presence and the use of spiritual senses:

I see if I would get good every where, it must be by striving to keep my outward senses under subjection to those which grace has opened in the soul. By faith I realize the presence of my great Prophet; my ear attends to that still small voice which is not heard in the hurry and tumult of our nature; my eyes gaze on the Divine perfections displayed in the whole economy of nature and grace; and hereby I begin a life that never ends, and obtain enjoyments which shall increase to all eternity. Faith does not merely wait for Divine influence, but actually lays hold of it, as well as on every other purchased and promised blessing; yea, by simple faith, promises and promiser are made all our own...I am desirous of learning
his way more perfectly, that I may daily make sensible objects subservient to the realities which faith reveals...(pp. 141).

By “striving to keep his outward senses under subjection to those which grace has opened in the soul”, Carvosso shows that he is actively applying or assimilating the unitive abstraction of presence to the particularities of his sense perception. He makes “sensible objects subservient to the realities which faith reveals”. Emphasis is placed on the voluntary aspect of the exercise. “Divine influence”, which includes inspirations of conscience - the “still small voice” of the “great prophet” - is deliberately invoked through meditation. In line with the idea of co-operative grace, Carvosso states that he does not “merely wait for Divine influence”, but willingly summons the sense of presence by “actually laying hold of it”.

As with Hunter and Perronet, Carvosso’s experience of the presence is markedly personified. A good conscience, which is expressed as an “approving smile”, engenders basic trust, vitality, and confidence.

He doth now reward my poor services with, His approving smile and continual presence; teaching me in ignorance, strengthening me in weakness, supporting me in trials, blessing my feeble endeavors and labors, fighting for me against every enemy, and making all things work together for my good. O my soul, what mercies! what boundless love! (p. 159).

The practice of the presence is coupled with introspection: “Some days before this, my faith was severely tried; and not without a cause. O what a necessity there is for more self-denial! Lord, keep me ever watching!” (p. 134). In this way, Carvosso is enabled to participate in the “mystery of faith” wherein sin is simultaneously comprehended in light of God’s pardon.

But this is the mystery of faith, that while I have on one hand a painful consciousness of my deserts as a sinner, I have on the other, at the same moment, “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin.” I thank God through Jesus Christ. He is “the way, the truth, and the life:” we must
ever bear in mind, that we can only be saved unto the uttermost while we
“come unto God by Him.” (p. 266).

Because Robert Roe’s autobiographical narrative includes dated insertions from a
personal journal, he provides a somewhat more detailed disclosure of the difficulties and
successes of his meditative experiences. The following extract indicates that he used the
practice of the presence, the moment to moment renewal of faith, in tandem with
self-examination:

I see plainly we are to come to God by simple faith, and expect grace
when we want it, and use it when we have it, day by day, hour by hour,
minute by minute...I feel this day the clear witness of God’s Spirit, that I
am his, and at the same time I have a sense of inbred sin (Arminian
Magazine, 1784, pp. 360-361).

Roe’s introspection frequently gets the better of him, and his emotional calm is
disrupted by “trials” and “temptations”. For example, he writes,

Of late I have been tossed to and fro. Sometimes I have been happy; at
other times, almost in despair. Trials from the world; temptations from
the enemy; and above all, the evils of my own heart, wearied out my
spirits: add to this, the weak state of my nerves, which often render me
incapable of recollection, so that I cannot pursue my business, or properly
judge of the state of my soul. Satan always takes advantage of these
seasons, and when I lay hold on the promises, he tells me, they are not for
thee. Thou art fallen from grace, thou hast sinned away the day of grace,
and wilt be damned. I have sunk into despair. Sometimes I would fast,
and use all kinds of mortification, to keep under my corruption; but when
I found them rise again with equal strength, I was ready to give up all (p.
81).

In permitting himself to feel and explore his ambivalence, Roe undergoes a rapid
oscillation of mood states. Strong resistances, which manifest as self-accusations and
doubt, create sufficient anxiety to sabotage his contemplation, thus leaving him
“incapable of recollection”. Hoping to rekindle the sense of presence, Roe falls back on
the standard procedures of ritual mourning. When these prove to be equally ineffective,
he lapses into despair. On other occasions, however, he is able to quell his ruminations.
I was very comfortable, till in placing my books I began to think they were bound too elegantly for a Christian, and fell into reasoning. I had no sooner given way to this, than Satan came in as a flood, and I was almost distracted. The 29th. I was a little comforted; but beginning to reason about speaking, I was soon miserable. I then resolved to cry unto God, and take no thought about speaking. My temptations and misery were gone in a moment, and I had sweet peace and love...April 19th. Since I wrote last, my experience and trials have been various. But this I ever find, when I yield to reasoning and unbelief, the enemy gets the advantage; but if I look to Jesus by faith, it brings present power, peace and love (p. 417).

Distracted by the worldly elegance of his books, as well as the prospect of preaching, Roe is drawn into an obsessive debate with his own tormented conscience. He is compelled to reason with the devil. But in this particular instance, instead of fruitlessly ruminating, Roe is able to follow Wesley’s instructions: “I then resolved to cry unto God”. By reinstating the sense of presence through simple prayer (i.e., looking to Jesus by faith), he recovers his emotional equilibrium.

**Post-Conversion Uses of the Sense of Presence**

Although Methodist autobiographers provided only encapsulated references to watching and praying, descriptions of the particular uses of the sense of presence - all of which occur after conversion, and some of which are based on spontaneously occurring ecstasies - are a more informative source of data. I have included this material in the present section because it readily demonstrates how the intellectual vision of presence facilitated the on-going work of the positive superego, helping believers to endure sickness and loss, to overcome the anxieties of preaching, and to engage in personal and moral problem solving.

In her paper, *Notes on Psycho-analysis and Integrative Living* (1947), Brierly argues that therapeutic uses of the sense of divine presence can be understood as superego phenomena. She cites two experiences of a woman in her late teens. In one these, when the woman tried to resolve a problem by surrendering her self to the will of God, she received an ecstatic “blessing”: “her consciousness was suffused with a feeling
of peace and beatitude which seemed like the healing gift of a transcendent power" (p. 74). In the second experience, she was “faced with an exhausting task to which she felt inadequate”. After spending a few minutes in a “concentrated prayer for strength”, she received another blessing. “This time waves of energy seemed to well up within her, she went to the dreaded task refreshed and renewed and carried it through without difficulty”. Brierly explains that both of these events “can be interpreted in terms of the modification of intra-psychic economy”.

The first can be thought of as an experience of definitive object-love relationship between ego and super-ego ideal, a revival of infantile beatitude, and the second as a release of id energy for sublimatory use sanctioned by the super-ego (p. 74).

In much the same way that the sense of presence diminished the physical and mental sufferings of the dying, when Methodists were taken ill, they were frequently comforted by feelings of communion with the divine. William Carvosso writes,

I have been confined to bed four days by an inflammation in my leg. But though the Lord has afflicted my body, my mind has been in perfect peace. My soul has mounted on the wings of contemplation, and I have enjoyed sweet communion with God. His presence makes my paradise (1835, p. 124)

In a rare variation of divine presence, Robert Roe describes a unitive encounter with a “guardian angel”, which was the spirit of a friend.

The following night I was very ill; but suddenly felt a kindred spirit, with dear ----. The love of God, as soon as I thought of her, warmed my heart, and healed my sorrow. I thought it was impossible to feel such union with any who are in the body. I therefore concluded she was dead; and that her spirit acted as a guardian angel upon mine. I rejoiced at the indisposition of my body, and the expectation of soon following her. The next morning I was tempted to reason; but in the afternoon I found a praying spirit for my dear friends; and the more I prayed, and exercised faith on Jesus, the more I felt heaven opened in my heart (Arminian Magazine, 1784, p. 307).

Just prior to his falling ill, Roe became unhappily estranged from his father who condemned his son’s involvement with the Methodists (p. 305-306). Also, on the night
preceding his illness, Roe ministered to a “sick woman”, and the encounter left a serious impression upon him: “This was a great cross to me” (p. 307). Although there is no direct evidence to suggest that Roe’s sickness was hysterical in nature, we may infer that the stresses of recent events - guilt over his father’s disappointment, and the unsettling reminder of human frailty - contributed to his state of mind while he lay convalescing. Themes of bereavement show that he had become susceptible to fears of dying. The ecstasy itself is compensatory in that it appears to be triggered by a depression (i.e. “sorrow”) associated with the illness. The unexpected intensity of the sense of presence convinces him that his friend must have been deceased, for it seemed “impossible to feel such union with any who are in the body”. Because his illness instills a fear of mortality, the comforting sense of union with a “kindred spirit”, one who has already passed on, augments his separation anxiety: “I rejoiced at the indisposition of my body, and the expectation of soon following her”.

Benjamin Rhodes recounts a presence ecstasy which occurred while he was still a youth.

At about twelve years of age, I took a walk one evening into a large, thick wood not far from town. I left the path, and wandered in the thickest part of it, till I was entirely lost. Night began to close in upon me, and I did not know which way to turn my face towards home. It soon became quite dark: I then gave over rambling, and intended to have remained there till the morning, when I hoped to find my way out. In this situation I found my former impressions begin to return with much sweetness. My soul was put in prayer; I was deeply sensible of the presence of God; my heart overflowed with penitential tenderness; and, under a deep sense of my own unworthiness, and of his goodness, mercy, and love, I sung and prayed with much fervor: yea, I was so thankful that the Lord had found me, while lost in a wood, that I would not for all the world have missed such an opportunity (Arminian Magazine, 1779, pp. 358-359).

The ecstasy, which is evoked through prayer, eases Rhodes’ fear and loneliness, giving him the patience to wait until he is eventually retrieved by his father. The experiences documented by Roe and Rhodes illustrate how the sense of presence
mitigated separation anxiety. This phenomenon is consistent with the fact that such ecstasies often transpired during periods of loss or separation from family and friends. For example, when Zechariah Yewdall first became an itinerant preacher in South Wales, the Lord “condescended to visit [him] in the most gracious manner” (Arminian Magazine, 1795, p. 266). The visitation filled his heart “with an abundance of peace and joy in believing”. Yewdall explains that the ecstasy was well timed. His departure into the field had “overwhelmed [him] with sorrow” since he was now without the “counsel and support” of his friends. Yewdall experienced his longing as a demonic temptation: “The enemy made cruel and painful suggestions”. Even so, he states that the Lord “relieved” him in his time of distress.

After losing his wife, William Carvosso lived with his son Benjamin, who had, unlike the rest of his siblings, remained unmarried (1835, p. 57). Benjamin was eventually appointed to a preaching circuit, and forced to leave his father behind. In a letter written one day after his son departed, Carvosso states that he prayed to God to assist him in his grief: “and [God] so filled my soul with his love, that I have been happy ever since. I am resigned to God’s will...” (p. 57). Later he received notice from Benjamin that he had been requested to undertake a foreign mission, one that would take him even farther away from home (p. 103-105). The news left Carvosso stricken with an “indescribable burden”, a conflict between his love for his son, and his belief that Benjamin had been truly “called of God”. Carvosso writes,

But on one occasion soon after, while I was in secret pondering over the painful subject, thinking of the separation, and of the various privations and dangers attending such a work, just at the moment when nature shrunk back, and I felt as if I could not consent to make the sacrifice, I seemed suddenly surrounded by Divine presence, and a voice said to me, “I gave my son to die for thee; and canst thou not give thy son to go an errand for me? I will bring him to thee again.” I cried out, “Take him, Lord, take him!” The Lord conquered me by his undying love, and never did I offer any thing to God more willingly. Indeed it appeared to me at that time, that, if I had a thousand sons, I would cheerfully have given them all up to
God for such a work. Nor have I since changed my views, or had one uneasy thought about him. At the time when I felt the wonderful deliverance, and the Father of mercies Himself condescended to reason with me, it seemed for the moment, I could not tell if I was in the body or out of the body. Time appeared only a moment, compared with that eternity which was opened to my mind; and it was in the full assurance of faith I offered him up, believing that, if I should see him no more in time, we should quickly meet in heaven; seeing the Lord told me He would bring him to me again...When the time came for his departure...and [I] took my final leave of him, I was so supported above myself, that I was perfectly calm and recollected...God has united us, in Him we subsist as one soul, and no “power can make us twain” (pp. 104-106).

The extract reveals how the sense of presence functions as an ecstatic manifestation of conscience, thereby assisting Carvosso to resolve a highly charged emotional conflict. The fact that he pondered the “painful subject” while he was in “secret”, indicates that Carvosso utilized the technique of ritual mourning in order to receive divine guidance. The onset of the sense of presence is accompanied by an interior dialogue in which the voice of God articulates an ideal dictate, a succinct moral analogy that clinches Carvosso’s decision to relinquish his son: “I gave my son to die for thee; and canst thou not give thy son to go an errand for me? I will bring him to thee again”. Here again we observe the imaginative shift in self-observation from the perspective of the ego to that of the ideal other. Carvosso considers God’s sacrificial relationship to his own son, and willingly concedes. In earnestly consenting to his ideal, Carvosso’s joy creates a greater sense of trust, and he is enabled to entertain the pleasing prospect of reunion, either in this life, or in the next. The satisfaction he experiences in abiding by his conscience, and voicing his decision, heightens his euphoria and gratitude: “The Lord conquered me by his undying love, and never did I offer anything to God more willingly”. Interestingly, the ecstasy appears to climax with a brief interlude of trance - Carvosso states that, for a moment, he was not certain whether he was still in his body. We do not have sufficient evidence to pin-point any specific resistance that dictates this hypnotic turn. Perhaps some measure of sorrow felt to be inconsistent with the dominant
emotional meaning of the experience led to a momentary defensive lapse in sense perception. In the end, however, Carvosso portrays the outcome in an entirely unambiguous light. His grief is replaced by the gratification of his convictions, and the consolations of unitive thinking: “God has united us; in him we subsist as one soul, and ‘no power can make us twain’”.

As a source of inner sustainment, courage, conviction, and creative inspiration, there is no question that the sense of presence gave ample support in the manifold labors of traveling preachers. Like so many other fledgling preachers, Zechariah Yewdall had difficulty finding the resolve to overcome a great reluctance to speak in public. He writes, “The first pulpit I went into was at Pudrey Chapel; the Lord was pleased to favor me with such a sense of his presence, as dispelled my fears, and gave me liberty in speaking to people” (Arminian Magazine, 1795, p. 218). When confronted by an “unruly” mob who tried to obstruct his passage into a chapel in Monmouth, Yewdall relied on the practice of the presence to subdue his fear. Note that his description underscores how the empathic shift in self-observation helped to preserve his composure.

When I went first into the pulpit, my mind was much exercised; but in a little time I found serene calm in the midst of the tumult, and a firm reliance upon the protection of the Almighty, especially while I was beseeching him to forgive and have mercy upon those thoughtless men, who knew not what they were doing. A friend conducted me home safely, and I was unfeignedly thankful that the Lord had given me a heart to pity and pray for my enemies...I found how much better it was to be persecuted for righteousness sake, than to follow a lawless multitude to do evil” (p. 268).

In addition to taking on the perspective of the other, the final sentence of the extract shows that Yewdall’s bravery, his willingness to risk attack and suffer ridicule, was further reinforced by the self-esteem derived from living up to his ideals in the midst of such danger.

Because verbal and intellectual inspirations of conscience are an integral part of the alternate state of presence, Methodist preachers, like Thomas Olivers, sometimes felt
themselves prompted to speak on themes and ideas which they believed were passively and spontaneously mediated by the spirit. On one occasion, while traveling as a circuit preacher in Scotland, Olivers awoke in the early hours of the morning and began to “call upon God”. “In an instant”, he writes, “I was filled with such sweetness as I had not tasted for a long time” (Arminian Magazine, 1779, p. 142). Olivers states that the enduringly positive influence of this “visitation”, was tied to an equally remarkable infusion of grace given to him while he addressed his congregation.

The effect of this visitation lasted a considerable time, and was of greater use to me, both in preaching and living. Some time after, I was preaching on the barren fig tree, a few words proceeded from me in such a manner, as I can scarce describe. The congregation seemed as if they had been electrified. One who had long been bowed down, cried out again; and said afterwards, that under those words, she felt as if she was dropping into hell. I have since thought that if the word was always attended with such power, very few would stand before it (p. 142).

A particularly fascinating example of the courage individuals derived from the sense of presence is found in John Haime’s narrative. In this case, the blissfulness of divine presence is used to sustain what amounts to an adaptive denial of extreme anxiety. Convinced of his invulnerability, Haime is literally swept away in manic exaltation during a brutal military encounter with the French army.

For my part, I stood the hottest fire of the enemy, for above seven hours. But I told my comrades, “The French have no ball made, that will kill me this day”. After about seven hours, a cannon ball killed my horse under me. An officer cried aloud, “Haime where is your God now?” I answered, “Sir, he is here with me; and he will bring me out of this battle”. Presently a cannon ball took off his head. My horses fell upon me, and some cried out, “Haime is gone!” But I replied, “He is not gone yet”. I soon disengaged myself and walked on praising God. I was exposed both to the enemy and to our own horse; but that did not discourage me at all: for I knew I had the God of Jacob with me. I had a long way to go through all our horse, the balls flying on every side. And all the way, multitudes lay bleeding, groaning, dying, or just dead. Surely I was in the fiery furnace; but it did not singe a hair of my head. The hotter the battle grew, the more strength was given me. I was as full of joy as I could contain (Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 262).
My heart was filled with love, peace and joy, more than tongue can express. I was in a new world! I could truly say, “Unto you that believe he is present”. I stood the fire of the enemy seven hours (p. 217).

We have previously seen how William Carvosso used the sense of presence to assuage the sadness of being separated from his son. Equally important, however, is the fact that the ecstasy also served as a vehicle or manifestation of conscience. The emotional power of the ideal strengthened Carvosso’s will, and gave closure to a painful moral dilemma. Another example of the relation between ecstatic presence and moral problem solving is provided by John Cennick. Although an early follower of Methodism, Cennick’s Calvinist leanings kept him from fully embracing several of Wesley’s core theological tenets, including the doctrine of Christian perfection, and Wesley’s insistence that conversion did not guarantee “final perseverance”, or the impossibility of backsliding (Towsland, 1957, 106-107). Cennick was also very skeptical of the eccentricity of “scenes”, the panic attacks, convulsive seizures and paralyses which Wesley, during his ministry at Fetter Lane, regarded as the “work of God” (p. 106). Torn between his allegiance to Wesley, and his own personal convictions, Cennick sought to resolve the conflict in the following way:

One day I walked by myself into the wood, and wept before the Savior, and got again a sensible feeling of His presence and determined thenceforward to preach nothing but Him and his righteousness. And so all fits and crying out ceased wherever I came, and a blessing attended my labors. Only this opened a way for Mr. Wesley and me to jar and dispute often, because, firstly, I could not believe or preach Perfection, and, secondly, I resolved to mention only the righteousness of Christ and the final perseverance of souls truly converted (quoted in Towsland, 1957, p. 107).

Like Carvosso, Cennick deliberately induced the ecstasy through ritual mourning. He proceeded to find a secluded spot in the woods, and exacerbated his distress by weeping and appealing to Christ. Upon acquiring a “sensible feeling” of the savior’s presence, Cennick’s resistance to taking a moral stance that genuinely reflected his own
convictions, was successfully overcome. In deciding to follow the directives of conscience, Cennick’s self-esteem and sense of integrity allowed him to tolerate his guilt. In short, he was enabled to comfortably assert his autonomy. The experience left him confident enough to “jar and dispute” with Wesley, to reassert a previously inhibited set of religious values, and to preach the gospel in accordance with his beliefs.

Theoretic Summary

Anticipating the current consensus of writers in the psychology of religion, Wesley understood that the revelatory character of conversion ecstasies were not wholly transformative in and of themselves. If long term characterological change was to be achieved, ecstatic insights needed to be systematically engaged, elaborated, and consistently carried forward in worldly practice. For this reason, he recommended the simultaneous use of two meditative exercises, the practice of the presence and introspection. The combination of these techniques were theologically aligned with the interdependence of faith and repentance, both of which were the necessary prerequisites of gradual sanctification.

The practice of the presence, a discursive exercise involving the imaginative contemplation of God’s immanence, was predicated on the memory of the original conversion ecstasies. The technique was a way of preserving and prolonging the state of mind associated with the new birth. More specifically, because all forms of action were regarded as expressions of prayer, the emotional and cognitive content of unitive ideals, the foundation of Christian conscience, were applied to one’s daily affairs, where, ideally, they would eventually be stabilized as permanent dispositions.

The practice of the presence induced a mild alternate state of consciousness, comparable to what Maslow calls the plateau experience. Two aspects of this state are crucial for understanding how the practice could bring about the personality changes associated with sanctification. Firstly, the unitive dimension of the sense of presence, as both a form of personal communion, and as an abstraction that organized one’s
perception of the cosmos, provided a holding environment, a space of psychic safety where self-examination could proceed with minimal likelihood of incurring a depression. Secondly, the alternate state was based on reverie, so that core ego functions remained intact. Consequently, individuals could maintain the mental flexibility necessary to balance the continual "day dream" of divine immanence with lucid introspection.

In essence, we may say that the practice of the presence was, in fact, an intensification of conscience. This simple formulation illuminates what I have referred to as the synergistic tie between watching and praying. In as much as the practice of the presence perpetuated the witness of pardon, believers in possession of a good conscience were now far more able to withstand the anxieties and depressive reactions that typically accompanied the apprehension of sin. The "shield" of faith permitted an intensive moment to moment examination of impulses resistant to a fuller realization of altruistic values. Also, in as much as the alternate state was a symbolic, that is, personified embodiment of conscience, it provided self-evident criteria for introspection. In fact, Wesley held that an awakened conscience not only brought one's sins into the light of day, it also revealed their "disguises", or the rationalizations used to deny hypocrisy. Thus, Wesley delineated an insight model of spiritual development, one that presupposed a depth psychological metaphor, a penetration into the "depth" and "ground" of one's heart.

Even though the practice of the presence minimized the psychological threats of introspection, resistances occurred all the same. Wesley identified two common reactions which can be regarded as unitive distortions: presumption and despair. In the former case, practitioners experienced a subtle form of inflation which involved a denial of the significance of sin. Despair, on the other hand, was characterized by an exaggerated preoccupation with the seemingly unbridgeable gap between one's own corruptions and the "height and glory of God". Here, the hope of acquiring holiness was distorted by the psychic residue of evangelical nurture. With the return of the bad object,
the promise of perfection - the confident hopefulness that stems from an unconflicted ideal - devolved into an impossible authoritarian demand. Wesley's advice to those who found themselves stymied by doubt was straightforward. Instead of "reasoning with the devil", a phrase which signified an obsessive and ultimately futile debate between the ego and the punishing superego, believers should resume the practice of the presence in order to revive the witness of pardon.

Because the practice of the presence maintained the ego's rapport with the loved and admired ideals of conscience, the motivating impetus of the latter gave "power" to overcome the temptations of sin. The important gratifications that accompanied the alternate state of presence, not the least of which was the ego's sense of satisfaction in living up to its ideals, were more compelling than those derived from the guilt ridden impulses of sin (i.e. worldly pride, indiscriminate sexual longings, anger, intolerance etc.). The frustrations of instinctual renunciation were consciously endured, but attenuated by the pleasure of self-esteem. As structures of impulse control were continually built up in the ego, individuals became more and more able to tolerate and contain psychic pain and tension. This process was due, in large measure, to the self-regulatory functions of the positive superego. As I have shown, the sense of presence helped Methodists to endure the ravages of sickness, the grief of loss, the anxieties of preaching, and the conflicts of moral problem solving. Temptations were thus regarded as welcomed opportunities for spiritual growth. The insight obtained in observing versus acting on one's impulses, promoted characterological change in tandem with the imaginative dimension of the practice of the presence. In other words, the meaning and consequences of undesirable impulses were re-evaluated, in fantasy, from the perspective of the ideal other, from the superego's point of view. Long term characterological transformation, or sanctification, corresponded to the automatization of this shift in self-observation. Sanctification, therefore, was characterized as the perfection of contemplation, a state of ceaseless, uninterrupted prayer.
Psychoanalytic anthropology, the study of the relationship between cultural forms and the unconscious, was brought into existence with the publication of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913). What Freud considered to be the origins of human social structure and cultural life, that is, organized communal existence, the incest taboo, and the beginnings of religion, are ingeniously reconstructed along deductive lines similar to the method employed in his individual case histories. By designating the Oedipus complex as the impetus for the creation of cultural forms, and by charting an evolution of religious ideas that reflects the collective need to manage the pressures of oedipal rebellion and guilt, Freud established a “defense” conception of culture which became axiomatic in later streams of psychoanalytic anthropology. For writers such as Roheim (1971), Kardiner (1946), Whiting (1961) and Spiro (1965), collective symbolism reproduces and reinforces optimal compromise formations between the ego and the unconscious. Whereas the actual clinical practice of psychoanalysis is aimed, ideally, at the resolution of neurotic conflict, prevailing psychoanalytic theories of the nature and uses of cultural symbolism tend to highlight themes of conflict management.

Although highly useful as a methodological tool, the defense conception poses theoretic limitations if it is taken as the primary metaphor for a working definition of culture. For example, while conceding that symbol systems may function as defenses, Obeyesekere holds that the foregoing writers, in emphasizing regressive themes, implicitly assume an isomorphism between cultural symbols and symptoms (1990, p. 19). From his field work in Sri Lanka, Obeyesekere describes the experiences of an ecstatic priestess who, through an emotional identification with, and the ritual manipulation of cultural symbolism, transformed and transcended the “archaic terrors of childhood” in a manner comparable to the “working through” of unconscious fixations in
clinical psychoanalysis (pp. 11-12). If cultural symbols are capable of effecting such resolutions, the defense conception needs to be augmented by a more inclusive theory. In other words, how can that which is in itself symptomatic contribute to the resolution of symptoms?

Furthermore, the restriction of our understanding of cultural symbols to the defense metaphor invokes a subtle ethnocentric and rationalistic bias. Obeyesekere challenges Devereux’s contention that ethnic symbolism may promote social “adjustment”, but not “introspective awareness” or “curative insight” (Obeyesekere, 1990, p. 21). The latter argues that a shaman provides a mode of treatment which, at most, “leads to a repatterning of defenses”, “a changeover from idiosyncratic conflicts and defenses to culturally conventional conflicts and ritualized symptoms” (1980, pp. 17-18). Thus, insights that constitute a “psychiatric cure” are reserved for the analytic session. Obeyesekere argues that this position raises an “embarrassing” implication: “one has to assume that prior to the invention of psychoanalysis, all of us went our ways in the abysmal dark of ignorance...” (1990, p. 21). Clinical psychoanalysis promotes a specific kind of reflexivity in the form of rational self-reflection and is a product of a modern and demystified worldview. Cultural and religious symbols, however, may also permit curative reflexivity, but in a different idiom.

Obeyesekere’s discussion of symptoms versus personal symbols provides a decisive methodological distinction that supplements the current defense conception. Individual symptoms possess “little range of variation or capacity for continual displacements, or substitutive flexibility” and therefore tend to “exhibit near identity cross-culturally” (p. 14). Personal symbols, on the other hand, are the product of culturally transformed symptoms. Predicated on a publicly recognized symbol system made available by the cultural sphere, personal symbols open up a semantic space for active self-reflection, and thereby replace the compulsive rigidity of symptoms whose limited meanings are, by definition, inaccessible to consciousness. Obeyesekere explains
that although both of these terms presuppose motive and meaning, symptoms are largely dominated by the former. Their regressive character engenders very little reflexivity in that reflections habitually "hover" around infantile motivations (p. 12). Personal symbols, on the other hand, channel fixated motivations into a galaxy of cultural signifiers whose cognitive richness and intersubjective character afford a range of psychologically adaptive options not available to the private neuroses. In this way, personal symbols provide a greater degree of remove from the archaic motivations of childhood. Unlike idiosyncratic symptoms, personal symbols participate in degrees of public consensus; shared intentionality fosters meaningful communication with others and thereby enhances self-reflection. The relative "mindlessness", so to speak, of the limited and private repertoire of symptom-symbolism is given over to the "mindful" play of polyvalent cultural symbols whose existential meanings are made available for therapeutic insight. Obeyesekere holds that the process of symbolic remove, the work of culture, is inherently tied to ideals and their sublimatory potential. Within these "higher levels of symbolization", "the Freudian notion of idealization and sublimation prevails; it is here that symbols prospectively and progressively move away from the sources of motivation to the realm of the sacred and the numinous" (p. 68).

Pfister's position on the curative potential of cultural forms is also relevant (1932). His analysis of shamanic healing in a Navaho context demonstrates how ritual uses of religious symbolism resolve neurotic conflict and promote conscious insight in symbolic form. Some modes of religious healing can constitute an "instinctive psychoanalysis" by an unwitting "[penetration] to the unconscious motivation of the psycho-neurotic disturbance" (p. 250). In stipulating that the unconscious "reacts more quickly to the language of symbols than the propositions of reason" (p. 251), Pfister brings instances of successful religious healing into line with play therapy where insight and the recession of symptoms is contingent upon the use of figurative language.
The way in which Wesleyan spirituality systematically utilized religious symbolism in tandem with both alternate states of consciousness and meditative techniques, exemplifies the combined views of Obeyesekere and Pfister. The Methodist pursuit of holiness was regarded as a renewal of the whole person; it presupposed significant personality transformation based on the long-term integration of religious and altruistic values. In keeping with scripture, Wesley regarded sin as a disease entity. Consequently, he understood sanctification as a process of personal healing. Prior to conversion, the soul's alienation from God was not only a moral dilemma, it was also seen as the cause of internal strife and the root of discontent and suffering. Wesley was well aware of the prevalence of despair amongst his followers. His particular rendering of the Gospel message spoke directly to this ailment. The continual inculcation of the assurance of divine benevolence and grace - a promise realized in the ecstatic reception of the holy spirit - was used to overcome an array of typical symptomatic states and manifestations, all of which were commonly organized by a core depression and a sense of futility.

In Wesleyan spirituality, uses of religious symbolism led to insights capable of ameliorating psychic conflict and depression. Wesley's portrayal of a merciful God, along with his attempt to induce an immediate, perceptual, and vitalizing sense of God's forgiving presence, fostered a potentially "curative" insight: "I am worthy of love". It will be noted that the content of this particular kind of insight differs from that initially intended by Freud, who emphasized the conscious acknowledgment of repressed instinctual strivings. To be sure, the realization that one is worthy of love is a departure from the traditional mode of psychoanalytic insights which epitomize the dramas of infantile sexuality and the Oedipus complex. If anything, the former is an expression of self-esteem, which, in terms of Freud's structural model, is a function of the superego. However, since ego psychologists have stipulated that both id and superego materials may be subject to repression and held in check by resistances (i.e., Rangell, 1974), the
recovery of ideas pertaining to self-worth may also be regarded as a legitimate class of insight.

The three traumas of 18th century British childrearing (evangelical nurture, bereavement, and the precocious pre-occupation with death and damnation) led to disruptions and complications in emotional development. The disintegrative splitting of self and object representations interfered with the consolidation of the positive superego such that the development of reliable values, non-conflicted ego-motivation and autonomy, self-esteem, regulation of drive and affect, intimacy and interpersonal relatedness were significantly compromised by aggression. Wesley’s model of spiritual development, and the techniques used to achieve sanctification may be regarded as a means by which splitting was gradually reduced. The pursuit of sanctification required individuals to bring together separated currents of love and hostility, so as to reconcile the impasse of will and resistance in direct apprehension of the presence of divinity. It mitigated conflict by strengthening, via religious symbolism, the ego’s ability to maintain an alliance with the positive superego, and the unitive ideals of conscience.

The process of Wesleyan sanctification parallels contemporary claims made by humanistic and transpersonal psychologists that there is a link between peak experiences and the transformation of values and personality structure. In the Methodist context, conversion, or “justification” is a unitive ecstasy characterized by the immediate sense of the loving presence of God. Subsequently, two meditation techniques (the discursive “practice of the presence” and “watching”, a variety of introspective mindfulness) are utilized to consolidate, as long term structures, the moral insights of the conversion ecstasy. These techniques foster a potentially significant resolution of psychic conflict and promote long-term gains in both content and accessibility of the positive superego. For Wesley, God’s love and mercy are the most fundamental features of his moral attributes (Maddox, 1994, p. 53). Watching and praying promotes a perceptible, that is, a cognitive and affective apprehension of divine grace which gradually modifies previously
depresing views of God as distant, critical and unforgiving. Wesley’s definition of
religion symbolically describes the ego’s permanent acceptance by the ego ideal.

The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus; ‘the life that is hid with Christ in
God’; the being joined unto the Lord in one Spirit; the having ‘fellowship
with the Father and the Son’; the ‘walking in the light as God is in the
light’; the being ‘purified even as he is pure’ - this the religion, the
righteousness he thirsts after. Nor can he rest till he thus rests in God
(Wesley, 1984-87, I: pp. 497).

In as much as the Wesleyan method secures the ego’s access to the positive
superego, one way of characterizing the integrative potential of Methodist spirituality is
to compare it to Klein’s notion of achieving greater access into the depressive position
(cf. Hinshelwood, 1991, pp. 138-155). The genius of Wesley’s technique lies in the
concurrent conscious acknowledgment and assimilation of one’s aggression or “enmity”
in the light of God’s abiding forgiveness. Ideally, the fluctuating cycles of depression
and elation are gradually reduced by the simultaneous and reconciling knowledge of hate
and love, of sin and absolution. The immediate sense of God’s loving presence
dramatically manifested in conversion, and later sustained by the meditative practice of
the presence, reduces the anxiety stemming from internal aggression and allows for the
systematic introspection of sin without the crippling fear of God’s wrath (Lindstrom,
1946, p. 116). In other words, in successful enactments of Wesley’s technique, the
strength of the ego’s identificatory relationship to the good object permits a sustained
investigation of residual aggression.

Unitive ecstasies are key in this process. They afford novel opportunities for
constructive identifications with an idealized imago (Haartman, 1998b, pp. 216-219). As
long as the ego maintains an identificatory alliance with the latter, action is no longer
dominated by unconscious rage stemming from the demands of a negative superego. A
new and empowering locus of psychological motivation is established. A dramatic boost
in self-esteem accompanies inner conformity to recovered ego-ideals. Pardon and
acceptance provide the courage to examine compulsive sinning, motivated in part by the need to aggressively act out or "rebels" against the internal bad object. These behavioral trends are gradually relinquished out of love. Due to the upsurge in self-esteem, they become replaced by aspirations reflecting the new value system. In Wesley's terms, this is equivalent to receiving power from God to resist sin.

The practice of the presence and watchfulness reinforce two processes that lead to the durable integration of the initial peak experience. Recurring identification with the sustained presence consolidates unitive values in a more permanent fashion, while systematic introspection strengthens, to the point of habituation, the awareness that one is no longer gratified or compelled by sin. Wesley's method created the opportunity for achieving greater integration between the ego and the positive superego, due to the ego-syntonic nature of religious ideals. Through the ecstatic invocation of love, rage is separated from these ideals, allowing the ego gradually to adopt them. Thus, psychological integration, the amelioration of the split imago, is concurrent with the intensification of empathy, and the transformation of values and moral sensibility.

As a developmental ideal, sanctification corresponds to what Brierly refers to as the "integration of sanctity", a "total surrender of ego-direction to super-ego control" (1947, p. 47). In a very significant sense, Maslow's notion of self-actualization can be used to illuminate Methodist sanctification in that both presuppose a more or less permanent alignment of the ego and the ego ideal. On the other hand, the integration of sanctity does not envisage a "democratic harmonization of id, ego and super-ego systems" (p. 47). Although abstract, these heuristic formulations raise an important question as to the integrative limitations of Wesleyan spirituality. In a similar vein, Obeyesekere, in his discussion of the work of culture and the process of symbolic remove, hints at the problem of symbolic constraints, or the extent to which cultural, and, more particularly, religious discourses are able to promote the working through of archaic motivations (1990, p. 62).
A truly thorough analysis of the symbolic limitations of early Methodism, as measured from the perspective of psychic integration, would be a whole other study in its own right. Be that as it may, it is useful to conclude the present work with a brief delineation of the problem as it bears on avenues of future research. As I see it, the integrative constraints of Wesleyan holiness were rooted in a historical paradox in which the attempt to overcome the scars of evangelical nurture continued to bear the unmistakable signature of the very regime that inflicted these wounds. Because Wesley and his followers could not erase their own psychic histories, it is all too easy to analyze Methodist spirituality in terms of repetitions and compromise formations, an approach which tends to obscure new developmental achievements and the extent to which conflicts were actually resolved. On the other hand, we must keep in mind that no form of cultural practice, be it spiritual healing or clinical psychoanalysis, can effect a wholesale rupture from the past. This is both impossible and meaningless. The formative events of early life are indelibly laid down in the unconscious, shaping our identity, character, and core beliefs. However, in tandem with new experiences, they provide the raw materials for psychic change and growth. Integration is characterized by a more inclusive reconfiguration of past experiences, a transformation of internal representations (and their emotional meanings), leading to a richer subjectivity and the undoing of rigid defenses.

In one sense, the whole notion of sanctification as the perfection of holiness continued to perpetuate the ethos of authoritarian childrearing. It is true that Wesley advocated a qualified definition of perfection, one that mercifully tolerated the "defects inseparable from life on earth", that is, the imperfections of knowledge and the shortcomings of bodily infirmities (Lindstrom, 1946, p. 145). Even so, the doctrine preserved the essential traces of infancy by enshrining a set of moral standards both exacting and difficult to achieve. In this sense, the lofty ideals internalized in the context of evangelical nurture remained essentially the same. The crucial difference, of course,
is that Wesley was able to resuscitate a primal love for the good parent, one that had been previously compromised by disappointment, rage and trauma. The symbolic re-emergence of this attachment, now manifesting as a good conscience, meant that one’s ideals could be eagerly and voluntarily embraced with a minimum of conflict. However, because the trace of the bad parent remained inscribed within the moral objectives of sanctification, the mobilization of aggression, and the inevitability of depression, punctuated every turn of the process. Moreover, the majority of published narratives and extracts which entered into the public domain attested to the benefits and successes of Methodist holiness. Like any other organization geared towards consolidating power and attracting greater membership, Methodism was not particularly interested in disseminating the accounts of those who, despite their efforts, continually failed to thrive, and were unenriched by grace. For this reason, we cannot adequately assess the number of individuals who were unable to surmount their depression, who remained untouched and unredeemed by the spirit; or those who, after tasting the fruits of conversion, backslid permanently.

If we are to conceptualize early Methodist spirituality as a metaphoric system that facilitated insight in symbolic form, we may say that its therapeutic potential was ultimately limited by the persistence of the bad object. There is no doubt that Wesley’s theology did much to soothe terrifying depictions of God the father; he adamantly opposed the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, replacing the inscrutable arbitrariness of divine judgment with images of God’s unconditional mercy and his willingness to save all who chose to accept Christ. The rejuvenating power of the witness radically diminished the paralyzing effects of a troubled conscience. At the end of the day, however, the fear of God was never wholly exorcised. The unconditionality of his grace was guaranteed only as long as one continued to abide by his word. Methodists understood that a significant decline in personal holiness would drive them back into the realm of the angry deity where, once again, they would be forced to grapple with the
ominous threat of his vengeance. Wesleyan spirituality went a long way in healing the split imago, but the split was never fully resolved. Although Wesley eventually modified the tactics of his early sermons in which he zealously and graphically portrayed the sufferings of the damned, his later works attest to the fact that he did not completely abandon this approach (cf. 1984-1987, III: pp. 31-44). What is more, some of Wesley’s circuit preachers clearly garnered a reputation as hell fire preachers (Arminian Magazine, 1780, pp. 98, 309, 479). We should not be surprised, therefore, that the periods of darkness and heaviness so frequently described in the autobiographical narratives revolved around the problem of doubt and the stubborn dread of damnation.

Besides fear, there is also evidence of an identification with the aggressor, a mindset which appears to contradict the otherwise dominant sensibilities of Christian Holiness. For example, Rack points out that “all Methodists...believed in ‘particular providences’ - the manifestation of the direct action of God through events” which, amongst other things, “wrought judgments on evil doers and scoffers...” (1989, p. 432). The sadism in these celebrated instances of providence is undisguised.

As a warning to drunkards, for example, the Magazine recorded how a man was drunk on the Sabbath as usual and died in his sleep. A blasphemous gardener dreamt that he met two devils and beat one of them. On waking he joined his drinking companions and later went to his hot-house. Here he was found to be on fire with his nose burnt off, his lips preserved but his blasphemous tongue burnt out of his mouth (p. 432).

Wesley himself imagined that several of his detractors were ruthlessly disposed of by divine intervention.

During the course of Wesley’s fifty-one years as a traveling evangelist, some of his local opposers were removed out of his way, as he thought, providentially. One “dropped down and spoke no more”; another hanged himself in “his own necessary house”; two in the same parish were “snatched away by a fever” (Abelove, 1990, p. 11).
Finally, the persistence of the bad object and splitting can be seen in the fact that Methodists, according to Rack, "inhabited a world which had strong elements of dualism" (Rack, 1989, p. 434).

The devil and his demons afflicted them during their conversion struggles, and their visions and visitations seemed vividly to symbolize the struggle for the soul between good and evil powers. And indeed Wesley himself believed in good and evil angels as agents of God and the devil (p. 434).

Abelove argues that in spite of its evangelical concerns, Methodists' relationship with non-Methodists was also dualistic in that a pronounced ingroup-outgroup mentality held sway. Wesley's followers had no difficulty in observing his rule "that they love each other and help each other in business" (1990, p. 108). As he traveled throughout the British countryside, Wesley consistently observed the ties of affection which so tenaciously bound his followers to each other. He variously described them as having "one heart and one mind"; they were "lovingly and closely knit together", "united" like a "family of love" (quoted in Abelove, 1990, p. 45). But the ethic of mutual reciprocity was not as easily extended to outsiders. Abelove claims that Methodists' "generosity seldom resulted in anything more than money or spiritual advice". "So strong was their sense of union with one another that no outsiders were really tolerable to them, unless of course the outsiders wanted to join" (p. 108). For example, the following account of a Sheffield man is, according to Abelove, a "typical" representation "of how the reaction to an outsider would go" (p. 108).

He says that once when "a strange family" had moved into the neighborhood, he went to call on them. He told them, "after some introductory remarks", that he was a Methodist, that he "feared God", and "had lately begun to inquire the way to heaven". He added that he and his family wished them well and would be glad to do them any feasible "office of kindness", but on one condition only: that they turned out to be "like-minded with reference to the salvation of their souls". If they were not, then, he could have no "familiarity or acquaintance with them", because "the friendship of the world was enmity against God" (pp. 108-109).
Whether or not this particular example was truly characteristic of the attitude of most Methodists, it does illustrate the realistic imperfections of empathy as compared to the scriptural ideal of universal love. In the end, we may say that Wesley and his flock were all too human. The legacy of the past continued to inhere in the present. Yet, whatever theoretic criteria we use to characterize psychic integration - the achievement of insight, the resolution of conflict, the movement into the depressive position, the strengthening of the ego, etc. - we must remember that these indexes of change are never absolute. They exist on a spectrum and can only be measured by degrees. Moreover, it is reasonable to suggest that Wesley’s technique of watching and praying might be capable of achieving an even greater degree of integration in the context of a more liberal, modern theology - one that is less encumbered by unresolved splitting. Be that as it may, if Wesley’s “method” did promote what Brierly calls the “integration of sanctity”, the therapeutic gains derived from the relationship between the ego and the positive superego was nothing less than a significant developmental achievement, one that, despite its limitations, attests to the crucial role of ideals and conscience in mental life.
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