The mind of Christ? A phenomenological explication of personal transformation and cosmic revision in Christian converts in Western Australia

Stuart Cranford Devenish
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TITLE PAGE

'The Mind of Christ?

A Phenomenological Explication

of Personal Transformation and Cosmic Revision

in Christian Converts in Western Australia.'

By:

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Submitted in fullfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

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Faculty of Regional and Professional Studies

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ABSTRACT

Religious converts routinely report differences in the way they attribute meaning as a consequence of religious conversion. Previously known objects, events and persons are perceived differently as a result of a new plausibility structure being brought to bear. Converts experience themselves and their lives as fundamentally problematic due to their limitations in the face of seemingly insurmountable physical, moral or spiritual crises, and set out in search of a resolution to their anguished existence. The resolution comes as they encounter God, the one whom—it is thought—holds within his hands the resolution to their problem and the seeds of their transformation into a new life.

The stimulus for this research has come from the researcher's experience over 25 years of observing converts' tendencies toward the reattribution of meaning during and subsequent to their conversion experiences. It was clear 'that' changed meanings took place; it was not clear 'how' and 'why' such changes occurred, nor 'where' the impulse for such change came from.

This research is concerned to explicate how contemporary Christian converts in Western Australia have experienced conversion as a transformational event. It does so by interacting with the self-reports of converts as they reflect on their experiences of conversion. The primary research question for this inquiry—in its preliminary form—is: what is the experience of acquiring new religious knowing, and what account may be given of the processes of change within the believer's perceptions of God, self and world?

Seven converts were interviewed in open interviews in which they were asked to divulge their beliefs about God, the world and themselves, before during and after conversion. Participants' self-reports were explicated phenomenologically through a process of imaginative re-experiencing and deep-listening. The eidetic structures and universal essences of those experiences were allowed to emerge into the foreground to make themselves known. 44 themes were identified from respondents' transcripts and shaped to form the substance of five key chapters whose primary emphases are, the world as the context of meaning change (chapter 5); the self and its crises as the catalyst for new interpretations of reality (chapter 6); the Christian
religious tradition and the meanings it holds within its myth-like gospel (chapter 7); the self in the presence of God (chapter 8); and the place of the mind in Christian conversion (chapter 9).

The notion of 'the mind of Christ' is a motif furnished by the Apostle Paul. His experience of scales falling from his eyes and his statement "we have the mind of Christ" portrays the possibility of the reception of a noetic awakening to enlightenment which religious believers participate in through conversion. Through the explication of respondents' experiences of meaning-change, a description has been developed in this research which constitutes new believers as imbibing the Christian 'mind' through contact with the Bible, and a myth-like and Christ-centered metanarrative which is re-told through litany and liturgy in the context of private and public worship.

Radical change was found to occur within converts' beliefs, attitudes and actions, in relation to God, themselves and the wider world, during and after the conversion event. It was found that subsequent to conversion converts feel themselves to have become seers of the supernatural, hearers of mysteries, and tasters of divinity, because they have been in contact with God and have imbibed aspects of his character and perspective. Thereafter converts hold a plausibility structure which is deeply influenced by the person of Christ and the Christian 'idea' of history as salvation-history. Converts were found to undergo a personal self-transformation as a result of conversion, in which they moved from an 'end of self' to an elevated status in which they both derived life and wisdom from God, and participated in the divine nature. Converts also were found to have undergone a revision of the world as a result of conversion, in which the cosmos became 'new' in the sense that it was created by God for his purposes, and that his presence intrudes into it, making the mundane realm into a sacred temple.

This research is generated from within the Christian faith tradition. It seeks to understand the experience of the believing soul in the 'act' of conversion as it encounters and imbibes new meanings and attributions of truth. It will be of interest to scholars, religious practitioners, and most importantly to religious converts themselves. (500 words)
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed:  

Dated 22/2/02
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In memory of ‘Stonehaven Farm’.

To the God who converts;
to the Christian Church, the community of the converted;
    hierophants whose eyes have been opened to a larger reality.

To those who called me to conversion and supported me in it;
to those whose task it is to call others to conversion.
To those who convert, now and in the future,
    and to those who support and teach them.

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    and will do so after me.

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    who believed in me, and whose generosity has paid for the costs
    of preparing this dissertation;
and my mother Norma, for her deep and abiding love for me.
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    and of whose character and faith I am so proud.
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    whose unstinting love, patience, support and wisdom are beyond words;
    and whose servant heart and womanly touch
    have ensured that this project has had a good birth.

I acknowledge my debt, in different ways, to each of you.
Thank you. A humble, grateful man. 

I count myself one of the number of those who write as they learn and learn as they write.¹

¹. A phrase with which Calvin commenced his Institutes, borrowed from Augustine (Calvin, 1960: 5).
TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Abstract..........................................................................................................................2  
Introduction....................................................................................................................10  

SECTION 1: REVIEW OF HISTORY AND LITERATURE  
Chapter 1: Conversion in the Christian Religious Tradition: Historical, Biblical and Ecclesial Considerations..................................................................................................................28  
  Christian Conversion: its Historical Context  
  Conversion in the Christian Religious Tradition  
  Conversion and Worldview  
  Conversion in the Bible  
  Conversion in the Early Church: 30-400 A. D.  
  Christianity and Paganism  
  Christendom: the Normativization of the Christian Worldview 800-1200 A.D.  
  Conversion in Australia: Historical Considerations  
  The Contemporary Christian Church in Australia  
  Conclusion  

Chapter 2: The Acquisition of Mind: Envisioning a Christian Perspective  
...........................................................................................................................58  
  The Mind of Christ?  
  The Acquisition of Mind via Culture  
  The Acquisition of Mind in Developmental Theory  
  The Acquisition of the Religious Mind  
  The Acquisition of Mind via Transformation  
  The Christian Mind  
  The Acquisition and Operations of the Christian Mind  
  A Notable Convert: Johann George Hamann  
  Conclusion  

SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY AND METHOD  
Chapter 3. Phenomenology and Religion: Philosophical Underpinnings  
...........................................................................................................................95  
  Introducing Phenomenology  
  The Development of the Phenomenological Movement  
  A Uniform Phenomenology?  
  Husserlian Phenomenology  
  Husserl's Relevance to a Phenomenology of Religion  
  The Phenomenology of Religion  
  The Historical Development of the Phenomenology of Religion  
  The Contribution of Phenomenology to the Study of Religion  
  Problems and Resolutions for the Phenomenology of Religion  
  The Phenomenology of Religious Conversion  

Chapter 4. Procedures and Methods for the Research ............................................ 140
  Introduction
  Pilot Study and Early Conceptualization
  Design of the Study
  Selection Criteria
  Interview Questions
  Interview Procedure
  Transcript Analysis Method
  Introduction to Co-Participants
  Conclusion

SECTION 3: PHENOMENOLOGY AS APPLIED TO RESPONDENTS' REPORTS
Chapter 5. The World as the Contexture for Meaning Change: the Making of a New World ................................................................. 166
  Introduction
  Procedural Remarks
    Change in World-Image
    World as Passing Away
    Fear of Being Judged
    Being Counselling
    Non-Believing Spouse
    Racism as an Unresolved Theme
    Attitude to Suffering
    1. The Concrete Meta-World
    2. The Other as Clue to the Existence of God
    3. The Dialectic Between the Sacred and the Profane

Chapter 6. The Self in its Lifeworld: Religion as Change Strategy ................................................................. 193
  Introduction
    Desperation for Relief
    Devastation of Lifeworld
    Fear of Death and Judgment
    Making New Beginning
    Questing after Truth
    Energetic Seeker
    Separation from Life before Conversion
    Freedom From Guilt
    Healing and Restoration
    Awakening from Sleep
    Feelings of Faith
    1. The Self and its Lifeworld
2. Knowledge as Experience-Based
3. Transcendence in the Midst of Immanence

Chapter 7: The Christian Religious Tradition: Harbinger of the Theistic Vision

Introduction
- Manifestation of Godliness
- Becoming Informed
- The Bible as Agent of Truth and Faith
- The Strangeness of Christianity
- Authentic Religion
- Unexpected Discovery
- Conversion as Entry into the Church
- Being in Community
- Witnessing to One’s Faith
- Acts of Worship and Service
- Ministry and Mission

1. Becoming a Member of a Believing Community
2. The Social as Emblematic of the Spiritual
3. The Theistic Vision of the Christian Faith Community

Chapter 8. The Self in the Presence of the Sacred: The God Who Fascinates

Introduction
- The Call of Holiness
- Life of Prayer
- Being Lifted Up
- Weeping as Religious Act
- Burning of the Spirit
- Fire of the Spirit
- God as Underwriter of Existence
- Transformation of the God-Image

1. The Knowability of God
2. The Love of God is our Knowledge of Him
3. The Assumption of God’s Character and Perception

SECTION 4: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF MEANING CHANGE AT CONVERSION

Chapter 9. The Mind in Christian Conversion: reasoning out the immutable

Introduction
- Not Knowing and Knowing
- Transformation of Consciousness
- An Altered Worldview
- Spiritual Insight
Renewing of the Mind
The Sanity of Believing
1. The Hiddenness of the Mind in Conversion
2. Knowing with the Heart
3. Knowing Through the Mind of Christ.

Chapter 10. A Phenomenological Explication of Meaning Change in Christian Converts in Western Australia

Introduction
Farewell to Husserl
A Phenomenological Explication of Personal and Cosmic Transformation in Christian Converts—from the Perspective of the Religious Convert
A Phenomenological Explication of Personal Transformation and Cosmic Revision in Christian Converts—from the Perspective of the Researcher
Suggestions for Future Research
Conclusion.

REFERENCE LIST
INTRODUCTION

Teilhard de Chardin wrote, “On some given day a man suddenly becomes conscious that he is alive to a particular perception of the divine spread everywhere about him. Question him. When did this state begin for him? He cannot tell. All he knows is that a new spirit has crossed his life” (1968: 128). This problem of the change which takes place in the way meaning is attributed by individuals who have undergone the radically transformative intervention of conversion yet have such difficulty accounting for it, forms the core around which this research is focussed. Max Heirich (1977: 674) refered to conversion as “the process of changing a sense of root reality”, and “a conscious shift in one’s sense of grounding”. Heirich called for new research into the “problem” of how converts imbibe new meanings in the context of the radical shift of conversion, saying “the problem is an intriguing one which deserves attention” (ibid: 676). William Hocking wrote of the paradoxical nature of religion and the observer’s reduction of it to language and thought:

The peculiar possession of religion is often spoken of in terms of knowledge, as wisdom, vision, revelation, truth. But there are reasons for doubting whether religion is, literally speaking, a kind of knowledge. Whatever it is it cannot readily be translated into valid ideas and language (1912: 32).

He appears to prefer the option that it is more than probable, psychologically speaking, that religion consists in a “practical attitude of mind, or a mode of feeling” (ibid: 33). Yet later in the same work he expanded on the nature of feeling by referring to it as an idea-driven sensibility, susceptible to having content and injecting a form of meaning into the religious believer’s life which is both pretentious and protensive.

Religious feeling, then, like other feeling, is all idea-material, idea-activity. Dissolve out the idea-issue of religion, and no feeling, and so no religion, is left. Holding our pragmatic test to religion, requiring of it that it do its work, we will have no religion without a theory; we will have no religion without a creed (ibid: 73).

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2. The citation method used in this dissertation is the Harvard or author-date system of referencing which has become standard in recent years in religious studies. That system applies in-text citations to sources, but also allows use of footnotes for purposes of adding further relevant subsidiary points to the discussion. I will list all references cited in the text and works consulted in a Reference List at the end of the dissertation. I have used Lawrence Macintosh. 1994. A style manual: for the presentation of papers and theses in religion and theology. Wagga Wagga: Center for Information Studies, as my source in making use of this method of citation and referencing.
Thus from these sources I am justified in discussing the problem of the new meanings generated within Christian converts in the context of religious conversion and experience, and the ways in which those meanings are imbibed, the sources from which they are received, and the ways in which those new forms of knowledge are formulated so as to impact their beliefs and attitudes toward themselves, the world, and God.

In this research I intend to address the question of how a person moves from owning no religious belief to owning religious belief as a matter of deep and abiding conviction. The problem I am addressing can be stated this way: what is involved in the movement from being unaware of the existence of Christian beliefs, to becoming aware that they exist, to the realization that they may have application to one's own life, to believing 'that' they are true, to believing 'in' God? In other words, in these reflective movements what is the experience of acquiring new religious knowing, and what account may be given for the transformation of meaning within the believer's perceptions of God, self and world?

The question assumes that converts do, in fact, imbibe a new religious vision at conversion which causes them to attribute different meanings to previously known objects and attributions of truth. It seeks to bring to the foreground the nature of the new religious vision, how the religious agent acquires the new religious vision, and the normative structure of the new religious vision for the believing soul and his or her world.

Contemporary Christian converts routinely report changed outlooks on the world as a result of their conversion experience. Count Leo Tolstoy reports of his own conversion to Christianity:

I came to believe in Christ's teaching and my life suddenly changed. I ceased to desire what I had previously desired and began to desire what I had formally not wanted. What had previously seemed to me to be good now seemed evil, and what had seemed evil now seemed good. It happened to me as it happens to a man who goes out on some business and on the way suddenly decides that the business is unnecessary and returns home. All that was on his right is now on his left, and all that was on his left is now on his right; his former wish to get as far as possible from home has changed into a wish to be as near as possible to it. The direction of my life and my desires became different and good and evil changed places (1974: 307).
Hughes indicates that Tolstoy's experience is not unique, that religious converts persistently experience such changes in belief, allegiance, affections and life orientation. He says of converts, "they see with new eyes" (1994: 80). Previous conceptions of reality are overthrown in favor of a deeper and more satisfying conception of the world and one's part in it. What then does it mean for someone to migrate from one faith position to another? What changes occur within the predominating vision of reality when for whatever reason—experiential, emotional, intellectual or moral—such a transformation takes place? How does one obtain new religious knowledge? These are the questions which will guide us and preoccupy our interest in the research. They are not easy questions, and neither will there be easy answers. Spader (1986: 195) writes of Scheler's treatment of the foundations of the human change of heart as being part of the mystery of the core freedom at the heart of man. He states, "such mystery Scheler does not try to penetrate, nor could he do so if he tried." This statement alerts both reader and writer to the difficulties we are about to face, and the caution and respect which that mystery demands.

Nevertheless, in this research I will seek to answer the question of how religious believers acquire new religious knowledge, and will do so by coordinating three horizons which provide important referential planes for our approach to the topic. These are (1) the historic Christian religious tradition; (2) meaning change in converts in the context of conversion to Christianity; and (3) phenomenology as an approach which is capable of accessing, describing and re-constituting the deeply-held subjective religious beliefs of individuals.

Of special interest will be the experience of individuals who have recently converted to Christianity in Western Australia, who have undergone changes within their plausibility structures as a result of conversion. The interpretive framework for discussing individuals' changed perceptions of meaning will be the philosophical approach of phenomenology, as derived from Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and which exists within the discipline known as the History of Religions, as the sub-discipline of the phenomenology of religion. Thus in the
language of phenomenology, the 'horizon' within which this research will be carried out is that of the religious worlds of individuals who have recently entered the Christian faith through conversion and their experiences of changed meanings which result.

While this discussion of conversion represents an undoubtedly narrow perspective on conversion as a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, it nevertheless is a recognition of a primary outcome of conversion which has—I will claim—thus far been neglected by scholars; namely the epistemological component of the acquisition of new religious beliefs in the context of conversion. In selecting one aspect of religious conversion for research, I in no way intend to imply that other aspects of conversion are without merit or are regarded by myself as unimportant.

**Non-Religious Analogues to Conversion:**

The changes of perspective entertained here are not so limited in scope as to have no analogues in other fields outside religion. The 'paradigm shifts' which Thomas Kuhn observed in the history of science, e.g. the movement from the Ptolemaic, to the Copernican, to the Newtonian worldviews in natural philosophy provide equivalent representations on a larger scale. Batson (1992: 207ff.) depicts the works of Dante, Milton, Dostoyevsky, Hopkins and others as representing arguments for changes in perspectives and beliefs toward a Christian outlook in the literature they bequeathed to us.

In cinema the 1997 Hollywood movie entitled *Contact*\(^3\) based on a novel by Carl Sagan depicts the journey towards belief undertaken by scientist Dr Ellie Arraway following her contact with extraterrestrial beings. In the final scenes of the account, an interviewer asks, "Dr Arraway, you come to us with no evidence, no artifacts, only a story which—to put it mildly—strains credibility.... Are you really going to sit there and tell us we should take this all on faith?" Following a long pause, Arraway responds: "Is it possible that it didn't happen? Yes..." Another interviewer responds, "Wait a minute, let me get this straight. You admit that you have

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absolutely no physical evidence to back up your story?” “Yes” is the reply. “You admit that you very well may have hallucinated this whole thing?” “Yes.” “You admit if you were in our position you would respond with exactly the same degree of incredulity and skepticism?” “Yes” is the reply. “Then why don’t you simply withdraw your testimony and concede that this trip to the center of the galaxy in fact never took place?” Arraway then responds with conviction:

Because I can’t! I had an experience; I can’t prove it; I can’t explain it; but everything I know as a human being; everything that I am tells me it was real. I was given something wonderful. I was given a gift, something that changed me; a vision of the universe that tells us how undeniably tiny and insignificant, yet how rare and precious we all are. A vision that tells us we belong to something that is greater than ourselves, that we are not... That none of us are alone. I wish I could share that with you. If everyone, even for one moment, could feel that awe and humility, and hope.... that continues to be my wish.

This fictional parable is effective in drawing the initial outlines of the horizon which will endure throughout the course of this research. That horizon is bounded by a number of contributing planes; first, the fact that Arraway’s prior position was in effect a position of ‘faith’ which did not previously resonate or intersect with her new position; second, the experience of space travel and the encounter with un-named and un-identified entities were for her ‘so beautiful’ and filled with awe that they were the occasion for the irruption of new truth; and third, both the experience which gave occasion for the irruption of new truths and the new truths themselves were incommunicable to others who have not made the journey.

Meaning Change at Christian Conversion:

The primary suppositions which underlie this research are derived from a series of irruptions of ‘insight’ or awakening to possibility from my own experience, from my reading of the literature of conversion, and from speaking with converts themselves.

First, as I stated above, my research question pre-supposes that converts do in fact undergo changes of meaning in the context of conversion, as a result of the in-breaking of some new truth into their lives which is received as wonderfully pertinent to them at some point of crisis. Thus my research question seeks validation of this supposition from the
experiences of converts themselves, and further seeks to inquire into the nature of their experiences of undergoing changed meanings and the ways in which those new attributions of truth arise.

Second, I suspect it is likely that any new attributions of meaning which Christians acquire at conversion are derived from the metaphors and images provided by the Bible. The apocalypse of John provides an example of a radically re-negotiated depiction of the cosmos:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:1-5a).

Here the Apostle John describes what he saw following a revelation in an epiphanic vision. He 'saw' a new heaven and a new earth, represented as a sacred city. God was in the city, by his transcendent presence making her more beautiful than any human city. The vision held a promise to the city's residents of final and total relief from the symptoms of human mortality common to everyman: tears, pain, death, grief. God had caused the old order to pass away and a new order to arrive by means of his prerogative to "make everything new." The vision holds within itself the certainty of its imminent arrival as a blessed denouement for those who had been faithful to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. John's vision of a new heaven, a new earth, a new city, and a new humanity acts as a metaphor for the realities which the Christian religious convert comes to grasp and live by. The vision creates the possibility of an imagination which goes beyond normative human conceptions of reality, and clears a path for us in this dissertation to begin to 'imagine' the world of the religious convert following his or her conversion to Christianity.

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Third, my interest lies in the phenomenon of meaning change at conversion for its own sake and as an originary experience. I have therefore taken the approach of privileging converts’ accounts of their transformations of plausibility structure, identity and attributional schemes over and above the representations of the phenomenon by theologians and other confessional authorities (on the one hand), and by scholars contributing to the literature of conversion studies (on the other hand). Therefore in order to meet the exacting requirements of the process of accessing and extrapolating the original experiences of converts themselves I have chosen the methodological approach of phenomenology.

Fourth, I have chosen to undertake the study from a religious studies rather than a theological perspective in order to serve my purpose of wishing to see conversion in a new way without the filters of belief and credal formulations built up by theology over 2000 years of Christian history. Theologians, says Kelsey, ought to be experts in religious experience, but they are not (1972: 137). I wish to see conversion and meaning change in conversion as if for the first time. This is not to say I reject conversion as theologians depict it; rather I choose, in keeping with the phenomenological approach, to put to one side any preconceived notions relating to conversion as the point of reception into the Church or as the prerequisite of salvation and a changed ontological status before God. I simply want to hear converts themselves reveal what their experience of meaning change at conversion has been in an attempt to see what conversion is without the sedimentary influences of dogma or doctrine.

The Setting for the Research:

This dissertation is an applied research project in the field of Religious Studies. It situates itself within the Christian faith as its ‘home tradition’ (Moore & Habel, 1982: 121), seeking to gain greater insights into the transformations inherent within Christianity which, it is argued, have been neglected and remain undeveloped to this point. The goal of the research is to explore meaning changes in the context of Christian conversion, by way of the experiences of seven recent converts to the Christian faith. It is this ‘applied’ component which will ground the research in the lived-experience of converts and will enable a dialogue between their
experiences, the historical tradition of Christianity, the extant literature on the topic, and the empathetic approach of phenomenology which will ensure a meaningful outcome is achieved.

The Christian Churches of Perth, Western Australia have supplied the converts who have become the co-participants for this research. More will be said in chapter four about how they were selected, but at this point it is enough to note that the sample of seven men and women were aged between the ages of 18 and 45, each from a different Christian denomination, each was nominated by his or her parish minister or priest, and each had undergone a recognizable conversion experience within the last five years. No particular attention is paid to issues of gender or ethnicity.5

The Purpose of the Research:

It is often useful in seeking to determine the positive use or application of a piece of research to define its parameters in both the positive and the negative. I will address the negative first:

First, this dissertation does not attempt to develop a theology of conversion or a systematic statement describing conversion from a Biblical, theological, or confessional perspective. Second, in this research I intend to represent Christianity as a unified tradition, despite the multitude of denominations, sects and cults which make up its rich tapestry. I will seek to treat Christianity by its 'mainstream' manifestations. No attempt will be made to define orthodoxy, nor is it intended that one as opposed to another form of doctrine or sectarian bias be preferred. For the purposes of this research I deem those Churches which have participated in the Australian National Church Life Survey6 to be examples of the mainstream Christianity I

5. While I recognize there are issues arising out of gender and ethnicity for the study of conversion, I have chosen in this research not to prioritize them. Instead I have chosen to place questions relating to these issues in chapter ten under the heading 'Issues for further research' at the close of the dissertation.

6. The National Church Life Survey has been developed and resourced by the Uniting Church Board of Mission (NSW) and the Anglican Diocese of Sydney through its Home Mission Society. It has involved the following denominations: In 1991; Anglican, Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Revival Crusade, Church of the Nazarene, Churches of Christ, Congregational, Foursquare Gospel, Lutheran, Presbyterian Church in Australia, Presbyterian Church in New Zealand, Reformed Churches of Australia, Salvation
am referring to in contemporary Australia. I have chosen to represent Christianity by means of its 'core' teachings as found in the teachings of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. My preference for perceiving and understanding the truth-claims of Christianity is not in their hardened dogmatic formulations, but in the narrative construction of the Biblical stories, and especially in the modalities of how such truths are experienced by converts and appropriated into their lives as relevant to their particular needs.

Third, I will not be addressing conversion to the New Religious Movements (NRMs). While much of the recent literature on conversion has addressed conversion as it relates to the NRMs, my particular focus is on conversion within the Christian tradition. That is not to say that conversion which is 'Christian' is radically divergent from conversion to the NRMs, because I regard it otherwise. In seeking to define proper parameters I have chosen not to focus on conversion to the NRMs. I will however make use of material from that literature which I deem applicable to meaning change in the context of conversion to the Christian faith.

Fourth, I recognize that conversion is a whole-person phenomenon, incorporating every aspect of a person's being; i.e., body, mind, emotions and spirit. Yet my research is aimed at that component of conversion which focuses on the heirophanic, cognitive, imaginative and reflective aspects of human perception. Having stated it in this way, I am able to delineate that quadrant of conversion which interests me most while recognizing there are other aspects in conversion which for the purposes of this research will be largely left to one side. It is the relation between the epistemological and ontological aspects of meaning for religious believers which forms the focus of this research. As such I intend to pay particular

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7. Indeed, David O'Rourke states that "conversion is not essentially a religious phenomenon; it is a human mechanism for conflict resolution that is often set in a religious context. Because the conversion can be to God or religious living, it can be given a religious quality. But the phenomenon itself is non-religious" (in Francis A. Eigo, 1987: 13)
attention to the transformations of meaning experienced by informants and alterations in the way they attribute meaning to events, experiences and other aspects of their life-worlds.

Having outlined some negative parameters for this research, let me now identify some positive ones: First, the purpose of this research is to attempt to make explicit participants' experiences of altered meanings, derived through open interviews concerning their beliefs, attitudes and behavior in their relationship to God, the world and their experiences of self. The conversion referred to is intended to be that of Christian conversion, because the experience has as its root-metaphor the person of Jesus Christ, or in the language of theology, because the object turned towards is the person of God, or his son Jesus, as conveyed by the historical narrative of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures.

Second, this research is interdisciplinary in nature, being located at the juncture of theological, philosophical, and psychological interests. These three disciplines impinge on the locus of the convert’s changed beliefs about God, the universe, and themselves as a result of the owning a new set of beliefs concerning what is ultimately true. The methodological approach I intend to make use of is phenomenology. Phenomenology is capable of relating to philosophy, theology and psychology, existing as it does as an important movement within Continental philosophy, there already being in existence the recognized discipline of the phenomenology of religion, and also the field known as phenomenological psychology.

Third, this research will be undertaken as a qualitative project related to the existing body of conversion studies but tangential to it because (1) it focusses on conversion within the Christian tradition and not on conversion to NRMs; and (2) it focuses not on reasons which predispose people to convert, but on the results of conversion in terms of altered psychological outcomes.

The Significance of the Research:

There has been much recent research on the topic of religious conversion. In 1981 Lofland and Stark argued that the literature on conversion had become so rich and diverse that
"a pause and provisional stock-taking" was in order (cited by Gallagher, 1990: 135). Despite their caution however, literature on conversion from both confessional and comparative religions sources has continued to increase. Much of that literature has focused on conversion to the NRMs, giving the impression that conversion within the context of traditional Christian Churches in Australia is unimportant to either the Churches themselves or to the scholarly enterprise. However, the National Church Life Survey has determined from its 1991 survey that 56% of church attenders have "experienced a moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion," (Kaldor & Bellamy, 1995: 129) indicating that conversion remains not only an important factor within the lives of a significant proportion of religious attendees within Australian Christian churches, but also by inference a notable factor in Australian society generally.

Part of the significance therefore of this research is to highlight the continuing priority of conversion within the mainstream Christian churches and its importance for the Churches in terms of practice and doctrine.

The primary significance of the research, however, is its special concern to gain an understanding of the processes by which religious converts undergo conversion as a personal, cognitive and epistemic transformative phenomenon. It does so by determining to prioritize the experience of converts in the act of conversion as the most original and important source of information on what conversion is, instead of deferring to any long-established doctrinal formulation, no matter how 'orthodox' it may appear to be. Csordas (1994: 3) says of the process of religious healing that "although anthropologists have produced volumes of descriptions of healing rituals, they have virtually never systematically examined the experience of supplicants in healing." I hold this to be true of meaning change in religious conversion. There exists many contributions toward a theological foundation of conversion, but few authors since Schleiermacher and James have taken the trouble to ask what is the experience of the believing soul, and even fewer have asked what is the experience of converts as they pass through the drama of conversion. It is my hope and expectation that this research will do just that.
This project will be of interest to religious converts, to religious studies scholars, and will be applicable within the churches in at least two ways; firstly, in assisting pastoral workers to support converts through the process of meaning transformation; and secondly, to inform the process of induction and catechism in the Christian faith in local churches.

Limitations to the Research

In all research there is the potential for limitations to occur. These differ according to the area of research, the objectives of the researcher, the methodology used, and the projected outcomes of the work. Given the inaccessibility of the 'minds' of religious converts, it would appear the possibility for such limitations in this research are exacerbated. As Rahner reminds us, "The fundamental decision [of conversion] is not wholly accessible to analytical reflection" (in Conn, 1978: 204). Yet the project warrants investigation despite the risks of miscontrual and obfuscation.

The first limitation is my decision to frame the research on conversion within the restricted horizon of the mentalistic construction of the religious person's perception. Quite blatantly conversion is 'more than' this limited perspective, and my en-framing of the research topic within this specific vector of conversion constitutes the potential reductionism of defining conversion as 'only' mental change. However, I have taken the position that in seeking to restrict my research to changes in the believing soul's outlook on God, themselves and the world, there is much material which—for the purposes of good research—must of necessity be left outside the frame. In my defense I appeal to a distinction made by Roman Catholic writers that a variety of predominating emphases may come through in religious conversions, such as 'affective', 'cognitive', and 'moral' emphases (Conn, 1986; Gelpi, 1976).

The second limitation is my representation of Christianity as a 'unity'. Given the fact that a broad range of traditions exist within the Christian Religion (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal), and that across the multiplicity of denominations represented by each of these traditions there have sometimes been a great deal of differences of opinion, there is an undeniable risk in assuming an essential unity when the Church itself does
not assume any such consensus. This could also be said to be true of my assumed position that an essential unity exists within the truth-claims of the Bible. While the Biblical position is a uniformity, represented by "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:5), the difference of opinion between Liberals and Fundamentalists in Biblical interpretation can be vast. And yet there is an amazing uniformity of belief within the Christian faith, as Christians are recognizably 'Christians' throughout the 2000 year duration of the Church's history, and across the spectrums which the spaces of international, inter-cultural, inter-linguistic, inter-generational gulfs represent.

The third limitation is stated by Farley in the following terms:

Could it be that there are no realities at all behind the language of this ... faith? Could it be that the testimony, the story telling, the liturgical expressions of this faith refer to entities that have only phenomenal status? Could it be that the mode of human existence which the historical religion calls faith involves no cognitizing, no apprehendings at all? Are Christian theologians like stock-brokers who distribute stock certificates on a non-existent corporation? (1975: 6).

Farley uses this question as a kind of 'straw doll', purposefully setting it up in order to knock it down. But the question is well asked. It is equally well answered by converts themselves who constitute a kind of 'un-heard voice' within theology and religious studies. Every authentic Christian convert would respond with an emphatic defense of the sacred realities they perceive in the course of their epiphanies, and would furiously deny any attempts to undermine the certainties of faith on the basis that:

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that comes from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgement (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).

The fourth limitation I wish to refer to is the possible accusation that I should have drawn on Heidegger rather than Husserl for my inspiration, given that Heidegger has provided a major source of inspiration to such eminent figures in theology as Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich. I have had the thought many times myself. However I have maintained my connection with Husserl for two primary reasons. The first is that my approach to Christian conversion in
this research is not from the standpoint of theology, but from religious studies. And it is from within religious studies that the discipline of the 'phenomenology of religion' has long been established. Although this discipline is not unequivocally Husserlian in its orientation, nonetheless it owes its genesis to Husserl and not to Heidegger. The second reason is Heidegger's rejection of Husserl's transcendentalism; an approach to consciousness which I regard as being of great importance in seeking to explicate for public 'viewing' the inward operations of those human subjects who have taken part in this research.

Finally, a major weakness in many research projects relates to the mis-match between the research question asked, and the research methodology applied in order to answer that question. I am confident that I have chosen the research methodology best suited to provide a clear and unambiguous answer to the research question: what is the experience of acquiring new religious knowing; and what account may be given of the processes of change within the believer's perceptions of God, self and world?

The Phenomenologist's Role in Phenomenology:

Because phenomenology takes the researcher to be part of the research project and not a presuppositionless observer who is able to locate objective truth as a result of standing 'outside' the research subject-object relationship, it is necessary for me as researcher and therefore as 'participant' in the research to bracket my presuppositions and commitment to religious belief in order to forestall the possibility of personal bias. As Rambo (1992b: 245) believes, "self-disclosure is a potential servant of and contributor to 'scientific' objectivity", and "unless the phenomenologist is keenly aware of his or her own assumptions, methods, values, and goals, the phenomenologist cannot pretend to the capacity to see, articulate, interpret and clarify what is distinctive about someone else's experience." The most effective way for me to disclose my presuppositions is to state my involvement in the Christian Church, and my relation to the Christian belief system.

I have had a lifelong association with Christian Churches of the Protestant Evangelical kind. I have undergone a conversion experience myself and have subsequently trained for and
actively participated in Christian ministry. I have theistic beliefs as supplied by the Old and New Testaments. As such I am an insider who is seeking to study my own religious tradition as if 'from without' (King, 1968: 1). In the course of twenty years of pastoral experience I have had extensive contact with people undergoing the conversion process and have developed a 'sense' of what takes place in the conversion process. Along with Ammerman (1987: 11), I "speak the language of [the] insider", and know the 'rules' by which insiders live.

There are particular strengths and weaknesses of an insider researching material so close to his or her own religious experience and calling.

Negatively, there is a blindness which comes with a too-ready use of technical language, concepts, cherished doctrines and particular perspectives which one may unconsciously apply to research as though they were a part of the facticity of things, when it is quite possible they are culturally conditioned and therefore 'relative' factors. The unconscious application of such inside knowledge, or the conscious intent to promote a particular sectarian cause both constitute a 'bias' against which Rambo (1993: 142-3) warns researchers of conversion. Waardenburg makes the case that it cannot be assumed that where the researcher has a religious faith it will lead to better results in the study of religion. He says:

Analytically speaking, the problem of the researcher who is self explicitly religiously involved is that a number of assumptions or statements which he makes are beyond logical control; they appear to preclude correction because they are religiously motivated, held or sanctioned (1978: 83).

The counterpoint to this is that the idealized, detached and completely objective standpoint to which empirical science aspires is not actually achievable, and that every researcher addressing conversion brings to the subject their own biases. In his own case Rambo prefaced his research with his own religious history, roots, convictions and commitments before launching into his research. He suggests that biases can only be addressed:

If the reporting scholar uses the following questions ... to reveal the investigator's point of view: Am I religious or not? Am I religious in a way that is the same as or similar to that of the person I am assessing? If I am not religious, what is my personal response to the nature of the religious conversion I am studying? Am I repulsed or attracted? What
is my fundamental agenda in studying such phenomena? (1993: xi-xv).

Positively, there is much to be said in favour of someone who is familiar with the language, symbols, reference points, concepts, doctrines and Scriptures of the religious target population. The primary learning curve in acquiring these fundamental ideas has already been achieved, and it is possible to enter into the 'sympathetic re-experiencing' (Twiss & Conser, 1992: 59) mode which enables a deeper and more insightful grasp of the symbolic and performatory representations of converts. Given the mystical nature of converts' experiences and the paucity of their knowledge of religious language in the early stages of their conversion-career, I believe only someone who has gone through that experience themselves has any possibility of re-capturing the essence of the conversion experience and re-constituting its significance. Dupré (1998: 8) agrees when he rhetorically asks, "can the phenomenologist truly grasp the meaning of the religious act without actively sharing the believer's faith? ... Does the very possibility of understanding the inner meaning of the act not presuppose that the critical observer 'lives' the act himself?" Otto commenced his The Idea of the Holy with the caveat that whoever has no knowledge of numinous moments as deeply-felt religious experience is "requested to read no farther" (1958: 8). James supports this view when he states, "one must have been in love to understand a lover's state of mind" (1961: 300). With particular reference to the understanding of Christianity, Kierkegaard argues that while it is possible to understand what Christianity is without being a Christian, it is not similarly possible to understand what it is to be a Christian without actually being one (Westphal, 1984: 15).

The Background to the Study:

The following autobiographical background provides a history of the journey which has resulted in me choosing the topic of the acquisition of new meanings in personal and

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8. From a general social science perspective, Zaner (1978: 16) states that "in a strict sense, every social scientist must already be in possession of the very thing ('the social') he sets out to research: ... I must already know in some way what social reality is, for otherwise I might find myself interviewing stones and recording the gentle noises of sleeping birds."
cosmic transformation in the context of Christian conversion, and serves as a further act of self-disclosure in keeping with Rambo's requirement for researchers in conversion.

I grew up in a Methodist church in rural Western Australia. At its core Methodism has its historical roots in revivalism which exhibits a preference for Biblical preaching, a strong commitment to hymn-singing in the tradition of Wesleyan hymnody, a practice of calling for the conversion of those outside the Church, and an insistence on the believers' personal piety reminiscent of John Wesley's 'heart strangely warmed' in perpetuum.

My family has maintained a lengthy association of eighty years with Protestant churches with a revivalist, pietistic bent. My grandfather was a Methodist lay-preacher. My father reported two specific incidences of spiritual awakening, the first while a youth and the second approximately eight years after his marriage in 1953, which resulted in both he and my mother experiencing conversion. Later my family established strong connections with the Keswick Convention movement where I spent many Christmas and Easter holidays.

My own search for truth as an eighteen year old has exerted a strong influence on me. Looking back on the conversion which resulted from that search, I see what appears to me now to be a 'classical' conversion drama. I rejected my father's faith and left home to make my own way in the world. I gained employment in a mining town in Western Australia's rugged North West where I met the best and worst of human characters. I returned home to be with my family, and in turn to experience my own religious conversion as the culmination to the search for meaning in my life. Following my conversion I became actively involved in local Christian activities such as leading youth groups, Bible study groups and lay-preaching.

Finally, I developed a sense of 'call' to ministry and moved to Perth to train for ministry at the Baptist Theological College. There followed local pastoral experience in Perth, and missionary experience in the Philippines. I became a mission society executive in Melbourne, and subsequently a minister in a regional congregation in Western Australia.

While studying for the Master of Arts degree I participated in a series of lectures on

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9. Master of Arts in Theology (awarded 1994, Australian College of Theology [Sydney]).
conversion given by Dr. Ian Hawley. My interest was sparked and I prepared a thesis entitled 'The Transformation of the Self: Worldview Change as a Consequence of Christian Conversion'. The present dissertation is an extension of that research, but significantly different from it in three ways. First, the missiological literature on worldview-change at Christian conversion is predominantly set within the context of non-Western, cross-cultural mission settings. This present research focuses on conversion and changed visions of reality within the Western context of contemporary Australia. Second, the research undertaken for the MA thesis was little more than an extended literature review on the topic, with no applied research from respondents' interviews. This dissertation will proceed by means of applied research based on information provided by respondents concerning their experiences of conversion, elicited through personal interviews.

Third, missiology has a vested interest in provoking individuals to convert. In this research my interest lies in the phenomenon of meaning change at conversion for its own sake. Any missional goals I have as a Christian missionary and minister are to be bracketed and put aside in an attempt to pay full attention to the experience of becoming receptive to, and gaining new religious knowledge through being open to the God-phenomenon by querying what it feels like to undergo meaning-change in Christian conversion, and what the essential features of that experience are.

Conclusion:

This dissertation seeks to disclose what, if any, changes take place in converts' perceptual processes as a result of undergoing the drama of conversion. The research undertaken here is from a religious studies perspective, and seeks to be open to the experience of meaning change in Christian conversion. Its primary task is to explicate the essential features of acquiring new religious knowledge at conversion by means of a phenomenological analysis of converts' self-reported experiences of religious conversion.

SECTION 1: REVIEW OF HISTORY AND LITERATURE

Chapter 1: Conversion in the Christian Religious Tradition: Historical, Biblical and Ecclesial Considerations.

Introduction:

Three horizons will inform this research, they are (1) the Christian religious tradition, (2) the experience of meaning-change in the context of conversion to the Christian faith, and (3) the phenomenology of religion. In this chapter I will draw into the foreground the ways in which the Christian religious tradition has understood and applied conversion. The operational definition of Christianity I use is that Christianity is a religion which emerged out of monotheistic Judaism in the first century A.D., whose adherents believe God to be a triune being existing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but whose faith centers on the person of Jesus Christ as the incarnate son of God, as Savior and Lord. Adherents hold that God has revealed himself in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The classical creeds of Christianity are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. Christians' beliefs operate out of an epistemology based on the events of the Biblical narrative, in which grace is understood as the operative principle within God's free offer of salvation, based on justification and faith. I will conceive Christianity as a basic 'unity' on the basis not of a uniform polity or cultural expression, but on the basis of a convergence of belief around the person of Jesus Christ, across 2000 years of Christian history and across countless ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

I define conversion here as a holistic, all-encompassing event-process which occurs in the lives of individuals (and sometimes of groups) which results in a transformation of their mode of being in the world. Conversion can be understood as one aspect of natural human development, such as rapid character maturation; but it is normally applied to that aspect of religious experience where an individual or group undergoes an identifiable transition of belief and allegiance from one religious tradition or modality to another. Conversion entails a fundamental shift in the way individuals and groups constitute reality; normally on the basis that ontological and epistemological structures conform to the shape of the new divinity and its
sacred manifestations and demands. The fundamental thing about 'Christian' conversion is its apprehension that Christ is now the new center of one's life. The result is a radical break with past beliefs and commitments, and a new and alternative way of being, worshipping, acting, and attributing meaning to one's life. More formally, I will repeatedly return to Alan Kreider's (1999: 1) definition of conversion throughout the research. Kreider's definition states that "conversion involv[es] changes in belief, belonging and behavior—in the context of an experience of God." Many definitions of conversion exist within the literature relating to that field. Three 'classical' definitions are provided by Nock,1 James,2 and Rambo.3 I have chosen Kreider's definition because I deem it to provide a functional definition of conversion which remains close to the experience of converts rather than reflecting a systematic description of conversion. In this regard it is well suited to a phenomenological explication of conversion. Further, I have not sought to provide definition upon definition of conversion, because in this dissertation the experience of converts transformation and world-revision is the priority rather than the development of a systematized 'theory' of conversion.

Conversion is conceived here as the instance or event which provides the context for changed meanings and the reattribution of truth in a religious neophyte. As such, I will not

1. A D Nock, (1961: 7). "An acceptance of new worships as useful supplements and not as substitutes, and they did not involve the taking of a new way of life in place of the old. This we may call *adhesion*, in contradistinction to conversion. By conversion we mean the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right. It is seen at its fullest in the positive response of a man to the choice set before him by the prophetic religions."

2. William James, (1928: 189). "To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which the self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. This is the least of what conversion signifies in general terms, whether or not we believe that a direct divine operation is needed to bring such a moral change about."

3. Lewis Rambo (1993: 176). "Conversion is paradoxical. It is elusive. It is inclusive. It destroys and it saves. Conversion is sudden and it is gradual. It is created totally by the action of God, and it is created totally by the action of humans. Conversion is personal and communal, private and public. It is both passive and active. It is a retreat from the world. It is a resolution of conflict and an empowerment to go into the world and to confront, it not create, conflict. Conversion is an event and a process. It is an ending and a beginning. It is final and open-ended. Conversion leaves us devastated—and transformed."
seek to make conversion the center or focus of the research. Instead, it is supposed that conversion provides the conditions in which those who undergo conversion imbibe the Christian 'idea' which henceforth acts as their 'guiding star' and determines their future beliefs, attitudes and actions. My goal in this chapter is to return to an earlier era of Christian history which I term the cradle of Christianity, in order to see in what way the early Christians understood and applied patterns of conversion. I have taken this approach in an attempt to gain an understanding of how someone who previously made no profession of faith comes to belong to the Christian faith and to hold Christian convictions and beliefs. I have taken the position that if an archetypal paradigm of conversion and induction into the Christian faith can be isolated as a kind of 'founding formula' in the earliest origins of the Christian religious tradition, it can reasonably be expected that converts entering the Christian faith today will continue to do so by that or by a recognizably similar pattern. Wordsworth's truism, 'The child is the father of the man' provides the rationale I have sought to apply. Because the time periods being discussed are so broad, only those events, persons and circumstances which serve to draw the Christian tradition, conversion, and changed religious beliefs to the foreground will be discussed. In discussing the origins of Christianity, I will restrict my thought to European or Western Christianity.

It is common to accept that the military exploits of Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.E.) and his armies were instrumental in bringing the worlds of Europe and North Africa under the influence of Greek culture and language. Similarly, it is commonly held that the Roman Empire came into existence as a new political system of order imposed by the massive Roman military and political machinery upon previously disparate minor chiefdoms. The result was the Roman Empire and its pax Romana. In both cases military conquest provided the occasion for a massive sea-change within the cultural, social, political, and religious makeup of Europe (Finn, 1997: 7). A new regime of politics, taxation, economics, culture,
philosophy, thought-forms, language and practice were brought to bear. How then may we conceive of the origins of a small marginal sect in a far-flung political backwater of the Roman Empire, and its expansion to its later ascendant position of becoming the established religion of the Empire in just three centuries? Rodney Stark (1997: 3) forms the question for us: “Finally, all questions concerning the rise of Christianity are one: how was it done? How did a tiny and obscure messianic movement from the edge of the Roman Empire dislodge classical paganism and become the dominant faith of Western civilization?”

In answer to “how was it done?”, the most apparent response is by means of religious conversion. Conversion is an important and abiding theme in the history of the development of Christianity. By means of it the history, culture, religion, and way of life in Europe has been changed in some way. And the transformations of mind from prior belief to present Christian belief has played an important part in the history of ideas, as Richard Tarnas has argued:

As Clement reasoned with the pagan intellectuals of Alexandria, the world was not a mythological phenomenon full of gods and daimons, but was rather a natural world providentially governed by the one supreme self-subsistent God. In truth, the pagan statues of deities were no more than stone idols, the myths were primitive anthropomorphic fictions. Only the one invisible God and the one Biblical revelation were authentic (1991: 108).

The fledgling faith's very survival depended on its successful self-propagation in the face of a bewildering multiplicity of alternative religious options. Its message was communicated to a vast array of differing ethnic groups, across disparate cultures and language groups, from diverse geographic and temporal localities and into a plurality of religious orientations. The fact that the spread of Christianity occurred in this way marks out 'conversion' as one of the

5. In answering the question in greater detail, Stark argues for the important role of numerous factors in the dramatic rise of Christianity, which in concert with religious conversion, resulted in the demise of Paganism, and the rise to ascendancy of Christianity. Contributing factors, according to Stark, were the responsiveness of the Hellenistic Jews, the appeal of Christianity to the upper classes and women, the effect of disease and epidemics on social networks, the practice of mercy and careful nursing of the sick, urban chaos, increased Christian fertility rates, martyrdoms, and contrary to Paul's teaching, the practice of inter-marriage with non-Christians which resulted in secondary conversions. According to Stark, these factors facilitated a 40% decadal growth rate for Christianity in the first four centuries of the Roman Empire.

6. As did the two other great conversionist religious traditions, Buddhism and Islam.
broad ‘patterns’ of history itself, as a kind of default method of how ideas transmit themselves from one group of people to another, and how they are bequeathed from one generation to another.

I will discuss Christianity’s sense of its distinctiveness as over against other extant religions during its formative period, how Christianity saw itself as unique and ‘exclusive’ of other religions, how Christianity has appropriated, understood and applied conversion as a missional strategy which exhibits tendencies towards both instability and also permanence over time.

1.1 Christian Conversion, its historical context:

The Christian religion takes its genesis from the life and person of Jesus of Nazareth. McMullen and Lane (1992: 85f.) observe that through his message and miracles Jesus sought to produce conversions and that the Gospel writers in their attempts to communicate Jesus and his message sought to do the same. The beloved disciple John is an example, “these [manifestations] have been recorded in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God” (John 20:30ff., McMullen’s italics). In the account of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus began his ministry in prophetic fashion with the words, “the time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). Jesus presented the kingdom as somehow residing in and mediated through his person and message. His evangelistic ministry was pointed in its repeated attempts to question and overthrow the resident belief systems within his hearers. In response to the question, “What must we do to do the works God requires of us?”, Jesus replied, “To believe in the one he has sent” (John 6: 28-29). He says to Thomas, “Stop doubting and believe!” (John 20:27). To his gathered disciples he states, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). In this regard, Trestemont makes the statement:

Jesus constantly appealed to men’s understanding. He pleaded for it, and his frequent reproach was the question, “Do you not understand?”... This faith for which he was pleading had nothing in common with credibility. It was quite specifically the mind’s approach to truth, the recognition of truth, the assent of the convinced mind, and not
in any sense a surrender of injunction, or *sacrifium intellectus* (1961: 101).

Jesus concluded his public ministry by exhorting his disciples, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:18), and, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8-9).

From its inception the Christian faith was a missionary faith, following the teaching and example of Jesus to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). It was inclusive in scope in the sense that it envisaged God as having a redemptive purpose for the ‘whole’ of creation, and exclusive in membership in that only those who made the confession “Jesus is Lord” were deemed citizens of the Kingdom of God. Its monotheism (one God in three persons) was augmented by the incarnation as the means by which God became immanent among humans. Jesus’ teaching both extended and radically altered the Judaism from which his teaching took its departure, and from which it sought to differentiate itself. Under Jesus’ teaching it was not the legalistic observance of the Old Testament Law as an obsequious ritual which God required, but rather the worship of God in “spirit and truth” (John 4:24) which in some sense must be profoundly Christ-centered.

Jesus’ teaching introduced a series of ‘reversals’ which exerted a destabilizing force within the Jewish religious psyche; the first shall be last, the lost will be found, those who humble themselves will be exalted, leaders must serve, adults must become as children, adherents must love their enemies, concerns for the welfare of the body must be exchanged for a concern for the inward wellbeing of the soul. Such re-interpretations of established and accepted mores posed a blatant threat to both cultural and religious beliefs. These reversals are brought to particular clarity in the preaching of Jesus which called for repentance, a turning within the mind, a demand for inner change, for believing new things, for living in a new way, for moving in a new direction.

Morrison (1992: 189) speaks of something similar when he refers to the Apostle Paul’s “inversion of values” with reference to his theology of the Cross. “What was to the world pain
was to believers pleasure; the world's ignorance was God's wisdom; its degradation, his honor; its servitude, his freedom; its weakness, his power; its death, his life.” In this regard, Morrison believes irony to be the “dominant trope” for understanding conversion and its subversive effects.

John Dominic Crossan, in referring to Jesus' parables, termed them 'subversive’. He identified a five-fold typology which described myth as a force which establishes a world; apologue (or didactic story) defends a world; action investigates a world; satire attacks a world; but parable subverts a world (1975: 59). Of Jesus' teaching, Crossan states:

Parables give God room. The parables of Jesus are not historical allegories telling us how God acts with mankind; neither are they moral example-stories telling us how to act before God and towards one another. They are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and thereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of story itself. They remove our defenses and make us vulnerable to God. It is only in such experiences that God can touch us, and only in such moments does the kingdom of God arrive. My own term for this relationship is transcendence (1975: 121-122).

Crossan suggests that Jesus' parabolic teaching was designed to overthrow and depose previous beliefs and convictions. In other words, the Christian gospel as preached by Jesus, and as received by his followers, included within its parameters the conviction that the new community of the kingdom of God was to be distinct from other cultural and religious communities, it was to be a community which gave its allegiance exclusively to God, who was in himself an exclusive being. Its central tenets revolved around the call of Jesus to leave one's mother and father, one's old way of living, one's previous religious beliefs, allegiance and commitments, and to 'come follow me'. A call to not merely a new way of life but a new way of seeing the world, a new worldview.

1.2 Conversion in the Christian Religious Tradition:

Conversion as it came to be understood and practiced by Christians in first century Palestine cannot be seen as remaining unaffected by the contemporary philosophical and

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7. "You shall have no other gods before me," Deuteronomy 5:7.
religious movements which surrounded it. McMullen and Lane (1992: vii) allude to the ‘obstetrics’ of Christianity. They typify the work of most historians as treating the arrival of Christianity as a fait accompli, as something which emerged unscathed from the other religions within whose nursery Christianity was incubated. Without doubt these sources exercised a significant influence upon primitive Christianity, and bequeathed to it key concepts and doctrines which affected its conception of conversion. Stark (1997: 193) takes a similar integrationist approach when he refers to ‘religious economy’; an idea associated with political economy which takes seriously the notion of competing ideas and products within the marketplace. A religious economy deals with competing religious agencies, their ‘products’, their ‘customer’ base, customer demand and more.

Christianity saw itself as being radically distinct from those religions and philosophies which surrounded it. Jesus’ teaching which required his disciples to “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21) advocated limits to the right of the state to demand absolute allegiance from its citizens. Peter and the other apostles found it expedient when challenged over their preaching in the name of Jesus to state before the Jewish ruling Sanhedrin, “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29).

So early Christians made attempts to establish a clear demarcation between the core-beliefs of their faith and those of the other religious traditions, and they did so by means of the blatant and exclusivist use of conversion. At the roots of the Christian application of conversion was a deeply-ingrained conviction that Christianity—as rooted in the person and teachings of Jesus—provided a radically different basis for its existence and direction. And hidden within the sense of ‘difference’ was the appeal to it being superior. The kerygmatic (Dodd, 1963) gospel which the apostles preached and the early church repeated, proclaimed Christ as sitting at the right hand of God and sharing his nature. The kerygma concerning Jesus took over the Old Testament characterization of God as being all-supreme; “Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord!” (Psalm 86:8), and applied it to Jesus. When Peter preached the words, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), he was espousing in summary the teaching of
Jesus before him, and the self-understanding of the Christian Church after him concerning the superiority of Jesus in every way over competing deities. This inclusion of all humanity under the singular salvific regime of the Christian gospel, and the exclusion of all other opposing "gospels" claiming to offer redemption, was later to become instituted in the words *nullus sulus extra ecclesium* (there is no salvation outside the Church), and the notion of *Christus Victor*.

Conversion was therefore built into Christianity as a systemic component of its functioning as the *modus operandi* of its mission to the world, and was seen as the normative requirement for sinners to receive salvation. Conversion became the intent of apostolic preaching which invited and expected a response within their hearers, and which acted as a catalyst to bring about the transference from darkness to light, from death to life, from lostness to being found, from confusion to clarity, from deception to truth. Conversion, as practiced by early Christian apologists, was thus the means of transference from outside Christianity to inside the world of Christian thought, the process of re-birth which facilitated adherence to the new religion, with its practices, rituals, and benefits, to the total exclusion of all other religious truth claims. It provided a religious and cultural mechanism which was a broadly accepted option for religious transition.

Jerome, the fourth century priest, scholar and translator of the Vulgate Bible stated that "Christians are made, not born" (Morrison, 1992: 185). His statement provides an important interface with the distinction I have drawn in relation to the spread of Greek culture and Roman political domination by means of military subjugation; that Christianity spread by means of conversion. According to Jerome, Christianity as a living religion is not transmitted by means of biological transmission; neither is it received in the way that Roman citizenship was as an automatic right to children born of parents holding Roman citizenship. Neither was it

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8. A contrary example is Paganism's lack of an ideological basis for acts of charity. Emperor Julian sought to encourage pagan priests to carry out acts of mercy in order to counter the effectiveness of Christian charity during times of plague and disease. It was a fruitless appeal; Stark identifies the reason for the failure of the appeal, to be the ideological foundation of Paganism as lacking any impetus to charity. Whereas Christianity contained the impulse towards love and selfless service as the very imitation of Christ himself (Stark, 1997: 83-84 & 88).
possible to receive the full spiritual investiture of Christianity by means of being born into the Christian community to Christian parents as an automatic endowment. Rather, the prioritizing of the spiritual world over the natural, the knowledge of God as personal and immediate to the self, the tendency toward religious ecstasy, the predilection toward prayer and religious practice was vouchsafed by means of a personal encounter with God and a turning toward him in conversion. According to the Apostle John, becoming a beneficiary of the kingdom of God was not a matter of natural human parentage, but required the spiritual re-birth of conversion (John 1:13).

1.3 Conversion and Worldview:

Was Jesus' gospel to “take up their cross and follow me” a call to believe in the existence of a new reality, a call to a new worldview? Robert Doran thinks so; he speaks of the inception of the primitive Christian community as the “birth of a worldview” (1995). He models his understanding of worldview around Smart's (1983) six-fold taxonomy of worldview: the experiential, the mythic, the doctrinal, the ethical, the ritual, and the social dimensions of worldview. Clifford Geertz says of the concept of worldview:

In belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well arranged to

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9. In his Introduction Doran indicates he has drawn his use of worldview from Ninian Smart's six dimensions of worldview. Those dimensions are the experiential, the mythic, the doctrinal, the ethical, the ritual and the social dimensions which go together to compose a total worldview. Doran understands his research to most readily belong to the 'doctrinal' dimension of worldview. This research will proceed on the understanding that the whole of life is embraced within and effected by worldview, but because the major element of interest which has motivated this research is primarily intellectual or perceptual, much of what follows resonates most comfortably with Doran's doctrinal dimension. At a later stage the mythic dimension will also be addressed.

accommodate such a way of life (1973: 89-90).\footnote{11}

Doran speaks of Christianity as “defin[ing] itself in a pluralistic world, and its self-definition must be seen in terms of what groups Christians were distancing themselves from” (1995: 158). His discussion rehearses the intricate and sometimes tangled web of intra-mural Christian debate about the cosmos, the Hebrew Scriptures, God and his relation to Jesus, human suffering, and gender. Goodman (1994: 3-4) distinguishes four ‘ideal’ types of mission as carried out by Christians in the Roman world; he terms them (1) informative mission, (2) educational mission, (3) apologetic mission, and (4) proselytizing mission. In each case the Christian mission was centered upon an alternative set of ‘core’ tenets to those of the prior religions. He states:

Christian writers in the early centuries often, though not always, took for granted that knowledge of, and assent to, particular metaphysical propositions about Christ and his relationship to the divine and human orders are conditions to be expected, and perhaps required, of those who wish to find favor in the eyes of God \textit{(ibid: 98)}.

It was important for a unified set of Christian core-beliefs to be recognized in order to provide unity among the believing communities, and to allow the various kinds of mission to proceed. By the time of the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., a somewhat homogeneous confessional creed had emerged from earlier debates. Against the Montanist, Sabellian and Arian heresies, the Council had decided in favor of Athanasius and Tertullian, thus affirming God’s triune existence, and the earthly Jesus as embodying the totality of God’s divinity.

What is important here is the establishment of ‘difference’ and distance between what early Christians believed about God, themselves, and the world, in contrast with the cosmologies, ontologies, epistemologies, and theologies bequeathed to them from the earlier

\footnote{11. The remainder of the passage, including his classic definition of religion is as follows: A religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. This illustrates the close relationship between worldview as “conceptions of [the] general order of existence” and religious belief and practice.}
religious traditions. Stark (1997: 38) says of worldview, "Instead of calling Romans to return to the gods, Paul called them to embrace a new worldview, a new conception of reality, indeed to accept a new God." The Christian 'worldview' revolved around the person of Jesus. Hawley (1992: 42 & 44) states that, "the person of Jesus Christ, rather than any beliefs about him, emerges clearly as the permanent element in Christianity.... Jesus Christ is the one who is to Christianity its abiding and dynamic character." He terms the core-beliefs I have been speaking of as 'basic beliefs', and defines them as being:

Beliefs founded in, and derived from, the historical and trans-historical Christ-event. Important components of such beliefs include references to the words, life, death, resurrection, exaltation and second coming of Christ, together with a rudimentary theological interpretation of his death and resurrection (ibid: 46-7).

Jeremias (1965: 30) identifies a similar group of components revolving around four key themes central to Christian belief: the fatherhood of God; the vicarious death of Christ; justification by faith; and Jesus of Nazareth as the revealing Word of God. The recurrence of the theme of Christ's death and resurrection is not accidental. In relation to the death of Christ, Knox observes:

The death of Christ is the central moment in the whole event to which Christian faith and devotion look back. From the beginning it has seemed supremely to represent all the values and meanings realized within the Christian community, providing universal Christianity with its most characteristic symbol. And it has always been remembered as a moment of strange and awful pregnancy ... It is significant that, according to the Gospels, both the death of Christ and the Resurrection took place in darkness—events too sacred to be gazed on, too full of portent to be plainly seen (1965: 30-1).

There are two aspects of religious worldview which need to be distinguished; the God-ward, and the human-ward. In the God-ward aspect, the ontological status before God is reversed, sins are forgiven through atonement, a new ultimate destiny is acquired, a new epistemological conception of the world-order is imbibed, which is recognizably different from its previous configuration. Whereas once the world was the secular mundis, now it contains sacred space, sacred time and is the locus of God's sacred activity. Next, the human-ward experience of being converted, where the convert feels forgiven, baptized, healed, and
exorcised of one's previous demons and addictions. In this state the convert has the sense of freedom and the feeling that one is inhabiting not merely a new state, but an entirely new world. To feel oneself to be in a new relationship with God, self and world, results in the new birth of the spiritual life, the putting off of the old and putting on the new (Colossians 3:9-11), which includes the inception of a new mind. It is this second or human-ward aspect of the religious worldview which will preoccupy us throughout this research and will come to the fore in later chapters.

1.4 Conversion in the Bible:

For Christians the body of writings which came to constitute the canonical and non-canonical Scriptures were most influential in bringing about the growing self-awareness of Christians in relation to conversion. Doran (1995: 4) observes that, “the Hebrew Scriptures are the one constant ingredient in the Christian worldview.” The Scriptures acted as the conduit which conveyed the unravelling drama of salvation history, beginning with the Isaiahanic pronouncement of the proto-gospel:

Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked; before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength’ (Isaiah 45: 22).

It grew with Jesus’ annunciation of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), and matured on the arrival of the Pauline extrapolation of the gospel as a pneumatically energized, Christ-centered, grace-oriented message of justification through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). By means of the Scriptures the Christian faith-community learned the metanarrative of redemption, contained most fully within the story of Christ’s redemptive crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, and return in glory to judge the earth and deliver his people.

In the New Testament there are two key words for conversion. *Epistrepho* in its secular usage continues the usage of the Hebrew *shuv*, to turn or return. In its theological sense it
refers to a turning to God. *Metanoia* is used most frequently and indicates a change of mind in the experience of repentance. According to Witherup (1994: 40), *metanoia* in its Biblical setting constitutes a key component in the call to conversion.

The language of conversion is used consistently throughout the New Testament, and was formative for the ways in which conversion was understood and practiced by later Christians. There are five conversion stories in Acts; (1) the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26 ff); (2) Saul's conversion (9:1 ff); (3) the conversion of Cornelius and his household (10:44 ff); (4) the conversion of Lydia and her household (16:11 ff); (5) and the conversion of the jailor and his household at Philippi (16:29 ff). It is clear that the entry point to Christian discipleship and following Jesus is conversion. Next, there are eight sermons recorded in Acts, each of which have as their primary intent the conversion of their hearers.

1. Peter calls for his hearers to repent (Acts 2: 38)
2. Peter pleads, "Repent then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" (3:19)
3. Peter preaches to Cornelius and his household (11:34 ff.)
4. Paul preaches to the Jews in Antioch, "Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.... Everyone who believes is justified" (13:38 ff.)
5. Paul preaches in Iconium, "We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God who made heaven and earth" (14:15 ff.)
6. Paul preaches the good news about Jesus and the resurrection in Athens (17:18)
7. Paul's account of his own conversion to the angry Jewish crowd (22:2 ff.)
8. Paul's sermon to King Agrippa, which Agrippa believes to be an attempt on Paul's part to "persuade [him] to be a Christian" (26: 28). Something to which Paul responds, "I pray that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

Thus the early church was steeped in a supernatural world which was Christo-centric, in which grace was operative, where salvation was freely available, and where a conversion-oriented pattern of proselytism was normative.
1.5 Conversion in the Early Church: 30-400A.D.

Two things constantly emerge from the study of the history of early Christianity; the first is the large number of conversion biographies, and the second is the consistent attempts of apologists to present the Christian faith in such a positive light that readers and hearers will be converted. It can be said that an important aspect of the history of the Church is contained in the recorded hagiographies of converts. Because the transformation from sinner to saint, from darkness to light, from diseased state to healing was felt to be so profound, every attempt was made to communicate this to non-Christian people. The Apostle Paul, Justin Martyr, Cyprian and Augustine are examples of this tendency towards conversionist protreptic as their favoured mode of religious communication. Many of the foremost converts went on to become bishops, martyrs, evangelists and prominent Christian leaders of the day who exerted a shaping influence upon early Christianity.

Perhaps the most infamous of all Christian converts—and the most ambiguous—is Emperor Constantine. Before engaging in a battle with Maxentius to determine accession to power, Constantine was said to have seen a vision, and according to Eusebius was instructed to emblazon the ‘heavenly sign of God’ on his soldiers’ shields.\(^\text{12}\) His victorious soldiers were baptized into the Christian faith—without catechism and apparently without choice—and thereafter the empire embraced the teaching of Christ as its own. The rise of Christianity was complete. Yet Constantinianism—the marriage of Church and State—did not necessarily result in a positive outcome for the Church.\(^\text{13}\)

Against that kind of analysis, Stark makes the suggestion that Constantine, as an astute

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\(^{12}\) Regarding controversies over the chi and rho, see Fox (1986: 616).

\(^{13}\) According to Hauerwas (1989: 18) Constantinianism confuses this world and its presuppositions with that of God’s Kingdom and its values, and attempts to implement the values of God’s kingdom by this-worldly means. In practice this becomes a misuse or abuse of religious power in defense of religious doctrine at the expense of spiritual truth; in effect an unholy alliance (if not dependence) by the Church on the State. The result according to Hauerwas is an unhealthy church which experiences a loss of spiritual vigor and vision, and presaged a period of decline for Christianity.
political tactician adopted Christianity in order to co-opt a popular ground-swell within the urban centers of power so as to harness the good-will and political support of a powerful new cadre within Roman society. With a 40% a decade growth rate, with notable footholds within urban centers, including many prominent women (for example within Caesar's household, see Philippians 4:22), with declining fertility rates in the overall Roman population, Stark suggests that, "Constantine's conversion would better be seen as a response to the massive exponential wave in progress, not as its cause" (1992: 10). Case makes the statement:

There is a recognition of the fact that the Christian element in the population is now so large, and its support for Constantine ... is so highly esteemed, that the emperors are ready to credit the Christian God with the exercise of a measure of supernatural power on a par with the other gods of the State (cited by Stark, ibid: 11).

If Stark is correct, then Constantine was not a 'spiritual' convert in the sense in which Nock applied this term:

By conversion we mean the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right (1933: 7).

Rather, he was a political opportunist who took advantage of a religious grass-roots movement for purposes other than those which it understood itself.

Without doubt the best known and the most influential archetype of 'spiritual' conversion to emerge from the early church was that of Augustine. In Archetypes of Conversion Hawkins (1985) writes of the Confessions as establishing a paradigm for spiritual experience which has been imitated and passed down through the ages. She cites St. Teresa who recorded in her autobiography:

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When I started reading the *Confessions*, I seemed to see myself in them and I began to commend myself often to that glorious Saint. When I got as far as his conversion and read how he heard that voice in the garden, it seemed exactly as if the Lord were speaking in that way to me, or so my heart felt (*ibid.*: 29).

The importance of having a 'model' upon which to base one's own conversion is worked out in Augustine's own life. In a state of confusion and anxiety, he feels led to the elderly Christian Simplicianus who informs him of the conversion of Victorinus, a prominent scholar who received Christian baptism as a public declaration of his faith. Later, he hears of two monks who had converted and adopted asceticism after reading the *Life of Antony* (Gallagher, 1990: 50-1). There is no doubt that Augustine undertook to reinterpret the meaning of his life from the vantage point of his conversion, and wrote his *Confessions* with the aim of glorifying God for his gracious actions in saving him, but also describing his own conversion experience in order to both attract, and provide a model for, those who had not yet followed a similar path (*ibid.*: 55).

It is well known that Augustine underwent several conversions; to philosophy, to Manichaeism, and finally to Christ. Hawkins states:

> It was ... at Carthage that Augustine underwent his two youthful conversions: the first to wisdom when he read Cicero's *Hortensius*, and the second to Manichaeism. These two proleptic conversions represent the type and antitype of his later, "true" conversion to Christianity (1985: 31).

His later conversion was a 'disenchantment' with his earlier experiences, and the inability of philosophy and Manichaeism to deal with his sexual incontinence. Augustine's famous prayer was, at that time, “Lord, give me chastity and continence, but not yet!” Augustine tried to 'will' himself to faith, saying "Now, let it be now!" ... I tried again and I was very newly there; I was almost touching and grasping it, and then I was not there" (Gallagher, 1990: 53). Following his conversion in the garden, prompted by the child's voice, “Take it and read it. Take it and read it”, Augustine read the words from Romans 13:13-14;

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Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (NIV).

On reading those words, Augustine reports he had no wish to read further; there was no need to. He felt his time of darkness and confusion was over, as his heart filled with the light of confidence and the certainty of having arrived at a new beginning (1983: 178). He believed his conversion was not something he had obtained by means of his own achievements, but that God had brought it about: "You converted me to yourself, so that I no longer desired a wife or placed any hope in this world but stood firmly upon the rule of faith" (ibid). Emanating from the nature of Augustine's conversion to Christianity are important factors which relate to his view of holiness, his attitude to this world, his view of conversion as a life-long process, and to the mental processes during conversion which have exerted a discernible influence on subsequent understandings of conversion.

In order to cope with the high rates of conversion, a pattern of ritualized catechism and induction was designed to allow incorporation of the neophytes into the life of the Church. In the *Apostolic Tradition*\(^{17}\) we find conversion being practiced as a set liturgical pattern within the early church. According to Harmless (cited by Kreider, 1995: 3) it commonly had four stages.

1. Evangelization which involved contact between a believing person and potential believers.
2. The catechumenate, when the hopeful initiate was presented to the Church with the support of a believing sponsor. Rigorous examination was undertaken in order to determine whether the potential initiate was able to 'hear the word'.
3. Enlightenment: on demonstrating an adequately changed behavior, careful instruction in Christian beliefs were given.

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\(^{17}\) Kreider (footnote 2, p. 22) says of the *Apostolic Tradition*, "strictly speaking, it does not exist. It is a cluster of parallel documents in various languages that scholars earlier in the twentieth century have melded into a single 'reconstituted' document and attributed to Hippolytus of Rome."
(4) Mystagogy: involved the explanation of the liturgy as a kind of unveiling of the mysteries of the Christian faith, where baptism and the eucharist were both explained and experienced.

Kreider refers to the ‘narratives’ of the Christian communities and their ‘controlling images’ as being the predominant subject material of the catechetical teaching (1999: 26-27). They learned these from their guides in their new spiritual journey so well that they became ‘habituated’ (ibid: 28). Field presents the kind of catechetical instruction received by initiates who were seeking to convert to the Christian faith in this way:

Conversion is thought of in terms of engagement in the tremendous drama of redemption, in which God is the principal actor who snatches men and women away from the powers of darkness in order to bring them into the Kingdom of His beloved Son. The other main role belongs to Satan, the Adversary. The candidate finds himself solicited by two opposing forces, and must freely choose to which of them he will give his allegiance. If he chooses Christ, he must from that point on fight the devil. He must enlist as a soldier of Christ and prepare for spiritual combat. But he is not in this battle alone. The Church fights with him (1997: 11-12).

Quoting the bishop’s words addressed to the catechumens, Field writes:

Faith will give you new eyes, eyes that are capable of perceiving what is invisible to the senses. Our bodily eyes can only see the objects which come into their range of vision, but the eyes of faith do not stop short at material things. It is characteristic of faith to attach itself to what is unseen as it is where clearly visible. Faith, Scripture tells us, gives substance to the things we hope for and makes us certain of things we do not yet see (ibid: 57).18

Built into the catechetical induction process at conversion was teaching related to the new vision of the Christian faith, enabling the convert to see beyond this world into the mysteries of God and his redemptive purposes. An integral part of the casting off of the old darkened understanding was exorcism, a continuation of the theme introduced earlier in terms of defining the difference between Christianity and non-Christian religions. McMullen (1984: 27) understands exorcism in the early era of Christianity as being “the chief instrument of conversion.”

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Over time a deterioration appears to have occurred in the way converts were inducted into the Church within the formal liturgy of catechism and baptism.

First, by the third century Christian bishops were lessening the demands for moral and lifestyle change in converts in order to expedite the conversion of the aristocracy. Lizzi says of this, "In order to encourage the conversion of the wealthier citizens, the bishops modulated their preaching, dealing in an appropriate fashion with the topics of wealth and alms-giving" (cited by Kreider, 1999: 69). The outcome was an aristocratic Christianity which aspired towards respectability, stability and civility.

Second, instead of the heavy demands of the four-fold journey of induction into the Christian faith as described in the Apostolic Tradition, later Christianity abbreviated the requirements for baptism down to a two-stage process of catechism aimed primarily at moral improvement, and baptism as the sign of entry into the Church. The strenuous three year didactic process with its emphasis on the initiated coming to know Christian mystery as esoteric knowledge, had now taken its minimalist shape in the form of Leo the Great's ten day 'Lenten fast'; a simple process of putting one's name forward for baptism (usually following the cajoling of bishops and priest in the preparatory season prior to Lent) and memorizing the Creed.

Third, by the fourth century, Christianity had become the official religion of the empire, but suffered from a spiritual malaise as the mysteries of Christianity became common knowledge, and as the fear of the unknown and vengeful God became truncated into a God of mercy and free grace whose existence now did little more than buttress the Roman Empire and the way of life of its peoples. Consequently the demands for baptism were lessened, and the practice of paedo-baptism (baptizing the children of believing parents), or obversely, delaying baptism until one's deathbed, became common.

Fourth, conversion became a technical term for the religious professionals of the day; first, for the succession of priests to their office, and second, of the entry of lay men and women into the monastic cloister (Kreider 1999: 81). This confusion may have had its roots in Paul's Damascus road experience, which is variously interpreted as Paul's conversion to Christ,
or his call to be an apostle.

Fifth, conversion later began to be applied by means of inducement and compulsion (Kreider, 1999: 39 & McMullen, 1984: 86f.), and moved away from its original meaning of a spiritual encounter with God.

1.6 Christianity and Paganism:

Conversion began to be understood by the commoner in the street as no longer belief, belonging and behavior, accompanied by experience (cf. Kreider); but as a mechanism by which one sought to acquire social approval and political and economic gain. One of the results was a lessening of spiritual vitality and genuine commitment to Christ, and the emergence of a kind of Christo-paganism which became established in the churches, with worshipers bringing pagan dance into Christian worship (McMullen, 1984: 74), and vestiges of pagan beliefs and practices continued to exist alongside Christian worship.

With the sign of the Cross neatly engraved on their foreheads the statues of Augustus and Livia, that had stood for centuries in the civic center of Ephesus, now gazed down serenely on the Christian bishops assembled by Theodosius II- the most orthodox, direct successor of Augustus- to the momentous council of 431 (Brown, 1996: 98).

Of the English princes at a later period in history Brown says:

Though the [British princes still held court] ... they thought themselves to be Christians. They gave 'gold to the altar' before each campaign, as well as 'gifts to the bard'. If they perjured themselves, they did it on Christian altars; just as, when they murdered their kinsman, they did so in the sanctuary of the Christian monasteries (ibid: 81).

Conversion had moved away significantly from involving changes in belief, belonging, and behavior in the context of an experience of God to a force whereby culture and sophistication were acquired. Brown makes the statement: “Christianization was no longer perceived, by many influential leaders of the Christian people, as taking the form of an outright clash of supernatural powers. It became, rather, a mission civilisatrice”(1996: 272).

The response of Christianity as a whole to paganism converged around two basic
patterns. The first was the attempt to totally destroy paganism. Augustine was at the forefront of the push to annihilate pagan idols and places of worship. He addressed his congregation in Carthage, “with invocations to smash all tangible symbols of paganism they could lay their hands on; that all superstition of pagans and heathens should be annihilated is what God wants, God commands, God proclaims!” (McMullen, 1984: 95). No wonder there were anti-pagan riots, such as those in Alexandria, where “busts of Sarapis which stood in the walls, vestibules, doorways and windows of every house were all torn out and annihilated... and in their place the sign of the Lord's cross was painted in the doorways, vestibules, windows and walls, and on pillars” (ibid: 63). This was backed up by instituted law across the Empire against “loitering with intent”—that is, intent to frequent pagan temples for worship (ibid: 97). Later missionaries such as Boniface put the axe to the roots of Germanic religion by chopping down the holy Donar tree at Geismar, Gallus who threw a burning faggot into the shrine of Woden (Wessels, 1996: x), or Charlemagne who burned the shrine at Irminsul, understood by pagans as being the axis mundi with the words “we regret that you are without knowledge, and have called evil spirits 'gods'” (Brown, 1996: 6). The Christian conception of this process of destruction was the replacement of superstitio with the true religio.

Yet there was a counter-tendency toward the subsummation of paganism, as is best illustrated by Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604). Gregory sent messages to missionaries in England with the instructions that pagan shrines were to be re-consecrated with holy water, that no former pagan place of worship should go un-claimed (Brown, 1996: 209; Morrison, 1992: 43). This expropriation of previously pagan sacred places, images and personages into the Christian world was intended to expedite the spread of the Christian gospel by retaining places and images which were familiar to people. Wessels illustrates this process of expropriation by referring—among others—to the pomegranate which had previously been a symbol of marriage in Roman religion, as becoming a symbol for Mary the mother of Christ (1996: 8); the Irish pilgrim Columba (521-597) who built a monastery at Iona, the sacred island of the Druids, which later became the most important Christian missionary center for the Celtic Church; churches in Germany which were built on pagan sacred sites, and still bear the names today of
Heidenkirchen (pagan Churches) (ibid: 9). Andrew Walls (1982) calls this the 'indigenizing principle'. Similarly Fletcher (1997: 266) records an example of a Christian expropriation of myth in a ninth century Saxon epic entitled Heiland (or Saviour), which depicts Jesus as the Lord of the peoples who gathers about him "youths for disciples, young men and good, war-wise warriors" just as any Saxon Lord would seek young men for his retainers. Wessels (1996: x) describes the subsummation of pagan sites, symbols and myth by the use of the German word aufhebung (to abolish, repeal or rescind), which has a double meaning. Its first meaning is the connotation of 'abolition'; and its second meaning is the connotation of raising to a new and higher plane. Aufhebung is descriptive of both approaches taken by early Christians to competing truth-claims, but is most effective in bringing our attention to the Christian message believing itself to elevate to a higher plane some already existing religious worship which has yet to be completed.

1.7 Christendom: the normativization of the Christian worldview 800-1200 A.D.:  

Following the deliberations of the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. the Christian faith, at least in the West, had laid the foundations for a unified set of beliefs and doctrines which were later to apply throughout the so-called 'Christian' world. A recognizable unity had been formed amidst the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity; no mean feat in a day without mass communications. Something like the Pauline formula, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5) had gradually come into existence. For the most part, Christian doctrine revolved around the nature of the existence, character and purpose of the Divine Being whom Christians appropriated from the Jewish Old Testament, and who was the driving force behind the incarnation, the redemption which Christians preached as the result of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross, and the primary actor in the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the author behind the inspiration of the New Testament. As McMullen stated with reference to paganism, the issue for pagans was not the existence of a new religion teaching new truths, but rather the character of the God who Christians preached. "A gulf opened ... over the word god
as distinct from *daimon*" (1984: 17-18). Christians insisted that God as Father, and Jesus as his earthly representative, was the 'Great God' whose authority far surpassed that of the other gods.

Thus, henotheism gave way to a carefully defined monotheism which held the notion of the Christian God as being supreme among the gods, and as making exclusive truth claims and demanding singular worship from followers to the exclusion of all other *daimons* and divinities. Christians were charged with being 'unbelievers' and atheists in relation to their previous non-Christian theologies, but had become—by means of conversion—convinced believers of the reality, power and relevance of Christ. Brown reflected on this as follows:

What truly preoccupied Christian thinkers was how to understand the unique manner in which the highest had been joined to the lowest—God joined to man—in the person of Christ. It was how to discern, in the person of Jesus, a figure whose actions and utterances were known in detail from the narratives of the Gospels, the God in the man and the man in the God (1996: 71).

According to Judith Herrin (1987: 8) the term 'Christendom' did not exist until the late ninth-century when the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred used it when translating the works of Augustine, Boethius and Pope Gregory the Great in 893. But the notion of Christian universality had existed from a much earlier time. Charles the Great had created such a concept in his Holy Roman Empire (*ibid*: 8, fn 5). And from as early as the third century the notion of a 'Christian age' had existed. Part of this Christian universality was related to a standardized chronology which took the birth of Christ as its beginning point. The Christian calendar was used by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, completed in 731 A.D., which took the incarnation as its commencement point (*ibid*: 4-5). A further innovation was an annual liturgical calendar designed as a guide for worship, which united the Christian seasons of advent, Christmas, epiphany, lent, holy week, Easter and Pentecost across Europe.

Herrin (*ibid*: 479) characterized Christendom as 'the dominance of religion' and the absence of choice, but Kreider identifies its primary tenets as being a common belief, a common belonging and a common behavior. In effect this picture shows Kreider's definition of conversion (belief, belonging and behavior) writ large across the entire empire. It forged an
invisible but tangible linkage between conversion, the Church, and the 'Holy' Roman Empire. In this new formulation the Church as religious institution was recognizably the product of conversion, just as the Empire as a political entity was the product of conversion.19

Herrin (1987: 12) says of the early medieval period that despite its turbulence, "it witnessed the establishment of Christianity as the fundamental belief of the vast majority of people in Eastern and Western Europe." Gradually a common mind came to coalesce within the medieval psyche in terms of religious belief. The Christian worldview, one major factor in the development of Christendom, had risen to not only a cultural and political ascendancy, but had forged a common identity and outlook upon the world. Brown (1996: 231) speaks of the development of a patchwork of 'micro-Christendoms' across Europe, uniting Patrick's Ireland, Bede's England, Boniface's Germany and merging it into a Christian 'global village'; as these micro-Christendoms fused to form "for the very first time, the only 'Christendom' that mattered in Europe." He speaks of the medieval Christian landscape as being:

No longer characterized by a loose-knit scatter of sacred joining-points in which a dispersed population resorted on high festival days. In Leige and in many parts of France, village, church and cemetery had come together. Even church-bells could be heard. The sound of bells no longer marked out an oasis of the sacred in the midst of violent, profane noise, as they once had done in Ireland. Rung at regular hours determined by the liturgy, bells were supposed to impose a Christian rhythm on the day of the entire population (ibid: 289).

By the twelfth century conversion had become institutionalized within the collective life of society, taking a different shape to that envisaged by the apostles. Conversion had been "established as a paradigm for individual and collective life" (Morrison 1992: 8). Morrison discusses five conversion theses prominent in the 12th century (ibid: 16-20); the restoration of the cosmos following the Neoplatonist conception of an egress from and a return to God; the restoration of the human soul following the knowledge contained in the 'philosophy of Christ'; the notion of theosis, where the worshiper was transmuted into the divine likeness; of conscience, where the human faculties of reason and of emotion where merged into a spiritual

19. Cf. Latourette's question; "How far may medieval and modern Europe be ascribed to the methods employed in the conversion of its people" (Latourette, 1944: xv, cited by Kreider 1999: xiv).
faculty; and of virtue, which became the moral and spiritual imitation of Christ as a kind of mimesis of the divine itself. In the light of conversion having been sequestered by the nobility whose values were those of the warrior knight, of honor, chivalry, and masculinity (ibid: 127), the concept of conversion came to be seen as a form of ennoblement. Drawing on established monastic texts, a definition of conversion was provided by Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1170-c. 1240) as, "conversion was a turning of the heart from bad to good (in contrition), from good to better (in devotion), and from better to best (in contemplation), rising from sinfulness and passing beyond itself to the vision of God" (ibid: 33). Everywhere conversion is presented in the formula of struggle, of penitence, and of the acquisition of saintliness through pain. It was the glorification of suffering as the mortification of the flesh, in favor of an entry into the realm of the spirit. This was exhibited as a psychological trauma, the torment of mind and spirit, as a stylized antechamber to the realization of the goal of holiness. Morrison terms Augustine's mental anguish and self-recrimination which accompanied his conversion as 'psychomachia' (1992: 75). Thus despite the changing nature of the character of conversion, it continued to point to what amounted to the Christian 'idea' of history, which placed Christ at the center of all things, including the will of God, and the project of salvation for sinful human beings.

1.8 Conversion and the contemporary Christian Church in Australia:

It will be the goal of this concluding segment of this chapter to identify briefly the continuing importance of conversion to the contemporary Christian Church in Australia. Because the dissertation is specifically concerned to explicate phenomenologically the experience of meaning change which converts undergo as a result of Christian conversion, only comments relevant to that project will be made.

Despite the growing pessimism concerning Christianity in this country following the Second World War and the exodus from the Churches during the 1960-1980s, there continues

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to be what Sacks (1991) calls a surprising 'persistence of faith'. Despite Wilson’s doubtful question, “Can God survive in Australia?” (1983), there continues to be an active, functioning and witnessing Christian Church in Australia. That Church has its tentacles in every city, suburb and town, as represented by its physical manifestations of church buildings, schools, monasteries, theological colleges, universities, hospitals, social welfare agencies, publishing houses and bookshops, national and international Bible societies, retreat centers, aged care facilities, and more. No composite inventory of these facilities exists, but undoubtedly its monetary value extends to many billions of dollars.21 The Christian Church however does not conceive of itself as buildings, bank accounts and real estate, but as a 'called-out' community.22

Representative of those who participate in the weekly activities of the Christian Church in Australia are its 13,000 trained clergy,23 those who act as staff for the myriad study groups, youth groups, prayer groups, mission agencies, social action networks, renewal fellowships, evangelism programs, worship teams, research organizations, radio stations and more. Christianity as it exists in its organized form is big business in Australia. It is the second largest provider of education and health care in the nation, and the third largest provider of social welfare services to the public. Bishops and welfare societies speak out on social issues on behalf of the nation's underclasses; and vocal minorities speak out in the name of God about controversial issues such as abortion and homosexuality. Christianity then continues to be a 'social fact' within Australia and its social fabric.


22. The English word 'church' and the German 'kirk' have come in common parlance to refer to an architectural structure, while the koine Greek word *ekklesia* used in the Septuagint and New Testament intends the notion of a 'gathered people' whose existence and gathering is for the purpose of worshipping God.

More important however than any statistics concerning external church buildings or Christian social functions are the internal meanings which provide the rich inner world which supplied the ideational material upon which the progenitors of the institutions previously mentioned built their physical edifices. The Church in Australia today is the great-grandchild of the early church. While there are vast distances between the two in terms of language, culture, thought-forms, political, economic, technological and other considerations, nonetheless there are people in Australia today who continue to make confessions which are recognizably Christian. They live in a world which is influenced to a remarkable extent by the ‘founding formula’ which applied from the teaching of Jesus, through the intervening temporal space, as an ideological, or more appropriately in this context, an ideational ‘bridge’. For all the differences which undoubtedly do exist, nonetheless there are significant parallels between their worldviews. Their cosmogony is creational, their theology is monotheistic, their epistemology is influenced by the biblical metanarrative of redemption, their morality is conservative, their anthropology is influenced by the notion of depravity, their expectation for the after-life is of judgment and reward. They have answered Manning Clark’s (1976: 13) question, “What is an Australian? By what faith does he live?”\footnote{In Clark’s ‘Boyer Lectures’ for 1976. He drew on the Nietzschean image of the madman and posed a question for Australians: Assuming that mankind has killed God, what did Australians put in his place? Did they bestow on each other the love and tenderness that they previously lavished on the Mighty Disposer? Or have we become bored survivors, sitting comfortless on Bondi Beach, citizens of the Kingdom of Nothingness, who booze and surf while waiting for the barbarians? What is an Australian? By what faith does he live? (1976: 13).} not in terms of a narrow sectarianism or nationalism, but in terms of a Christo-centric confession, “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord... I believe in the Holy Spirit....”\footnote{The Apostles’ Creed; in Hugh McGinlay (Ed.), 1988, \textit{Uniting in worship}, Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, The Joint Board of Christian Education, p. 122.}

How then did these people become Christians? According to Jerome’s truism that “Christians are made, not born”, contemporary Australians who claim Christian beliefs must at some point have undergone a conversion experience which led them to hold Christian truth-
claims. Such people were not born with these beliefs. They must have been acquired in the context of a conversion experience. According to the 1996 National Church Life Survey:

The majority of [church] attenders (56%) have experienced a moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion. Another 41% have not had such a distinctive experience; 33% have grown gradually in their faith and 8% have never had such an experience. Only 3% are unsure. It should not be assumed that attenders who have never had a distinct conversion experience or have grown gradually in faith do not feel they have been converted (Kaldor, Bellamy & Moore, 1995: 129).

Who then are these ‘converts’ who have become acquainted with the Christian vision? Examples of Australians in the public eye who have converted to the Christian faith are Carolyn Jones, Darren Beadman, Tim Costello, Michael Tait, and Margaret Court. They represent a continuing movement toward religious belief and practice from among the general Australian population, and indicate that religion and conversion are social ‘facts’ in the wider Australian population. Examples of converts who have come to claim Christian beliefs from outside the public eye will be introduced in chapter four.

This research provides an extension to work previously carried out on Australian Christian spirituality by Walker (1988), who undertook PhD research on the conversion of secular Australians to Christianity; Dixon (1988) whose PhD research enquired into the religious beliefs of adolescents in Western Australia; Devenish’s (1999) MA relating to Western Australian youths’ perceptions of God; and Collison’s (1999) research into the congruence of

26. Well-known Australian religious commentator and founder of the ABC radio and television series 'The Search for Meaning'.


28. The brother of Australian Treasurer Peter Costello. Tim is currently the National President of the Baptist Union of Australia.

29. Federal Labor Senator from 1988 to 1993 with the Community Services and Health portfolio, and who later was Australian Ambassador to the Hague and the Vatican City. In 1999 he became a Roman Catholic priest.

30. A darling of Australia's tennis scene, winning 62 Grand Slam tennis events, including Wimbledon, and the Australian, French and American Open events over the years 1961 to 1975. She converted to the Christian faith in 1973, and today runs Margaret Court Ministries and is Pastor of Victory Life Center in Perth.
discipling as an educational strategy with the objectives of Christian faith communities in Western Australia.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I have made use of Kreider’s definition which defines conversion as bringing about “changes in believing, belonging and behaving, accompanied by an experience of God”; and have sought to present the ways in which conversion was understood and practiced in early Christianity, as expressed in the examples I have chosen. In particular, I have sought to discuss the impulse to conversion within the Christian religious tradition, to introduce the epistemological changes which took place in the minds of the early Christians as they rejected their previous outlook on life in favor of a completely new and alternative belief system and worldview, in the context of conversion to the Christian faith. I have undertaken this task in an attempt to locate potential ‘keys’ which might illumine the experiences of contemporary Christian converts who undergo a comparable exchange of one belief system or worldview for another. Despite the deterioration of conversion in the Christian religious tradition from the third century onwards, nonetheless a persistent pattern of proclamation and catechism can be discerned over a long period of time, which demonstrates Christianity’s preoccupation with inducting new members into its faith-communities, and into the Christian system of belief which provides the determinating worldview for Christian belief, identity, belonging and behavior. The ‘keys’ to the Christian worldview which I have located in this chapter are its Christ-centeredness, its call for an exclusive commitment, and its rejection of a self and world-centered concern in matters of morality and personal self-gratification, in favor of a life which is pleasing to God. These aspects will be further developed in chapter two.
Chapter 2: The Acquisition of Mind: Envisioning a Christian Perspective:

Introduction:

This second chapter is intended as a review of the literature on religiously-motivated meaning change. I propose to undertake a discussion of how those authors whose work relates to this field have sought to understand how religious believers come to acquire new religious knowledge and its operations within their perceptual apparatus. I will therefore discuss the following components of mind and meaning change in this chapter: (1) the ways in which culture bequeaths a 'mind' to individuals; (2) the inter-connection between biology and consciousness, indicating that mind is somewhat dependent upon the human life-cycle; (3) the acquisition of the 'static' religious mind as the recipient of religious information without spiritual enlightenment; (4) the transformed mind which obtains a capacity to envision spiritual realities; (5) the operations of the religious or spiritual mind as indwelling the narrativized drama of the Biblical record. I will conclude by introducing a notable convert whose thinking changed radically at his conversion.

I will use the idea of 'mind' in this research in a non-technical way, perceiving it as a theme which integrates other key components in the consciousness of the newly-believing soul, such as new religious knowledge, epistemology and worldview which moderates the gestaltic transactions of the person in its relations with God, self, world and others. This signals my preference to eschew the objectivisms involved in the way psychology, philosophy and biological science use the term. I will retain instead a Husserlian preference for mind as the locus for meaning and the constitution of reality. I will apply the notion of mind as the concept which integrates those operations of the self comprised of the rational, volitional, judgmental, emotional, existential and experiential components of one's existence within the context of one's life history. Thus mind is not something reducible to the brain, but is that part of human 'being' which believes, reasons, perceives and attributes truth to objects, events and relationships. Later in this research the co-participants themselves will speak to delimit what their 'mind' is as it is made-up in a religious way, as they imbibe knowledge and belief which is both ultimate, and alternate to what they have previously known and believed. In this chapter
the literature related to the topic of the inception of meaning will be addressed, beginning with culturally transmitted meaning and its connection with biological development.

2.1 The Mind of Christ?

The title of this dissertation is an *agent provocateur* which requires exploration in order for it to relinquish its structure and meaning. The question-mark acts as an interrogative challenge to the ‘default’ or common sense response which comes most readily to mind, and introduces the possibility of a broad range of alternative hermeneutical options. The phrase ‘the mind of Christ’ is Pauline in origin and is taken from 1 Corinthians 2:16. There Paul alludes to the religiously plural milieu of first century Corinth where the religious worldview options discussed in early chapter one were exerting an influence on the minds of the recently converted disciples who made up the Christian Church in Corinth. He typified the situation in this way, “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:22-24).

Paul makes a clear distinction between the religious beliefs held by Jews, Greeks and Christians. Those who had become Christians had done so by leaving behind their previous religious understandings and beliefs in order to follow Christ. For them the predominant factor was no longer what previously provided their answers and enlightened their minds. They had lost faith or de-converted (Barbour, 1994) from their previous outlooks on life, and had undergone a radical shift in their root-metaphor so that now Christ had become their center, the one who now functioned as the hermeneutical ‘key’ for their epistemology, cosmology and ontology. Paul described his ministry as being “not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:13).
He draws a contrast between the man\(^1\) without the Spirit (\textit{psychikos}) and the man with the Spirit (\textit{pneumatikos}). The \textit{psychikos}, or the un-spiritual person, is not energized by the illumination of the Spirit and cannot understand the deep mysteries of the wisdom of God. On the other hand, the \textit{pneumatikos}, or the spiritual person, had received a revelation from the Spirit and had obtained knowledge of God's wisdom and the ability to understand and interpret it. Thus I perceive six things to become apparent concerning those believers of whom Paul says, "but we have the mind of Christ." These six things are as follows:

First, a transition had occurred whereby individuals have moved from being unspiritual (\textit{psychikos}) to being spiritual (\textit{pneumatikos}). This transition most likely occurred at conversion, and without doubt it exerted a transformational effect on the convert's perception of reality. Second, it was apparently possible to belong to the believing community of the Church and participate in Christian worship while remaining unspiritual, yet the ideal remained the achievement of the state of an enlightened and therefore mature spirituality which was dependent upon the Spirit's revelation of Christ to the believer's mind. This is one explanation for the existence of un-converted people within Christian congregations, and provides a justification for those who preach conversion within the Churches.\(^2\) Third, the transition from unspiritual to spiritual—as effected by the Spirit—brought about a new way of seeing, of attributing reality and truth, to conform to the message of the Christian gospel relating to God's universal and eternal purposes. This new vision in some way had Christ at its center, forcing a reinterpretation of the basic ontological structure of reality,\(^3\) and bringing

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\(^1\) Here I need to make a disclaimer concerning the use of 'man'. In this and various other instances I use the term 'man' in order to maintain the usage of the authors whose work I am citing in that instance. In this usage, for example, I am reflecting the Apostle Paul's language ('man' in the NIV and \textit{antibpos} in the Greek text). I make this disclaimer in the full awareness of the current preference for gender-representative language. When not citing an author's usage, my tendency is to use gender representative language, by referring to 'himself or herself' or similar.

\(^2\) The Roman Catholic Church in Australia has recently concluded a Decade of Evangelism which has largely targeted their own congregations in order to bring about conversions amongst their own people.

\(^3\) The Biblical record describes Jesus as the universe's primary creative agent (John 1:3), as sustainer of the created universe (Colossians 1:16), and as judge of all mankind (the Revelation).
about a shift in the epistemological structure of belief within the Christian disciple. Fourth, the movement from being unspiritual to spiritual required individuals to make a departure from previous religious beliefs and commitments, or to de-base their former truth-claims in order to make room for the new beliefs and commitments to exist and assert their claims. Fifth, the new vision had something to do with God's 'new' dispensation of grace. The Old Testament dispensation was characterized by limited revelation on God's part, meaning that only prophets and kings were made aware of God's purposes. The response expected by Isaiah to his rhetorical question, "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?", is "No one!" And yet Paul when addressing this topic makes the astounding statement that everyone who has accepted Christ and has been enlightened by the Spirit is a 'spiritual' (pneumatikos) person. Sixth, according to Paul, the 'mind of Christ' which resides within the religious believer has an authoritative point of reference which informs the believer and his faith community by providing a 'core' root metaphor which confers an overarching plausibility structure. It was no longer literally Christ's mind, but their own, informed by the conscience of the religious percipient in a state of openness to the Spirit. Thus every aspect of their actions, attitudes and attributions of meaning are transformed. Therefore what Paul refers to as the 'mind of Christ' is essentially the 'Christian mind', and will be referred to as such throughout the remainder of this dissertation. The content of the 'Christian mind' has yet to be established and will be discussed later in this chapter.

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4. Alan Segal says of Paul's conversion, "While Paul carried over into Christianity much of what he learned in Judaism, he inverts the values of his past in a way that is consistent with his new commitments", cited by Richard Longnecker (1997: 29).

5. Verse 16 of 1 Corinthians 2; which is a quotation from Isaiah 40:13. The reference to 'Lord' is to God (YHWH), not to Jesus.

2.2 The Acquisition of Mind via Culture:

In order to adequately account for the changes of mind which take place in the extraordinary circumstance of religious conversion, it will be necessary to draw an outline of how mind is normatively acquired. I will begin the discussion by referring to the vantage points provided by missiological anthropology and the sociology of knowledge.

As indicated previously I have drawn significant insight from the discipline of Christian missiology, whose literature first alerted me to the problem of how the religious mind acquires new religious knowledge, and the role of that new religious knowledge in bringing about adjustments within their worldview. Missiology is derived from the activity of Christian mission which Scherer defines as, "the total activity of the Church in preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing Christian communities, and witnessing to the kingdom [of God], including advocacy of justice and service to humanity" (Jongeneel, 1998: 2). Jongeneel defines missiology as "the academic discipline which—from a philosophical, empirical and theological point of view—reflects upon the history, theory and practice of (Christian) world mission" (ibid: 3). Missiology, because of its broad interest in vastly different geographic, cultural, linguistic and religious fields, is a multi-disciplinary endeavor. Conn speaks of missiology as being in a 'trialogue' between theology, anthropology and Christian mission (1984: 130). Part of that trialogue has sought to come to an understanding of the place of culture in the development, maintenance, transmission and transformation of religious worldviews, which is after all, an important part of the domain of spirituality and religious belief. Central to the normative operations of culture are four intrinsically important functional categories, namely contextualization, enculturation, inculturation, and worldview.

First, the category of contextualization had its origins in the 1972 report issued by the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches entitled, 'Ministry in Context', as a response to the growing usage of the term 'indigenization'; a term which sought to

represent the emic perspective of the indigenous church.\textsuperscript{8} Contextualization has come to stand for the appropriate grafting of components of the Christian gospel as represented by the Biblical narrative into local cultures, thought-forms and mazeways without the polluting accretions of Western Christianity. As such contextualization seeks to take local cultural contexts seriously. It became possible to speak of a variety of contextualization models, as does Gilliland (1989: 313f.) when he speaks of the ‘anthropological’, the ‘translation’, the ‘praxis’, the ‘adaptation’, the ‘synthetic’ and the ‘critical’ models of contextualization.

Second, according to Luzbetak, ‘enculturation’ is similar to the process of socialization which an individual receives within his or her own culture as one’s “incorporation into a society by learning its way of life” (1991: 182). Enculturation is the process of induction into competency in one’s home culture’s values, beliefs and habitualized activities, usually as a child or juvenile member and participant within that culture.

Third, inculturation on the other hand (not to be confused with enculturation or acculturation) is a missiological term popular amongst Jesuit writers in the 1970s, which after Vatican II became standard parlance. In his \textit{Evangelii nuntiandi} Pope Paul VI referred to inculturation as “a radical and profound understanding” of local ways and values (\textit{ibid}: 69). As such inculturation is the learning of a culture’s beliefs, patterns and mazeways etically or ‘from outside’, but so effectively as to allow one to operate as an insider, allowing the expatriate missionary to import and apply Christian motifs and beliefs effectively within that cultural context.

Fourth, since 1994 Charles Kraft has been developing a ‘work in progress’ manuscript on worldview entitled ‘Worldview for Christian Witness’.\textsuperscript{9} His use of worldview reflects a wider usage of the notion throughout missiological literature, following general anthropological

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\textsuperscript{8} This was in keeping with other attempts to root the Christian gospel in non-Western cultural forms which would enjoy their longevity and by ensuring their acceptance by indigenous cultures and thought-forms. Early missiological theorists such as Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson spoke of the ‘indigenous church’ in the nineteenth century. An example is the self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating church in China. The Three Self Patriotic Movement in that country continues to make use of this formula.

\textsuperscript{9} Dated 1997. Permission to quote this work has been given by the author.
Kraft's definition of worldview is:

The totality of the culturally structured assumptions, values and commitments (allegiances) underlying both a people's perception of reality and their responses to those perceptions. Worldview is not separate from culture. It is included in culture as the structuring of the deepest level presuppositions on which people based their lives (1997: 2).

According to Kraft, all human interpretation is based on worldview assumptions, which are culturally-mediated, unproven, unconscious and entirely reflexive. People ordinarily follow their habituated assumptions because to question them every time a decision must be taken is too emotionally demanding. Because worldview is transmitted socially as part of the enculturation process, it is inevitably taught and imbibed as something absolute. Following Kearney (1984), Kraft understands there to be five universals of worldview; categorization, person-group, causality, time-event, and space-material. This complex interpretative schema of causality, cosmology and coping mechanism is what enables a plausibility structure to be manufactured and retained. Kraft also believes there to be five prominent functions of worldview; they are (1) the structuring of the deep underlying motivations and predispositions within the individual or group, including the will, the emotions, the use of logic or reason; (2) the patterning of the assignment of meaning, this is the area of interpreting and evaluating; (3) the providing of explanations in order to make sense of reality, so the production of myths and legends, doctrines and creeds is undertaken in this sub-region of worldview. As an extension of this aspect, allegiance and patterns of relating and adapting are important; (4) psychological reinforcement is important; he develops the theme of rituals and transitional rites at this point; (5) the final function of worldview is that of integration which holds society together amidst the pressures of external threat and internal modification.

Following Tippett (1987: 157ff.) Kraft suggests a model of worldview change at the

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cultural level which contains within it four components; demoralization, submersion, conversion and revitalization. He explains the historical phenomenon of religious revival by means of cultural and spiritual revitalization.

In Christian conversion, the first generation experience typically involves a radical change in worldview and behavior. But the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the pioneers seldom experience the same kind of worldview transformation so meaningful to their predecessors (1997: 82).

Kraft suggests that people convert through paradigm or sub-paradigm shifts and replacements located within the worldview of an individual group or culture. Paradigm shifts within a worldview occur when someone undergoes a radical change in perspective, such as the Copernican Revolution in science when the human picture of the world moved from a geocentric foundation to a heliocentric foundation within the primary generating model of reality (ibid: 69). This involves a process of demoting previous beliefs and replacing or promoting them with other more plausible paradigms or subparadigms.

In summary, missiological anthropology understands enculturation to be the normal process by which an individual inherits the worldview components of his or her culture. By means of this process a culture transmits the meanings and values to which it gives priority, from one generation to the next. In doing so it ensures the continuing existence of that culture, and the proper function of those individuals who make up its membership, in terms of their proper functioning within the parameters of the cultural ‘world’ they have been inducted into, and must participate within.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) are best known for postulating the thesis that reality is socially constructed. They were strongly influenced by Schutz’s social phenomenology, and were therefore mediately influenced by Husserl’s concept of the lifeworld. They propose that social reality is not a self-generating, pre-existent entity. Rather, it is people in community who actively create meanings in keeping with the pre-determined limitations of nature issuing in a precarious human existence, and the intrinsic psychological need of human existence to stave off anomie. Both aspects provide the context for an “ongoing outpouring of human being into
the world" (Berger, 1969: 4). According to Berger, three processes are involved in constructing reality; (1) externalization, where through communal effort humanity fashions the external world into a habitable universe which supplies physical nourishment, emotional nurture, and cognitive certainty; (2) objectivation, where society makes 'real' the social world they have constructed. A fully objectivized universe no longer exhibits signs of being constructed by humanity as a product of collective need. It now gives every appearance of being 'objectively real' in the way it imposes itself back upon its human creators; and (3) internalization, where reality (though humanly constructed) is absorbed into consciousness as an external 'fact'.

While consciousness precedes socialization (ibid: 83), nevertheless it is socialization which transmits the gilded cage of an agreed-upon Weltanschauung to be transmitted to the next generation. The reception of a culturally-shaped consciousness or 'sacred canopy' provides the plausibility structure on which all those who reside in society depend in order to share a contiguous language and meaning. The result of primary socialization is that the child internalizes the world as 'the' world, as if there were no other. It becomes his or her 'home' world, despite the fact that sociologists of knowledge can make the statement that "primary socialization ... may be seen as the most important confidence trick that a society plays on the individual—to make appear as necessary what is in fact a bundle of contingencies, and thus to make meaningful the accident of his birth" (Berger & Luckmann, ibid: 155).

Once created, a world must be maintained. This process involves the transmission of its values to new members of society through socialization, and a program of 'therapies' designed to keep deviance at bay. Yet the values of the created world are not static, and multiple options are available to its citizens, and thus transformations within individuals' subjective realities do take place. According to Berger and Luckmann:

To be in society already entails an ongoing process of modification of subjective reality. To talk about transformation then, involves a discussion of different degrees of modification. We will concentrate here on the extreme case, in which there is a near-total transformation; that is, in which the individual "switches worlds" (ibid: 176).
Berger refers to switching worlds as 'alternation',\textsuperscript{11} which equates to religious conversion. Religion has the task of both world-maintaining and world-shaking (1969: 100). Conversion, according to Berger, is the transmission of the individual from a previously established world to a new one, following a disenchantment of some kind. It is not a second socialization, but a switching 'between' worlds. But as socially-constructed reality, once constructed, it must be maintained. So according to Berger, it is one thing to undergo an experience of religious conversion; it is quite another to maintain it (1966: 177), especially when one belongs to a 'cognitive minority' (Berger, 1971: 5-6).

In summary, Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality thesis allows for both the transmission of the values of that world to the rising generation by means of socialization, and also the possibility of conversion into and out of such worlds.

2.3 The Acquisition of Mind and Developmental Theory:

Religious studies is a multi-disciplinary field which draws upon the insights of a variety of academic and intellectual disciplines. Dittes notes that religion has always provided an important focus for applied psychology, in view of the fact that, "religion offers rich, sometimes dramatic, insistences of key psychological processes such as the development and change of attitude and belief ... and above all, many instances of the interrelation between cognitive and motivational variables" (1970: 602).

While I make no claim to specialized knowledge in psychology,\textsuperscript{12} the subject of the development of 'mind' requires me to venture into that field, as Watts and Williams have stated:

\textsuperscript{11} A term also used by Nock, but in a more specific way. See chapter 1 for an explanation of Nock's usage.

\textsuperscript{12} This research is concerned with an area known as the psycho-spiritual element within conversion. Holm (2000) referred to this element as the 'psycho-phenomenology' of religion. I have chosen to reject this nomenclature in favour of the term the 'phenomenology of mind' in Christian conversion. What this caveat does is retain the focus of the research on phenomenology and its ability to access, understand and describe the inner workings of the psyche in conversion, without resorting to the discipline of psychology, a field in which I hold no qualifications.
Religious experience is in one sense such an inherently psychological phenomenon that religious writers over the centuries have necessarily used at least some kind of lay psychology in talking about it.... Excising psychological concepts from religion is not an available option (1988: 2).

I will begin by outlining in brief the theories of the developmental psychologists Piaget and Kohlberg. Piaget's developmental or genetic epistemology is an important source of theoretical insight when addressing the development of children's cognitive abilities in the early years of the human life span. Four stages in the development of cognitive awareness in children as proposed by Piaget are the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational thought, and formal-abstract cognitive stages. For Piaget, knowledge is essentially an active response on the part of the child to their social environment. Of the sensorimotor stage he says:

At eighteen months to two years this "sensorimotor assimilation" of the immediate external world affects a miniature Copernican revolution. At the starting point of this development the neonate grasps everything to himself— or, in more precise terms, to his own body—whereas at the termination of this period, i.e., when language and thought begin, he is for all practical purposes but one element or entity among others in a universe that he has gradually constructed himself, and which hereafter he will experience as external to himself (1964: 9).

According to Piaget, it is at the latter stages that children are able to understand the abstract, non-empirical nature of religious belief, commitment and experience. For Piaget, as for Fowler (see section 2.4 below) the transitions between the stages are as important as residing within the stable location of any of the stages.

Lawrence Kohlberg was influenced by Piaget's theory of developmental reasoning, and applied it to morality. He developed a model of moral judgment which moved sequentially through six stages; stage 1: obedience and punishment orientation; stage 2: instrumental purpose and exchange; stage 3: mutual inter-personal expectations and good relations; stage 4:

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social system and conscience maintenance; stage 5: prior rights and social contract; stage 6: universal ethical principles. While Kohlberg focused principally on a person's moral structuring of life within their social environment, he also hypothesized the possibility that a similar model may characterize the ways in which individuals develop religious conceptions of their ultimate environments. Kohlberg and Power refer to Piaget, Fowler and Kohlberg's various applications of moral development theory to religious thinking, summing it up in this way:

Fowler defines a sixth stage of faith partially designed to parallel a sixth moral stage of judgments of justice and love. His definition of this sixth stage is largely made in terms of charismatic exemplars, including Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Abraham Lincoln, and Dag Hammarskjöld. Before Fowler had started his research on faith stages, I (Kohlberg) had speculated about a "Stage 7" that would "answer" the unresolved questions left unanswered by Stage 6 moral principles. Its essence involved, I speculated, the adoption of a cosmic as distinct from a (moral Stage 6) universal human perspective. Exemplars held a natural law view of the relations between moral principles of justice and the ultimate. This could be either a theistic or a pantheistic orientation (1981: 232).

Kohlberg and Power conclude by observing that the universalizing moral principle of Stage 6 is necessary but not sufficient for the establishment of Stage 7. The tendency to move from Stage 6 to Stage 7 results from "experiences that are most distinctly religious experiences of union with deity" (ibid: 256), which facilitates the transition beyond experiences of the transcendent within nature, to cosmic or infinite experiences of the Divine which are consistent with but not reducible to rational science and morality. Kohlberg allows that the seventh stage of moral development is parallel to or consistent with spiritual awakening.

In the discussion above it is evident that the capacity for 'mind' as I am conceiving of it increases with cognitive maturity, and with that increase comes the possibility of a greater degree of complexity in reflecting on religious objects such as God, the Bible, sin and salvation. That is not to say that children fail to entertain religious thoughts or beliefs, nor is it


to say that adults who have achieved this by dint of their stage of life are bordering on or have entered into a deep religious awareness.

2.4 Acquisition of the Religious Mind:

Maslow (1974) wrote of the peak-experiences in a person's life which characterize the essential substance of human existence in its higher or transcendent nature, that inherent within the spiritual values people hold are naturalistic meanings which are as authentic as any proscribed revelation claimed by any religious institution. Maslow associated what he called 'B-cognition' (or being-cognition; a unitive, enlightening and noetic kind of knowing) with peak-experiences which tended to engender B-values such as truth, goodness, beauty, perfection etc. (ibid: 92-94). While Maslow wanted to argue for a humanistic rather than a supernaturalist model, nonetheless his basic thesis that a form of knowledge accompanies the fundamental transformation of peak-experiences is in agreement with the suppositions which underlie this research.

James Fowler is the primary representative of those writers who have developed a developmental model which represents the religious thinking of humans throughout their life-cycle. I will use him here as a representative of those writers who have contributed to the field of Christian religious education and who make use of developmental psychology.

First, James Fowler's book *Stages of Faith* (1981: xiii) sees faith as a 'human universal', and defines it as:

People's evolved and evolving ways of experiencing self, others and world (as they construct them); as related to and effected by the ultimate conditions of existence (as they construct them); and of shaping their lives’ purpose and meanings, trusts and loyalties, in light of the character of being, value and power determining the ultimate conditions of existence (as grasped in their operative images—conscious and unconscious—of them (ibid: 92-3).

Fowler initially discerned six stages of faith (ibid: chapters 15-21). They are:

- stage 1: intuitive-projective faith (ages 4-7)
- stage 2: mythical-literal faith (ages 6 1/2-11)
- stage 3: synthetic-conventional faith (ages 12-adulthood)
stage 4: individuative-reflective faith (ages 18-adulthood)
stage 5: conjunctive faith\textsuperscript{16} (ages minimum 30)
stage 6: universalizing faith (ages minimum 40).\textsuperscript{17}

At the individuative-reflective stage, adequate maturity and confidence is achieved to allow the emergence of an 'executive ego' (1984: 62), which can 'self-authorize' one's decisions and beliefs. The conjunctive faith stage brings with it the capacity to live with the polar tensions of life, and to see truth as being a pluriform entity. The stage of universalizing faith, according to Fowler, enables the religious person to rise to a level of detachment which involves a self emptying, and an elevation of thought which he terms 'the transvaluation of value'.\textsuperscript{18} As such universalizing faith "has assented to a radical decentralization from the self as a epistemological and valuational reference point for construing the world"\textit{(ibid: 69)} in favor of the Christian 'master story' \textit{(ibid: 82ff.).} The altruism of vocation and of personal self-emptying is derived from a desire to live in service of God's Kingdom and its values, which are alternate to earthly values.

Fowler speaks of Erikson's influence upon him as being more pervasive and subtle than Piaget and Kohlberg (with whom he was in a 'fictional conversation', 1981: 110). He describes Erikson's eight ages of the life cycle as being a structural-developmental program of psycho-social growth. They are (1) trust versus mistrust; (2) autonomy verses shame and doubt; (3) initiative versus guilt; (4) industry versus inferiority; (5) identity versus role confusion; (6) intimacy verses isolation; (7) generativity versus stagnation; (8) integrity versus despair. He characterizes Erikson's stages as being 'epigenetic', and as building towards the conditions

\textsuperscript{16} Fowler's earlier description of stage 5 was 'paradoxical-consolidative' faith. In 1981 he termed it 'conjunctive', writing that he had "not found a simple way" to explain this stage, but that despite his difficulty to capture its essence by means of an appropriately descriptive nomenclature, stage 5 "as a style of faith-knowing does exist and it is complex" (1981: 184).

\textsuperscript{17} In his \textit{Becoming adult, becoming Christian}, 1984; a seventh stage is discussed, which fits prior to stage 1 above, and is referred to as 'primal faith', and which belongs to infants.

\textsuperscript{18} A term which is also used by Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan, and will be discussed in Chapter 9.
which facilitate the achievement of faith which is an important apex of human potentiality (ibid; and 1984: 21, 27 & 29).

Drawing on Rambo's definition of conversion; "a significant sudden transformation of a person's loyalties, patterns of life, and focus of energy" (1980: 22), Fowler characterizes conversion as a:

**Significant recentering of one's previous conscious or unconscious images of value and power, and the conscious adoption of the new set of master stories in the commitment to reshape one's life in a new community of interpretation and action.** Conversion, understood in this way, can occur in any of the faith stages or in any of the transitions between them (1981: 281-2, author's italics).

Finally, Fowler explores the notion of 'vocation' as the point of progressive fulfillment of adulthood in the question, "Who am I? To the question Whose am I?", changing the point of focus from who I am in the sight of those significant others in whose eyes I see myself reflected, to who I am in relation to the creator, ruler and Redeemer-Liberator of the universe; it is "from this perspective [that] all questions of identity become questions of vocation" (1984: 93).

Second, I will introduce the Christian educational models developed by Ronald Goldman, and C. Ellis Nelson. Goldman (1964: 51f.) extended Piaget's research in childhood development applying the stages of pre-operational, concrete, and propositional thinking to the religious development of young children, late junior or pre-adolescent children, and adolescents. Goldman's research is premised on William James' belief that religion is not a *sui generis* style of thinking, but is "no different in mode and method from non-religious thinking." As such it is simply everyday thinking applied to religious topics. According to Goldman, it is reasonable to expect children to be 'infantile theologians' (ibid: 5), who in the pre-operational phase apply a kind mythological artificialism (ibid: 231) to their religious insights. In later stages, children's capacity to grasp the metaphorical nature of religious communication is increased. In his second book Goldman (1978) drew attention to the developmental limits in religious growth. This is an extrapolation of his belief that religious thinking is normative human thinking applied to religious topics.
Nelson (1971: 89) holds that Christianity is communicable and that it can be learned. Under the heading of 'worldview', Nelson writes:

The Christian religion has formed its worldview largely from the stories of Genesis to account for the creation of the world, man's situation of disobedience, and God's commands that man use the animate and inanimate world about him. This general world view is given more specific content in the salvation story of the New Testament, which was incorporated into the Apostles' Creed ... [which] does not emphasize Christian life because it is primarily a world view, a belief system that orders the relation of God to man in salvation, and a description of the unseen world (ibid: 45).

For Nelson, the community of faith communicates its intrinsic values to its children by means of socialization. Faith resides within the presuppositions of the religious community and is mediated to its young by means of doctrine, socialization, and personal influence. He describes the agencies of instruction which form the mind of the rising generation and leaves a powerful guidance system within the individual as being threefold: (1) the process of explaining the world to a child, (2) the process of training a child to think and act according to the values of his or her culture, which produces a conscience (because it responds to punishments and rewards), and (3) the process of becoming self-conscious within a particular society and family-setting produces a self-identification which 'colors' all subsequent attitudes, actions and relationships. Contrary to Wuthnow (1999), Nelson holds that parental influence alone is insufficient to shape the minds of children of Christian parents. "The affectional relations in the family may be effective in shaping moral character, but unless the church shapes the mind and heart of the parents, the family goals will not be different from those of the surrounding society" (1971: 117). In other words the parents are incapable of transmitting Christian beliefs and values apart from the church as harbinger of the Christian tradition.

In summary, the Christian faith community has as its responsibility the transmission of faith from the generation of mature adult believers 'forward' into the minds and hearts of its children. Despite the developmental limits referred to by Goldman, nevertheless the Christian community must pass on its worldview, seeking to propel them through Fowler's stages of faith into maturity, and through Erikson's epigenetic epistemology to a faith which contributes positively to the quality of life of the individual, and the ongoing life of the faith community.
2.5 The Acquisition of Mind via Transformation:

In this section I will extend the distinction between 'spiritual' and 'unspiritual' which was drawn by Paul between the Christian and the non-Christian mind. In our day—as it was in Paul's—it is possible to belong to the believing community and participate in Christian worship while remaining unspiritual.

There is significant potential, especially in a post-Christian culture, for individuals within the Christian faith community to experience a socially mediated form of faith wherein they accept as true the information contained within the Apostles' Creed, but as having little significance for their own lives. The possibility of a personal Deity who created the universe, and who intervened in human history by means of Christ's provision of redemption on the Cross, remains a taken-for-granted phenomenon, without any element of 'inspiration'. Protestant theology calls this 'Sandemanianism', which holds that nothing more than intellectual assent to particular doctrines is necessary for salvation.

Balducelli (1973) makes the observation—following James—that the ordinary religious believer inherits faith as a socially induced religion, taking it 'for granted' because they have received its content as a matter of mundane transmission administered by others. Balducelli describes this as being parallel to Berger and Luckmann's social construction of religious reality. He outlines a four-fold model for the socialization process by which he thinks religious truths are transmitted; (1) imperative teaching: whereby a religious friend or practitioner commends the truths of the Christian faith to an individual; (2) the internalization of identity: whereby those truths are taken into the core of the individual, and form the kernel of their new identity; (3) the internalization of a world-image: whereby the world-image acts as a "mental construct which both makes sense to the mind, and in terms of which the mind makes sense of the world in correlation of which life is lived" (ibid: 549); and (4) the internalization of vertical legitimation: whereby the establishment and insertion of religious practices and institutions into their social and existential contexts are given a sense of 'rightness' because they derive

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ultimate legitimation and validation from God. For Balducelli, the 'vertical' component is intelligible as:

The Creator God, who has spoken the whole cosmos into being ... presides from above over the destiny of that which he so masterfully accomplished.... True, by the time the creation account ends, man has not said or done a single thing, but there is no doubt that he is capable of saying and doing the right thing, if needed, since the God who has decided to make him in his own image and after his own likeness, has successfully carried out that most intelligible decision. And so, for both God and man, the world is truly a thinkable place (ibid: 550).

Individuals who experience stages one, two and three—despite their knowledge of Christian religious information—have only achieved what Balducelli describes as a 'first conversion', which is socially dependent, and therefore defective. A second conversion is required, which equates to the “event of transformation itself” (ibid: 546) and is therefore a necessary condition and a valid source of vertical legitimation of their human existence. A 'second conversion' is thus the result of a disenchantment with pedestrian religious experience and understanding.

If the plight of religion socially induced is traceable to the fact that the believer's commitment to the validity of God has been administered to him by others, and that God's validity for him has been a function of their validity, it stands to reason that his plight cannot be remedied unless he administers God’s validity to concerns through a discovery and a choice he can truly name his own. There seems to be no alternative to a God whose reality is socially induced, and socially grounded except a God validating his own reality (ibid: 555).

The problem of a required movement from first conversion to second conversion is not a problem which affected the primitive Christian community described in the book of Acts. It is however a problem suffered by the later generations of religious believers. However in the intervening eras religious faith-communities have struggled to transmit their religious worldview from one generation to the next, as indicated by James' comment: “Churches, when once established, live at second-hand upon tradition; but the founders of every church owed their power originally to the fact of their direct personal communication with the divine” (1928: 30). Thus the notion of the 'second' conversion is important in terms of upgrading knowledge which is resident within an individual’s belief system as a cultural 'given' to the level of a thoroughgoing 'originality' of personal conviction. This is the work of transformation, which
brings to the tacit level of the executive ego (Fowler) the energy and emotional conviction of a personal belief in God which has implications for oneself and for one's world.

With regard to the notion of the 'second conversion', William James' understanding differs from that of Balducelli. James speaks of the 'once-born' and 'twice-born' believer. The 'once-born' person is a 'healthy-minded' individual whose predisposition toward life is fundamentally optimistic, and who accepts himself as a creature who by birthright shares in an inviolable goodness. The 'once-born' individual, according to James (ibid: 166) perceives the world as a "sort of rectilinear or one-storied affair", and who exhibits a basic happiness with the state of affairs which applies in his life in the natural world. From a religious perspective this is somewhat similar to a Unitarian theology, conceiving of God as a monistic and creative 'world-spirit'. The 'twice-born' individual, on the other hand, suffers from a sickness of soul, and from notions of sin, judgment, guilt and eternal condemnation. According to the humanist Emerson these feelings of darkness are nothing but "the soul's mumps, and measles, and whooping-coughs" (ibid: 167). In the case of the 'twice-born' individual, the world is a 'double-storied mystery' which presents itself as incomplete and unfulfilled. The individual undergoes a sickness of mind and soul, by which James means a kind of psychomachia (Morrison, 1992: 75), an experience of rejecting the soul in its present form and the world as a naturalistic phenomenon, in favor of a conception of reality which embraces a belief, indeed a dependence, on a supernatural Deity whose help is sought for forgiveness, healing, restoration and new beginnings. This is demonstrated by James' definition of conversion:

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. This at least is what conversion signifies in general terms, whether or not we believe that a direct divine operation is needed to bring such a moral change about (1928: 189).

Ironically, James himself experienced a season of depression and maladjustment late in his own life, undergoing what in his own terms was undoubtedly a 'second-birth', yet without
submitting to any religious conviction which is recognizably Christian. I shall return to multiple-storied universes later in the chapter.

Rosemary Haughton, a Catholic theologian, in *The transformation of man* (1980) places the foregoing discussion in its proper ecclesial context. She refers to the preference of Catholic parishes to encourage their attendees toward spiritual 'formation' through education and the acquisition of moral standards. This category conforms to Balducelli's 'first conversion' where the culture rather than the individual has been Christianized, and to James' 'first-birth' where a spiritual orientation has been conceived within a naturalist framework. In all three cases, the culture and the individuals who reside within it are religious but not spiritual, or in my terms, 'Church-ed' but not 'Christ-ed'. Apart from the normal operational requirements of the human psyche to dwell within an ordered universe, the personal world as conceived is not passionately owned according to any deeply held convictions which mirror the natural and supernatural state to which they are thought to apply. Haughton says the religious 'formation' has yet to come to maturity, and that it does so by means of 'transformation'. She states:

> The “flash point” of decision is the moment when formation gives way to transformation. But the two have nothing in common at all, they do not even meet. Without the long process of formation there could be no transformation, yet no amount of careful formation could transform. Transformation is a timeless point of decision, yet it can only operate in the personality formed through time-conditioned stages of development, and its effects can only be worked out in terms of that formation (ibid: 31).

What Haughton is signalling is the transfiguring of consciousness in those who can be termed 'culture Christians' into something greater. A culture-Christian is someone who attends Church, receives the eucharistic elements, calls himself or herself a Christian, whose worldview has supplied a baseline set of religious beliefs, and whose individual mode of existence reflects

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a modicum of commitment to the Creed in terms of personal morality and comportment. Yet the dominant center of the belief-system lies elsewhere than in the set of doctrines which represent the metanarrative of historic Christianity. The 'mind' of the culture Christian is inevitably captured by the *zeitgeist* of their culture. Their preference is for this world and its pleasures, material possessions, and personal status and freedom rather than for the Kingdom of God and its otherworldly priorities.

Kierkegaard spoke powerfully about this in the 'golden age' of Danish Christendom (Loder & Neidhardt, 1992: 256). His was a polemic against a smug and self-sufficient culture which drew its identity and morality from Christianity without owning its core beliefs. In Kierkegaard's dialectical writings, four stages act as prominent designations for religious awareness and growth; they are (1) the aesthetic stage, (2) the ethical stage, (3) Religiousness A, and (4) Religiousness B (Kierkegaard, 1968: 493f.). I will restrict my comments here to the final two categories.

As with Haughton's formation and transformation, Kierkegaard's Religiousness A is prerequisite for the arrival of Religiousness B. In both cases the former occurs without there being any 'firmer hold upon religious realities' (to use James' terms). To summarize, Religiousness A is the appropriation of religion for one's own interests, without reference to God and his purposes. The person who resides within Religiousness A is blind to the wider religious realities, and is as yet 'un-awakened' to the redemptive purposes of God; he has 'misunderstood' the purpose and place of being a Christian. Kierkegaard continues:

Religiousness A can exist in paganism, and in Christianity it can be the religiousness of everyone who is not decisively Christian, whether he be baptized or no. That is only natural. To become a cheap edition of a Christian in perfect comfort, is very much easier, and at the same time it comes to about the same as the highest attainment, the man is indeed baptized, he has received a copy of the Bible and the Hymn Book as a confirmation present—is he then not a Christian, an Evangelical Lutheran Christian? ... My opinion is that religiousness A ... is so laborious that it is always enough of a task. My purpose is to make it difficult to become a Christian, if not more difficult than it is (ibid: 495).

In short, Religiousness A is all the trappings of Christianity without the benefits of undergoing
its fundamental transformations. It is presumptuous, presuming that because it has the form, it also has the essence; a fact that Kierkegaard infers is plainly not so. The difficulty is not to understand what Christianity is, but "to become and be a Christian" (ibid: 497).

Religiousness B, on the other hand is a consciousness of paradox, as a man caught in the vortex of earthly immanence, but who looks beyond concrete realities to see God and his truth as the dialectical ‘opposite’ and contradiction of the world (ibid: 506-7). The person in Religiousness B is aware of the polemic between heaven and earth, and the demand from heaven for the earthly man to qualify for grace by recognition of his guilt, as a sinner, that he has offended God, and that his duty of ‘sympathy’ is more than a simple act, it is the fruit and proof of his salvation. For Kierkegaard one must make the ‘leap of faith’ which is a quality of inward decision which can only be made by the person who has reached a stage of maturity in their own existential and character development.21 The ‘leap’ here is a movement beyond the realms of human rationality, into the realm of subjective transcendence. It is an imaginative strategy to bring about a “transition from one genus to another”,22 the means by which one makes the qualitative transition of “the leap from unbeliever to believer” by the incontrovertible means of transformation. “There is no direct transition to becoming a Christian, but, on the contrary, this is the qualitative leap” (ibid: 211). In this way Kierkegaard insisted on the transition into faith (read ‘conversion’), not by means of the ‘stages of faith’ referred to by Fowler and others above, but by becoming a ‘Knight of faith’ who seeks God and launches himself without proof and without knowledge onto God with complete and certain

21. Where he states, “The religiousness of childhood is the universal, the abstract, and yet it is the foundation in fantasy-inwardness of all subsequent religiousness. Becoming a Christian involves a decision which belongs to a much later age. The child’s receptivity is so completely without decision that it is said proverbially, ‘One can make a child believe anything’” (Ibid: 532).

subjectivity.\textsuperscript{23} Thus for Kierkegaard, the full realization of faith did not come through a 'stage along life's way'\textsuperscript{24} but through a decisive act of submission, which resulted in \textit{saligbed}, or a deep sense of peace.

In conclusion, the movement from knowledge 'about' and engagement 'with' the Divine is the substance of the concern of each of the authors referred to. Each applies their particular language to the phenomenon which the Apostle Paul characterized as the distinction between the spiritual and the unspiritual person. In each case the authors agree on the importance of a moment of transition between the 'stages' of existence depicted in a before and after taxonomy. However what is not agreed upon by the authors whose works are rehearsed here is the rationality of faith, when they vary from Balducelli's world which is truly a thinkable place (including God's work in it), and Kierkegaard's overly subjectivistic characterization of faith.

Thus far I have been discussing the acquisition of mind in relation to new religious knowledge. In doing so I have reviewed ways in which key theoreticians have described how individuals receive (passively) and exert (actively) their beliefs and opinions about both naturalistic and metaphysical realities. Before proceeding to discuss the reception of new beliefs in the moment of religious conversion, I now wish to turn to the topic of the 'Christian' mind.


- Faith requires risk.
- Risk requires uncertainty.
- So faith requires uncertainty.
- But knowledge requires certainty.
- So faith and knowledge are exclusive.

2.6 The Christian mind:

In this section I will undertake a review of the literature generated by Christians who have sought to develop approaches to the notion of the ‘Christian mind’. In doing so I am aware of the possibility of being open to the accusation of prematurely anticipating the findings of the ‘applied’ research into how respondents in this research experienced themselves as they acquired components of that religious belief which made them Christian believers. In my defence, let me establish that I am concerned here with how writers within the Christian religious tradition have developed and understood the theme of the ‘Christian mind’ and its existence, substance and content. This will allow me later in the dissertation (both provisionally in this chapter, and especially in chapters 5 to 9) to meaningfully develop the processes of ‘how’ it is that an individual imbibes and appropriates the contents of Christian belief, belonging and behavior, perceived in terms of the ‘Christian mind’.

James Orr (1897) was an important 19th century scholar who described the Christian view as being: (1) the affirmation of God’s existence as a person in a theistic religion; (2) the creation of the world by God, his presence within it and his transcendence over it; (3) the dignity of mankind, as created in the image of God; (4) the state of sin which alienates mankind from God and brings about disorder in the world; (5) the self-revelation of God in history through Israel, and through Christ; (6) Christ as possessing the fullness of God’s divinity in the span of his humanity; (7) Christ’s work on the cross as being his act of atonement which brought about the redemption of the world; (8) God’s purpose to bring salvation to mankind, and to establish his Kingdom on earth; (9) the purpose of human history as being teleological in that Christ will return to proclaim his Kingdom, to judge the unrighteous and reward the just. Orr’s precis of the Christian view of the world conceives of a cohesive body of doctrine which acts as a kind of shorthand summary for the state of affairs which pertains between God and his creation. His preference is to refer to ‘view’ rather than mind. Nevertheless the substance is the same as it is the mind which ‘views’ the reality referred to.

From a more recent date, Blamires (1978: 3) made the complaint that the Christian
mind is no longer operative. This, he says, is because the intellectual relevance of Christian truth has been emasculated by a pernicious secularism. In this he has much support. Blamires observes that those who ought to be making use of the Christian mind are training it to think otherwise, with the result that a kind of religious schizophrenia emerges (ibid: 70). In the collision between the secular and Christian minds there is a great deal of bewilderment as each side seeks to discern the operating principles of the other, often perceiving one another as counter-ideologies. What then is the 'world' presented by Christianity? Blamires describes this world as consisting of six essential features. (1) It has a supernatural orientation. (2) It is characterized by an awareness of evil. (3) It is characterized by a particular conception of truth. Blamires summarizes this:

The marks of truth as christianly conceived then, are: that it is supernaturally grounded, not developed within nature; that it is objective and not subjective; that it is a revelation and not a construction; that it is discovered by inquiry and not elected by a majority vote; that it is authoritative and not a matter of personal choice (ibid: 107). (4) It is characterized by an acceptance of God’s authority. (5) It is characterized by a concern for the person, i.e., it is a humanism. (6) It is characterized by a sacramental cast.

Thomas Torrance, a well known Scottish philosopher and theologian, wrote of the “Christian frame of mind” (1989) in seeking to retain a place for Christian thinking in the materialist and scientific world of the twentieth century. He was particularly interested in opening a debate between theology and natural-science. Neidhardt summarized seven key themes related to Torrance’s integration of Judeo-Christian theology and Einstein’s relativity theory: (1) the unitary character of theological and scientific knowledge, (2) relativity theory refers to the Absolute underpinnings of the relative, (3) in creative science, the “invisible” explains the “visible”, (4) the physical universe as being a relational rather than a container

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model, (5) 'field' theories which are an expression of the relational character of reality, (6) the universe as a multi-leveled entity which exists as an integrated whole, (7) theology and natural science are allies rather than foes.26

Thomas N. Smith (1994) characterizes the basic cognitive features of the 'Christian mind' as requiring one to: (1) think biblically; (2) to think theologically; (3) to have an evangelistic mind-set which calls others into fellowship with God; (4) to have a spiritual mind which is open to the Holy Spirit; (5) to have a human mind which is actively applied to seeking the truth concerning the supernatural realm of spiritual truth in the midst of the mundane realm.

I will conclude this section by referring to Brueggemann's portrayal of the content of the Christian mind. He proposes that a "dramatic, dynamic understanding of the Biblical text as imaginative model of reality" (1993: 8) is how the Church has historically understood the Scriptures and how they are best understood today. To return to the earlier references to multiple-storied existences, Brueggemann uses the notion of a 'three-storied universe' in two ways. First, he picks up on Bultmann's concern with the difficulties faced by the Bible as an ancient text in a modern scientific world. Bultmann's response was to demythologize the Bible and the Christian message. Brueggemann's response—contra Bultmann (who placed the weight for an authoritative judgment on modern culture)—was to listen again to the Biblical narrative, considered strictly as narrative, picturing its stories as a necessary and valid means for God to communicate his message to mankind. In a series of 'story-based imperatives' (ibid: 62) Brueggemann outlines the Old Testament gospel (continued and refined in the New Testament) as God's offer to Israel (and through Israel to the world), which came in the form of (1) a promise to the ancestors; (2) the liberation of slaves; and (3) the gift of land to displaced peasants (ibid: 10). These are the three 'stories' which form the elements of the Christian universe. Through the telling of these stories, a number of functions are fulfilled. First, the identity of the believing community is affirmed. The stories have become definitional for Israel's self-understanding, to the point that their placement of themselves within the universe

is posited on the bedrock of these defining stories which have taken on a mythic proportion, allowing the believing community to conceive of the world in terms of sacred space and sacred time, and of themselves as being 'elected' by God and as existing in a covenantal relationship with him. Second, history is given meaning and purpose; no longer is it the agonistic context for a purposeless struggle between good and evil, life and death (as in the pagan cosmologies); rather it is a dramatic teleological and theological unfolding of God's redemptive purposes within his creation, in the form of YHWH versus Pharaoh, Jesus verses Satan, and the believer versus the world. The outcome of which is the conferring of justice for the oppressed, judgment for the unrighteous, and vindication for God's name. Third, the 'telling' of the definitional stories of faith, with their myth-like origins exerting a shaping influence on the worldviews of those who hold them, is intended to subvert the stories of the counter-communities which surround the people of faith. Such a form of telling is what contemporary Christians would recognize as evangelism:

The telling and hearing of this “three-storied reality” is an invitation and summons to “switch stories”, and therefore to change lives. The telling and hearing constitute a wrenching encounter that leaves nothing of “business as usual”, as it did not for the ancient users of these stories. The wonder is that these old texts as models of alternative imagination do indeed continue to have that generative, transformative capacity, even in our time and place (ibid: 11).

Brueggemann characterizes the outcome of the stories as a three-fold sequence; as victory-proclamation-appropriation (ibid: 129). In the face of the dominant empire, with its royal consciousness (1985: 46), the role of the prophet and his or her faith-community is to announce the existence of an alternative consciousness by subverting the consciousness of any State, religion, ideology or idols which displace God and his worship, by initiating an alternative pattern of belief, practice and valuing. The result of the ‘prophetic imagination’ on the religious convert is to “nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us” (ibid: 13). Such a program has as its goal the delegitimation of the world, and the annunciation of God and his kingdom, Christ and his gospel, the Church and its living in hope of another reality
beyond this world. That reality is predicated on a dissatisfaction with this world, with its positivist science and technology, and its determination to function with no thought for God's right to exercise his rule and reign among mankind. The program of the Christian mind—as with all religious epistemologies—is ultimately to subvert the mundane in favor of the sacred.

Enough has been said from the literature discussed to indicate the belief within the Christian community that a 'Christian mind' does exist, that it has a content which forms a cohesive unity which in some way is antithetical to the available secular options and those religious options which have anything other than a Biblical Christology as its core epistemological component. Brueggemann's contribution in particular has shown that behind the formulation of theological doctrines and the proscriptive teachings of religious authorities lies a narrative which provides the primitive source for its later formulation, and which exerts a noticeable 'shaping' influence upon religious believers.

I believe there are other items to be added to the descriptions of the Christian mind given above. I would add an eternal perspective (which Medieval theology terms *sub specie aeternatis* [Berger, 1992: 194], which when translated means, 'from the perspective of eternity'); an openness or receptivity to divine communication; a past orientation with an expectation of future fulfillment (Ladd, 1974); and particularly a mythical consciousness, by which I mean an ability to listen to the ancient story of the Christian cosmology and to perceive it as applicable to one's life today. Finally here, there is the element of exclusivity; an element which I was at pains to demonstrate in Chapter one was an identifiable component of early Christians over against pagan beliefs and practices.

2.7 The Acquisition and Operation of the Christian Mind:

In the Formula of Concord (1517) Lutheran theology places the conversion experience in a formally instituted program known as the *ordo salutis*, or order of salvation, which

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perceived one's coming to faith in terms of a diachronic sequence based on an understanding of the convert as progressing through a sequence of 'calling, regeneration, adoption, conversion, faith, justification, renovation, sanctification, and subsequent perseverance in faith'. The rejuvenation of mind I am seeking to highlight here would in this case have taken place during the 'renovation' stage. The notion of *ordo salutis* is extended in Berkhoff (1984: 503-4), where faith is represented in terms of *notitia* (the intellectual element of faith), *assensus* (the emotional element of faith), and *fiducia* (the volitional element of faith).28

James Engel (1997: 186) presented his 'spiritual decision process' in terms similar to a contemporary *ordo salutis*. His process model allows for the dynamic and changing nature of human beliefs across time (both synchronic and diachronic). It recognizes that the process of coming to belief in religious realities is not a 'one step' movement but a complex series of 'stages' through which an individual may pass several times in order to achieve the moment of transformation. Engel's model (1990: 186)29 has as its basic premise a problem-solving model of conversion.

| no awareness [of the Christian message] | SEED-SOWING |
| knowledge of gospel core | | |
| understanding of gospel implications | | |
| positive attitude toward becoming Christian | | |
| problem recognition | | |
| change of allegiance | | |
| re-evaluation | | |

28. Citron treats the subject in further detail (1951: 99ff.).

29. Engel's order in his article was vertically oriented, commencing with spiritual reproduction/maturation at the top of the scale and working down the page to no awareness at the bottom. To assist the reader to begin the scale at the top of the page and read 'down' the scale in the order of the conversion process, I have reversed Engel's points.
incorporation into church

v

spiritual reproduction

MATURATION.

Diagram 1: showing the Engel scale and the process of converts' acquisition of belief.

Engel's model conceives of a movement from no awareness of the Christian message, to a commitment to that message and its content, and subsequently to communicating that deeply-held belief to one's counterparts. It is likely that the pivotal point of conversion is at the point of the 'problem recognition' stage, wherein a religious solution presents itself, and where knowledge turns into belief and commitment. The right-hand column represents the missional agenda of the Church in terms of seeking to win converts, to equip them with a Christian worldview, to retain them within the Church, and to send them out as a missionizing force.

Bruce, after commenting on Engel's spiritual decision process, writes:

Actual conversion takes place as one begins to believe a new worldview, gives primary allegiance to Jesus Christ as primary value in his life, and begins to allow subsequent value change to work its way through his life into behavior aimed at pleasing God. There is always a period of overlap with the old worldview, values and behavior as one learns to understand, evaluate, apply the truth and the standards of God to himself. This the prolonged process of conversion, but the evidence of real conversion is a life of growing congruence between one's worldview values and behavior, all centered around Jesus as Lord (1992: 72).

Bruce characterizes a person's values as their treasured ideals, commitments and loyalties which operate from within and is informed by their worldview (ibid: 21).

Loder (1981: 31-5) gives the name 'transformational logic' to the moment of acquiring new religious knowledge which is comprised of a series of stages within the larger assumptive world of the religious knower. These stages are (1) 'conflict', where the knower recognizes the presence of ambiguity and seeks to overcome ambiguity by his state of dissonance; (2) the 'interlude for scanning', where the knower casts around for hunches and possibilities of investing emotional energy; (3) 'constructive act of the imagination', where through a process of 'bisociation' a resolution to the problem is composed.
The construction of insight sensed with convincing force that constitutes the turning point of the knowing event. It is by this central act that the elements of the ruptured situation are transformed, and a new perception, perspective or world view is bestowed on the knower (ibid: 33).

The next stage is: (4) release and opening, where the 'problem' orientation is seen as an opportunity, and the sense of discovery and possibility is explored; (5) 'interpretation', which seeks a congruence between the original problematic context and its correspondence with the solution as discovered by means of the imaginative 'leap'. Thus Loder can state of the moment of conversion:

At the heart of convictional knowing is a radical figure-ground shift that is not merely perceptual but existential, in which the truth of Christ's revelation transforms the subject from a knower into one who is fully known and comprehended by what he or she first knew. Convictional knowing describes the structural and dynamic link between knowing about Christianity and becoming a Christian (ibid: 122-3).

Thus for Loder the moment of conversion contains within it a 'knowing' element which supports the research supposition of this research, and which will be further discussed in the concluding chapters of this dissertation.

In summary, the Christian mind is acquired by means of a process of induction, as described in the models offered above. However the acquisition of mind is set in a physiological, existential and historical context which requires the existence of a faith community which adheres to an identifiable core of faith beliefs. It also compels the religious agent to go through a process of problem-solution, trial and error, discovery or encounter with the Divine in order for the socially promulgated religious knowledge to be owned with passion, commitment and vigor by the individual.

I turn my attention now to the operation of the religious mind, as shaped by the message of the Christian gospel. Boomershine says of the English word 'gospel':

Gospel is a shortened form of an Old English word, 'godspell'. It means: 'god' good, 'spell' tale i.e., 'good tale'. A spell was a spoken word or set of words believed to have magic power. In Old English, therefore, the word that was the best equivalent for the Latin word, evangelium, was a tale whose telling had power (1988: 16).
The reference to gospel as a ‘tale’ whose telling has power, or as ‘story’, invokes Wright’s (1992: 32) use of worldview as being inextricably related to narrative, when he states that the key features of all worldviews is the element of story. He explains:

Every human community shares and cherishes certain assumptions, traditions, expectations, anxieties and so forth, which encourage its members to construe reality in certain ways, and which created contexts within which certain kinds of savers are perceived as making sense (ibid: 36).

Wright argues that narrative is the fundamental structure of worldview, and orders the chief modality of conveyance of cultural vestiges across both diachronic and synchronic components of temporality. In fact, worldviews says Wright, are themselves at their “deepest level shorthand formulae to express stories” (ibid: 77). Thus stories provide the larger framework from which they draw and establish the kinds of background settings within which truth is possible. The world created by the narrative drama is the context within which verification of all truth-claims take place, and judgments made concerning authenticity, possibility, likelihood, and coherence are either accepted or denied. The reference to ‘story’ buttresses and augments Brueggemann’s use of story in the previous section, extending it into the sphere of worldview. For Wright, when Paul tells the story of Jesus, he compresses what is otherwise an essentially Jewish story of God’s redemptive intervention in the life of Israel, into the story of Jesus (ibid: 79). Wright’s use of stories as ‘controlling stories’ (ibid: 42), is similar to Wolterstorff’s use of ‘control beliefs’ (1976: 14) and Fowlers ‘master stories’ (1981: 277-9). These deep-level tacit beliefs will be discussed in further detail at a later point in the dissertation.

For Wright, the Christian ‘founding myths’ (1992: 396) are those stories from which the faith communities who subscribe to them draw their identity, their biography, their worldview, and the modalities by which they deduce and attribute truth and meaning. He refers to the Gospels as ‘myth’ in the sense that “they are the foundational stories for the early Christian worldview” (ibid: 426), which provide an interpretive framework by which the early Christian communities were able to navigate their way as an insecure and not-yet stable cognitive minority in the face of long-established and seemingly impregnable alternative myths which
surrounded them. The perspective from which the founding myths were perceived was from the ‘inside’ (ibid: 122). The new Christian community was an ‘indwelling’ community, because it entered into an envelope of meaning, and operated out of the worldview it provided them. Blamines (1978: 113) states, “you do not make the truth, you reside in it.”

A further three-storied structure comes into view; this time not related to the way the faith community perceives the Biblical revelation, but in the way that revelation operates within their consciousness to supply a worldview. According to Willimon (1990), the Bible has exerted a shaping influence upon the Christian Church over the course of its historic development. A Christian and a Buddhist are not different because one is a better person than the other, but because “they have listened to different stories” (ibid: 12); because the Bible has had a ‘reality-defining’ power over the Church (ibid: 20); and because the idea of being ‘reasonable’ is a referential term in that it is dependent on knowledge of the system which informed one about the meaning and relevance of ‘reason’. Hence, in order to reason as a Christian (that is, to own a Christian mind), one must be transported (read converted) into the meanings inherent in the baseline-story which supplies what is reasonable within its parameters. According to Willimon: “reason is not some detached, individual endowment. Reason is a result of conversion into, and life within a distinctive community which has been given the skills, through this story, for seeing the world and our lives rightly” (ibid: 32).

According to Lindbeck, a Christian is someone who operates ‘intratextually’ (1984: 113f.) by residing within the Christian faith as someone who is convinced of its validity. A Christian is someone who dwells within the meaning of the Biblical text ‘intratextually’ and is familiar with its symbols, meanings, and reference points. In other words, to be a Christian is to be someone who has a ‘skill’ in the meanings which the Christian mythology bequeaths him. According to Lindbeck, “Intratextual theology redescribes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extrascriptural categories. It is the text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text” (ibid: 118). This is similar to Polanyi’s idea (1974: 92) of the ‘tacit’ dimension of cognition, which is the pre-reflective, assumptive, taken-for-granted realm of what every resident within a given culture or faith
community knows to be true. And it would appear that Christians have long known this to be so. Thomas Aquinas refers to the appropriation and interiorization of knowledge supplied by the faith tradition as a set of assumptive values for the individual as 'connatural knowledge',\(^{30}\) and Cardinal Newman refers to this as the 'illative sense' of Christian truth.\(^{31}\) Calvin used the metaphor of Scripture as a 'lens' by means of which the Christian is able to gain certain knowledge of God and the world, through God's written self-revelation. Such knowledge is perceived by the Christian as a gift from God (Institutes, 1960: 70). Thus this newly acquired religious knowledge is deposited in the tacit dimension of pre-reflective 'assumptive' knowing within the religious believer, providing their basic presuppositions and exerting a 'shaping' influence on how he or she perceives their life and attributes meanings to objects, events and acts within the social world.

Returning to the notion of narrative, Lindbeck states that such religious knowledge has at its primitive source a narrative base. "To become a Christian involves learning the story of Israel and of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one's world in its terms" (1984: 34). Having imbibed the story of Christianity into one's worldview as defining myth and integrating story, the Christian disciple then makes this real or exteriorizes this in his or her life in the outward lifeworld, as an outward and performative extension of their 'inward' conception of religious reality. Thus the life of the believing soul transcends the mundane world by transforming it into the sacred through their participation in the originating and founding myth.

2.7 A Notable Convert:

Religious converts frequently report changes in the way they understand the events of everyday life following the intervention of conversion. In the Introduction I recounted Tolstoy's report of his conversion as an 'about face' within his reasoning. Hughes (1994: 80) indicates

\(^{30}\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II.45.2; Cf. 1.1.6, ad 3; cited by Lindbeck (1984: 36) footnote 12.

that Tolstoy's experience is not unique; that religious converts persistently experience such changes in belief, allegiance, affections and life orientation. He says of converts 'they see with new eyes'. Previous conceptions of reality are overthrown in favor of a deeper and more satisfying conception of the world and one's part in it.

Johann George Hamann's conversion illustrates this point. Hamann (b. Königsberg 1730, d. Münster 1788) was a German writer and philosopher, a contemporary and adversary of Kant, who also exerted a notable influence on Kierkegaard. Because of his fragmentary writings and dark expressions he was known as the 'Magus of the North'.32 His philosophy came out of a dialectical idealism which took on an agonistic existential tone. Hamann was sensitive in nature, as displayed by his extreme disappointment with his friend's immoral life, and his discomfiture with constipation. He was unsuccessful in business, and sought a new beginning in London. His journal, dated 'London, den 19, Marz am Palmsonntag 1758' reads, “I began today with God to read the Holy Scripture for the second time.” By the 31st of March he had progressed to the record of Abel's death at the hands of his brother Cain. At this point, Citron (1951: 74) states, “God seems suddenly to fall upon Hamann convicting him of his guilt and at the same time calling him by his mercy and love.” Hamann continues:

I felt my heart beat, I heard a voice within moaning and groaning, as the voice of blood, the voice of a brother who was slain, who wanted to avenge his blood ... I could not hide before God any longer, that I was the brother's murderer ... The Spirit of God continued in spite of my great weakness and in spite of my long resistance ... To reveal to me more clearly the mystery of the divine love and the benefit of the faith in our gracious and only Savior.33

Hamann's religious conversion became the critical turning point from which he began to renegotiate his relations with God, himself and his world. According to Metzke, there are three aspects of Hamann's conversion which stand out and are instructive for our purposes:

1) The conversion is not an arbitrary event, as might happen casually to a person, without affecting his substance. Instead it is a crisis-like shock by which the person

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becomes someone else.
2) This change is radical. Not only the mind or the faith or the actions of the person, but the being itself changes. It is a complete renewal—not however in a material sense—a transformation of man's nature, but as a reversal of the life's history, a turn of the path of life.
3) Such a radical change and renewal is never possible by wishing and wanting, but only through the intervention of a higher power. The new life is a work of God (1967: 126).

Contrary to the humanist metaphysics and the 'atheism intellectus' (Poewe, 1999: 201) of his day, the source of Hamann's intellectus had suddenly taken on new categories of being, life and metaphor which lay beyond the limitations of the zeitgeist of the contemporary cultural milieu. Hamann experienced a radical breakthrough to a new experience, perception and conception of reality which re-centered his existence and gave it meaning, providing a new register for his entire range of thought which energized and elevated his view of reality. The outcome of Hamann's conversion and consequent reconfiguration of his perceptions of reality was a rejection of the philosophical theology of his time, similar to Pascal's (1985: 309) rejection of the "God of the philosophers and scholars" in favor of the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." No longer was it mere speculation 'about' God as having this or that quality or character, but rather as the God who relates to mankind becomes the prima causa, the one in whose essence lies the purpose, meaning and intelligence of all things. Thus God became the hermeneutic principle for Hamann's philosophy which 'shook' his sense of autonomy, and made him aware of his absolute dependence on God, who invited him into an 'I-Thou' relationship (Metzke, 1967: 131).

Summary:

This brings to a close the discussion of this chapter which has sought to deal with the acquisition of mind; first in its normative sense, as it is bequeathed by culture, and second in the transformation of religious conversion. We have arrived at the point where we can state that from the literature reviewed above we can say that for those individuals who have undergone conversion, and who have entered the domain of Religiousness B, a new form of awakening or
enlightenment takes place. For the Christian, this awakening takes its genesis from the story of the Christian gospel, in which one learns of the prospect of grace, the forgiveness of sins, the inclusion of one's own life in a redemptive purposes of God. To borrow from Maslow, it is possible to speak of a C-cognition (rather than a B-cognition); which is the kind of spiritually-determined, supernaturalized 'conversion-cognition' which one receives in the life-drama of religious conversion.
Chapter 3: Phenomenology and Religion: Philosophical Underpinnings.

Introduction:

Previously I have informed the reader of the three horizons within which this research would be set: the historical Christian faith tradition, the experience of meaning change in the context of Christian religious conversion, and the philosophical method of phenomenology. In this third chapter I will give priority to phenomenology. In particular I will discuss the founding of phenomenology by Husserl, the principles of phenomenology, and the applicability of phenomenology to meaning change at religious conversion.

The beliefs, convictions, and commitments held by newly-converted religious neophytes are held within the deep recesses of their beings. Because of this it is not possible to access these directly, firstly because religious beliefs are not concrete shop-floor commodities which may be readily requisitioned for stock-take, and secondly because the experiencing-subject who reports any religious encounter, conversion or transformation first interprets those experiences for themselves. That is to say those reports are mediated by the experiencer rather than being directly apprehended by the researcher. Given the non-requisitional nature of religious experience, these entities are unavailable for observation by the normal disciplines of natural empirical science or the human sciences such as anthropology, sociology, or psychology. Theology, while undoubtedly holding a stake in religious experience and epistemology is likewise inadequately equipped to engage directly with subjective accounts of individual experience, apart from making a judgment on their orthodoxy or otherwise. How then shall we proceed?

In this research a methodology is required which is able to meet the following requirements:

1. It must engage with the self-reports of individual religious converts relating to their experiences of meaning change at conversion.
2. It must take into account the total lifeworld context within which religious beliefs are acquired, formed and operate; not simply the conversion event.

3. It must be capable of accessing and describing deeply held subjective beliefs with their accompanying meanings.

4. It must include both the material and non-material aspects of religious rituals and the metaphysical meanings towards which they point.

5. It must include the researcher as a co-participant in the research process, enabling him or her to bracket his/her own experiences and beliefs.

6. It must have the capacity to allow for the dynamic nature of transformation.

7. It must take an open and non-judgmental stance to the Christian religion and religious experience.

8. It must be able to deal with the many and varied instances of religious experience and language of individual believers and their believing community or tradition.

9. It must uncover the essence of religious experiences and meanings.

10. It must not impose unnecessary disciplinary constraints.

I believe phenomenology to be the methodology best suited to this research because it is able to achieve these criteria in the following ways:

1. Phenomenology is uniquely capable of sympathetically explicating the detailed self-reports of religious converts and presenting an adequate description of their meanings for the human subjects.

2. Phenomenology is able to acknowledge the seamless nature of reality as it is ‘given’ to humans in a complex, multi-layered lifeworld within which the believing soul acquires religious beliefs and the agonistic (Lyotard, 1984: 10) milieu within which it operates.

3. Phenomenology is able to demonstrate a capacity to gain access to beliefs and meanings which are held internally to the believing soul by means of the intersubjective communication of truth-perceptions between the researcher and the believing individual.

4. Likewise phenomenology is capable of drawing out from the mind the heirophanic conceptions of epistemic and ontic reality by means of the maieutic (from Greek maieutikos, ‘midwifery’) abilities to draw out meaning constructions, via transcendental analysis.

5. Phenomenology includes the researcher as a co-participant in the research process by means
of bracketing their prior experiences and beliefs, yet enables him/her to perceive the phenomenon as if 'for the first time'.

6. Phenomenology as a science of consciousness allows for a dynamic and non-static transformational conception of models of epistemology held by the believing soul in the unfolding drama of faith development and its outworking in the lifeworld.

7. Phenomenology provides a sympathetic and non-judgmental method for assessing a wide variety of religious truth-claims and religious experience, of religious persons within their sacred worlds. This includes accepting that religious experience is more than mere metaphysics.

8. Phenomenology is able to embrace religious experience in its dynamic instantiations in time, space, embodiment and cognitive formulations; not merely as a static representation of these things 'after the fact'.

9. Phenomenology is able to uncover the essence of religious experiences and meanings, by means of the eidetic reduction, intentionality, intersubjectivity, and its transcendental move.

10. Phenomenology does not impose unnecessary disciplinary constraints upon the primary research data. Unlike psychology for example (which has as its normative operating principle a predilection toward a pharmacological or therapeutic purpose in identifying the causes and cures of neuroses, phobias, pathologies, irrationalities and the like), phenomenology is open to religious experience and the beliefs and meanings they generate or which generate them.

3.1 Introducing Phenomenology:

Spiegelberg defines phenomenology as “the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions” (1970: 810). According to Rollo May,¹ "phenomenology is the science that makes the bridge between nature and the world of our personal immediate experience." Merleau-Ponty writes that "phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking" (cited by Bettis, 1969: 2). Or van den Berg:

Phenomenology is a method; it could be called an attitude.... The phenomenologist wants to observe in a way one usually observes. He has an unshakable faith in the everyday observation of objects, of the body, of the people around him and of time, because the answers to stated questions are based on the results of this sort of observation. On the other hand, he distrusts theoretical and objective observations, observations at a closer inspection, the kind of observations made by a physicist. He distrusts standard opinions quickly formed like projection, conversion, transference and mythicizing. He wants to live and to have his psychology spring from this life. If he intends to write a discourse on swimming, he will want, first of all, to swim—and repeat his swimming until he knows and can express what swimming is (cited by DeRobertis, 1996: 17).

My own definition describes phenomenology as a style of attentive participant-observation which consciously seeks to develop an acute double vision, enabling it to extricate itself from the natural attitude in order to enter the reflective arena of the phenomenological attitude, thus allowing the phenomena to constitute its own meaning to consciousness. By means of such reflection—performed under the eidetic reduction—the underlying essences and structures of the phenomena being observed become apparent, whereas it was previously hidden and outside one's line of vision. Edmund Husserl, often spoken of as the father of phenomenology, described phenomenology as the science of consciousness. A more in-depth analysis of Husserl's development of phenomenology will be undertaken in section 3.4 below.

3.2 The Development of the Phenomenological Movement:

Quite properly from a phenomenological point of view, Lyotard situates Husserl's originating of phenomenology in its historical context, within the Cartesian attempt to locate a foundation for indubitable knowledge (1991:n32). Descartes attempted, by a process of methodological skepticism via rationalistic intuition and deduction, to establish such a certain foundation. It was Descartes' (1596-1650) program of radical doubt whose Archimedean point was expressed in his phrase cogito ergo sum which provided Husserl with a point of departure for his later development of phenomenology. Instead of accepting Descartes' dualism between mind and body, subject and object, Husserl radicalized the project by synthesizing the two into a process of transcendental subjectivity. In taking this approach he was following his
philosophical forebears, Kant and Hegel. Kant developed a transcendental idealism, based on his observation that the human mind cannot know 'things in themselves', but only knows phenomena as they appear to the mind. For Kant, reality is a three-fold entity, comprising noumena, phenomena, and self. He made considerable use of the notion of 'phenomena' as 'the data of experience', things that appear and are ordered according to categorical structures (a priori concepts of concepts). Hegel reacted against Kant's splitting of phenomena and noumena; he proposed that phenomena be understood as a series of stages of knowledge "Progressing in evolutionary fashion from raw consciousness to absolute knowledge." This included all the varieties of human episodes, ethical, political, religious, aesthetic and everyday experience. Summing up Hegel's contribution Ryba writes:

Human consciousness, as part of the world and an instantiation of spirit, is the medium by which the cosmos knows itself as spirit.... The knowledge thereby gained, are the revelations of spirit to itself in the guise of man's conscious life. Thus to seek to understand the laws which govern the physical universe is to be turned ... toward an understanding of human consciousness (1991: 57).

It was this centrality of human consciousness upon which Husserl later drew in order to restore apodictic certainty to science in his Crisis of the European Sciences (1935). Brentano, Husserl's teacher and mentor, revived Aristotelianism and the empirical method in philosophy and psychology. In particular his intentionality-hypothesis that intentionality is always object-directed, or 'toward' something exerted great influence on the phenomenological method of the later Husserl. In the history of philosophy, it can be said that Husserl has brought phenomenology to a level of maturity and given it its crystalline focus. Ricoeur states, "All of phenomenology is not Husserl, even though he is more or less its center" (1995: 3).

3.3 A Uniform Phenomenology?

Given the plethora of schools within phenomenology—historical, constitutive, existential, Husserlian, hermeneutical—one may rightly wonder whether a unified

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phenomenological movement actually exists. The history of the development of phenomenology, from Husserl to Heidegger, from Sartre to Merleau-Ponty, has been discontinuous and erratic. Even within Husserl's long career three major stages can be distinguished, part of which involves the repudiation of positions he held previously. As Crotty (1996: 1) points out, "If one can speak at all of an orthodoxy in this tradition, it has to be said that, right from the start, there has been an abundance of heretics"; and Spiegelberg claims there are as many phenomenologies as there are phenomenologists. Merleau-Ponty (1998: vii) asks, "What is phenomenology? It may seem strange that this question has still to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered."

Crotty (perhaps following Spiegelberg [1976: 654]) speaks not of a single 'phenomenology', but rather of 'phenomenologies'. He makes a broad distinction between the Husserlian 'continental' phenomenology with its rigorous philosophical roots resonating with the Cartesian search for a sure foundation for knowledge; and what he calls the 'other' phenomenology emanating from the more pragmatic North American social sciences school. Regarding the transplanting of Continental phenomenology into the American context, Crotty observes:

Transplantation may not be the analogy to use. For the most part, rather than being permitted to set down its own roots west of the Atlantic, phenomenology was grafted on to local stock. The fruit it has produced reflects the American intellectual tradition far more than any features of its parent plant. True enough, the discourse of phenomenology remains. The vocabulary is there. One hears of 'experience' and 'phenomenon', of 'reduction' and 'bracketing'—of 'intentionality', even. However, the meaning of these terms is no longer the meaning they have borne within the phenomenological movement from which they have been taken. (1996: 2).

Nevertheless, I believe a coherent and continuous phenomenological core can be discerned which transcends the particular emphases employed by the various phenomenologists. Spiegelberg suggests that such continuity is not to be found in the results produced by phenomenological research, nor in a uniformity of findings by the phenomenologists themselves, but rather is to be found in its method. He characterizes the
core of phenomenology as its method, and states “There is little disagreement among phenomenologists about this point” (1976: 655). Embree and Mohanty⁴ speak of five positive features accepted by most phenomenologists, regardless of discipline, tendency or period:

1. They tend to justify cognition with reference to evidence... which is awareness of a matter itself as disclosed in the most clear, distinct and adequate way possible for something of its kind.
2. They tend to believe that not only objects in the natural and cultural worlds, but also ideal objects, such as numbers, and even conscious life itself can be made evident and thus known.
3. They tend to hold that inquiry ought to focus upon what might be called ‘encountering’ as it is directed at objects and, correlatively, upon ‘objects as they are encountered’.
4. They tend to recognize the role of description in universal, a priori, or ‘eidetic’ terms as prior to explanation by means of causes, purposes or grounds.
5. They tend to debate whether or not what Husserl calls the transcendental phenomenological epoche and reduction is useful or even possible.⁴

While undoubtedly there are a wide variety of definitions and approaches to phenomenology by both its practitioners and its critics, nevertheless amongst its practitioners a coherence of method and purpose exists. I intend to discuss two different modalities within the phenomenological movement; the first as the ‘tree’ from which phenomenology draws it originative life (namely Husserlian phenomenology), and the second as one of the ‘fruits’ which have grown on that tree (namely the phenomenology of religion).

3.4 Husserlian Phenomenology:

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a German mathematician, philosopher and psychologist who taught at Halle (1887-1901), Gottingen (1901-16) and Freiburg (1916-28), who sought to establish philosophy as a rigorous science based on phenomenology as its method. He was reacting against what he perceived to be errors in traditional rationalism and

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⁴. More will be said concerning my approach to and use of Husserl’s eidetic reduction and the transcendental ego in the section on Husserl which follows.
empiricism leading to a stagnation in the sciences. He tried to resurrect the project of Descartes in order to reestablish the foundational role of philosophy which he felt had been replaced by historicism, psychologism, and the empirical method of natural science. But in doing so he rejected the Cartesian ontological reduction of the cogito as the source of apodictic certainty, in favor of locating certitude in the sphere of subjective transcendental consciousness. Pivecivi (1970: 50) notes, “phenomenology has a Cartesian ancestry even though it repudiates the Cartesian metaphysics.”

In Husserl's hands phenomenology became a philosophical discipline which describes the formal structure of the objects of awareness and of awareness itself in abstraction from any claims concerning existence. As a discipline within philosophy phenomenology is concerned—among other things—with the analysis and description of consciousness as it is manifest within the life-world or Lebenswelt. It holds that scientific and philosophic abstractions are established on the basis of this prior, prescientific world. It seeks to resist a Cartesian dualism between body and mind, subject and object, holding that objects as they present themselves to consciousness are capable of showing their essences intersubjectively, as constituted in the apperception of the perceiving individual by means of the appresentation of an object in its 'givenness'. The task of phenomenology is to locate the essential meaning or essence (eidos) of human consciousness and its intentional directedness towards objects and other subjects, within the horizons of human experience and consciousness. Beginning with Husserl, phenomenologists attribute a privileged position to consciousness as the subjective basis of world-constitution.

In the light of the three overlapping and complex phases of the development of Husserl's phenomenology and the comment by Smith and Smith (1995: 37) that such is the extent of publication by Husserl himself and the subsequent interpretations of his works by other writers, that “the literature on Husserl, and on these competing extrapolations of his views, has reached the point of unsurveyability”, I intend to set some parameters which will guide the discussions which follow. I have judged however that it is possible to make a clear statement of Husserlian phenomenology in its mature form as a uniform system of thought,
despite the evolutions in Husserl's thought. I therefore intend to progress by not taking these vagaries into account unless there is particular need to do so, and to regard myself as being free to draw material from a wide variety of sources which in my view delineates Husserl's least complex position without unnecessary augmentation. In this way I believe I can establish an adequate basis for my application of phenomenology to meaning change in the context of Christian conversion.

My project is to bring into clear view the experience of converts as they undergo personal changes of meaning in the context of Christian conversion. It is important to make explicit the role or function which phenomenology is intended to perform within the context of this research. The contributions I judge Husserlian phenomenology is best suited to make are:

1). To enable the transfer of non-material perceptual apprehensions of 'truth' from informants to the researcher for empathetic re-constitution. In Husserlian phenomenology this function is named *intersubjectivity*. 2). To provide the possibility of a maieutic transparency which unveils the religious meanings of the human religious convert's beliefs and impulses. In Husserlian phenomenology this function is named *intentionality*. 3). To lay bare the human-divine relation so as to reveal the hierophanic structures of knowledge and meaning. In Husserlian phenomenology this function is named *transcendental reduction*. 4). And to bring the phenomenon of altered conditions for truth in the experience of conversion to the forefront by the removal of all other phenomena which impedes a clear vision of it. In Husserlian phenomenology this function is named *eidetic reconstitution*.

In the following sections I will discuss each of these headings.

### 3.4.1 Intersubjectivity:

In his opening to the fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl spoke of the transcendental 'clue' which is provided through the experience of the Other:

First of all, my "transcendental clue" is the experienced Other, given to me in straightforward consciousness ... as I immerse myself in examining the noematic-ontic content belonging to him.... In any case then, within myself, within the limits of my
transcendentally reduced pure consciousness, I experience the world (including others)—and, according to its experiential sense, not as (so to speak) my private synthetic formation but as other than mine alone ... as an intersubjective world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone. And yet each has his experiences, his appearances and appearance-unities, his world-phenomenon; whereas the experienced world exists in itself, over against all experiencing subjects and their world-phenomena (1982: 90-9, author’s emphasis).

For Husserl the Other has a ‘givenness’ about it, having its own selfhood, which has the structure of an ‘animate organism’, and is governed psychically (Williams in Mohanty, 1989: 320). The importance of the Other is that he or she points to me myself, as a ‘mirroring’ of my own self (ibid: 94). A psycho-physical delimitation is made between the ‘sphere of ownness’ and a ‘sphere of otherness’. The transcendental ego apprehends the Other as a concrete spatio-temporal subject within a common natural world environment, and through a process of empathy first gains knowledge of the Other, and then of himself. For Husserl, “The path leading to a knowledge absolutely grounded in the highest sense, or ... a philosophical knowledge, is necessarily the path of universal self-knowledge—first of all monadic, and then intermonadic” (ibid: 156).

According to Kern, inauthentic empathy towards the Other pertains only to the other as externally presented to intuition as a body, an empty appresentation without adequate appreciation of the monadic existence of their whole being (in Embree et al., 1997: 358). Authentic empathy is an ‘absolutely empathizing cognizance’ of the Other as “if I were within the other by intuitively transposing myself into the motivations of the other’s situation” by means of intuitive appresentation. The first method is the standpoint of the natural sciences, and the second is the foundation of the human sciences. The ‘clue’ spoken of by Husserl refers to the trans-monadical intersubjective double reduction, allowing an apperceptual transfer via intuitive kinesthetic inward and outward movement through a duplicative “pairing by association” (ibid: 357). This process of intuitive insight by means of ‘reciprocal motivations’ enables apodictic knowledge in the social world, and overcomes the problems of subjective solipsism.

When the phenomenologist enters the phenomenological attitude via the reduction
and reflects on a second subject, contemplation is done by way of empathy or intentional correlation. Against the background of their being in the same life-world and operating within the same constitutive structures of consciousness, an apperceptive transfer via intuitive inward and outward movements occurs which enables a duplicative 'pairing by association'. Thus an inter-subjective communication makes apparent to the researcher the intentions and points of view of the second knowing-subject. This 'double reduction' permits a kind of methodological immediacy of presence between the two subjects, wherein the researcher is able, through a process of 'absolute empathizing cognisance' which allows him or her an authentic entrance into and analysis of the intersubjective transcendental sphere.

3.4.2 Intentionality:

Husserl appropriated intentionality from Franz Brentano his mentor. Brentano began in psychology but moved to being a theorist in the nature of mind. For him all consciousness was consciousness of something; the data of consciousness being “divided into two great classes—the class of physical and the class of mental phenomena” (1973: 77). Every 'act' of consciousness brings the intended object into the mind as its content. As Spiegelberg states, for Brentano there is no “hearing without something heard, no believing without something believed, no hoping without something hoped” (1982: 37). Brentano's conception of intentionality is realist; the real existence of an object provides the necessary condition for consciousness. He proposed a double intentionality which conceived of physical objects in their materiality as being primary object and following the mental act of presentation to the mind as secondary object. This secondary object exists as a reflexive element, 'piggy-backing' on the primary object (Bell, 1990: 10f.). This allowed for the conscious subject to experience, for example, the sound of a musical note, and the awareness of self in the experience of hearing; an experience central to everyday human life.

Husserl accepted much of the Brentano thesis, but extended it from a materialist to a transcendental model. In doing so he continued to hold a correlation between the object and the intending subject, but he no longer required the object-existence as a necessary pre-
condition for intentionality. Spiegelberg encapsulates the Husserlian description of intentionality in a five-fold definition:

Husserl’s notion of intentionality is one which makes intentionality that aspect of any conscious act which (a) refers to a possible object of consciousness, (b) interprets pregiven mental materials as object-presenting, (c) establishes the identity of the objects of different intentional acts, (d) connects the various acts which produced its intuitive fulfillment and (e) constitutes the object meant (cited by Ryba, 1991: 181).

Contrary to Brentano’s realism, Husserl moved toward a transcendental idealism. The ‘presentation’ of the meaning of a phenomenal object to the mind of the subject (as its content) is distinct from any necessary existence of that object; this allowed objects experienced in other times or places than the ‘now’ to be trans-temporally and trans-spatially re-presented to the mind. Equally possible is the re-presentation to the mind of non-existent (the irreal) entities such as beauty, emotion or belief in God to be mentally present as a real object. In rejecting any causal subject-object relation, Husserl granted an equivalent status to both external temporal object and internal intending consciousness; there being no necessary relational causality between the object as-it-is-in-itself, and the product of its constitution in the mind. McIntyre and Smith (in Mohanty & McKenna, 1989: 150) call this the ‘existence-independence’ thesis of intentionality. Husserl was not so interested in the classification of mental phenomena in response to experienced objects (as was Brentano), as he was to explore the potential for intentional analysis to explain meaning for the human experiencer and the establishment of conditions adequate for truth to be accepted. Ryba notes:

Salamanders the size of terriers and spiders the size of doormats simply do not exist; how can they be the object of an experience? The Husserlian response to this question is that when a phenomenologist speaks of every experience having an object he means that every experience has an immanent object, an object which is contained within individual consciousness and has no necessary referent in the world beyond (1991: 179).

Husserl began his discussion of intentionality in the *Logical Investigations* (most notably the Fifth Investigation), and continued in subsequent writings to shape and develop his understanding of the concept, especially in the *Ideas*. There Husserl further developed the key
polarities of meaning which are implied by his notion of intentionality. Of particular importance are noema and noesis. Noema refers not to the object simpliciter, but to the representation of the intended immaterial (irreal) object as it is immanently re-constituted within the mind of the experiencer. Noesis on the other hand refers to the act of assigning meaning, of bestowing sense on the inert hyletic data given to the mind by means of its instantiation within the lifeworld. Noesis makes sense of the multiplicity of part-whole tensions within the visual sensate world, applying a priori commitments and evaluations, which produce an internal synthesis of meaning from the complex of phenomena.

Because of physical, contingent constraints on human perception, humans see a perspectival appearance of something which sees its front side but not its obverse or ‘back’ side. Yet through our ‘background experience’ we know that all physical objects are three dimensional. Through intentionality the subject can reconstruct aspects of hyletic datum which are absent to vision, from a priori knowledge, as a paradigmatic whole. This is the importance of the noematic aspect of vision, which draws from our culturally predetermined ‘repertoire’ of general conceptual knowledge (McIntyre & Smith, in Mohanty and McKenna, 1989: 176). Essentially intentionality is the noesis-noema correlation, and forms an important component of phenomenology as Husserl conceived it. Husserl referred to the ‘doxastic thesis’ as that component in intentionality within which belief is situated; the perception that the real object is ‘thus and so’ in relation to the experiencer (Embree et al., 1997: 353f.; Bernet et al., 1993: 93; Ricoeur, 1995: 40). As such, Husserl’s doxastic theory has great significance for this research and will be referred to in later chapters.

3.4.3 Transcendental Philosophy:

The ‘transcendental’ aspect of Husserl’s phenomenology is undoubtedly its most problematic and controversial aspect. Yet in Husserl’s mind it is the most important part:

Instead of attempting to use ego cogito as an apodictically evident premise for arguments supposedly implying a transcendental subjectivity, we shall direct our attention to the fact that phenomenological epoché lays open (to me, the meditating philosopher) an infinite realm of being of a new kind, as the sphere of a new kind of experience: transcendental experience (1982: 27 author’s emphases).
Husserl adds an important footnote to this statement, saying, "And where there is new experience, a new science must arise" (ibid). Thus the transcendental component of Husserl's phenomenology is his coup de gras, the pivot point, the final step in bringing phenomenological philosophy to its completion. For Husserl, those who reject his transcendental philosophy are obviously unfamiliar with it and operating out of the natural attitude. Spiegelberg notes the following in reviewing the Husserlian transcendental turn:

The title "transcendental", of which Husserl grew increasingly fond and which clearly indicated his increasing sympathy for Kant, is nevertheless rarely explained and is by no means identical with any of its traditional meanings. In the Ideen the implication seems to be that what is transcendental about phenomenology is that it suspends (ausschalten) all transcendent claims (i.e., assertions about reality, that of consciousness itself). The fullest exclusive discussion of the theme recurs in Husserl's last publication, the "Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology" (§ 26). Here, he wants to assign it a wider meaning, in line with the Cartesian approach, according to which a transcendental philosophy "reaches back (zurückfragen, i.e., literally, "asks back for") to the ultimate source of all knowledge," with the implication that this source is to be found in the ego. In other words, it expresses Husserl's commitment to a radical subjectivism for which subjectivity is the source of all objectivities, a position which is spelled out explicitly only in the period after the Ideen (1976: 1/126).

It is important to say at least the following concerning Husserl's use of the transcendental move. First, it follows the historical lead provided by Kant, who stated:

In the transcendental aesthetic, we proved, that everything intuited in space and time—all objects of a possible experience, are nothing but phenomena, that is, mere representations; and that these, as presented to us—as extended bodies, or as series of changes—have no self-subsistent existence apart from human thought. This doctrine I call Transcendental Idealism (1943: 278 author's emphasis).

Second, the transcendental aspect of Husserl's phenomenology is an extension of Descartes' work on the cogito, but moves beyond this through his critique of Descartes' empirical ego. Husserl believed Descartes to have failed in his attempt to establish the grounds for apodictic certainty by failing to take a transcendental turn (1982: 23f).

Third, the transcendental element in phenomenology has to do with one's knowledge of one's own wisdom and cognizance rather than any metaphysical object. In Husserl's mind, the
transcendental is what provides the condition for a world appearing at all.

Fourth, for Husserl the transcendental move is a trans-empirical philosophy which gives access to a universalized epistemology, on the basis that we all live in the same lifeworld and humans process meanings through the same physical and ideational apparati, regardless of cultural and linguistic differences.

Fifth, Husserl's transcendental turn is the source of much controversy within the phenomenological movement, as referred to above in section 3.3, where Embree and Mohanty characterized phenomenologists as "tending to debate whether or not what Husserl calls the transcendental phenomenological epoché and reduction is useful or even possible." It was Husserl's transcendental idealism which was the source of Heidegger's separation from Husserl. Heidegger chose instead an existentialist phenomenology, rejecting what he saw as Husserl's acquiescence towards solipsism and idealism.

My commitment to the transcendental position in the context of this research is twofold. Firstly, the transcendental method allows for the disclosure of the objects as religious knowledge or truth-claims within the consciousness of the believing soul, through the 'absolute emphasizing cognizance' of intersubjective co-association to the researcher. In this way the researcher has some idea of what is going on in the mind of the co-participant. Secondly, although Husserl's strict phenomenological orientation would not license any certain claim to there being a 'supernatural world', nonetheless transcendental phenomenology, as a quest for apodictic knowledge about what is thought to be real, provides a possible pathway towards the theistically determined and biblically-sanctioned supernatural world within which religious converts reside and thus provides a possible metaphysical route of religious enquiry.

This aspect of transcendental phenomenology, I believe, is best suited to explore a religiously-shaped epistemology. At a time in the life of religious converts which is transitional and therefore unstable, phenomenology as a transcendental science of consciousness enables—through co-presentation of the objects of consciousness—an appropriate method of their reconstitution for observation.
3.4.4 The Eidetic Reduction:

The reduction is what provides the completion of the other three components in Husserlian phenomenology (intentionality, intersubjectivity and the transcendental turn).

According to Husserl, as humans:

Our first outlook on life is that of human beings who are living in a natural fashion, imagining, judging, feeling, willing "within the natural standpoint." ... Physical things somehow spatially distributed are simply there for me.... Human beings are immediately there for me: I look up, I see them, I hear them coming toward me, I grasp them by the hand; speaking with them, I understand at once what they have in mind, what they are thinking, feelings that move them, what they wish and will.... This world is not there for me merely as a world of facts, but with the same directedness it is a world of values, of goods, a practical world...The same applies to humans...in my surroundings, they are my "friends" or "enemies," my "servants" or "superiors," "strangers" or "relevance,"...No doubts or denials regarding the givens of this natural world change in the slightest the all-encompassing thesis of the natural standpoint.... At most, the "world may be otherwise than I have supposed in this or that matter...as so-called "illusion," "hallucination," etc. According to the general thesis of the natural standpoint, however, it is always there. To come to know it more reliably, more perfectly ... is the aim of the sciences belonging to the natural attitude. Instead of remaining in this attitude, we propose to alter it radically (Ideas I (1), §§27, 30 & 31).

In order to move beyond the Lebenswelt it follows that one needs to escape the natural attitude, and move to a 'radical' new standpoint, that of the transcendental phenomenological attitude. This is done by means of reduction. An important methodological procedure in phenomenology is epocbé (reduction). The epocbé is a suspending of the convictions of the natural attitude as a preparation for entry into the phenomenological attitude. Once in the phenomenological attitude it is then possible to look at the intentions one normally dwells within unconsciously in the natural attitude. The reduction on the other hand is what the epocbé enables the viewer to then perceive once in the phenomenological attitude. Through a reflective awareness of the subject matter in question peripheral layers are 'reduced' or stripped away, revealing the entity as it is in itself, as a residuum, in its essential existence, reconstituted to consciousness through the eidetic reduction. Husserl spoke of 'performing' the epocbé but of working 'under' the phenomenological reduction; as such they are two aspects
of the one operation.

The point of the eidetic reduction is to identify the ‘essence’ of an intentional object by means of a process of ideation or essential intuition. The end product retains its identification with the original temporal or irreal object, for as Husserl says:

The essence *(eidos)* is a new sort of object. Just as the datum of individual or empirical intuition is an individual object, so the datum of essential intuition is a pure essence. Here we have not a mere superficial analogy, but a radical community of nature. Essential intuition is still an intuition, just as the eidetic object is still an object.... Essential intuition is the consciousness of something, of an ‘object’, a something towards which its glance is directed *(Ideas §3, 5)*.

The essence of an object is not merely limited to its own ‘thing as such’ identity, but shares its structure and meaning with other like objects. Thus eidetic analysis seeks to identify and apprehend structures which have universal applicability, beyond the temporal or irreal object simpliciter under scrutiny, in the same way that a species is related to an instantiation of it.

Prior to any reduction, the phenomenological attitude reveals that under the natural viewpoint there is something there, in other words before phenomenology is a transcendental philosophy it is a materialist one, arguing for a kind of ‘real presence’ of things. Thus, the underlying method of phenomenology is a realist epistemology which proceeds to unveil the essence of an object by means of a transcendental idealism, and subsequently returns to a realist-idealist integration of subjective consciousness and its real object. Given the real existence of objects, the question is ‘What is the meaning of this thing?’ The answer is provided by the eidetic intuition as it grasps the essence, structure and meaning of objects, in their givenness in the lifeworld and as relational (I-thou) objects in the world.

There are also other functional aids to phenomenological analysis which will be applied in following chapters, such as part-whole analysis, and the ‘identity in manifold’ and ‘presence-absence’ categories referred to by Sokolowski (2000); but it is these four functional apparati which I discern as being a basis to that phenomenology which has as its essence a Husserlian spirit. These are the components which will be uppermost in my mind as I carry out
the phenomenological explications of respondents' transcripts in later chapters.

3.5 The Relevance of Husserl to a Phenomenology of Religion:

At this juncture I will turn the discussion to a biographical account of Husserl's personal religious experience, and his views—however incipient—made known through his writings, relating to conversion and the transformation of beliefs as a result of the religious encounter. I will do so because I believe his personal experience provides a direct link to his being relevant to a phenomenology of religious experience; including conversion, as will be evident below.

First, Husserl himself was a religious convert. He grew up in Prossnitz, Moravia as a member of a Jewish family. Surprisingly, his father sent him to a non-Jewish school, in order for Edmund to receive an education in the Realgymnasium in Vienna, in the Greek and Latin classical texts, in mathematics and science, and coincidentally in the Christian Scriptures. Spiegelberg states that, "While [Husserl was] born into the Jewish religion, [he] became a Protestant in his twenties, largely as a result of his study of the New Testament" (1976: 1/86). It may be assumed from the paucity of Husserl's references to religion and to his non-participation in religious worship throughout his life that his so-called 'conversion' to Christianity was incomplete, and had its genesis in a number of factors. These begin with his father's religious liberalism, and include the limitations imposed upon the Jewish community by the Moravian government's population-control policy which imposed a limit of exactly 328 Jewish families in the province (Sawicki, 1996: 2), and apparent tensions within the Jewish community of Prossnitz at the time.

The idea of Husserl's conversion is not altogether strange, given the statement by Husserl that:

Man's life is nothing but a way to God. I am trying to reach this end without theological proofs, methods, or aids, in other words, to get to God without God. I must, as it were, eliminate God from my scientific thinking in order to pave a road to God for those who, unlike you, do not have the security of faith through the Church.... I know that this procedure might be dangerous for myself, had I not deep ties to God and belief in Christ (cited by Oesterreicher, 1952: 77).
Oesterreicher makes the comment that the notion of leading others to God 'without God' is a mental feat performed in a spirit of heroic sacrifice typical of the nineteenth century spirit, and is nothing other than 'puerile bravado'. In biblical terms this concept is far removed from the Spirit's midwifery of the soul into paradise following an encounter with the Divine.

But this sense of assisting others in their spiritual lives while putting one's own spiritual life at risk is not dissimilar to Paul's statement, "I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers (the Jews)” (Romans 9: 3). In his later life Husserl had regular discussions concerning religious subjects with Sister Adelgundis Jaegerschmidt O.S.B., a one-time student of his. It is apparent that during these times—alongside his (at that time) regular reading of the New Testament—Husserl's faith was provoked into life, although it remained somewhat undeveloped. Husserl tended towards treating Christian doctrines as scientific hypotheses, and managed therein to misinterpret Scripture and church tradition (Oesterreicher, *ibid*: 78 & 80). He attended Sister Adelgundis' final vows at the Benedictine priory of St. Lioba in 1935. The closing confession made by the Sisters was, "The kingdom of this world and all the panoply of this aeon have I despised for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have seen, whom I have desired, in whom I have believed, whom I have loved.” After the ceremony Husserl congratulated Sister Adelgundis. He was moved to tears and summarily collapsed in a state of swoon (*ibid*: 84). During a season of ill-health in 1937, Husserl stated, "Having done my duty as a philosopher ... I... feel free now to do what would help me to know myself, for no one can know himself who does not read the Bible" (*ibid.*). On Good Friday the following year, while in hospital, Husserl commented to his nurse, "Good Friday ... Yes, Christ has forgiven us everything." With his death fast approaching, Husserl apparently had some kind of insight, and suddenly turned to his nurse saying, "I have seen something wonderful. Write it down quickly!” When she returned with a notebook, he was dead (*ibid*: 85). What did he wish to communicate with such urgency? Had he seen a vision of Christ? Had he in fact undergone a conversion experience? There is evidence, as reported by witnesses (Spiegelberg, 1976: 1/85, Oesterreicher, 1952: 43ff.; Sawicki, 1996: 2), that Husserl did experience a genuine deathbed
conversion. However both Spiegelberg (1976: 1/85) and Osborn (1953) express doubts about the authenticity of the reports.

Second, conversion appears in Husserl’s writings as a leitmotif, although usually in the pejorative sense. In a letter to Ingarden, Husserl decried the “movement toward conversion” amongst a number of his followers (Spiegelberg, 1976: 87); and in his published writings conversion is routinely depicted as an immediate and irrational change of belief, without adequate thought and therefore unjustified. However in a surprising reference, Husserl likened one’s adopting the phenomenological attitude to that of a religious conversion: “Perhaps it will even become manifest that the total phenomenological attitude and the *epoché* belonging to it are destined in essence to effect, at first, a complete personal transformation, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion” (*Crisis* §35: 137).

This provides critics such as Bell with further ammunition for their critique of phenomenology as nothing more than an appeal to subjectivism and solipsism.

In so far as one’s ability to do Husserlian phenomenology (as distinct from one’s being able to talk about doing it) depends upon one’s having performed the phenomenological reduction, adoption of that phenomenology cannot be a matter for rational deliberation, but only for something suspiciously like conversion as a response to personal revelation (1990: 162-3).

But Bell, I suggest, has mis-read Husserl’s project. Husserl as philosopher is concerned about

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5. Spiegelberg states that Husserl’s death took place on Good Friday 1938; whereas Oesterrereicher, with more detail, asserts it to be April 27; several days after Good Friday.

6. In a later footnote, (1976: 1/172), Spiegelberg observes, “The seeming frequency of conversions to Catholicism among the members of the Older Phenomenological Movement, a development that stands in marked contrast to the trend away from the Catholic Church in the preparatory phase of the Movement. Certain facts are undeniable. Especially under the spell of Scheler during his middle phase, Catholicism became almost fashionable among the religiously indifferent as well as among Protestant and Jewish members. There was the early conversion of Dietrich von Hildebrand, and best-known, that of Edith Stein, who even joined the Carmelite Order. But the importance of these cases can easily be exaggerated... As to Reinach, whose turn to philosophy of religion and wartime Protestant baptism before his death were remarkable and influential, there is certainly no conclusive evidence that he personally contemplated conversion to Catholicism.... The truth of the matter would seem to be that the phenomenological approach in its openness to all kinds of experiences and phenomena is ready to reconsider even the traditional beliefs in the religious field in a fresh and unprejudiced manner. That Catholicism, and particularly Augustinianism with its emphasis on intuitive insight, had a marked advantage over Protestantism at the time may have been due partly to the new-orthodox tendencies in Protestantism with their exclusive emphasis on supernatural revelation and Biblical faith.”
the 'crisis' in which the European sciences find themselves, and seeks to establish a 'first philosophy' which has as its basis a program of 'radical beginnings' which he likens to the radicality of religious conversion. Here Husserl resorts to analogical language (typical of the religious convert) in order to convey in poetic and pictorial language what it is he is trying to say. MacDonald states: "Husserl here points towards the personal decision on the part of the absolute beginner, in his fullest freedom, to realize a complete transformation of both self and world—and that means nothing less than responding to a call for radical conversion" (2000: 242). The transformation in this radical new beginning requires an intellectual \textit{volte face}, in which the roots of the very basis of experience are transformed (ibid: 234). But in a radical way, part of the new intellection Husserl was calling for \textit{was} a conversion. MacDonald has drawn attention to Descartes' \textit{Meditations} as being modelled on Ignatius Loyola's 'Spiritual Exercises' with their basic structure being based on the precepts of poverty, chastity and obedience (ibid: 14 & 231). These precepts had as their intent the establishing of a higher form of cognition for the supplicant; the purgative (in which the body is mortified and one turns away from the senses); the illuminative (in which one becomes aware of one's moral power through Christ's example); and the unitive (in which one seeks to join or merge one's will with the divine will) (ibid: 230).

Third, there is in Husserl's work an identifiable theological pattern, although it remains incipient and undeveloped. From numerous motifs which are present in his work, it is obvious that he is familiar with the Bible. One recurrent metaphor is that of the 'promised land', with the domain of phenomenology being the new Canaan, and Husserl himself as the figure of Moses (\textit{Ideen}, Introduction & 429). Likewise, Spiegelberg suggests that it would be hard to explain away the religious and even theistic phraseology which occurs in a personal diary entry of 1906 (1976: 86). Yet for all that there is no apparent theological construct which compares well with any recognizable Christian theology. From confidential notes and private correspondence, Spiegelberg constructs the following indicators of an incipient Husserlian theology:

(1) Husserl expected that his phenomenology, and particularly its teleological
interpretation of consciousness, would in time become helpful in aiding theological insight. But as for himself, Husserl merely remarked half-wistfully: "I wish I were that far." (2) Husserl repudiated uncompromisingly and repeatedly any kind of theological dogma. (3) Husserl disclaimed theism in the usual sense. To be sure, there are in his *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie* references to the idea of an epistemological God as a perfect knower. But Husserl never claimed any theological significance for this deliberate fiction. Beyond that, the idea of God seems to have entered his later thinking only in the shape of a final goal of the constitutive functions of consciousness. Apparently he did not make up his mind about the question whether or not such a Deity was a personal being. And it almost looks as if, as the goal of human consciousness, Deity is still very much in the making, i.e., God is merely a becoming God (*ibid*).

Point one (above) is significant for this research in the sense that Spiegelberg (an important source for the history of phenomenology) recounts Husserl's expectation that phenomenology would be a suitable method for application to research relating to religious phenomena. Second, Husserl's apparent rejection of dogmatic theological formulae may well have been a personal response to religious bigotry perhaps observed at first hand; the narrow and inflexible formulations of religious scholastics, in contradistinction to Husserl's openness to phenomena; and like other philosophers who endured the horrors of the First World War, Husserl may well have reacted against the ideological elements within religion which contributed to the conflagration. Third, the notion of "God as a becoming God" is evocative of Whitehead's 'process theology', built around the being-becoming dialectical tension prevalent in ancient Greek philosophy; Parmenides acting as the chief protagonist for being and Heraclitus as the protagonist for becoming (Grenz & Olson, 1992: 130). Husserl spoke often about the stream of consciousness as being a 'Heraclitian flux'. Dupré records without source an excerpt from a conversation between Husserl and Ingarden, with Husserl asserting, "undoubtedly [the] most important problem [for philosophy]" was that of God (1998: 4).

Fourth, phenomenology in the Husserlian spirit, unlike the Cartesian inclusion of God as a foundation for certitude in the *cogito*, makes no judgment about the existence or otherwise of God. But it does make room for the 'objective' reality of a religious believer's belief in terms of the doxastic manifestation of that belief. Ricoeur states that:

Believing is a credence, a crediting, prior to the judgment properly so-called, which
takes a position with respect to truth and falsehood. The modality of being which the doxa confers on actuality is antecedent to the operation of the yes that emphasizes and refers to the believing and also to the operation of the no that cancels it. This is the "thetic" or propositional character, which once grasped can be neutralized or suspended. Consciousness, instead of being taken in by its world, reconsiders itself with respect to this enveloping power and discovers itself as positing or giving (1967: 40).

As such the doxic component of belief allows for conversion in the sense that in the light of available experiential evidence, if it appears that old constructions of reality have become untenable and improbable, a thetic judgment can be made to disavow previous commitments and confer on new beliefs the status of truth or actuality.

Lastly, Husserl's phenomenology has left a lasting legacy for those scholars and philosophers who have sought to apply phenomenology to the study of religion, and who work within that discipline known as the phenomenology of religion. It is to this discipline which I will turn momentarily. However, before doing so, I need to draw together the threads of this discussion in the form of a summary statement indicating my reasons for asserting the relevant status for Husserlian phenomenology in the field of religious studies.

Let me state that there are problems in making Husserl's transcendental phenomenology the lynch-pin for a phenomenology of meaning change at conversion, and these must be acknowledged. First, it may surprise readers familiar with theology that I have chosen to position Husserl and his transcendental phenomenology at the center of my methodology, rather than Heidegger, who to the almost complete exclusion of Husserl, has had a direct and lasting influence on theology, in particular through Bultmann and Tillich. In doing so, I do not reject Heidegger's contribution to the furtherance of a religious phenomenology. I do however make the judgment that Heidegger's existentialist and non-

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transcendental approach to religious experience to be inferior to Husserl's phenomenology in its ability to discern the essence of the object of consciousness by means of an eidetic science. It is Husserl's originary method and genius which I find attractive, and for the purposes of this research, more congenial. Second, as will become apparent in section 3.6, there are significant problems with the phenomenology of religion as a movement; although Husserl should not be held responsible for the incongruities of a movement which developed largely after his death.

In the positive, however, Husserl's status as a religious convert in his own personal experience is a fascinating augmentation—although not a necessary condition—to his role as methodological exponent and co-participant in this research project. Likewise, his statement above that perhaps "the total phenomenological attitude and the *epoché* belonging to it are destined in essence to effect ... a complete personal transformation, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion" (Crisis § 35: 137); provides an appropriate linkage between the experience of conversion, and the appropriate methodology by which to interpret it. Recall the quotation from Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* above that, "Where there is new experience, a new science must arise." This close proximity of association between the subject-area for research, and the suitability of methodology—in my view—fulfills the requirement of appropriately matching the two; the language and experience-base of the one feeding into the other and enabling a meaningful explication of the transformation of meaning at religious conversion. Third, I believe Husserlian phenomenology is uniquely suited to accessing and describing participants' self-reports of meaning change at conversion, largely due to the capacity of the intersubjective 'co-association' which it allows, indeed encourages; the transcendental facility of such phenomenology, which via the eidetic reduction, is able with certainty to identify the invariant essence of religious experiences, and their doxastic meanings. Fourth, I believe phenomenology in the Husserlian spirit to be well-suited to understanding the dynamic rather than the static nature of epistemological change at religious conversion; a point also identified by Oates as one reason why he chose phenomenology as a predominating

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8. I do however find particularly attractive Heideggers' leaning towards the mystical which he found in Eckhart's writings; see Kisiel (1993), and John Caputo (1984) *The mystical element in Heidegger's thought.*
theme within his psychology of religion (1973: 33).

In summary, I have sought to demonstrate the critical relevance of Husserl's phenomenology to the study of religion in general, and for the purposes of this dissertation to the transformation of meaning in the context of personal religious conversion.

3.6 The Phenomenology of Religion:

The phenomenology of religion has tended to emphasize the macrocosmic sphere of the rituals and structures of world religions at the universal level. In taking this approach as its dominant modality, I agree that the phenomenology of religion as a discipline has made a useful contribution to the understanding of world religions. However I am concerned in this research to address the microcosmic sphere of the lives and experiences of individual converts, and in so doing, to heed the voices of individual religious converts in their originary experiences. In my view it seems an unwarranted restriction of phenomenology to restrict it to the historical and philosophical realms, when it is uniquely capable of addressing through intersubjective enquiry the processes of meaning construction and alteration within individuals and sub-groups. So in this research I am seeking to apply phenomenology's ability to identify and elicit meaning in the microcosmic dimension of personal religious experience.

Within the phenomenology of religion a number of important scholars have framed their research largely within the Christian religious tradition, as I have chosen to do. Three significant early phenomenological studies by Gerhardus van der Leeuw (1963), Friedreich Heiler (in Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion ['Manifestations and Nature of Religion'] first published in 1961; later adapted by McKenzie, 1988); and Henry Dumery (1975). Each of these scholars has given space to conversion as part of the phenomenon of the Christian religious tradition, but in my view, not in adequate detail. Van der Leeuw (1967: 2/529f.) gives 6 pages out of some 700 to conversion; Heiler mentions conversion as one of the 'supernormal forms' of Christianity, but does so without explication. Dumery addressed the structures of Christianity as an institution and as a religious system of thought. As with Heiler, Dumery refers to conversion only in passing. I must turn to James and Rambo in order to find
an adequately explicated phenomenology of Christian conversion; a task which will occupy my writing in section 3.10.

The phenomenology of religion is a discipline which occupies a marginal place within the larger field of phenomenology. In his historical introduction to the phenomenological movement, Spiegelberg mentions only as an afterthought any reference to the phenomenology of religion or important practitioners of the discipline, such as van der Leeuw or Dumery. That is not to say however, that the subject of religion is marginal within phenomenology. As Hart states, "religion is a term that can refer to matters that are among the most basic of phenomenology" (in Embree et al., 1997: 599). Thus, religion has supplied a rich source of phenomena for analysis by phenomenologists such as Otto (1923), James (1928), Eliade (1957), Scheler (1972), and van der Leeuw (1967), and will do so again for me in this research.

3.7 The Historical Development of the Phenomenology of Religion:

The first reference to the use of the phrase 'phenomenology of religion' is attributed to the Dutch scholar Chantepie de la Saussaye, in his *Manual of the Science of Religion* (1887). Twiss and Conser summarize the development of the phenomenology of religion in the fashion of a metaphor depicting a synchronic phenomena sedimented in three important diachronic stratum:

The history of the phenomenology of religion is a complex one. It might be compared to a musical composition that contains three separate but related voices—the essential, the historical-typological, and the existential-hermeneutical phenomenology of religion. Schematically, the first voice begins with the publication of Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, which establishes the direction and overall tone of the composition. Subsequently, the work of Gerardus van der Leeuw and others, the second voice appears, embellishing upon the first voice yet clearly projecting its own distinctive sound. Though receding somewhat into the background, the first voice continues to the heard, and in fact enriches the composition through its interplay with the now dominant second voice. Finally, the third voice, that of the existential phenomenology of religion, enters, and new elements as well as established themes are audible. In this way the three voices interact with one another, shaping the overall melody and contrapuntally contributing their parts to the resonance and power of the composition as a whole (1992: 1-2).

In identifying the first voice as 'essential', Twiss and Conser refer to its basic concern
with the nature of the religious consciousness of the believing soul, "the defining traits of his or her religious apprehensions, emotional states, and motivations for religious activities" *(ibid: 7).* Scholars who contributed to this early essentialist phase are represented by Otto, van der Leeuw, Scheler and Earle. While each had a particular agenda they pursued, they sought to adhere to the Husserlian method of adopting the phenomenological attitude, and seeking to describe empathetically what they observed in religious agents, while bracketing their own beliefs.

The second, or historical-typological voice—an adaptation of Smart's 'typological phenomenology' of religion—is of particular interest to those scholars working in the history of religions, and the way in which participants in each tradition 'intend' the world; "how they understand, respond to, feel about, and act in the world from their distinctive standpoint" *(ibid: 24).* In other words, the worldviews of each religious tradition are identified to allow a comparison with the beliefs of other traditions. Scholars representative of this voice are Kristensen, Kitagawa, Eliade and Smart. Unlike the essentialists, these phenomenologists of religion are concerned to identify the emergence of a religion's ethos and worldview in its own historical development. A sympathetic reexperiencing which leads to evocative description is a primary goal and method within this voice, seeking to identify the experiences of participants within the framework of their traditions.

The third, or existential-hermeneutical voice is preoccupied with the "structures and problems of the human existence in the world, including ... freedom, intersubjectivity, temporality, corporeality, finitude and death as well as ... anxiety, hope, despair, guilt and caring" *(ibid: 44).* Scholars representative of this voice are Ricoeur, Marcel and Merleau-Ponty.

9. Representative of such agendas is Dupré's use of the phenomenology of religion to debunk the tendency of philosophy to account for religious phenomenon within the limits of autonomous rationality.


11. The typological aims of this voice are exemplified by Kitagawa in his analysis of religious pilgrimage, when he balances the unique and particular ethos of individual religious traditions, with archetypal universal categories, identifiable across each of the traditions, of pilgrimage as an invariant structure because it recurrent across all religions.
This voice is oriented towards the exigencies of the human condition. As such, the methodological constraints of phenomenology are sometimes subordinated to other dominant existential aims and insights. For Merleau-Ponty, a complete reduction or *epoche* is not possible, because that would be deleterious of the existential nature of being in the world. For Ricoeur, this inextricable connectedness with the pre-given world marks the "shift in accent... [to] existential phenomenology" (*ibid*: 47). This 'incarnational' aspect of embodiedness means that our 'seeing' of the world is perspectival, and that the ideal of a detached, standpointless observer, as a 'anonymous epistemological subject' (following Ricoeur) is impossible. For this voice, it is possible through observing the religious agent's performance—in ritual, language, and experience—to elicit their primary intentions and experiences. "Thus the existential-hermeneuticist finds himself or herself contending with both the primary performative-symbolic language of awareness of evil (or, more broadly, religious experience) and the secondary symbolic-dramatic language of narrative myths" (*ibid*: 63).

In order to facilitate an analysis of the phenomenology of religious conversion within the Christian tradition, I will not limit myself to any one of the three voices or approaches identified above; but will draw on the strengths of each. The strength of the essential voice as I perceive it is its preference for the Husserlian methodology; the historical-typological voice seeks to extrapolate the contextual component of the faith tradition within which belief is nurtured, and its predilection for sympathetic reexperiencing of meanings expressed by the religious person; and the strength of the existential-hermeneutical voice is its insistence on listening to the powerful voices of human finitude and other exigencies, which are often represented in respondents' self-reports concerning their conversion.

Equally, it needs to be acknowledged that each of the positions has a corresponding weakness; the essential voice falls down in its failure to make adequate use of the Husserlian methodology; the historical-typological voice faces difficulties in adequately dealing with differing conceptions of religious truth across the various faith traditions. In my view the

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12. A concern which is not relevant to this present research because of its preoccupation with the faith experiences of contemporary individuals within the single faith tradition of Christianity.
existential-hermeneutical voice fails to take advantage of two important factors; first, the methodologically privileged insight allowed by the phenomenological reduction, and its eidetic claim to invariant structures. And second, it exhibits a possible tendency towards a preoccupation with human suffering and a blindness to the comforts and empowerment of divine intervention through the disciplines and operations of the faith tradition to which adherents belong.

I will conclude this section by pointing out the essential unity of the movement, despite the multiplicity of applications and agendas to which the approach of phenomenology is brought. Twiss and Conser indicated that despite the multiple voices, it is a single composition. As I concluded in section 3.3 above (previous heading), I believe there exists a parallel unity among the phenomenologies of religion, as there is among the phenomenologies in general. Once again, it is a unity of purpose and method. The purposive aspect of the unity ought not to be controversial, given the recurrent emphases on making every attempt to sympathetically uncover the meanings of symbols, rituals, doctrines, practices and experiences constituted in the context of the religious tradition by the religious actor. The overweening preoccupation in each voice is to exemplify the invariant structures of the religious phenomena they are describing, and to explicate the meanings inherent within them for the believing soul. It is the question of method which is problematic, and which will be addressed at length in section 3.8 below.

Waardenburg agrees with my assessment of a basic unity within the movement, when he refers to the common features by which 'classical' phenomenology of religion identifies itself. He isolates six common features as: 1) The reduction of religion to something other than 'religion' is resisted. 2) Religious facts may only be found in religious contexts. 3) Classifications of religious facts are made by means of typologies, and universalized beyond the local situation. 4) Attempts are made to lay bare certain basic structures of religion and religious experience. 5) The meaning of religious phenomena is established within the value category of religion as such. 6) The phenomenology of religion refrains from founding itself on a strict rational basis and philosophical reflection (1978: 121).
Likewise Penner lists six recurrent categories common to the phenomenology of religion; 1) It treats religion as a reality *sui generis*. 2) Reductionism is resisted. 3) The aim is to formulate the essence of religion. 4) Value judgments are spurned. 5) By means of the epoché the question of truth is suspended. 6) Hierophany is used in lieu of the more theological term 'revelation' (1989: 43).

It can be seen that there exists within the phenomenology of religion three basic schools or disciplines. Yet despite the differences of approach, there exists within the phenomenology of religion a basic unity.

3.8 The Contribution of Phenomenology to the Study of Religion:¹³

I wish to address the contribution made by the phenomenology of religion to the study of religion in general. First, the inter-disciplinary character of the phenomenology of religion should be noted. The phenomenology of religion has often been confused throughout its historical development with other parallel but distinct disciplines such as the philosophy of religion, the science of religion, comparative religions, the psychology of religion, and the history of religion. Dhavamony states that:

'[The] phenomenology of religion is an empirical science, a human science which makes use of the results of other human sciences such as religious psychology, religious sociology and anthropology. Still more, we can even say that phenomenology of religion is closer to the philosophy of religion than any other human sciences which study the religious phenomena, for it studies the religious phenomena in their specific aspect of religiousness (cited by King, in Whaling 1984: 1/89).

The interdependence of the various movements and methodologies is apparent, no doubt largely because of the difficulties of apprehending the object or objects of religion directly. Theology can speak of the difficulties within the spiritual search as *deus absconditus*, so those disciplines seeking to access the Holy must apply a variety of methodological

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¹³ I regret the delay in publication of Arvind Sharma's book, *To the things themselves: essays on the discourse and practice of the phenomenology of religion*, New York: DeGruyter, until September 2001. From personal discussions with Sharma and Waardenburg, who wrote the forward, I am lead to believe the book provides the most recent and comprehensive overview of the field of the phenomenology of religion.
techniques in order to turn the *absconditus* into an immanent presence. The interdependent nature of inquiry within the realm of the religious is indicated by Bleeker, Van Baaren and Drijvers, who consider the four traditional branches of the science of religion to be the history of religions, phenomenology of religion, psychology of religion, and sociology of religion. An example of the reciprocal relationship between these branches of research within religion is the way in which the phenomenological method can be of help to the history of religions, in the following five respects: 1) It can impel the history of religions to assess the principles of its study to examine the presuppositions of their own work. 2) It sharpens the eye 'for the specific nature of religion'... by studying religion within the wider context of non-religious facts, the historian is 'in danger of losing sight of the true nature of religion'. 3) It can help the historian to reach 'the true end of his study: the clarification of the meaning of religious phenomena'. 4) It can give him 'insight into the essence and structure of religious phenomena'. 5) The phenomenology of religion 'can induce the historian of religions to ponder on the definition of religion which he uses' (Van Baaren, cited King, in Whaling, 1984: 1/94-5).

Each of these disciplines seeks to grasp the essence of religion as a universal human phenomenon, traversing religious, ethnic, denominational and sectarian boundaries, by means of comparative analysis. This is an understandably difficult task, and in my view it is the breadth of the undertaking which has caused the persistent misunderstanding between these movements and the ensuing entanglement in methodologies. Second, the desire of phenomenologists of religion to enter into the faith world of the believing soul and his or her faith tradition brings a particular strength to the research of religious phenomena. An empathetic acceptance of the religious tradition and its accompanying supernatural vision, and a sympathetic reexperiencing of both the credal expressions and personal experiences of faith, as being valid, are of great importance as a style of research. Such a style surely has greater potential than any other methodology to assess the baseline reality towards which the manifestations point, and which ultimately the researcher is seeking to understand and explicate. Kristensen states, "we must always try in our study to put ourselves in the position of
the believer, because it is there alone that the religious reality is to be found which we wish to understand" (cited by Twiss & Conser, 1992: 27). It is my conviction that the phenomenology of religion can gain insights into religious experience which no other method can do by means of natural scientific, historical, sociological or psychological apparati. This is of great importance when seeking to address the topic of religious conversion. Inevitably the experiencing human subject is caught up in the process of radical transformation, and is likely not to have the vocabulary or means of making adequately explicit what is a profound subjective experience.

Contrary to the statement of Dhavamony (above) that the phenomenology of religion "makes use of the results of other human sciences"; Tober insists that if a renewed phenomenology of religion is to begin, it must fulfill the role of 'completing' the work begun by the history of religions: "Instead of completing the task of the history of religions, the phenomenology of religion needs to provide a foundation for it" (1983: 88).

3.9 Problems and Resolutions for the Phenomenology of Religion:

Across the spectrum of literature relating to the phenomenology of religion are recurrent references to problems extant within the movement. My purpose in this section is to discuss four of those difficulties, and to suggest some possible resolutions. I have selected the problems on the basis of what I consider to be either their need for resolution in order for the approach of the phenomenology of religion to have a credible future; or which impinge directly on the phenomenology of religious conversion within the Christian tradition.

First, I wish to address one aspect of Penner's critique of the phenomenology of religion (Impasse and resolution, 1989), located in his first two chapters. Penner makes a call for a radical departure in the phenomenology of religion. He questions those scholars who treat religion as a sui generis domain, suggesting that lurking beneath the rhetoric of the phenomenology of religion—when it refers to the object of religion as The Sacred, the Holy, the inexpressible, the numinous—there exists a methodological ploy, which fulfills the function of covering up the fact that researchers within the movement of the phenomenology of religion
are caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, if they divulge their own convictional religious beliefs, they automatically call into question the professed status of the phenomenology of religion as a scientific endeavor by exploding its neutrality. On the other, until they make the move to disclose their convictional beliefs, they must continue to refer to the divine as being indefinable, because “it is [only] the theologian who knows who God is! It is the theologian who seeks the truth about God” *(ibid: 56)*. For Penner, the phenomenology of religion as we presently know it is nothing other than “Christian theology carried on by other means” *(ibid: 42)*. The tension—inherent within all studies of religion—becomes focused around the necessity of methodological neutrality in order for an unbiased appraisal of religious phenomena to pertain; yet the right remains for the researcher to own appropriate personal religious beliefs. The path out of the impasse to a radical departure in the phenomenology of religion, is—according to Penner *(ibid: 58-59)—for the researcher to “radically revise or reject” the category of the Sacred; to suspend metaphysical or theological assertions to prevent them from becoming substitutes for a phenomenological description of religion; and undertake a new analysis of myth and ritual. Here Husserl’s reflections on ‘signification’ as elucidating myth as a referent whose objectively is ultimately ‘real’ will enable an adequate constitution of the object “by virtue of its own signification.”

In my view, the way to achieve the radical departure in the phenomenology of religion sought by Penner and to climb off the ‘horns’ of the dilemma he referred to, is to resort to Berger’s ‘methodological atheism’ which acknowledges the validity of the researcher’s beliefs, but seeks—appropriately within the phenomenological context—to bracket them. This would deliver us into Ricoeur’s ‘post-critical faith’; which in its mature expression contains within itself the seeds of the possibility of the researcher retaining his or her religious belief while producing careful scholarship in the field of religious studies, by habitually refraining from having one’s faith intrude on the topic at hand.

A second recurring problem in the literature of the phenomenology of religion concerns the relationship between it and Husserlian phenomenology with its reductions and transcendental orientation. Penner foreshadowed the status of Husserl within the
phenomenology of religion as problematic when he refers to Oxtoby’s statement:

One of the principle options in the study of religion in the mid-twentieth century has been termed the ‘phenomenology’ of religion ... understood strictly, the phenomenology of religion is supposed to be a precise application to religion of insights from the European philosophical movement known as phenomenology, launched by Edmund Husserl (Oxtoby, 1987: 436, cited by Penner, ibid: 41).

Penner discusses the impropriety of scholars within the phenomenology of religion movement who make use of rhetoric of Husserlian phenomenology such as ‘intention’, ‘meaning’ and ‘signification’, but “have no relation whatsoever to the phenomenological movement which begins with Husserl” (ibid: 57). He continues by saying:

This is unfortunate because we are left without any theoretical framework by which we might understand the procedure for putting “intentional analysis” into practice. Perhaps a new slogan might be suggested to scholars interested in developing a phenomenology of religion. Instead of “back to intentionality” it should be “back to Husserl” (ibid).

It is a sad fact that in this case, the result of an empty language is an impoverished method. Dupré thinks that those who undertake comparative analyses of religious phenomenon are “unquestionably inspired by Husserl’s phenomenological description, but they seldom surpass the empirical level of an anthropological typology and rarely attain the philosophical justification Husserl required” (1998: 3). In each case it is an underdeveloped ‘method’ which is called to account. George James concludes his summary of the ‘archeology’ of the development of the phenomenology of religion by making the following balanced statement:

It is inappropriate for exponents of the philosophical tradition that began with Husserl, who are interested in religion, to regard the work of the phenomenology of religion as no more than aberrations of phenomenological research.... [Their] tradition of scholarship cannot legitimately claim magistral rights to the name.... It is extremely doubtful whether the insights of Husserl and his followers that have had an important impact on a variety of fields within the human sciences are not as important to the study of religion...or that these will be irrelevant to the research that has been undertaken by the phenomenology of religion. In the second place, then, it is equally inappropriate for the phenomenology of religion, simply because it has a legitimate claim to be insights of Husserl or his followers [or] to appropriate these insights or the vocabulary in which they are expressed without a thorough understanding of their radical implications. Finally, if further meaningful dialogue between philosophical phenomenology and the phenomenology of religion is going to proceed, and if the
phenomenology of religion is going to make further progress, it will be necessary first to begin to understand what objectives, attitudes, and perspectives have distinguished the phenomenology of religion as a family of approaches from other possible approaches and to explore in a scholarly way the relation of these to the concerns of Husserl and his successors and to the perspectives developing in the phenomenological traditions as they continue unfolding to today (1985: 335).

I agree with Penner when he makes the call for a renewed phenomenology of religion, on the basis of a 'back to Husserl' platform; and James when he refers to the inappropriateness of those phenomenologists of religion who use the language of transcendental methodology, but satisfy themselves with mere description. James' call for a rapprochement between the philosophical phenomenology and the phenomenology of religion offers a resolution to the impasse.

Third, as Cox puts it, “a central problem for the study of religion is how the subjective observer gains knowledge of an objective entity when that entity (religious life and practice) is embodied in subjective experience” (1992: 25). Likewise, van der Leeuw states that, “religion ... is an ultimate experience that evades our observation, a revelation which in its very essence is, and remains, concealed” (1967: 2/683). First, there is the question of God. As Penner has suggested above, if the phenomenology of religion is a *de facto* theology with God as its primary object, is it truly possible to then have a phenomenology of religion? I think not, on the basis that theologically-speaking it is not the nature of God to make himself directly accessible to his human subjects by means of mere observation, as if human rationality by its powers of perspicuity were able to look directly into the divine essence. In my view, it is asking too much even of a transcendentally oriented phenomenology to derive the unsullied essence of God by means of the *epoché*, intersubjective consciousness and the transcendental reduction.

However, theology insists on the Divine as being a self-revealing entity, and understands God to have revealed himself in history by his acts, in Scripture, and in person through Jesus Christ. Taking theology at face value, if God reveals himself, he does so on his terms, and conditionally to those who meet the criteria of faith, who exist in the sacred sphere,
and who live in the expectation of God's unveiling of himself, his will, his redemptive purposes, and his sacred pathways. However, within phenomenological research, it must be anticipated that God emerges not as he is-in-himself, but only as he is perceived by those who experience him. This is so because, as van der Leeuw points out phenomenology seeks the *phenomenon* as such; which is what "appears" (1967: 2/671). Because God does not appear as a material phenomenon—except (as the Christian tradition would have it) historically in the person of Jesus Christ—he cannot be apperceived as a phenomenally appresented object. Indeed, for Husserlian phenomenology, God does not exist until he manifests himself within the consciousness of the believer. This statement, which may appear strange to the 'believing soul' (Westphal, 1984: xi), has its basis within the phenomenological program of skepticism toward the contents of the natural attitude, and is not concerned with reality *per se*, but with how we experience and understand it. For Laycock (in Laycock and Hart, 1986: 171) the God of the phenomenologists is God "as revealed through reflection upon concretely lived experience."

If Cox's question relates to the non-material aspects of experience within religious experiencers, as I think it does, then a phenomenology of religion must be possible. However, gaining access to experience which is intrinsically transcendent is a difficult task, and requires phenomenology to be more than a simple description of inward intentions and outward expressions (as Dupré suggests, 1998: 5). As Scheler would have it:

> The God of religious consciousness 'is' and lives exclusively in the religious act, not in metaphysical thinking extraneous to religion.... The God of religion is the god of the saints and the god of the people, not the cerebral god of the 'intellectuals.' The fount of all religious truth is not scientific utterance but *faith* in the words of the *homo religiosus*, the 'holy man' (1960: 134).

Thus what makes the religious object accessible for phenomenology is the fact that the inner intention is indissolubly linked to the outward expression. In the religious act the 'holy man' referred to by Scheler has something in mind; whether communion with the divine through prayer, or forgiveness of sins through the Eucharist. According to Dupré:

> The world exists as an antepredicative *given* that the mind encounters through the
givenness of the body and upon which it then bestows its own intelligibility. The body functions as a unique order of meaning-giving intentionality that makes the world a differentiated whole.... Dumery speaks of a "hierogonic" subject that constitutes a sacred sphere by mediating a transcendent impetus within the ordinary life world. In all conscious acts the mind projects meaning over its world: aesthetic, scientific, moral. But the religious meaning differs from all others in that it thematizes the radical receptivity that lies at the ground of all active projection of meaning (1998: 11).

Of all the worlds in which mankind has ever lived, almost all of them have been religious (Berger, 1969: 27). The religious or 'sacred sphere' which the hierophant constructs becomes a dwelling place, where objects in space and time are consecrated as being representative of another transcendent order which impinges on the mundane world, and supererogates it and its values, intents and projects. As referred to in chapter two the religious convert, by a process of paradigm-transmigration, arrives in a wondrous new world constituted by God's election and prevenient provision of redemption. This supernatural world has overcome the aporia of the past, with its sin and darkness, and now "bestows its own intelligibility" (in Dupré's words), making sense of what previously had no sense, and projecting itself from the inner world of the religious convert, outward to the larger world, transforming what was previously mundane into a sacred universe. For Dupré:

In contrast to [the] theory of illumination, modern philosophy had increasingly emphasized the constitutive role of the subject. Despite his own Kantian connections, Husserl's concept of Wesenschau prepared the highly modified version of the older theory that Heidegger and other phenomenologists developed in their notion of truth as disclosure. A process of cognition that results in an intuition of what is essential in the appearances shares a fundamental assumption with the ancient illumination theory, namely that in truth the real discloses itself—it appears with its own evidence. The road to the evidential intuition may be paved by the transcendental subject, but in the final intuition, reality genuinely discloses itself (ibid: 17).

Such disclosure by the sacred, when grasped by the cognitive processes of the believing soul, manifests itself through their passion and candor in such a form that phenomenology, with the appropriate intuition, is able to readily access and identify it.

Fourth, Flood (Beyond phenomenology, rethinking the study of religion, 1999) provides a critique of phenomenology as an adequate basis for the study of religion. He does so from a broad-based disciplinary standpoint within religious studies which draws upon
linguistic, narrativist, feminist, queer, postmodernist and post-colonial theories. I will limit my reflections to three elements within Flood's contention that the phenomenological method alone is inadequate for understanding religion. The first element I have chosen to address is his belief that phenomenology 'smuggles' a Husserlian philosophy of consciousness into religious studies with its method (ibid: 106). Flood maintains that phenomenology operates out of a particular philosophy of consciousness which arose as a result of the European Enlightenment. When applied to religion this Western scientific mentality acts as an imposition upon religious phenomena. Second, Flood argues that phenomenology naively assumes that its goal of description of any given phenomena is able to adequately represent its underlying universal structures. It does so based on the assumption that the descriptive language used is able to adequately portray the broad range of meanings extant within any specific event. He suggests that linguistic attempts to observe and describe phenomena within consciousness are not simply a passive, and therefore innocent, attempt at 'mapping' what it sees, but rather an active construction of events and forms of truth it supposes itself to observe; they are brought-to the phenomenon rather than seen-in it. Third, Flood finds in a phenomenology of religion which applies the methods of bracketing and *epoché*—the very methods designed to obtain transcendental knowledge of regional and therefore integrated ontologies—a privileged, isolated and removed self brought into being as a result of the Cartesian *cogito*. According to Flood such a self is not an intersubjective being who dwells within a 'community of monads' (ibid: 110), but an individual without connection with the cultural and narrative-worlds of those subjectivities which surround it.

Because of their insightfulness and complexity Flood's critiques are difficult—but not impossible—to defend. My response is first to address his contention that phenomenology smuggles a Western scientific philosophy into religious studies and imposes its assumptions upon its data, in the following way. This critique can equally be aimed at any so-called scientific methodology used in the study of religion and is therefore a generic fallacy which is not antithetical to phenomenology *per se* but to all social science research methodologies including those favored by Flood such as narrative, cultural and dialogical approaches. In my
view what makes phenomenology a pertinent research methodology for religious studies is its awareness of its potential for bias and its insistence on those researchers who make use of phenomenology that they be transparent to themselves and to their readers by seeking to fully self-disclose their interests.

Second, Flood's position that phenomenological language which attempts to be descriptive in fact ends up as constructive language is dependent (as Flood himself acknowledges [ibid: 102-3]), upon the accompanying narrative being expressed from either an 'insider's' or an 'outsider's' perspective. If the narrative reflects an outsider's position, it is likely that the researcher has foregone the empathetic re-experiencing required by true phenomenological language, and a non-phenomenological framework such as from a historical, cultural, anthropological or other research methodology (ibid: 2) should be applied, not a phenomenological one. The problem in my view is a 'design' fault on the part of the researcher, not a flaw in phenomenology itself.

Third, Flood's assertion that the 'subject' within phenomenological research has become an entity separate from other subjects, is I think, a refusal to accept phenomenology as an adequate methodology for the study of religion on the grounds that he is committed a priori to an alternate methodological position. Flood's position that, "As religions can be seen in terms of sign systems, as systems of signification and communication, then the mode of their study must be primarily in terms of semiosis rather than consciousness" (ibid: 112), betrays his interest in a macro-analysis of religion akin to a comparative religions approach, and appears to be unsympathetic to a micro-analysis of religious experience which forms the focus of this research. My response is to note that a direct link must exist between semeiotics as a science of signification, and consciousness, and that 'link' is a socially mediated one. Berger makes the point that consciousness precedes socialization (1969: 83), which indicates that any objectivity of meaning requires both that the individual participate in a socially-objectified world, and that the individual make choices which ensure his or her own life is meaningful in its own right.

In this discussion I have presented what I think to be the most compelling 'problems' for a phenomenology of religion, and have sought to identify solutions in order to lay open the
possibility of an ongoing and effective discipline.

3.10 The Phenomenology of Religious Conversion:

This brings me to the concluding section of this methodological chapter. Because the research is set within the parameters of the phenomenology of conversion, it is important to draw together the writings of those authors who have contributed to the field with particular reference to both 'conversion' and 'phenomenology'. Two such authors have contributed to this field and will be discussed here.

William James made an early and enduring contribution to the understanding of religion in general, in his Varieties of religious experience (1902 Gifford Lectures); and in particular to the phenomenology of conversion. According to Spiegelberg, James was only cursorily aware of Husserl and his developing continental phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1976: 1/112). Nevertheless he did make regular trips to Europe from America, and read widely. Indeed, Spiegelberg suggests that there is "considerable certainty" that the influence flowed in the opposite direction, with Husserl being influenced by James' psychology of religion. "Students of Husserl's work have often been struck by the many parallels between his phenomenological insight into the structure of consciousness and some of the central chapters in James' Principles of psychology" (ibid). But there is no evidence to suggest a Husserlian flavor in James' published work. Nevertheless, while James' phenomenological apparatus is admittedly somewhat superficial, it is obvious that the underlying methodology used by him is intensely phenomenological, due to his repeated intention to "return to the concrete situation", as exemplified by his use of extended description, his empathetic intersubjective entry into the experiences of his subjects, his insistence on the givenness of the lifeworld, and his sustained efforts to uncover the essence of religious experience in its cognitional meaning for the religious believer. This sets James as an important figure for religious studies in general, as a peripheral contributor to the phenomenology of religion movement, but in the field of the phenomenology of conversion he is the central figure. One route to the establishment of James's phenomenological orientation is his connection with C.S. Pierce, to whom he
dedicated his *The will to believe* (1897), in the following way; "...to whose philosophical comradeship in old times and to whose writings in more recent years I owe more incitement and help than I can express or repay" (Hookway, in Putnam, 1997: 145). It is likely that Pierce exerted a double influence on James's scholarship, both in terms of phenomenology and pragmatism. It is generally agreed that James applied pragmatism as one of his primary methods in relation to the reality of religious conversion in someone's life can be measured by its fruits within the life (James, 1928: 237 et al.). Wilshire says of James' particular brand of phenomenology:

James' phenomenology places him much more intimately within phenomena than do the phenomenologies of the absolute idealists. His world will be messier, more pluralistic, pulverized, and "irrational" than they (particularly Hegel) could possibly abide. It *will* be a world, but a "concatenated" one "hanging together from next to next," with no single strand of identity, no absolute mind pulling everything together through their necessarily connected essences which that mind itself constitutes in its knowing (in Putnam, 1997: 112).

James describes his own work in his introductory comments as being an approach which would not be theological, nor grounded in the history of religions, nor anthropological, but:

Psychology is the only branch of learning in which I am particularly versed. To the psychologist the religious propensities of man must be at least as interesting as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution. It would seem, therefore, as a psychologist, the natural thing for me would be to invite you to a descriptive survey of those religious propensities (1928: 2).

As pointed out by Niebuhr (in Putnam, 1997: 217), James changed his definition of psychology from a relatively traditional treatment in his earlier works *Principles* (1890) and *Briefer Course* (1892), in order that in the *Varieties* (published 1902) psychology is able to proceed along the lines of psychology as a natural science "of consciousness *as such.*" But even in the *Briefer Course,* when:

We talk of psychology as a natural science, we must not assume that means a sort of psychology that stands on solid ground. It means just the reverse; it means a psychology particularly fragile, and into which the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every point, a psychology all of whose elementary assumptions and data must be
reconsidered in wider connections and translated into other terms. It is, in short, a phrase of diffidence, and not of arrogance (in Putnam, 1997: 217-8).

Ultimately then, James' 'psychology of consciousness' forms a parallel approach to the phenomena of religious conversion to that of Husserlian phenomenology. This is so because both have as their intended objects the consciousness of religious beliefs and experiences; and they share the methodology—if not the overt language—of seeking the essence of the experiencing subject by means of careful intuitive description of outward actions through self-reports.

While I affirm the unquestionable contribution of James, my critique of his contribution in the field of religious conversion lies in a number of the assumptions he makes. First, I think a problem lies in his decision to work with those individuals who are 'religious geniuses' (1928: 6) rather than the 'ordinary believer' whose faith is supposedly received second-hand. In making such a distinction I think James makes a mistake which I will term 'gnostic elitism'. Admittedly a tension exists around the origins of faith; does spiritual vitality come from the prophet who leads and inspires or from the masses who follow him? Or does the prophet emerge from among the people and draw his life from the ardor of the community's faith? James' distinction has the benefit of allowing a bracketing of all those who do not meet his criteria of faith, but I suspect his language of 'genius' is poorly chosen and muddies the water rather than providing a lucid definition of conversion.

Further, James also addresses "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude" (cited Gallagher, 1990: 36); and in so doing separates the individual from his or her faith community, within which that experience is shaped and takes its genesis. James also characterizes conversion as being rapid and naturalistic (ibid: 189 & 242). One of the things I have noticed about conversion is that no single typification of conversion fits all the 'messiness' of the lives of converts. I perceive a tendency towards reductionism and psychologism in James's definition, in that he restricts his analysis to the isolated religious 'genius' who undergoes a conversion which is sudden and cataclysmic. In that case there is little allowance for lengthy, community-based, or psychologically satisfying and stable
transformation at conversion.

The second contributor to the phenomenology of conversion I will draw attention to is Lewis Rambo. Two publications in particular will take my attention; the first is an article entitled 'The Phenomenology of Conversion' (co-written with Lawrence Reh, in Malony and Southard, 1989), and the second is *Understanding Religious Conversion* (1993). The first publication states as its goal, to "explore the nature of the phenomenological enterprise and offer a case study that illustrates some possibilities and problems with applying the method to the study of religious conversion" (Rambo & Reh, 1989: 230). The case-study involves a certain Esther Tenichev (name changed) whose conversion story is extraordinarily well documented because she was undergoing spiritual direction with a qualified adviser who kept a careful account of her faith-journey. The lengthy transcript-analysis involves comments from both Rambo and the spiritual director, on Esther’s self-report of the faith journey from nominal Judaism to Roman Catholicism. For Rambo, the heart of phenomenology is to:

Go beyond bare facts to the level of facts-as-perceived. It is the quest to discover and describe what a person actually experienced. The goal of phenomenology is elegantly simple to articulate, excruciatingly complex to accomplish.... Phenomenology does not aim at discovering something that does not exist but at uncovering, describing, and articulating as well as possible what is experienced by an individual (ibid: 230 & 245).

Rambo is convinced from personal experience that ‘messiness’ is inherent in any phenomenological research which expects to deal seriously with the complexities of human experience” (ibid: 233 & 243). This is borne out not only in Esther’s life, but in a grueling self-exposé by Rambo. He regards phenomenology as, “[a] form of ‘clinical’ study of religion. In other words, real human beings are far more complex, messy, and resistant to reduction and simplification than any of our theories so far either admit or are capable of taking into account” (ibid: 249). Rambo foreshadowed this present research when he referred to future developments in the phenomenology of conversion as the need to study “larger numbers of converts from different cultures, backgrounds and life histories” (ibid: 254); thus promoting the

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14. Note James' use of the same term.
need for further research in the field, and anticipating its diversification beyond the American religious studies orbit.

The second publication by Rambo (1993) is a systematic tour de force of the process of religious conversion from a number of different scholarly perspectives; among them, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and theology. Rambo's methodological debt to phenomenology is evident when he places empathy, personal experience, and the complexity of the human predicament as central to his approach, and his desire to "get inside another person's skin" in order to explicate their conversion experience (ibid: xiv). References to phenomenology occur throughout the work,15 and Rambo fulfills the phenomenological requirement of self-disclosure in his preface. His book is a complex discussion of conversion, drawn mostly from the perspective of Christianity; embracing a broad range of personal experience, including the author's first-hand experience and that of convertees, with extensive entré into the broad literature relating to religious conversion, especially from the social sciences. The contribution of Rambo in this work lies in his unique schematic arrangement of conversion as a processual experience (ibid: 168-169), as a seven-stage process, incorporating 'context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences'. Of particular interest to this dissertation—with its goal of explicating the convert's acquisition of new beliefs at conversion—is stage six, 'commitment'. The components of hierophanic change and transformation during the moment of religious commitment will be discussed later in the research.

In summary, the previous research done by James and Rambo provides a commencement point for this research, which is committed to the phenomenological study of religious conversion within the context of the Christian faith. While not agreeing with James' research on conversion en toto I nevertheless acknowledge his importance to this (and other) field[s], and where appropriate I intend to draw on his work throughout this dissertation. The work of Rambo is critical to this research and I am indebted to his insights.

15. See pp. 10 ff., 160 & 171.
Conclusion:

In this chapter I have discussed the contribution of phenomenology as a movement within mainstream philosophy to the study of religious phenomena and experience. I have paid particular attention to the phenomenology of religion as a discipline which provides an adequate basis for a well grounded phenomenology of conversion. The foregoing discussion has enabled me to arrive at a number of key statements which constitute the basis for the methodological program for this dissertation: (1) A philosophy of religious conversion is possible, using phenomenology as its primary approach. (2) The movement known as the phenomenology of religion provides a basis from which to develop the sub-discipline of the phenomenology of conversion. (3) A phenomenology of conversion is methodologically grounded in Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. (4) Husserl, rather than Heidegger, is the appropriate source of inspiration for the project, given Husserl's status as a bona fide religious convert himself, and given the rigor of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. (5) The transcendental aspect of Husserlian phenomenology, along with those aspects of intentionality, intersubjectivity and eidetic reduction provide the core principles adequate for a phenomenology of religious conversion. (6) The phenomenology of religion is uniquely capable of accessing and describing the inward religious faith-transactions of the religious convert, as being maieutically evident.

I have also discussed a number of critiques of the phenomenology of religion, and provided a basis for the continuation of the method as applied to religious phenomena and experience in this research. Finally, I have demonstrated the importance and applicability of phenomenology as a methodological tool of analysis in the radical realignment of consciousness in Christian conversion, which is the primary intent of this research.
Chapter 4. Procedures and Methods for the Research

Introduction:

I have commenced previous chapters by referring to the three horizons of the Christian religious tradition, converts' experiences of meaning change at conversion, and phenomenology which shapes and informs this research. Chapter one emphasized the Christian tradition and its dependence upon conversion as the point of entry into the Christian faith. Chapter two focussed on the literature relating to the acquisition of 'mind' as a human developmental phenomenon, and as acquired at conversion in the Christian religious tradition. Chapter three introduced phenomenology and its application to religious studies. It discussed the phenomenology of religion as a discipline, and addressed Husserl's contribution to a phenomenology of religious experience.

This fourth chapter seeks to provide a clear method for the research in order to tie together the experiences of religious agents within the Christian faith tradition as explicated by phenomenology. The question this chapter seeks to address is, 'in what way might a phenomenological explication of changed meanings in converts to the Christian faith be undertaken?' At this point we are dealing with the procedural question of method. The distinction I will make between 'method' and 'methodology' is that methodology provides the critical theoretical framework which is applied in order to interpret and make sense of the available data; whereas 'method' is the instrument which facilitates the methodology by applying it to the raw datum in such a way that neither the experiences of the religious soul nor the genius of the theoretical methodology are in any way compromised. Thus the methodology being used here is phenomenology, and the method I have chosen to bridge the gap between theoretical framework and the living human subject is the personal interview, which enables co-participants to descriptively relate their experiences of changed meanings in relation to God, self and world.

Pollio, Henley and Thompson (1997: 28) draw on the etymology of the word 'method', and describe it as a composite of the Greek words bodos, referring to a path or a way, and the word meta, across or beyond. Given this foundation, my rendering of the meaning of 'method'
is to traverse that path most suited to deliver one to one's chosen destination. Given that the question this chapter seeks to address is, 'In what way might a phenomenological explication of changed meanings in converts to the Christian faith be undertaken?' My answer is by means of personal interviews, which are open, which are exploratory rather than explanatory, which position the participant rather than the investigator as the real expert, and which take as authentic and valid the self-reports of participants. Pollio, Henley and Thompson state:

The interview is a human event that yields interpretable data if approached properly. Such data reflect the participant's perspective on his/her experiences as they emerge in the context of an interview. To the objection that such reflections are not the 'real' phenomena, one might respond with: "Just where else is the real to be found?" (ibid: 31).

The qualifier used by these authors is 'if approached properly'. This chapter is concerned with establishing that the interviews I have undertaken with my participants fall within necessary parameters for undertaking personal interviews, and to demonstrate a proper concern for scientific validity and authenticity. It will do so by presenting a clear portrayal of how the interviews were undertaken, and how the data derived from participants were processed and analyzed in order to present the final phenomenological descriptions of participants' experiences of changed meanings in the context of Christian religious conversion.

4.1 Pilot Study and Early Conceptualization:

In a pilot study undertaken in October 1998, I prepared a series of 70 questions in order to elicit responses from two respondents. My primary research question was, 'What has been your experience of undergoing alterations in your perception and meaning structure as a result of religious conversion?' While the respondents felt comfortable with the questions and both returned excellent interviews (which I later used), I felt too many questions were an imposition on respondents' self-reports and that an abbreviated and simplified set of questions were required. Part of the difficulty was a failure on my part to adequately focus the research so as to elicit self reports which were properly related to a clearly delineated research question.

I further clarified the research question for myself; 'What is the experience of acquiring
new religious knowing in the context of conversion; and what account may be given of the processes of change in the believer's perceptions of God, self and world following Christian conversion? It still did not yet appear that an adequately defined phenomenological horizon had been identified. I had located the arena within which I wished to locate change, namely the 'set' represented by God, self and world; but I had no way of determining rates of change over time, nor in what ways change might be represented. In its mature form, the horizon of phenomenological enquiry can now be represented by a further triangulation represented as:

What 1. changes in belief, attitude and action
2. relating to God, self and world
3. took place before, during and after conversion?

The reconstituted question, presented in this way, gives the researcher the added capacity to make inquiries into the experiences of respondents from a number of directions, and allows for a level of complexity that the research question in its previous form was unable to address or answer. The question can be likened to a three-sided rubric cube when it is illustrated as a table in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. changes in belief</th>
<th>2. changes in attitude</th>
<th>3. changes in action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. relating to God</td>
<td>5. relating to self</td>
<td>6. relating to the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. before conversion</td>
<td>8. during conversion</td>
<td>9. after conversion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram 2: the research question illustrated as a table.

This model of transformation enables the researcher to conceive of multiple aspects of the research which can be addressed from any commencement point, such as, "what changes in belief (1) relating to God (4) took place during conversion (8)?" Or, "what changes in attitude (2) relating to the world (6) took place before conversion (7) and after conversion (9)?"
4.2 Design of the Study:

The study is intended to be an applied piece of phenomenological research, drawing on the experiences of religious converts who have undergone changed meanings in the context of Christian conversion. The self-reports of participants will be explicaded by means of phenomenological analysis of their transcripts. In order to facilitate the intended purpose of the research a design which reflects the character of the research and enables a satisfactory answer to be offered in response to the primary research question must be formulated.

The design I chose for the research is a personal interview of each participant. I chose to interview seven participants in a series of three, one hour, open interviews which were informal and semi-structured. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed onto computer following the interview. Following ethics clearance in November 1998, interviews were commenced in June 1999 and concluded in July of the same year.

The interviews were focused on gaining descriptions of first-hand experiences of respondents' changed meanings within the horizons discussed above. Phenomenology is concerned first and foremost with the phenomena of human experience in order to gain a holistic grasp of the experience. It is concerned to describe and explore rather than to explain the phenomena, in the conviction that if careful attention is paid to the details described by the respondent, the shape of the underlying essences and invariant structures will emerge. This requires a patient 'listening' to the datum of experience on its own terms, without prior theory or hypotheses, in order to allow the inherent nature of the experience and its meaning to make itself known. Krüger states that the urge of phenomenology:

Is to re-establish contact with the raw material of life itself. It is the effort to rediscover and re-experience life itself directly underneath the layer of secondary scientific constructions. It wants to learn again how to see clearly and how to describe accurately what we see ... It wants to return 'to the things themselves' as the phenomenological battle-cry runs (1982: 17).

My goal was to conduct the research in a way which facilitated 'real' rather than forced responses which allowed respondents adequate time to collect their thoughts and to describe their conversion experiences, and enabled a detailed picture of meaning change to appear.
4.3 Selection Criteria:

Seven participants were chosen to participate in the research. That was felt to be a manageable number of interviews to undertake and transcripts to process. Any more than seven and the sheer volume of data would have been difficult to process. Any less and there may have been objections to the research on the basis of the adequacy of the breadth of its sample selection. However Polkinghorne (1989: 48) names studies which ranged from 325 to 3 respondents, and Churchill (1990: 58-9) suggests that for phenomenology one in-depth case study is adequate for a valuable research project to be undertaken. Giorgi makes the statement that “the more subjects there are, the greater the variation, and hence the better the ability to see what is essential. On the other hand, specific situated structures might still be desired, and these could be based on only one subject” (1985: 19).

The following criteria were applied in the selection of respondents for the project.

1. They were to be 18 years and above
2. They must have experienced a recognizable conversion
3. That conversion must be in some way recognizably ‘Christian’
4. They must be of Anglo-Australian origin
5. The sample should be gender representative
6. They must reside in Perth, Western Australia

The reasons for selecting these criteria are as follows:

1. 18 years and over. While many conversions take place prior to 18 years of age, I was aware of the need to select respondents above that age so they could adequately communicate their experiences, and so that normal human biological development would not be mistaken for the changes related to conversion.
2. A recognizable conversion. I wanted local parish clergy to identify people within their churches whom they as religious ‘professionals’ recognized as having undergone a conversion
which was genuine and authentic.

3. A recognizably 'Christian' conversion. Christianity is only one of several major religious traditions which are conversionist. I wanted it to be clear that the conversion experienced was specifically related to the Christian tradition.

4. Of Anglo-Australia origin. I selected respondents from as homogeneous a group as possible, from among a 'white' Australian population. Many people of Asian, Aboriginal or other ethnic minorities could have been chosen for the research, but I felt doing so would have introduced a level of cultural complexity which was unwarranted and would possibly compromise the findings of the research. In my closing comments in chapter ten I draw attention to my interest in seeing how this research stands up when applied to ethnic and cross-cultural contexts.

5. Of either sex. I preferred the sample of respondents to be gender representative. Four females and three males were selected. As is commonly practiced in phenomenological studies, because I as the researcher am included as a co-participant, and because I am a male, there are four females and four males included in the sample.

6. Residents of Perth. Perth as this State's capital city represents the highest concentration of population and it can safely be assumed that it also contains the highest population of religious converts. Because I reside outside Perth, I chose participants from that location because they are unknown to me and outside my previous circle of professional and pastoral influence.

7. From Christian denominations participating in the National Church Life Survey. This criteria meant that the denominations with which respondents chose to associate themselves are understood by the National Church Life Survey (as an Australian religious research body representative of the broader Australian churches) to be authentic manifestations of the Christian Church in this country.

4.4 Interview Questions:

The questions used in the interviews have been formulated from a basic set of categories of religious phenomena developed by McKenzie (1988), and Moore & Habel (1982). Moore & Habel adapted and extended the six dimensions introduced by Ninian Smart (1973),
which were doctrinal, mythological, ethical, ritual, experiential and social. Moore and Habel have extended this to eight categories; namely beliefs, stories, ethics, ritual, experience, social structure, symbols, and texts.

My questions did not embrace all the categories outlined by McKenzie, and Moore & Habel, but covered those areas deemed central to the research question. The 70 questions I had previously identified were felt to impose themselves unnecessarily on the participant, and did not allow time, space or opportunity for them to elucidate clearly their experiences. A more open, less structured approach was taken in order to allow deeper access to participant's experiences of changed beliefs.

The questions I took into the interviews were as follows;

1. When were you converted?
2. Who were the key people involved in your conversion?
3. What were the circumstances in which you were converted?
4. How did God make himself known to you?
5. Why do you become a Christian and not something else?
6. What was your family's religious background?
7. Prior to conversion were you aware of a need for change?
8. Tell me more about the specific circumstances of your conversion.
9. Before you became a Christian, what was your impression of Christianity?
10. Was there a period when you were conscious of preparing for conversion?
11. What feelings did you have during your conversion?
12. What fears were attached to deciding to become a Christian?
13. Did you feel you could stop the conversion process if you wanted to?
14. What physical posture did you assume as you committed yourself to God?
15. Were you particularly aware of your body at the time?
16. Were you aware of anything different about your sense of time?
17. Tell me about the physical space or place in which you were converted.
18. Before your conversion, what did you believe about God?
19. After your conversion, what did you believe about God?
20. What were your attitudes and feelings towards yourself pre-conversion?
21. After your conversion, what were your attitudes and feelings towards yourself?
22. Before your conversion, what did you think about the world?
23. After your conversion, what did you think about the world?
24. How much of the Christian gospel did you know before conversion?
25. What part did the Bible play in your conversion?
26. Were you aware of a sense of God's presence; in the form of Father, Son or Holy Spirit?
27. Can you identify any beliefs which changed at the moment of decision?
28. During conversion were there any new insights about God's character and being which you became aware of?
29. In what way did Jesus make himself known to you?
30. Was there any moment at which you felt self-conscious; as if standing outside your own body watching on like a spectator?
31. Did you know how to convert?
32. What did the differences 'feel' like?
33. Were your beliefs, attitudes and behavior fast or slow to change?
34. What was your experience of encountering God for the first time?
35. What was your experience of going to Church for the first time?
36. What was your experience of receiving salvation and forgiveness of sins?
37. What is your response to Jesus' unqualified love and acceptance for you?
38. After your conversion, what was most 'real' to you?

When the occasion called for it, I asked additional questions such as, 'What did that mean for you?', 'How did that feel?', and 'What was your bodily experience?' etc.

4.5 Interview Procedure:

Letters of introduction and explanation were sent to denominational offices and local Church clergy in Perth, Western Australia, asking them to refer me to people within their churches who met the list of criteria I provided. Not all denominations or churches were able
to locate suitable people, and two people referred to me by clergy did not wish to participate in the research. However, seven participants were located and agreed to participate in the research. They have done so with a surprising degree of energy and enthusiasm.

The first contact with each participant was by telephone in order to discuss the purpose of the research and my expectations of the participant in taking part in the project. I answered any queries they had, and dates were set for interviews. During the first interview, I was especially concerned to develop a rapport with each participant. Following a brief description of the purpose of the research, we discussed people we may have known or issues related to their family or church. My goals for each of the interviews were as follows:

- **Interview 1:** provide an ethics statement and obtain cooperation signature
  - build a relationship through a mutual flow of information
  - general information to build a context/lifeworld background

- **Interview 2:** specific information about religious experiences
  - specific information about religious beliefs
  - specific information about changes in belief

- **Interview 3:** re-visit responses from interviews 1 and 2
  - more probing questions in specific areas
  - tidy loose ends and say thank you.

### 4.6 The Conventions of Transcription Used:

I began the process of transcription with a great deal of temerity because I was uncertain how to proceed, given the extent of concern in the phenomenological literature stressing the need for capturing informants' responses accurately. I began with Stromberg's¹

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**Conventions of Transcription:**

- { } bounds speech spoken softly
- { { } } bounds speech spoken very softly
- CAPS indicates speech spoken loudly
- underlining indicates words spoken with emphasis
- : extended sound
- | | bounds utterances produced simultaneously by two speakers
- .... Noticeable pause too short to be accurately timed
conventions for transcription. However, I soon realized there were two major difficulties in using his method. The first was that given that the average of the seven transcript protocols was 33 pages (a total of 230 pages in all), I simply had too great a volume of data to process with that degree of precision. The second was the realization that what was more important than the exact capturing of each and every non-verbal transmission of meaning was the necessity to locate and properly apply a sequenced method of transcript analysis which was able to manage and make sense of the seven transcripts in such a way that each response was sensitively heard, recorded, sorted, compared and contrasted with comments from other respondents.

The conventions I adhered to during the process of transcription were as follows:

.... a slight pause in speech
[pause] a longer pause in speech
; a break in meaning which did not require the commencement of a new sentence
(tears) when respondents expressed noticeable emotion during their self-report
(adjusted) indicates any phrase changed by me to better capture the speaker's intended meaning
(Laughter) indicates respondent's laughter.

4.7 Transcript Analysis Method:

By now it should be apparent that a great volume of literature relating to phenomenology is available. The vast body of literature relating to theoretical considerations surrounding existential phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology, and the phenomenology of religion are cases in point. There is also a great
variety of applied phenomenological research, addressing such issues as being angry, foreignness, and nursing (Crotty, 1996). From the Christian religious perspective, studies exist on the Christian experience of God (van Staden, 1998), encountering other religious traditions (Cox, 1992), and the sacredness of place (Eliade, 1987; H.W. Turner, 1979). However, no universality has been achieved in locating a procedural method by which these studies have analyzed their data and arrived at their final explications of the phenomena. Few of them describe fully the steps they took in undertaking their analyses, and one quickly realizes the scarcity of material available to act as a guide for undertaking a practical piece of research of one’s own.

Since Edmund Husserl focussed almost entirely on the theoretical and philosophical aspects of phenomenology and did not leave any recognizable formulae for its application to the practical concerns of human experience in everyday life, I learned I must look to others to gain trustworthy guidance in the realm of applied phenomenology. Those guides to whom I have looked for practical advice in bringing phenomenology as method into proximity with converts’ experiences of changed meanings have been Don Idhe (1986); Amedeo Giorgi (1985); Clark Moustakas (1994); Max Van Mannen (1990); Pollio, Henley and Thompson, (1997); Cox (1992); Rambo and Reh (1992); von Eckartsburg (1989); Polkinghorne (1989); Colaizzi (1973); van Kaam (1959); and Schweitzer (1998).

Of special significance has been a method which Robert Schweitzer developed in his PhD dissertation. That method is an adaptation of Giorgi’s phenomenological method,

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outlined in Schweitzer's 'Sketch of a psychological phenomenological method' (1985: 8-22). In outline, Giorgi’s method involves a four-step procedure for phenomenological research as it applies to psychology. Those steps are:

1. Gain a sense of the whole: the idea here is to gain an intuitive overview of the ‘whole’ of the transcript.
2. Discrimination of meaning units within a psychological perspective and focused on the phenomenon being researched: the idea here is to adopt a mind-set which allows the practice of ‘discovery’ rather than that of ‘verification’ (as in a logical-empirical research method).
3. Transformation of subject’s everyday expressions into psychological language with emphasis on the phenomenon being investigated: the sense here is that each natural meaning unit (NMU) should be interrogated for its essential meaning, which is then re-stated by the researcher in terms suitable to the discipline of psychology.
4. Synthesis of transformed meaning units into a consistent statement of the structure of learning: the sense here is that the researcher synthesizes and integrates the insights contained in the transformed meaning units into a ‘consistent description of the psychological structure of the event’.

Schweitzer’s method is an expansion on Giorgi’s model. It has six stages as follows:

Stage 1: An intuitive holistic grasp of the data: where the data, derived from interviews, is read and understood from the participant’s point of view, and the data is allowed to ‘speak for itself’.

Stage 2: Constructing a constituent profile: which requires three steps:

(a) delineation into natural meaning units (referred to as NMUs)
(b) reducing NMUs to central themes (referred to as CTs)
(c) eliminating redundant CTs and reconstituting CTs to form a constituent profile.

Stage 3: Constructing a thematic index file from the constituent profiles: which is made up of three further steps:

(a) delineation of the Constituent Profile
(b) identifying Referents within the constituent profile
(c) constructing a Thematic File using a Sorter Card Index System.

Stage 4: Searching the Thematic Index File:
(a) the data is combined and treated nomothetically
(b) the referents are used to interrogate the data
(c) clusters are noted within the data
(d) interpretive themes are identified

Stage 5: Arriving at the Extended Description:
(a) the data is interrogated using interpretive themes
(b) a rigorous description of the interpretive themes is given

Stage 6: Synthesis of the Extended Description: where the main themes contained in the extended description are re-presented in a succinct and coherent manner.

The model I have used owes much to Schweitzer’s model, but it diverges from it in a number of significant ways. The most notable differences are my introduction of the notion of a succinct sub-narrative; my replacement of his card sorting index with a numbered research key which enables available word-processing computer software to sort data into similar categories; the removal of several steps of analysis (especially his Referents) which I felt to be unnecessarily repetitive; giving the interpretive themes an enlarged and more specific function; the use of the concept map in order to determine relationships between interpretive themes; the prioritizing formula (frequency x intensity = priority); giving a place to the phenomenological steps of ‘bracketing’ and ‘free variation’ in order to creatively identify invariant structures of experience; and the use of ‘explicative themes’ as the final steps in order to arrive at the eidetic structures and essential features of the experience of meaning change at conversion.
4.7 Transcript Analysis Method:

I will now introduce the transcript analysis method I have applied in this research.

**My Preliminary Approach:**

1. I identified the primary research question which focussed the research
2. I compiled a list of interview questions designed to evoke responses to the research question
3. I established a set of criteria by which to select informants
4. I located respondents and informed them of the purposes of the study
5. I undertook the interviews (after having obtained University Ethics Committee approval)
6. I transcribed the interviews from audio tapes into a typed transcript

**Stage One of Transcript Analysis: Idiographic Mode**

1. In an initial analysis of a single transcript, I located categories of meaning which pointed to foundational experiences and meanings related to the research
2. I constructed a research key (see below) with categories and sub-categories related to the research question (and subsequently re-formulated it as I progressed through the transcripts)
3. I isolated the natural meaning units (NMUs), each containing a single meaning
4. I numbered these according to categories I placed in the research key
5. I sorted the numbered NMUs into categories determined by the research key using available computer software
6. I arrived at abbreviated NMUs by removing extraneous items
7. I selected central themes, i.e., themes ‘central’ to the experiences of participants, especially noting multiple references, for example (x 4)
8. I wrote a phenomenological comment on each central theme in CAPITAL letters to distinguish it from respondents' transcripts
9. I placed central themes with my phenomenological comments in a numbered boxes for 'ready reference'
10. I wrote a succinct sub-narrative of the individual's experience of the phenomenon
11. I wrote a descriptive sub-narrative of the individual's experience relating to the interpretive theme/s selected

**Stage Two of Transcript Analysis: Commence Nomothetic Mode**

1. I collated the succinct sub-narratives and interpretive themes
2. I drew a concept map of the points at which the interpretive themes interconnect with the phenomenon of meaning change
3. I used a formula (frequency x intensity = priority) to rank interpretive themes in order of importance
4. Around the prioritized interpretive themes I collated lesser interpretive themes in such a way that they naturally 'augmented' and 'fed into' them. The resulting meta-themes I called 'explicative themes' (see below)
5. I reflected on my own experience of the interpretive themes and made relevant notes. I reflected on my reading of the relevant literature relating to prioritized interpretive themes, and located critical sources
6. The 'explicative themes' form the penultimate stage of the explicatory method used in this research, and three such themes are placed at the end of each chapter
7. In order to arrive at the explicative themes I placed myself within the phenomenological attitude to allow a 'putting out of action' of what I thought I already knew about the topic, and I began a process of creative writing using a process of 'free variation' in order to multiply possibilities
8. I drew on my own experience of the phenomena and references in the literature, in order to re-formulate my creative writing into a useful piece of phenomenological description which sought to capture the invariant structure of the interpretive theme identified in relation to the phenomenon
9. Finally, from the explicative themes at the end of each chapter, I continued the process of distillation into one final phenomenological description at the conclusion of the research, which seeks to name the essential structures of the experience of transformation and meaning change in the context of Christian religious conversion.

The research key which I developed during the explication of the pilot studies and later
developed into its mature form sought to isolate and highlight themes and experiences which continued to recur in respondents' transcripts. As I progressed I saw the potential for 'sorting' the data into the categories I had selected and placed in the research key by means of my existing computer software.

**Research Key:**

1. **Pre-Conversion:**
   - 1.1 childhood/upbringing
   - 1.2 specific events recalled
   - 1.3 search for meaning/truth
   - 1.4 encounters with Church/God/Bible
   - 1.5 important people/influences
   - 1.6 lifestyle elements
   - 1.7 marriage and family
   - 1.8 sense of self
   - 1.9 beliefs about God and world

2. **Conversion Event:**
   - 2.1 period of preparation
   - 2.2 life-issues
   - 2.3 contact with Bible/Church/Christians
   - 2.4 repentance and sin
   - 2.5 encounters with God/Jesus/Holy Spirit
   - 2.6 self-awareness
   - 2.7 changes of any kind
   - 2.8 sense of self

3. **Post-Conversion:**
   - 3.1 changed actions
   - 3.2 changed attitudes
   - 3.3 changed beliefs
   - 3.4 sin and repentance
   - 3.5 work/family/friends
   - 3.6 perceived benefits
   - 3.7 particular issues/events
   - 3.8 God/Jesus/Church/Holy Spirit
   - 3.9 Bible/prayer/revelation
   - 3.10 bodily sensation: emotion, sensation, posture, time
   - 3.11 sense of evil
   - 3.12 awareness and perception of change

4. **Issues for the Co-Researcher:**
5. **Special: to be Developed Later:**

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7. Categories 4 and 5 were areas of special concern for which no correlation with other elements was immediately obvious. These categories were designed so that dedicated time could be given at a later stage to developing their significance and explicating them further.
There is not room here to give an example of the process through which a transcript was taken in order for it to arrive at its final phenomenological shape. See Volume 2, Appendix B for an example of a single respondent's transcript which has been fully explicated using this method.

4.8 Introduction to Co-Participants:

Each participant is identified by their first or given name. Where appropriate this will be followed by their denomination and their age. I have chosen to use this method in order to protect the identities of the participants because of the confidential nature of the material divulged in the interviews, and yet make certain the reader is aware of which respondent is being referred to. The denominations into which participants were converted were Roman Catholic (RC), Anglican (Ang), Baptist (Bap), Churches of Christ (CoC), Vineyard (Vin), Independent Charismatic Church (ICC), and Assemblies of God (AOG). An example of one co-participant's 'tag' is AnneRC21 (Anne, who is a Roman Catholic, and is 21 years of age). I have taken care to present respondents' actual words within quotation marks as a way of ensuring that the reader is in no doubt about which 'voice' is speaking. In each case the statement indicated has its origin in the transcripts of the participant (located in the Appendices in Volume 2).

AnneRC21 Biographical Introduction: Anne comes from a nominal Protestant family. As a girl she attended Sunday School. After leaving high school she resided away from home with a household of young people who encouraged her to take drugs. As a 19 year old she returned to high school to qualify for university entrance. She characterized her life at that time as being "mixed up." She had an anxiety disorder. Anne says of her belief about God, "I believed in God as the old man on the cloud judging me." At high school Anne met a number of practicing Christians, including J—, whose life so impressed her that she began to reflect on the meaning of her own life. Anne decided to get her life cleaned up as a way of preparing to present herself to God. She says of herself, "before I came back to the Church I had given up smoking, I wasn't
drinking, I wasn’t taking drugs, and I was celibate.” She now read the Bible and developed a meaningful prayer life. She read Lewis’s *Mere Christianity* and experienced a deepening interest in the Christian faith. Anne began attending a Catholic Church. When she experienced the rich symbolism of the Mass, she felt she had “come home.” Anne was inducted into the Catholic faith at Easter, 1998.

**AnneRC21 Conversion Narrative:**

Anne’s dissatisfaction with her life prompted her to “be open to change.” “I wasn’t comfortable with my life. I didn’t have anything to lose.” Meeting J—caused Anne to consider the option of becoming a saint herself. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity* described in practical terms ‘how’ one became a saint. Despite being “embarrassed” by Christians, Anne developed the disciplines of Bible reading and prayer which opened up a new world. She noticed that her image of God was changing from the angry and judgmental old man in the clouds, to a more fatherly figure who dealt with her in a patient, gracious and merciful way. She developed a “love relationship” with Jesus, whom she felt to have died for her sins. She reports herself as being “guided by grace”; and as being “awakened” from her previous life as if from a bad dream. She stated, “I wanted [God] for myself.”


**CynthiaBap29: Biographical Introduction:** For Cynthia’s family, religion was a matter of good morals. Her father was Catholic, her mother was Anglican. She went to Sunday School, and attended Religious Education at school. She didn’t “think about God” as she grew up. Following her marriage and the birth of their second son, Cynthia experienced post-natal depression and was prescribed medication. Her relationship with her husband was strained and she wasn’t “managing” in her emotional life. For a family-oriented person, a capable mother and wife, the development alarmed her. Life didn’t make sense any more and the old
equilibrium had been upset. Her son invited her to Church and she went. She appreciated the
care of the Church people, and grew to know about and to love God. Subsequent to her
conversion, Cynthia began an active prayer life. She prays alone in her bedroom at home, and
in mid-week prayer and Bible study meetings. She finds it difficult to attend meetings because
her husband is not a Christian. Cynthia believes herself to be a non-reflective person who lives
in the “present moment”, and who also believes herself to be a “feeling” rather than a thinking
person. It is these “feelings” which demonstrated to her the reality of God’s presence within her
life, and brought a sense of wellbeing and meaning to her existence. Cynthia “hadn’t realized
he was such a forgiving God”, and reports that she now thinks about God all the time.

CynthiaBap29 Conversion Narrative: She commenced a Bible study with the Pastor’s wife, and
at the end of 8 weeks was asked to sign her name as an act of commitment to God. She resisted.
When asked the question, “What would it take for you to make a decision [to believe]?”,
Cynthia reflected quietly. She didn’t want a miracle, but did want a sign from God that he was
real. Within weeks her parents moved to Perth without telling her, and she decided that was the
sign she needed. She signed the Commitment Card which read, “I now commit myself
completely to Jesus Christ my Savior, and will follow Him as Lord, in the fellowship of His
Church”, and dates her conversion at Easter, 1996.
The interpretive themes I discuss in relation to Cynthia are: ‘feelings of faith’, ‘transformation
of the God-image’, ‘attitude to suffering’, ‘service as expression of faith’, ‘Bible reading’, ‘life of
prayer’, and ‘non-christian spouse’.

GregICC27 Biographical Introduction: Greg remembers no religious instruction from his
parents. During primary school a teacher taught the class to pray the Lord’s Prayer. He
received lessons from a Postal Sunday School for ten years. He attended an Anglican Grammar
school which required compulsory Chapel attendance. He heard sermons but “slept through
them.” He described himself as being “insecure” and “an uptight, legalistic, not a very attractive
person.” He was an avid reader of science fiction books, and collected a large amount of
Arthur C. Clark literature. He states he had a "science fiction worldview." At University many of his friends were Christian. One of them donated $2000 to a Christian cause; this impressed him. After graduation Greg began working for a law firm. His goal was to become wealthy and drive a Mercedes. He worked long hours, hoping to retain his job. When his employers informed him he was "unsuitable"; Greg took this to mean "unsuitable as a lawyer and as a person." He was devastated and felt "terribly (x 2) miserable." His girlfriend left at this time which gave him feelings of "abject emptiness and brokeness." He had reached "rock bottom."

GregICC27: Conversion Narrative: Soon after the announcement of his redundancy Greg made a decision to rebuild his life. He located books by Norman Vincent Peale, whose advice was to read the Bible every day and underline the word "faith." Greg began but soon forgot to underline and was reading the Bible on a daily basis. Greg began attending a small Christian study group where he saw a young woman make a profession of faith. He became aware of the possibility and necessity of conversion. A member of the cell group prayed that Greg would "have a core of joy." Greg suddenly realized that no matter what happened he would "always have this core of joy." God spoke specifically to him, and he "knew that Jesus was God, which gave him a real face." During a season of deep reflection and prayer, Greg experienced what he calls a "Holy Spirit baptism", which for him involved the death of his old self, and a complete surrendering to God.

The interpretive themes I have discussed in relation Greg are: 'devastation of lifeworld', 'unexpected discovery', 'spiritual insight', 'being counselled', 'the disciplines of faith', 'an altered worldview', and 'ministry and mission'.

JamieAOG27 Biographical Narrative: Jamie's mother professed a Christian faith but his father did not. His relationship with his non-identical twin brother was close but competitive. He blamed his mother for "loving him more than me." During his high school years Jamie developed a rebellious attitude and mixed with youths who experimented with drugs. University years for Jamie were all about drugs and girlfriends. One girlfriend noted Jamie's
unhappiness and advised him to “make the decision to be happy, you’ve got to want to change.” Jamie reports an inward struggle with his “brokenness”, his “pain” and his dissatisfaction with life. He “hated himself” for his low self-esteem. When he was 18 he desired “a job that pays me over $30,000 a year, the drugs, the sex, the booze, and a girlfriend who loved me.” Yet he increasingly asked the question, “What is the meaning of my life?” and said, “There must be more to life than this!” He says he was addicted to pornography and hated himself because he “didn’t have the power to change.”

**JamieAOG27 Conversion Narrative:** The catalyst for Jamie’s conversion was a night of drug-taking at a nightclub, surrounded by friends. Under the influence of drugs he experienced for the first time a dramatic sense of paranoia, where feelings of fear, terror and evil surrounded him. He cried out in terror. Subsequent to the event he says, “I got snapped in half by God, broken in half.” He reports being aware of the presence of God as a source of rescue and salvation, and thinking to himself, “turn back to God!” The next morning he spoke to his girlfriend saying, “Would you believe I have just become a God-fearer?” Jamie believes that was the moment of his conversion. He remembers the date as June 29, 1998. He made a list of 7 things he was going to do, including ceasing his drug use, to stop disobeying God, and to stop wrecking his life. That morning (a Sunday morning) he spoke with his mother saying, “Mum I just want to give my life back to God.”

The interpretive themes I discuss in relation to Jamie are: ‘fear of death and judgement’, ‘the need for a saviour’, ‘transformation of the God-image’, ‘renewing of the mind’, ‘the communicability of faith’, ‘the fire of the spirit’, and ‘change in world-image’.

**JaniceVine38 Biographical Narrative:** Janice was one of 7 children. Her parents separated when she was 9, and her mother left the family soon after. She became surrogate mother to the other children, and cared for her alcoholic father. She says “it was very hard.” She had her first baby at 18. She says of herself, “I’ve always felt no matter what I do, its no good.” Janice and her husband have 6 children. They were heavy users of alcohol and drugs; she called herself an
“addict.” They experienced marital difficulties and Janice was a victim of domestic violence. Janice brought 5 of her children (ages 20 to 6) to Perth to “make a new start.” She began frequenting a cafe which provided her with low cost meals. The people who ran the cafe were from the Vineyard Church. A team of YWAM missionaries ran activities for children from that same church, and several of her children attended. During the Christmas holidays of 1998 her daughter (aged 10) came home shouting, “I've become a Christian (x 2).” This sparked Janice’s interest. She began attending the YWAM programs and became friendly with two of the young women on the team. She asked questions, and they visited her regularly. Up to this time, Janice says she had “always believed that there was a God” but that “he couldn’t help us.” She thought a Christian was a “Bible basher”, someone who “talked about God all the time” and “couldn’t have a conversation like a normal person.”

JaniceVine38 Conversion Narrative: Several months after attending Church, the Pastor preached a sermon and Janice “felt God’s presence, like something just lifted me up.” She said, “like something had come over me.” She assigned its meaning to the presence of the Holy Spirit. She was standing, looking up at the words of a hymn, and singing. The sensation she had was like “making a new start in my life”, where “all the weight lifted off my shoulders, I knew I had no more worries, that God was there for me.” She had been having a “few problems” at that time, but felt that “God helped me sort them out.” She knew everything would be all right and “decided that I wanted to become a Christian; I wanted to change my life.”


MarkAng45 Biographical Narrative: Mark was an only child, whose parents were divorced. The family were not religious in any way. He experienced a religious encounter at age 12 in the company of friends. They went, for fun, into a community hall where a Pentecostal mission was under way. The boys were called to the front for prayer, and each of them were “slain in the
Mark called it “an amazing experience.” At age 21 he attended a number of Catholic charismatic services where he subsequently made a religious commitment. The commitment dissipated through a “lack of support.” Mark then began in earnest to search for the “truth”, exploring the Buddhist and Hindu faiths. Now married and experiencing marital conflict, Mark suggested Church-attendance could provide a possible solution. His wife began attending a local Anglican Church. She and the Rector invited Mark to church. For six months he listened to Bible reading and preaching, and commenced reading the Bible for himself. Mark was surprised to encounter a merciful and relational God who expressed through the Bible a disarming interest in Mark. Through reading the Bible he learned of the personal existence of God, and the possibility of forgiveness of sins and a direct relationship with God through faith in Christ.

**MarkAng45 Conversion Narrative:** The moment of Mark’s decision to become a Christian was quiet and unobtrusive. The date was March 15, 1998. He recalls the moment clearly as he “laid everything on the line” before God. He renounced his past life and friends as “totally worthless”, and gladly embraced the godly life. He was sitting at home alone praying. He began weeping and experienced a raised heart rate. Spiritually, some kind of act of commitment and relational “knowing” took place. He felt himself to be a “real sinner”; but “when he [God] converted me all of a sudden I became a changed person.” Soon afterwards, he said to his wife while reading the Bible, “listen to this, this is absolutely spot on and totally true.”

The interpretive themes I will discuss in relation to Mark are: ‘questing after truth’, ‘separation from past life’, ‘the call of holiness’, ‘life of prayer’, ‘weeping as a religious act’, ‘witnessing to faith’, and ‘the sanity of believing’.

**SamanthaCoC19, Biographical Narrative:** Samantha grew up in a Church-going family. In her early teens she attended a Christian youth group, and briefly a Christian school. Her parents

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8. They fell unconscious on the floor under the influence of the Spirit. ‘Slaying in the Spirit’ continues to be practiced by Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Australia today.
moved towards “New Age” belief. She experienced rejection from her family, and said, “The sense of hurt was horrible.” She says of her later teenage years, “I wasn’t a complete person; there were lots of voids in my heart from my friends and family.” She used illicit drugs, alcohol and “slept around.” These didn’t meet the inner needs of her real self, and she felt there must be something else in life to answer the problem of her unhappiness. The theme of “desperation” is underlined by her repeated use of the word (x 11). It stemmed from a sense of worthlessness, guilt and not belonging anywhere. “I just felt worthless”, and she “felt I needed God.” Before her conversion, Sam believed God existed, but was distant and inaccessible. “I used to think he was an angry God and that he would try and punish everyone.”

SamanthaCoC19 Conversion Narrative: Despite Christianity feeling “weird”, Samantha commenced attending a local Church on the invitation of a friend. For two months she heard the Christian message and began reading the Bible for herself. Initially the record of Jesus was just an “interesting story” without reference to her life. “Jesus”, she says, “was doing some cool stuff ... I didn’t find it truthful then.” But the “more I read the Bible and the more I prayed the more I realized it was true.” She felt God speaking to her through answered prayer and a series of coincidences. At a Church meeting an evangelist’s words “just hit home” to her and she began to take the Christian gospel seriously. She said she “wanted to believe” it, because she felt that God had healed her broken heart. She returned home to her bedroom where she prayed in a kneeling posture. She gave God an ultimatum, “I have to know tonight or that’s it!” and “show yourself to me!” She describes the moment of conversion as God “touching her” in a series of “burning” sensations when she “felt his presence.” “I was complete, he [had] filled all the gaps, all the holes in my heart and in my mind and I became a complete person.” The interpretive themes I will discuss in relation to Samantha are: ‘the desperation for relief’, ‘the burning of the spirit’, ‘healing and restoration’, ‘freedom from past guilt’, ‘transformation of consciousness’, ‘an energetic seeker’, and ‘racism as an unresolved theme’.
Initially I identified 49 interpretive themes which offered themselves as nodal reference points in the experiences of participants and invited further explication and interpretation. These were further distilled into 44 interpretive themes through several themes being placed together, such as 'service as expression of faith' being placed with the more prominent theme of 'acts of worship and service', and 'the communicability of faith' was placed with 'witnessing to faith'. Two further interpretive themes were added to provide a voice to other emergent themes which I felt were present in respondents' reports but were not represented in the existing interpretive themes; these were 'world as passing away', and 'conversion'. The adjusted interpretive themes were then sorted into related headings and assigned to one of the chapters which form the substance of the explication process in chapters 5 to 9. In simplified form chapters 5 to 9 are headed, The World (chapter 5), The Self (chapter 6), The Christian Religious Tradition (chapter 7), God or The Sacred (chapter 8), and The Mind in Christian Conversion (chapter 9). In the tabled diagram which follows, each chapter is laid out under its heading and the interpretive themes which comprise the substance of that chapter's research interests are also listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5—WORLD</th>
<th>Chapter 6—SELF</th>
<th>Chapter 7—TRADITION</th>
<th>Chapter 8—THE SACRED</th>
<th>Chapter 9—MIND IN CONVERSION</th>
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<td>world as passing away</td>
<td>desperation for relief</td>
<td>Bible as agent of faith</td>
<td>transformation of God-image (x4)</td>
<td>knowing and not knowing</td>
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<td>change in world-image</td>
<td>devastation of lifeworld</td>
<td>manifestation of godliness</td>
<td>God as underwriter of existence</td>
<td>altered state of consciousness</td>
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<td>fear of being judged</td>
<td>fear of death and judgement</td>
<td>being in community</td>
<td>the call of holiness</td>
<td>altered worldview</td>
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<td>attitude to suffering</td>
<td>making new beginnings</td>
<td>conversion</td>
<td>being lifted up</td>
<td>spiritual insight</td>
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<td>being counselled</td>
<td>questing after truth</td>
<td>authentic religion (x2)</td>
<td>life of prayer</td>
<td>renewing of the mind</td>
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<td>non-believing spouse</td>
<td>energetic seeker</td>
<td>unexpected discovery</td>
<td>weeping as religious act</td>
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<td>racism as an unresolved theme</td>
<td>separation from past life</td>
<td>becoming informed</td>
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<td>freedom from guilt</td>
<td>ministry and mission</td>
<td>fire of the spirit</td>
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<td>healing and restoration</td>
<td>witnessing to faith</td>
<td>need for a Saviour</td>
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<td>acts of worship and service</td>
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<td>feelings of faith</td>
<td>strangeness of Christianity</td>
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Diagram 3: 44 interpretive themes sorted into five chapters.9

4.9 Summary and Conclusion:

This chapter has had the practical purpose of discussing the method I have used in order to undertake a phenomenological analysis of participants' transcripts. I have discussed the selection criteria for participants, and introduced the research key I developed as the transcript analysis method applied throughout the research. I have introduced each of the seven participants, using the format of biographical introduction, conversion narrative and the list of seven interpretive themes. Those interpretive themes will form the substance of Chapters 5 to 9 which follow.

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9. It will be noted that for Chapter 8, the Sacred, two figures are indicated thus, (x4) and (x2). These indicate the number of occurrences which these themes find in respondent's transcripts, and therefore represent themes of some importance.
SECTION 2: PHENOMENOLOGY as APPLIED to RESPONDENTS’ SELF-REPORTS.

Chapter 5: The World as the Contexture for Meaning Change: The Making of a New World.

Introduction:

Previous chapters have addressed one of three components central to this dissertation: the Christian religious tradition, meaning change at religious conversion, or phenomenology as a science of consciousness. This chapter and the four which follow it will incorporate each of these components into a three-fold strand, applying a phenomenological explication to the experiences of people who have converted to the Christian religious tradition, and have acquired new religious knowledge as a result. Thus these next five chapters form a new and distinct section of the research. I have now moved beyond a historical overview, beyond a literature review, and beyond issues of methodology (as discussed in chapters 1 to 4), into the heart of the dissertation.

In this chapter I will begin to articulate what the dissertation has been striving toward from the beginning, namely to explicate the self-reports of respondents' to this research relating to their experiences of meaning change in Christian conversion. This chapter is entitled 'The world as the contexture for meaning change: making a new world', and addresses the following interpretive themes: 'change in world-image'; 'the world as passing away'; 'fear of being judged'; 'being counselled'; 'non-believing spouse'; 'racism as an unresolved theme'; and 'attitude to suffering'.

Procedural Remarks:

What follows in this chapter is a series of exploratory discussions which seek to address the experiences of respondents under the headings referred to above, drawn from the Interpretive Themes outlined in chapter four. My intention here is to provide a description of respondents' responses to those catalytic forces which caused them to come to an end-of-themselves and to consider taking a religious solution to their problems, rather than continuing to seek answers out of their own repertoire of possibilities. Out of those responses I
seek to make apparent the 'disclosures' which lay hidden and concealed in respondents' comments to their physical circumstances, in order to uncover structures and intentionalities which reside there.

My method in proceeding in this and following chapters will be as follows. First, I will provide a simple description of the original events of selected interpretive themes from respondents' transcripts. Second, I will explore the lived experience of respondents by stating what were the primary elements of the performative experiences involved in those interpretive themes. Third, I will seek to uncover the structures of the phenomenon in the mind of the knower as consciousness 'of' its object, thus highlighting the relationship between the noema and noesis. Fourth, I will seek to uncover the essence/s within the noetic and noematic field, taking into account the situated-self within its lifeworld. At selected points, where I think it possible and necessary, I will attempt to carry out the eidetic reduction in an attempt to reveal the underlying intentional structures. Fifth, I will seek to understand and name the meaning of the encounter between the experiencer and the phenomenon as a 'moment' of transcendental knowing within the religious experiencer, of his or her own knowledge, and of the role of the metaphysical in their life-worlds.

This approach seeks to elicit responses which will directly address the research question: 'What changes in belief, attitude and action; relating to God, self and world; took place before, during and after conversion?' It also seeks to allow for a discursive and 'imaginative' approach to respondents' self-reports, in keeping with Husserl's program of free variation as a primary method of the phenomenological methodology. This method of proceeding is typical of writing which is properly phenomenological, and I cite Ernest Hocking's use of 'free meditations' in his *The meaning of God in human experience* (1912) as an example of the process of free variation and its benefits in un-packing a particular phenomenon from the natural attitude in which it discloses itself, into its more stratified essential features while retaining its proper linkage with its originating occurrence. In undertaking this approach my purpose is to remain with the phenomenological project of description and exploration rather than prescription and explanation, in an attempt to arrive
finally at a rhetorical representation of the essential character and meaning of a particular facet of human experience in religious episodal performance.

This chapter, based around the physical setting of the earth and converts' experiences of conversion 'within' its boundaries, is the most mundane of the four chapters in Section 3, in the sense that it addresses that which provides the overall horizon or contexture within which individuals find themselves. As was indicated at the commencement of chapter two where no specific definition of 'mind' was given, no specific definition of 'world' will be provided here, in an intentional move to 'listen' to the ways in which respondents define their own existence in the midst of the outward, textural, concrete meta-world. The notion of 'mundane' is intended to convey the idea of what is profane, or farthest away from that which is sacred. Nevertheless, phenomenologically speaking, the world as that which provides the contexture or genetic environment for the embodied human experiencer, necessarily retains its place. This is so because phenomenology insists on the relational and contextural components of a phenomena including its originative context and its horizons as being essential to the hermeneutical process of deriving meaning. This is one important reason for my inclusion of the sometimes long and arduous overview of the literature and history of the Christian religious tradition's appropriation of the instrument of conversion in chapter 1, and the acquisition of mind—normative and religious—in chapter 2. Any assessment of conversion and the development of a radically new vision of reality—religious, phenomenological or otherwise—is, in my view, simply meaningless without the inclusion of the proper context to which the subject in question belongs. The essential nature of context in the admission of meaning is discussed by Byrne as follows:

The key idea from Wittgenstein operative in the moral interpreters of religious language such as D.Z. Phillips and Stewart Sutherland is contextualism about meaning. Wittgenstein's slogan to the effect that the meaning of a word is its use in the language is taken to imply that to uncover the sense of a term we should find and explore the contexts in which it is used. Meaning is rooted in contexts of employment (1998: 127).

Thus discussion of contemporary conversion and its operations in the psyche of converts is
dependent on the ways in which that function has been understood historically and within the scholarly literature of that sub-tradition. That is also true of the human subject; it requires a proper contexture in which its existence takes its shape and the meaning of which finds its significance. Thus the world as a penumbra of physical co-incidences in which human subjects ‘nestle’ within the alien universe and find their comfortability, provides the first clue to what meanings are possible in the experience of a religious believer and how those meanings are structured. The world therefore must provide the point of departure in addressing changed meanings in the context of religious conversion.

(1) Change in world-image:

In his teenage and early adult life Jamie conceived of the world as his playground, as the place where he could exercise his right to form his own identity and choose his destiny. He experimented with drugs and participated in a series of intimate romantic liaisons. He obtained employment with an accounting firm and earned a generous income. He understood the world as a physical realm filled with social spaces where no moral restraint was necessary. His mother's words "your sins will find you out" provided a recurrent edge-figure motif which bit at his conscience. Over time Jamie acquired an ability to shut-down the voice of his conscience and listened instead to the voices of his bodily appetites and his peers. The physical universe for Jamie was like an empty continent, a *terra nullius* which existed as an arena in which he could fulfill his desires. His only concern with the world was for his own personal happiness.

But immediately prior to his conversion Jamie came to believe he was being corrupted by malevolent forces within the world from which he needed protection. Although he believed God had created the world, the world had since become degenerate and God was about to judge it and bring it to a cataclysmic end. Jamie came to believe, through reading the Bible and his experience of conversion, that the antidote to the burgeoning evil within the world was the Christian gospel, as illustrated by his statement, “I think we're sitting on the greatest secret in the known universe.” Thus for Jamie a radical shift within his world-image had taken place. No
longer was the cosmos a neutral object, simply ‘there’\(^1\) and available as the horizontal backdrop to his Dionysian lifestyle. No longer was it the immovable and permanent *boudoir*, the antechamber which served as the arena for his personal revelry. Now it took on a sinister texture as the place where evil displayed itself; where a battle for his soul was taking place, whose outcome was the potential loss of his eternal soul. The world began to take on the appearance of the apotheosis of everything evil. Against the boundless possibilities and potentials of his human freedom, Jamie sensed an unsettling impression that there was real opposition to his existence and a kind of spiritual decay which sought to erode and resist his existence. This was not because God’s creational fiat was inadequate or because beauty was lacking in the natural order. It was because he believed the non-material world of human institutions and social intercourse had been co-opted by the devil for his own sinister and destructive purposes. Jamie experienced his existence as subsiding into a malaise of evil and despair, which God now offered to redeem, restore and repair.

(2) The world as passing away:

Jamie experienced a fundamental dissatisfaction with his life in the world. His tendency to rebel against the good and his love of mischief caused him to wonder about his own existence, in the same way that Augustine’s stealing pears (1983: 47) began to unveil the nature of his own corrupted heart through a form of reflexive self-revelation. Following the theft, Augustine sensed an increased level of guilt, anxiety and unhappiness in his life. Despite the initial enjoyment of his sin, over time his conscience became rankled and he came to see that what he loved most was not the fruit but the act of deception, the secret knowledge that the deed had been committed. It made him miserable. It was not that evil was a material force, as in Manicheaism; he came to believe it resided as a destructive force within his own being. Similarly, Jamie saw clearly his shortcomings\(^2\) and understood them as unsatisfactory before

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2. Cf. Romans 7:19, “What I do is not the good I want to do no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.”
the bar of his conscience. It caused him to believe that this world as he presently conceived and experienced it was 'not enough'; that something more ideal and fulfilling must lie beyond. He began to question the ontological integrity of the universe and his own existence within it.

On becoming a 'believing soul' (Westphal, 1984: xi) through conversion, Jamie was exposed through preaching, public worship and Bible reading to the cosmology of the Christian belief system and its relegation of the place of the world to a limited place within the broad sweep of salvation-history. He came to understand that God was about to announce judgment on the world in keeping with the teaching of 2 Peter 2 in which the 'corruptedness' of sinful humanity provoked God's impending judgment; “The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (2 Peter 3:10). He read that Jesus' kingdom did not belong to this world (John 18:36), that friendship with the world means becoming an enemy of God (1 John 2: 15-17); and that the saints and holy ones of old perceived themselves as aliens and strangers in the world (Hebrews 11:13). By their persecution, suffering, abstinence and rejection of the world and its values, the saints of earlier times condemned and overcame it.

This cosmological pessimism was not total however. Jamie came to believe that the destruction of the corrupted heaven and earth was in order to make way for a re-created 'new heaven and a new earth' (2 Peter 3:13). He believed this new cosmic structure was intended by God to provide a 'home of righteousness' for those who live godly lives and anticipate the appearance of the 'day of God'. Rather, Jamie's pessimism related to his unpreparedness to continue living in that kind of a world. He discovered that world to be impermanent, passing away and soon-to-be-made redundant by a new act of divine fiat designed to replace it with the kind of world he would want to reside in as a saint. There is an optimism in Jamie then, which relates to God's restorative program for the world and his belief that he would himself one day be included within that process of restoration.

(3) Fear of being judged:

Janice was confronted by a different kind of world to the one Jamie imagined. In her
responses she presented herself as residing within a social contexture where people tended to
make social classifications, such as might be found in a tightly classified social system. In a
world delimited by social classification and peoples' attitudes to her, Janice was particularly
sensitive to her 'place' within it. Peoples' valuing or de-valuing of her (depending on where
they placed her within their classification schema) affected how she viewed herself. Janice
always had a suspicion that the way she spoke, the way she dressed, and the way she appeared
demonstrated to those around her that she belonged to a lower order of classification. Her
awkward grammar, her missing teeth and her limited wardrobe told their own story. She feared
that people would "judge" her;³ she stated, "I used to be afraid of people judging me and things
like that; but I'm not anymore."

Her biggest fear on attending church for the first time was that people would judge her.
This fatalistic perception of judgment included the likelihood that God would examine her life
and find it wanting, that she would be inadequate in some way and would fall short of his
expectation and requirement. Janice fully expected that God would in some way be displeased
with her. To her surprise she discovered that she was not judged at Church. One of the greatest
joys Janice experienced at Church was that people did not judge or condemn her. She felt
included and loved despite her acknowledgement that she was different from them.

For Janice, the realm of the social world was an impasse, an arduous passage through
which she found it difficult to maneuver. She knew a disclosure was being given to others
through her modalities of presentation; her personal history, her speech and appearance. She
recognized that her status before most 'others' was that of a marginal being whose gestural
presentation within the world 'gave away' the clue to that of which she was most ashamed,
namely her poor education and her difficult early life. This being-in-the-presence-of-the-other
elicited from Janice an intersubjective awareness of their knowledge-of-her and also thematized
her own apperceptive elaboration of herself as a lesser being, a social outcast, someone who
was not suitable for membership amongst people of taste and intelligence. To her surprise
however, she encountered members of the community of faith she began attending as open,

³ Janice used the word "judge" or its derivatives (judging, judged, judgment) 13 times in her transcript.
welcoming and non-judgmental. Better still, she encountered God as one whose mercy and justice looked beyond her own standards of culturally-engendered values to ascribe her not as an alien, but as a member of his household.

(4) Being counselled:

Greg acknowledged his sense of inadequacy and poor self-esteem. He made his way tentatively through high school and university aspiring to the acceptance and approbation of his peers and superiors. On becoming a believing soul Greg sought the counsel and wisdom of older Christians as to whether he should see his former girlfriend again. Later, on arriving in Japan as a lawyer he became friendly with a missionary couple in his church. He shared Bible studies with them and received their counsel regarding his spiritual development. When it came time for him to leave Japan to return to Australia for Bible College training, he felt these friends were not sensitive to his needs and he became angry with them. He felt he was placed in a compromising tension between meeting the expectations of these and other groups of friends. Being compromised in that way "rocked" him and made him begin to rely on his own judgment rather than to accept naively the advice of so-called "mature Christians." He began to see the necessity to listen to his own inner wisdom and meet his own needs rather than to surrender passively to those social forces in the world who were older, wiser and better than himself, simply because they assumed the role of counsellors.

On joining a missionary society and planning to return to Japan as a Christian missionary, Greg was required to attend a professional Christian counsellor because the Mission representatives had assessed him as having "boy-girl problems" and being susceptible to stress. At first Greg resented having to attend but after the counselling sessions he changed his attitude toward the counsellor and counselling in general, because he had learned so much about himself and learned new self-management skills. He now recommended counselling to everyone he met. Greg's initial attitude to counselling appears to be that it was a worldly and not a "spiritual" activity; that to submit to counselling was unnecessary, as God could be expected to resolve any difficulties Greg might have as an "automatic" result of Greg's
becoming his servant. Yet on submitting to the process of counselling he learned of its benefits to himself, and through his experience, the potential of others benefiting also. He came to see it as a spiritual exercise necessary for the growing spiritual disciple.

There is something here under the guise of the physiognomic appearances of Greg's experiences of being counselled which speaks of the 'other'. Like Janice, Greg experienced himself in the presence of the 'other' as less-than, as someone whose existence was inferior, subservient and subordinate to the 'other'. For Greg the way toward social approbation was through self-improvement, as attested by his penchant for Norman Vincent Peale and the literature of the self-help movement, and as elaborated by his persistent submission in the counselling setting. The truth being unveiled here in the intentional constitution of Greg's own-self is the idea of the self-in-the-presence-of-the-other as conceiving of itself as a minimal self; as 'less-than' the 'other'. Here we have the self in comparison with other selves and in competition with other beings. The outcome for both Janice and Greg was a form of false-consciousness which constituted itself around an ideal-type of an imaginary perfect being to which the existence of the 'others' measured-up, but their own existence did not. Greg overcame his false-consciousness in order to listen to his own inner-wisdom and to seek counsel and assistance from sources which proved to provide a positive influence in his life, including the counsel provided by faith. This movement unveils the arising of an inner knowledge which is informed and shaped by religious belief, in the consciousness of the believing soul.

(5) Non-believing spouse:

Cynthia's closest relationship in all the world was with her husband. Yet because she had become a Christian and he had not, a sense of strain developed between them. At first he was very supportive of her new faith because he could see that she was a "happier person." He was the first person Cynthia told about her conversion. She felt nervous and embarrassed as she described her experiences of conversion to him. However as she began to spend more time at Church, she reported, "I turned my attention away from him... because I've re-focused my
sole attention on Jesus." The outcome was that her husband began to resent her involvement in
the Church. This was despite the fact that he knew the minister and there was no suspicion of
the Baptist Church being a "cult." Cynthia felt obliged to be somewhat "secretive" about her
faith. She described her husband as likely to be "uncomfortable" in church, because he had
previous "bad experiences" in church. More than anything else, Cynthia wanted her husband to
become a Christian because she believed the entire family would be happier if they had a
common foundation of faith. In the meantime she learned to limit her time at Church in order
to maintain harmony at home. She felt unable to talk about her faith to her husband, so she
spoke instead with her eldest son telling him about her belief that "God would always be with
you" and "he will always help you."

For Cynthia, the emotional and physical bond to her husband as her closest human
relationship was held in abeyance in the light of the transformation she had experienced in her
encounter with God and subsequent conversion. This new relationship was something entirely
new and compelling; it was to be valued even above those relationships she valued in the
human world. The subversion of her conjugal relationship was a recognition that in itself the
human-human relationship in marriage was inadequate to meet her inner longings for healing
and re-composure in the midst of her depression after the birth of her second son. Cynthia
sought out the healing potential within the human-Divine relationship as a quiescent but
potent source of strength which was able to meet the inward longings of her soul and bring
about a salutogenic resolution to her depression. Cynthia's secrecy at home concerning her
faith was not a denial of the place her husband held in her life; rather it was a recognition of
her need for a season of adjustment as she learned more about her new faith and constituted
herself within the role of a neophyte disciple within the faith community. Essentially it was an
interval during which she was learning to integrate her new faith-identity with previous
commitments within the larger world.

(6) Racism as an unresolved theme:

Prior to her conversion Samantha had been beaten up by an Aboriginal girl at school.
She continues to harbor anger and ill-feeling toward the particular girl and her race following the incident. Samantha still "gets scared" and "has a lot of fear" when she meets Aboriginal people. She reported the issue of racism to be the main un-resolved issue following her conversion. She stated, "That's something that's really hard; I know that every one of us is God's child and so when I let these racist comments slip about Aboriginals, or Asians for that matter, I bite my tongue because I know that's not right." She doesn't think she was a "hopeless racist" before or after her conversion, but the issue is significantly thematized by her strong memories of the incident and the on-going tensions she continues to feel toward Aboriginal people.

Samantha’s experience of victimization by an Aboriginal girl prior to her conversion brings into the foreground several key themes. The first is her own ethnic origins. She was born in New Zealand and is of distant Maori descent. While she is aware of her kinship lineage, she perceives herself as an 'Australian'. The second is the tension she experiences as a result of the incident which continues to remain with her as an 'absent presence'; something which actively provokes a response of anger, frustration and fear within her. The third is her recognition that racism is wrong on the basis of Jesus’ teaching concerning the necessity to love one’s enemies (Matthew 5:44) and to love one’s neighbor (Matthew 22:39). Samantha fully agrees with these teachings but continues to wrestle inwardly whenever she meets Aboriginal people. In part, her conversion has increased this tension because now she recognizes the unity of all humankind as "God’s children" and has to reconcile the equanimity of God’s love for both herself and her Aboriginal neighbors.

Despite her negative experience Samantha feels that Jesus’ teaching requires her to forgive her Aboriginal assailant and to treat her as an equal, on the basis that God shows no favoritism and treats both assailant and victim as equally worthy of forgiveness and entry into his kingdom. The significance of the mundane world with its exigencies and crises for the transmission of the presence of the sacred is made paramount. The world—with its appearances of evil and opposition to the saint—remains the locale within which the believing soul must work out its salvation “with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). The saint is not removed
from the world and magically transported into the cotton-wool environment of heaven for which they earnestly long. Instead saints feel themselves to be "sent into the world" (Matthew 10:16 & John 20:21) to overcome its terrors and to bring the Kingdom of God into an otherwise sinful, unbelieving and idolatrous world-age.

(7) **Attitude to suffering:**

Suffering is thematized in an interesting way in the transcripts of several respondents. Anne's response to human suffering is one of ambiguity and incomprehensiveness. She asked, "If God is loving, how can he make people suffer?" Her training as a nurse has taught her to be concerned with human wellbeing. The distance therefore between peoples' suffering and God's failure to alleviate it is a "mystery." It is the greatest challenge to her faith. Yet the realization of the vicarious suffering of Christ on her behalf appears to have overcome the challenge which suffering makes to her faith. She defined Jesus as "someone who suffered, wept and went through experiences I have gone through." Christ's identification with her humanity and his redemptive act to overcome her sin became the primary theme in Anne's conversion.

Cynthia asked a similar question; "How can there be a good God when there's so much suffering in the world?" and drew a similar conclusion; that human suffering was incommensurate with God's grace and capacity to bring it to an end. Nevertheless she attributed the causality of suffering not to divine but to human agency, insisting that human pain and suffering is the result of the misappropriation of human freedom rather than God's malevolence. For Cynthia suffering is purposive. It acts as a precursor to faith in that the very same grace which allowed suffering to enter the individual's life is itself preparatory to faith. For Cynthia, God is ultimately good and anything he allows into her life, including the hypothetical possibility of her contracting cancer or losing a child, is no more than a "testing"
of her faith in order to strengthen it.

Greg had an insight into Jesus' suffering and related it to his own experience of struggle in daily living. He “saw” Jesus' suffering on the cross and experienced deep emotion and sorrow in the belief that his own sin and depravity was the cause of Christ's suffering. Jamie likewise understood Christ to have suffered on his behalf. He focused not on the physical suffering and torment of Christ, but on the “exchange” which took place in that transaction. Through Christ's death he understood himself to receive life; in Christ's offering a perfect sacrifice to God, he understood himself to receive forgiveness. This exchange is consistent with the idea of Isaiah 53:5. Samantha understood the lengthy period of suffering prior to her conversion to be not only propaedeutic to her own conversion, but also as preparatory for her role as someone who could assist others to move towards conversion and maturity of faith.

It is apparent that several aspects of suffering are thematized in these accounts; the first is the universal reality of suffering in human experience; the second is respondents' perturbation at the 'puzzling' aspect of suffering as being their dominant bodily and emotional experience which is incommensurate with their beliefs about the goodness and mercy of God; the third is God's freedom to allow suffering to impact his creation; the fourth is respondents' perceptions that suffering is propaedeutic to conversion and therefore has a positive side to it; and the fifth is the significance of Christ's suffering as someone who suffers 'alongside' his followers.

I was shown a poem by a Christian woman who had received it from her sister in America (Christmas 2000) which sums up a common Christian attitude to suffering:

‘Our Father’.
Our Father knows what’s best for us, so why should we complain
We always want the sunshine, but he knows there must be rain;
We love the sound of laughter and the merriment of cheer
but our hearts would lose their tenderness if we never shed a tear.

Our Father tests us often with suffering and sorrow
He tests us not to punish us, but to help us meet tomorrow;

5. Isaiah 53:5, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”
For growing trees are strengthened when they withstand the storm and the sharp cut of the chisel gives the marble shape and form.

God never hurts us needlessly and he never wastes our pain for every loss he sends us is followed by rich gain; And when we count the blessings that God has so freely sent we will find no cause for murmuring and no cause to lament.

For our heavenly Father loves his children and to him all things are plain so he never sends us pleasure when the soul's need is pain; so whenever we are troubled and when everything's gone wrong it is God working in us to make our spirit strong.  

The poem restates the motif of absolute trust in God's overall purposes, as described by Cynthia for her life. Regardless of the circumstances, the new convert can be assured that no evil will be allowed to impact on the believer's essential being, and that the pain experienced by the body in human suffering is instrumental in positioning the soul in a state of spiritual alertness or readiness. The religious believer's attitude to suffering is that "you have afflicted me in faithfulness" (Psalm 119:75). Psalm 23, a psalm habitually read at Christian funerals, states, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me" (verse 4). Despite the certainty of death and the end of human life as they know it in this unpredictable existence, Christians believe that God has decreed his protection upon the soul and that the prospect of a happy and secure afterlife is certain. The Apostle Paul states:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

So Jamie, despite fearing death and experiencing being dangled over "hell" can make the statement "I'm eternal", because he is perceiving his experiences of finitude and psychospiritual trauma from an eternal perspective beyond the earth. From the perspective of eternity death and suffering are only of consequence in that they are preliminary and preparatory for a

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6. No author, date or publishing details were included in the correspondence.
higher form of existence in a post-human, post-earth experience of co-inhabiting with God in a heavenly world.

Summary:

These idiographic representations of the world as the contexture for meaning change have unveiled a number of primary structures which I have ascertained to be invariant universal features in the experience of conversion. In the following section I will address these nomothetically, seeking to answer questions related to how pre-religious knowers come to imbibe and accept new religious knowledge as true belief. I will also discuss the processes that lead religious actors to reject beliefs which had previously guided their existence and to replace them with a new foundation for knowledge. Henceforth this new knowledge forms the foundation of their religious belief which enables them to have a grasp on reality and to feel a level of comfort in the world. I will proceed by discussing three sets of inter-connected primary structures which I call Explicative Themes. These explicative themes represent the penultimate stage of the phenomenological explicatory description, and will be further distilled into their final form in chapter 10. The first explicative theme is the concrete meta-world, the second is 'the other' as the clue to the existence of God, and the third is the dialectic between the 'profane' and the 'sacred'.

1. The Concrete Meta-World:

The concrete meta-world is the environing contexture within which human beings live their lives, create systems of meaning, and against which they measure the potential for the existence of alternate ontological possibilities. Against the quotidian backdrop of the concrete meta-world, believing souls as residents of the earthly sphere have come to prioritize the 'other dimension' (Dupré, 1972) as either being worthy of greater value than the physical world of appearances which surrounds them, or as a necessary augment to their existence within it. It is from the stuff of the concrete meta-world that the believing soul creates symbols which stand as ritual representations of the sacred which lies beyond it. Holy words are written in ink on
paper depicting a ‘kingdom not of this world’; a cross of wood symbolizes a mythological act of God from times long ago and is understood as bringing redemption to humanity; a figure is fashioned of modeling clay representing Moses, Mary, a Pope or a holy personage from another era whose life of saintliness and obedience to God acts as a template for the worshiper’s own life of discipleship. Objects which belong to the realm of the mundane and which contain no inherent ontological significance beyond their own existence are endowed with the power to represent a higher reality, and in some cases are understood to come ‘from’ the other-worldly realm. In the language of Eliade (1987), the earthly realm is perceived as a ‘cosmicized’ representation of the heavenly world in material form. This is a classical depiction of the believing soul’s delineation from a wide range of potential mundane places, times and people, to represent sacred space, sacred time and sacred personages. Sharpe states:

Almost the first thing which the student—or indeed the casual observer—of religious affairs notices, is that ‘believers’ subject the times and places, the objects and personalities of the waking world to a definite scale of values. A house may be full of books; but one book is somehow different from all the others, being both handled and read in a special way. A village is full of buildings; but before entering one of them people make special preparations, while once inside, their normal behavior changes. Men and women wearing clothes that set them apart from the crowd are treated in a manner subtly or startlingly different from workmates or the members of one’s family. The days of the week are differently treated; on Fridays for some, Saturdays for others and Sundays for a third group, customary behavior is partly or wholly suspended: travelling and trading either ceases altogether or is curtailed in favor of actions which the observer may or may not understand (1988: 49).

The careful differentiation made between what is holy and what is not holy by religious individuals and communities indicates the propensity of the religious mind to distinguish between what is profane and what is sacred, and to allow for an active appropriation of what is profane toward the purposes of the Holy. How can the physical world be conceived as representing a metaphysical world beyond its own existence? The world as the space-time domain within which the human agent finds his or her ontological existence is susceptible to a variety of stratifications, and respondents’ reports of their experiences of themselves in the

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7. In Islam, the Dome of the Rock is thought to be an actual object which has come down from heaven. Likewise the Book of Mormon for the Church of the Latter Day Saints.
world indicates there are many kinds of 'world'.

At its simplest level, first there is world as object *simpliciter*, as earth-cosmos which Sokolowski (2000: 43-4) holds to be other than its astronomical participation in the system of the universe, in that it is a concept related to our immediate experience. Second, there is world as the realm of private space and the constitution of meaning through sentient experience with hyletic objects in nature. And third, there is world as the social and cultural domain of relationships with others; the making of a human ideational world within which people are enculturated towards the reception of language-skills and a socially mediated, culturally constructed worldview.

From the respondent's accounts given above a more stratified construct of world can be identified. There was world as vacant space waiting to be filled; world as unequally differentiated social classification; and world as the context in which wisdom is imbued through counselling. This plurality of worlds is an essential component within the phenomenological apparatus. Binswanger (1963: 296) in his *daseinanalyse* conceived of differences in the way world is experienced by speaking about a plurality of worlds based on social location and a kind of radiation out into the larger physical contexture by the use of *eigenwelt* (one's own autonomous world), *mitwelt* (the world of fellow men and those which surround one), and *umwelt* (the general environment and ecology which affects everyone). Steinbock likewise made a similar but more distinct differentiation by going beyond the genetic (the facticity of human existence) as being within either an 'alienworld' or a 'homeworld', by using the term 'generative phenomenology'. By this he was reiterating Husserl's content of generativity (*Generativitat*) which Steinbock defines as "specifically the process of 'historical' and social becoming that is circumscribed geologically, where by 'geological' I mean the...

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8. Or what might be obversely stated as the world was experienced by them in many different ways.


10. Which Needleman describes as, "the effort to ascertain in each individual that which makes his experience and the phenomena of his world possible"; from Jacob Needleman's critical introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's *Being-in-the-world: selected papers of Ludwig Binswanger* (1963: 139).
constitutive role of 'Earth' and cultural 'landscapes'” (1995: 3). This conceptual flexibility between world and worlds creates the potential for movement between worlds and the reconceiving of an ideational world not in terms of the appearances of the 'real' world, but in terms of a humanly shaped 'ideal' world. Thus the world as the contexture in which meaning is both learned and made also becomes the contexture for meaning-change when the existing world-image fails to meet human needs in relation to issues of mortality, suffering, terror and experiences of the numinous.

For each of the respondents in this research, the world as the realm of the profane requires the alterity of the sacred in order for there to be the possibility of something greater-than that which 'is'. Behind the aesthetic and moral realm (representations of beauty, charity, goodness and creativity) lies a cipher of something greater, higher, better and more real than the phantasmic and surreal existence they now lead. William Hocking (1912: 312) in an alternative description of Aquinas' ontological argument for the existence of God, spoke of the world as disclosing the sacred. In a syllogism-like phrase he stated, “Because the world is not, God is” (italics in original). His reasoning discloses what every believing soul knows to be true; that when the world ceases to persuade us of its aseity and appears as an augmentation of something more substantial, there we find God. Or put more simply, where the world ends God begins.

There is an important precedent in Christian history for interpreting the world in the light of another world. Augustine in his City of God (1950) contrasts two cities; the city of this world and the City of God. Augustine as Bishop of Hippo wrote during the troubled period when Alaric and his Goths were ransacking Rome (410-1 C.E.). In writing he sought to do two things; first, he sought to defend Christians against the charge of being at fault for the catastrophic sacking of Rome on the basis of their prohibition of the worship of pagan gods. Second, he sought to provide Christians themselves with a renewed vision of the heavenly city

11. Which is a Biblical theme from Hebrews 13:14, "Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come."
to carry them through the dark days of their suffering and persecution. Augustine contrasts the city of this world—pagan, contemptuous, rebellious, full of evil, blasphemy and idolatry; with the glorious city of God—devout, righteous, pure, built upon a disinterested other-centered love, and filled with peace. No more profound contrast could have been made. At a critical time in history Augustine re-evaluated the priorities of Christians and pointed them beyond the decaying outer world to the ‘City of God’ by means of a re-constitution of their world-image, and therein produced a thoroughgoing renewal of their inner world. The rejection of this world with its Babylon-like worldliness, is the preparation for entry into the City of God. The 1500 years of Christian asceticism and monasticism which followed, with its liturgical practices of confession, Lenten austerity and the charism of penance, are all testimony to the enduring nature of the idea within Christianity of the rejection of this world as the requirement for entry into the next.

For the religious soul, a doxastic judgment or ‘position-taking’ is made on the basis of some hierophany, which brings about a radical alteration in their ‘ur-doxa’ or world-belief (worldview). As Eliade states:

> When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space; there is also revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse. The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world (1957: 21).

Thus the radical in-breaking of a hierophany with its attestation of the reality of a new and higher world, demands a re-attribution of the perception of reality on the basis of a new ‘founding’ principle. The writer of the book of Revelation captures the motif of the victory of the City of God over the city of Babylon when he recounts the voices of the heavenly throng saying, “the kingdom of this world is now the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).
2. The 'Other' as Clue to the Existence of God:

Respondents' experiences of others were without question influential in the drama of conversion. For Anne, meeting J— was of primary significance as an attracting force in arousing her interest in Christian spirituality; whereas Mark's statement, "I wasn't happy about myself really; I used to drink, I used to go out with my friends drinking, swearing; that kind of thing. I wasn't too happy about some of the things we got up to" demonstrated his repulsion at the attitudes and activities of his worldly friends and colleagues. Greg underwent excruciating inward turmoil when rejected by his employer and his girlfriend, but when experiencing those rejections began to consider the necessity of a right relationship with God. Cynthia allowed her relationship with her husband (her closest human affinity) to be subverted by her newly-established relationship with God. Janice was particularly sensitive to her 'place' within the social world, and towards peoples' 'judging' her. She fully expected God to judge her and in judging her to find her unacceptable. Ultimately however she experienced God's acceptance and approbation.

The idea of the 'other' is a recurring theme in philosophy generally and in phenomenology particularly. Husserl's concept of the 'sphere of ownness' and the egology of the 'I-myself' is both informative of and receptive to the alterity of the other as an alter-ego. A distinction is made between myself and not-myself as a recurring theme within a person's lifeworld. The basis of Husserl's doctrine of intersubjectivity is his notion of 'pairing' which allows for one's apperception of one's own being to be a 'clue' to a possible elaboration of the being of the other as a similar but distinct ego by means of self-awareness of the ego as a transcendental being. The notion of the other as sharing one's human likeness and one's physical and social space therefore allows for the possibility of shared meanings between the 'I' and the 'other', through the commonality of shared human experience and mutually accessible meanings. These shared connotations necessitate the inclusion of the other as being both

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12. The problem has been to know where to put a discussion of 'other'. Should it be in chapter 5 under the discussion of 'world'; or should it be in chapter 6 under the discussion of 'self'? It rightly belongs to both. For reasons of structure and balance, and in order to highlight the world as the place in which the other is encountered, I have placed the discussion of 'other' in this chapter.
necessary and meaningful.

The analysis of respondents' transcripts carried out in this chapter has disclosed several environmental and noematic factors which operate as underlying universals in religious conversion. The first factor is a tendency toward comparison and competition between selves. The self is constituted as a self-in-the-presence-of-the-other. While the I-thou relationship is usually understood as a positive because it builds community and provides succour, nevertheless it also has the potential to produce threat, murder and violence. Levinas characterized the potential in the I-other relationship thus, "in alterity we can find an enemy" (Moran, 2000: 326), and "the otherness of the other is the beginning of all love" (ibid: 330). I referred earlier to Janice and Greg forming a false-consciousness constituted around an imaginary ideal personality type. Their conceiving of themselves as 'minimal' selves and as being less-than the 'other' made them feel they were in a place of personal pathos without either enemies or friends.

Second, this competitive self-in-the-presence-of-the-other leads to a discovery of one's poverty of resources and finitude. When the other is conceived as adversary, regardless of whether the contextural activity is scholarship, musicianship or sportsmanship, one regularly finds oneself bested by someone with sharper wits, a keener ear or a more natural talent. We experience being defeated as humiliating and infuriating. Yet the outcome has the potential to leave us with the sense of the real existence of some order of existence which is better, higher, stronger, and more real than anything we can produce. Levinas spoke of this 'sense' of the other (characterized in French as l'Autrui or the personal other) as a 'trace' of the possibility of some other beyond human likeness; some being which religious believers come to know and recognize as God (ibid: 331). And Jaspers (1956, vol. 3) named this alternate sense a 'cipher' within the earthly sphere of the un-named transcendent reality of the Holy.

Third, the sense-of-the-self in the presence-of-the-other as a contest provides the impulse to seek personal transformation; to do away with the 'minimalist' self and its false-consciousness constituted around an imaginary ideal personality type. The impulse toward transformation seeks to go beyond the self as 'minimal' toward the self as 'complete' and
whole. When the self desires to achieve its best good and highest potential, any leap-of-faith can ford the impossible chasm between humanity and the supra-human; any amount of faith, no matter how small, can ‘move mountains’ (Matthew 17:20). At its center the drama of conversion has within it an element of attaching oneself to an object or person whose character, origin and potency lies beyond the mundane in the sphere of the heavenly or Sacred. This process of attachment sees the struggling self-in-the-world eschew its previous attachments and undergo an ontological shift in a movement which carries it from lesser to greater, from outer to inner in an upward spiral toward a transformative encounter with the ultimate ‘Other’ who is best known as God. The notion of ‘attachment’ with application to religious conversion is addressed by Antti Oksanen (1994), who applies Bowlby’s ‘attachment theory’ to conversion. In that study Oksanen concluded that each convert has an ‘attachment history’, that a point of ‘tension’ is what catalyses conversion, that ‘seeking’ is the habitual preoccupation of the convert, and that an ‘attachment-figure’ plays an important part in conversion. The attachment-figure can either be a religious protagonist or God himself. Oksanen’s study provides support for my supposition that converts find clues to the existence of God in the visage of human ‘others’.

Ultimately, Martin Buber’s category of *I and Thou* (1958) is best suited to the self-in-the-presence of the Other. It is God as the eternal *Thou* who is the being who is “directly, most nearly, and lastingly over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed” (*ibid*: 80-81). In attaching itself to God as *Thou*, the I-myself takes on an entirely new perspective within the world. According to Buber, men do not find God if they stay in the world or if they leave the world; rather, “he who goes out with his whole being to meet his *Thou* and carries to it all being that is in the world, finds Him who cannot be sought” (*ibid*: 79). Likewise, “meeting with God does not come to man in order that he may concern himself with God, but in order that he may confirm that there is meaning in the world” (*ibid*: 115). Thus the world of the believing soul is a world soaked in the being of God whose existence as a super-mundane Other is recognized as *Thou*. Such a world is no longer profane, but one into which God has poured out his loving grace by means of establishing a meaningful and transformative *I-Thou*
relationship with the believing soul.

3. The Dialectic between the Profane and the Sacred:

This final section of Chapter 5 is an exploratory discussion of the interconnectedness or conjoined nature of the realms of the profane and sacred. That respondents conceive of the profane and sacred worlds as interconnected is evident in their transcripts. Respondents' experiences of meaning change are in many ways their response to the tensions which emerge from their apperceptions of where they feel they stand in relation to the two worlds of the profane and the sacred. As citizens of the objectively concrete world they encounter 'traces' (Cf. Levinas in the section above) of the divine in the everyday occurrences of life. The sensing of traces of the other dimension are not limited to my respondents alone however. I suspect it is a common experience among people everywhere. This is the substance of Edward Bailey's 'implicit religion' thesis (*Implicit religion: an introduction*, 1998); that regardless of culture, language, race, gender and class, people consistently experience something beyond their environment and their own existence which has a quasi-mystical, super-ordinated quality or aspect to it. Among the mundane and everyday aspects of life, some connectedness to spiritual 'being' is experienced. In the positive, this might come in those unanticipated moments of serendipity such as in the glimpse of innocence when a new-born baby breast-feeds from its mother; or on observing some act of human compassion shown to another person; or some 'peak' experience when caught up in a beauteous moment in nature. But this can also be seen negatively; such as in the senseless violence of rape; a drunken sea-captain piloting his oil-carrier onto rocks; the misappropriation of others' resources through fraud; or the recognition of Western culture as a 'supermarket of desire' (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1989: 77) is critically

13. For example, Anne met J—whom she believed to be a saint from heaven living on earth, and began thinking about becoming a Christian herself. Cynthia had “feelings of faith” in her body which are reassurances of the reality of God in her life. Jamie had an attack of fear in a nightclub and afterwards said to his girlfriend, “Would you believe I have just become a God-fearer?” Janice came to conceive of God as an invisible but potent source of power who acted to underwrite her existence within the mundane world. Mark, while inspecting a plot of land with the purpose of considering it for purchase, saw a rainbow and interpreted it as a "sign" from God. Samantha experienced a burning-sensation in her body, and interpreted it as a physical manifestation of God's Spirit, come to reassure her of his presence.
flawed.

These occurrences can have the effect of drawing us upwards 'towards' some unascertainable object or existence beyond this world. For some a sense of unfairness and injustice can have an overwhelming effect, leaving them with a sense of dis-ease, of being marginalized and alienated; as if they were denizens of this world, rather than citizens of it. This is a 'clue' to the existence of a world beyond the profane world, and evokes a restless hunger for the true home-world of which Steinbock speaks (1995).

The profane realm on its own, without the reference-point of the sacred, remains hidden to itself; and the sacred without reference to the profane has no possibility for making itself known through revelation, compassion or redemption. It remains a world 'enclosed' to itself. For the religious agent however, a dialectic co-synchronicity exists between the profane and the sacred worlds in which the earth-body of the percipient provides the clue to the metaphysical soul and its function of bringing the two worlds together in a coalescence. Just as the handyman mixes two substances from separate tubes to produce an amalgam of glue or fibreglass, so there exists an ad-mixedtured correlation between the earth-body and the metaphysical soul in shaping transcendental beliefs. Luijpen refers to these dual realities as the first and second 'dimensions'. Of the first dimension he asserts that secularized Western man dwells exclusively in a profane world and understands only the language of 'flat descriptions'; whereas the religious man resides within a second dimension, construed as the mythic dimension of sacred history, which discloses itself in "actions, behaviour, history, cosmos, objects, time and space" (1976: 118-120).

A compelling illustration of the fact that the earth-body is not limited to its concern for its physical wellbeing alone comes from an insight from Greg's self-report concerning the truth and veracity of the Christian gospel while sitting on the toilet relieving himself.¹⁴ During the

¹⁴. A related although less hubritic *leitmotif* can be observed in Arthur's Stace's practice of writing the word 'Eternity' in beautiful copperplate handwriting all over Sydney's street pavements during the 1930-50's. The symbolic representation in chalk of the eternal under-foot on Sydney's city-pavements has proven to be a powerful evocation of the dimension of the Sacred in the midst of the mundane for hundreds of thousands of commuters. It remains a continuing figure in Sydney's self-awareness, as demonstrated by the word 'eternity' being emblazoned in fire for all the world to see across the Sydney Harbor Bridge at the conclusion of the 2000 Olympic celebrations.
most human of acts, the realization came to him that God had come to earth in the person of Jesus, whose incarnation now provided a kind of super-conductor or 'bridge' between heaven (the sacred) and earth (the profane). With this insight came the possibility of entering the life of heaven while remaining imprisoned in the earth-body.

It appears there exists a venerable tradition of seeing the beyond while performing tasks essential to the maintenance of the body. Martin Luther is known to have had a similar in-breaking of insight while sitting "on the privy in the tower" (Wilson, 1998: 9), which Bainton demurely refers to as the "daily task" (1978: 62). Erikson with greater particularity reports Luther as writing in a 1532 table-talk that he was endowed with special insight while in the 'cloaca' or toilet (1962: 204). The subject of his deliberations was Romans 1:17, "The righteous will live by faith." Luther later wrote "I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning ... this passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven." Also Bruce Wilson, the Anglican Bishop of Bathurst New South Wales, wrote in Reasons of the Heart (1998: 9-10) of his experience of sitting on the toilet at night as an upper-teenager and seeing shooting stars through the open door. At the time he was troubled thinking about whether or not he should become a priest. The first night, the shooting meteorite was an object of wonder. The second night, he suspected God may have been speaking to him. On the third consecutive night this occurred, he 'knew' with certainty that God was speaking to him and subsequently became a priest.

The grimaced crouch common to every human being is a visceral participation in mortality. During the contortions of eliminating waste from the body and thus ensuring the physiognomic health and welfare of the mortal body, an alternative other-worldly reality can sometimes impose itself. It makes itself known as an illumination, a theophany, an anagogical 'insight' from somewhere other than this present world. In this seemingly oxymoronic moment the worlds of the profane and the sacred which had previously given every appearance of being 'separate' reveal themselves to be powerfully inter-connected through a physical attestation of

the body through its susceptibility as a profane 'thing' to be annexed to the purposes of the sacred; an appearance in-manifold of its spiritual vitality.

Summary:

What makes itself apparent as an invariant eidetic structure within the consciousness of earth-bound humans is some sense of interconnectedness between the spheres of the profane and the sacred; some kind of inter-twined co-incidence between the earth-body and its spiritual counterpart the soul. This 'co-incidence' is systematically developed by Eliade in his *Myth of the eternal return*, when he states:

> When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space; there is also revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse. The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world (1987: 21).

This is one explanation for the great variety of attitudes held toward the world by religious agents (such as world rejecting, world denying or world embracing). The insight provided here is that a spiritually determined consciousness looks 'beyond' the concrete meta-world to an originary spiritual world 'beyond' the boundaries of the physical world, thus leaving the physical world as a contingent entity free to be interpreted in a variety of ways. One interpretative response is that of the ascetic hermit who radically rejects this world and its pleasures in favor of the pleasures of an alternative world, anticipated in the present as a soon-to-be-fulfilled empty-intention. Another response is that of the martyr, who chooses to stand against this world by placing his or her body between two sets of opposing realities; the profane with its demand to relent and compromise one's confession, and the sacred which beckons one toward the promise of the bestowal of the ultimate gift, the gift of eternal life. Walter Wink describes martyrs in this way: "Martyrs are not victims, overtaken by evil, but hunters who stalk evil into the open by offering as bait their own bodies. Those who are willing to sacrifice nothing or very little, offer nothing or very little to history. It must be said that they offer little or nothing to their own soul" (1992: 161).
Religion informs and transforms what is taken within the profane realm to be manifestations of say, morality, art, science, politics or economics. In the realm of the sacred these things are fused together into an "explicitly metaphysical account of general and abstract features of the reality of the whole" (Tracy, 1981: 159). For Christian converts, the earthly world in which they live and upon which they depend for their existence (Jaspers, 1956: 3/77) is reconstituted in favor of another world, from which every possible blessing—salvation, restoration, wholeness and re-birth—is thought to derive its substance and possibility.

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have discussed interpretive themes from respondents' transcripts relating to the world as the place in which meaning change occurs for religious experiencers who undergo conversion to the Christian faith. I have elucidated the importance for the conversion event of the reality of 'another' world, from which the possibility of salvation and restoration makes itself apparent. I have discussed the place of the 'other' as a world-centered clue to the existence of God. Finally, I have uncovered the interdependence between the earth-body and the spirit-soul as necessary co-conductors of the human-based 'problem' and the sense that the 'solution' lies outside the physical universe in the resources of the divine.
Chapter 6: The Self in its Lifeworld: Religion as Change Strategy

Introduction:

This chapter addresses the interpretive themes: desperation for relief, devastation of lifeworld; fear of death and judgment; making new beginnings; questing after truth; energetic seeker; separation from life before conversion; freedom from guilt; healing and restoration; feelings of faith; and awakening from sleep.

(1) Devastation of the lifeworld:

Greg’s life had been progressing well; he had employment in the legal profession, he was earning a creditable income, he dreamt of driving a Mercedes and his goal was to be happy and prosperous. However he experienced a despoiling of his lifeworld on being terminated by his employer and when his girlfriend left him. His response to these circumstances was to “sit in abject emptiness and brokenness”, to feel “terribly, terribly miserable”, and to experience “every waking second as a sense of terrible grief.” Into his once stable and satisfying ‘world-life’1 came the unexpected specter of devastation and ruination. An unseen enemy ravaged through his camp bent on a slash and burn policy, leaving his ambitions razed and his emotions maimed. Like Job he sat amidst the ashes scraping the pus from his wounds; or like Jeremiah’s statement of self-pity he could say, “Woe to me because of my injury! My wound is incurable!” (Jeremiah 10: 19). Greg’s repeated adjectives of “emptiness”, “brokenness”, “misery” and “terror” constitute a state of inner carnage which mirrored his outward circumstances of disassemblance. Nothing in his power could change those circumstances; no amount of pleading or egoistic pressure could change the state of affairs. He had no power to exert leverage over his legal firm’s employment policy, nor the possibility of bringing about a reversal within S—’s determination to withdraw her romantic attachment. His grief was

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1. James Hart. 1992. *The Person and the Common Life*, Dortrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 54. Hart uses the notion of ‘world-life’ to refer to something more grounded and existential than Husserl’s lifeworld, in the sense that the lifeworld is a passively given entity established by one’s social grouping, whereas a ‘world-life’ is the result of an active position-taking on the part of the individual who makes up his own mind as a transcendental subject within the greater social flux.
poignant because of the vacuous sensation which his prior relations created by their non-presence; as residuums they were experienced as painful and empty intentions. Their continuing presence belonged to a past tense but were now reconstituted as a concealed but ‘real-absence’. The distance between past fulfillment and present emptiness created a longing within Greg for a way out, for new beginnings, for salvation. No avenue of resuscitation made itself apparent except the avenue of a self-directed restoration from within. A burned and ravaged city may be either abandoned, or rebuilt. The writer Jane Austen\(^2\) places in her character Darcy’s mouth the words, “I shall overcome this!” Greg made the decision to overcome his inner destruction and begin again by moving to rebuild the foundations of his Self and his world. Initially he drew on resources generated by other people, but within weeks he was actively tapping into the resources he felt were offered by God.

(2) Desperation for relief:

Samantha’s experience immediately prior to her conversion was of an urgent despair; she used the word “desperate” nine times in describing her physiognomic symptoms of struggle, agony, pain and despair. She experienced desperation as a quality of recklessness which impelled her headlong toward some impetuous goal in the hope of alleviating her inward distress. She was a desperado; someone who was “ready for any desperate deed.”\(^3\) She lay alone on her back on her bed after attending a church meeting, pondering her interior pain, desiring relief, and formulating scenarios for reasons why she should choose God, or end her life in suicide. She states:

I was so very desperate to know the truth; I was so desperate to know God; That was why I gave him an ultimatum, ‘I have to know tonight’ or that’s it.... I was just so desperate to know him, and ... when I realized the truth the tears stopped. So I wasn’t stressed out, I wasn’t upset. I was just desperate to know him.

Samantha’s longing was ultimately an inward desire to be loved. She experienced the longing


\(^3\)The Macquarie Dictionary. 1989. Macquarie, Australia; p. 492
as a desperation which manifested itself as a pressure or tension, as a dark fear that she would never find the object she longed for. She felt alone and separated from the sources of life which could provide succour and guide her toward light and truth. The *elan vital* which had supported her through life to this point had dissipated, vanished, run out. Her sense of being rejected, not loved by her family, and the hurt she experienced in several abusive romantic relationships aroused even more urgently in her imagination her need to be loved. As a child Samantha knew the experience of being loved as a filled intention; an I-other relation which provided unconditional acceptance, succour and support; but in her teenage years her experience of love was cut off, incomplete, conditional and manipulative.

In crying out to God, she was reaching beyond the level and resources of mere human love into the level of the metaphysical and supernatural. While she knew little of God's love and nothing of Jesus' love-sayings in the Gospel of John; out of her own sense of identity-lack and need, she constituted the love of God as an *a priori* necessity. In doing so she went beyond Aquinas' 'Five Ways' (Brown, 1990: 123f.), reasoning instead that God must exist because of the urgency and expediency of her inner pain and her own human necessity. In Samantha's response was a position-taking based in her own instinctual sense of need; a poiesis which sprang from a growing vision of the Holy as the only possible source of life and hope for the future.

(3) Fear of death and judgment:

Jamie experienced a gnawing fear of death, and consternation over God's annunciation

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4. John 13:1, in the context of Jesus' washing his disciples' feet, where John says of Jesus, "he now showed them the full extent of his love"; John 13:34 where Jesus establishes his actions towards others as the template which the disciples were to use in their actions towards others, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another"; John 14:21 where Jesus speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit says, "he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him"; and John 15:13 where Jesus anticipates his own death, states "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends."

5. The notion of a human necessity for the existence of God is referred to by C.S. Lewis (1999: 97) in *The pilgrim's regress*, when he suggests that the desire for God is in its own way a proof for the existence of God, a comment supported by Griffin (1980: 47).
of judgement due to his pre-conversion misbehavior. On one occasion Jamie took a large quantity of drugs and experienced a "dark presence of evil" which he attributed to occultic influence. He felt attacked by terror and paranoia. Later, on the occasion of his conversion, he attended a nightclub, again under the influence of drugs, and experienced such a sense of the demonic that he feared for his life and cried out in terror. Through his immediate experience of impending doom Jamie encountered an "ultimate moment" and came to see his life from the perspective of the impending "death of himself." In the language of Tillich (1949), Jamie had his 'foundations shaken' to their very core. It was the kind of 'dread' of which Kierkegaard spoke, which crushed the human spirit and laid waste to all hope. Jaspers referred to this state as a 'godforsakenness' (1953: 72). Jamie's reflections on fear and death did not thematize the unjust and unwelcome intervention of God, but rather his own acknowledgement of guilt, his being deserving of death and spiritual damnation, and his need of God's salvation and rescue. An early factor within Jamie's religious life was his mother's repeated words, "Be sure your sins will find you out." Following his season of rebellion, he had now arrived at the threshold of his day of accounting. When God "dangled his soul over hell" Jamie attributed this to an act of mercy and grace as he anagogically re-perceived his existence not in terms of the prodigal son in exile, but in terms of himself as the recipient of the gracious father's unreasonable pardon and compassionate love. No longer was he the sinner in the hands of an 'angry God'; now he was the prisoner set free; an escapee from Hell itself. Instead of being afraid of God and running from him as he had done in the past, he ran to him. In the light of his history of the misuse of his freedom which had resulted in his enslavement to sin and terror, Jamie


7. Jonathan Edwards, the C18th New England revivalist and theologian preached a famous sermon entitled, 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God'; 1986. The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Revised by Edward Hickman, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, Volume 2, p. 8, part of which reads: "The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them."
reappraised his standing and before God by coming to ‘fear’ God.\(^8\)

Thomas Merton (1978: 83) had an experience of seeing death at the age of 17; “Death is something you see very clearly with eyes in the center of your heart: eyes that see not by reacting to light, but by reacting to a kind of a chill within the marrow of your own life.” It had a lasting effect on him. He saw the eventual death every human faces as a kind of ‘end of the Self’; a kind of Leviathan which when struggled against, makes the human spirit all the stronger: “Souls are like athletes that need opponents worthy of them.” Like Jamie, Merton experienced himself to be “bleeding to death” (ibid: 164); referring to a metaphorical, not a literal flowing away of one’s life. He felt himself to have come to the end of his own resources and the ‘death’ referred to was the result of his moral failure and the struggle to submit to God and hand over autonomy of his life in an act of surrender. Yet Merton realized there was a point to his suffering when he stated, “My defeat was the occasion of my rescue” (ibid: 165). In coming to fear God, Jamie felt himself to have overcome the terror of the possibility of his death, and encountered the one in whom fulness of life resided.

(4) Making new beginnings:

Anne felt “desperate for something” and “mixed up”; she feared for her life and where it was leading her. She began a program of transcendental meditation which had the effect of alleviating her anxiety attacks. She initiated a process of moral and spiritual catharsis in preparation for a new beginning in her life. She encountered a group of Christian students whose lives exhibited the qualities of contentment, goodness and holiness she longed for. She began to reflect deeply on Christianity and to attend Christian worship.

Anne experienced her life as existentially uncomfortable, as a tangle of questions without answers and desires without fulfillment. Deep within herself she had a suspicion, some kind of maieutic disclosure that a new beginning was required. That something was missing in

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\(^8\) The Old Testament usage of ‘fear’ [Hebrew yir’a] is that of holy fear or reverence, as opposed to dread and terror. The outcome of this kind of fear is life, not death. In Jeremiah 32.40 YHWH says, “I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.” Such fear is also the principle of ‘wisdom’; “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”, Psalm 111:10.
her life was obvious because of the recurring jangle of unfulfilled longings for a higher order of existence than that which she presently knew. She began attending to her spiritual life without the prompting or fellow Christians or the support of a church. She self-diagnosed her condition not as an attack of evil, but rather as a lack of good. Thereafter she carried out her own therapy by responding intuitively to her inner promptings as they rose to the surface of consciousness in order to make themselves known. After the event of her conversion she acknowledged that without her knowing it, God was at work in her life all along. But during the process she pressed forward toward an unseen promised land with the weight of eternity on her mind, seeking for the misplaced 'missing parts' from the greater 'whole' of her life. During this time Anne was an active agent in the process of personal restoration and making a new beginning. She took control of her life by putting behind her the habits of her prior unsatisfactory life and began having an affair with the Holy; she did this by attending Church, reading the Bible, praying, and reading Christian literature. By these means she sought to find entry into the Kingdom of God.

(5) Questing after truth:

Mark reported his journey into the Christian faith as a "search for truth." He experienced an allergic reaction to his previous life of sin and dissipation, believing such fripperies to be "absolutely worthless." He underwent a pseudo-conversion in a Catholic context which did not continue because he felt he received no support. Mark's search for truth took him into Buddhism and Hinduism but he felt these didn't take him "to God." The presenting symptom which catalyzed Mark toward conversion was a shaky marriage relationship. Mark's wife A—began attending church and invited Mark to attend church also. As he retrospectively re-constituted the experience, Mark felt that by positioning his life in a right relationship with God the potential for becoming reconciled with A—would be exponentially increased.

Mark's response reveals that deep within him there is something of the mystic. He was aware of the existence and reality of the Sacred. He knew it was necessary for him as a frail
human being, steeped in myopia, to undertake a journey of discovery in order to uncover the pathway which would enable him to enter the hidden realm of the spirit. He was aware of those practices and disciplines which lay at the gateway to the spiritual world, such as prayer and repentance, worship and contrition. He understood the Christian Church to be a culturally-fashioned manifestation of the ‘religious’ which was no more than a vestibule or a doorway to a higher, better life. In coming to accept the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ and his resurrection, Mark became a willing and active disciple who participated in the weekly practices of the community of faith he had come to join.

A primary characteristic of Mark’s seeking after truth was his rejection of his prior life of sin in favor of undertaking a quest for holiness. Mark’s desire for holiness came out of his deep repentance, manifested through a series of bouts of weeping. Mark experienced these bouts as purgations, as cathartic washings of his soul, as lustrations which cleansed away that which was wicked, rebellious and evil within him; leaving him calm, cleansed, and filled with everything good, whole, and serene. He renounced his past life as a mere phantasm, a mere charade of the higher order of existence for which he longed. Gladly leaving it behind he set out to become a saint, a holy person, by giving priority to the disciplines of prayer, Scripture reading, Church attendance and worship which elicited the ‘pleasures’ of a pure spirituality (Gillen, 1987). There was to be no lengthy and impatient wait for the experience to come to him as in Samuel Beckett’s ‘Waiting for Godot’ (1985). In that instance God never arrives. Mark actively set out to seek God by forming his identity around that of a committed, participating religious actor whose envaluation of the experience of God elicited an alternate ‘knowing’; a modality of knowing which was greater than any other experience or form of knowing he had previously known. Mark put aside his previous practices of sin based on the assertion of his freedom from the Divine commands, and sought instead to set in motion a process of poiesis which ‘re-made’ his world. He re-evaluated his actions, thoughts, associations and his eternal future around the values which now centered on the God-encounter. The desire for repentance and holiness, while a stratification within Mark’s experience, is an essential feature or eidetic structure of the life of every convert.
(6) An energetic seeker:

Samantha described herself as a "seeker." She says:

I would ask questions. At every altar call at Church or youth group I would go forward and ask questions and ask to be prayed for ... I'm a seeker. It was the same with reading the Bible. I wouldn't just read half a chapter ... like that first night I read the Bible I read the whole Gospel of Matthew in one sitting.

She was energetic about her spiritual search; she kept nothing in reserve. She exerted the energy and intent of those disciples of whom Jesus referred to as pressing forcefully into the kingdom of heaven.\(^9\) The pain and revulsion she felt from her old life and the appeal of the new path before her was such that she eagerly discarded her old patterns of behavior and her old beliefs in favor of what she understood to be an exciting new beginning which promised salutogenic healing.

Samantha ventured into new territory with neither map nor guide, trusting not in disclosures of the metaphysical world of nature (sun, moon and stars), but in her own intuition and sense of which was the right direction, simply following the pathway of conversion as it unfolded before her. The further she journeyed, the deeper she went, the more authentic the Christian faith appeared to her, and the more real God became. In response to what she experienced as God's reaching out and touching her heart, she "ran to him." She sought to bring her recalcitrant attitudes and actions under the aegis of the Christian gospel so that she was "acting like a Christian" and "doing Christ-like things." For Samantha, becoming a Christian was not simply selecting a new religious belief, it was adopting an entirely new identity which manifested itself in an experiential manifold of belief, belonging and behavior. With the new identity came a brand new dwelling place, replete with the paraphernalia of the naturalized citizen of the new kingdom; contentment, happiness, love, joy and peace (Galatians 5:22) as just reward for her efforts.

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(7) Separation from life before conversion:

Mark's conversion was accompanied by a program of divesting himself of his old pre-conversion life. He had felt "totally sinful" and strove to slough off the remnants of his past life which he labelled "totally worthless." He longed for something which presented itself as discontinuous from his past existence; as a new and alternative option. He rejected the pain of his previous life in favor of the peace, certitude and deep conviction which he experienced when he became a Christian. His experience of the movement from his past life to his present faith was one of 'exchange', wherein darkness was thrown off in favor of light, blindness exchanged for sight, emptiness exchanged for being filled with the presence of God, and confusion exchanged for the certitude of truth.

For Mark the new life represented a state of freedom from his dark and inchoate past and offered the prospect of new materials from which to weave a new and exciting future. Like early European explorers and settlers, the virgin forests of the Americas and Terra Australis represented a welcome opportunity to leave the corrupted past behind and to build a bright new future unencumbered by the constraints of crusty habit and dry precedent. They could forge their own destiny and adopt a future shaped by hope and not despair. For Mark the reason for the journey towards freedom was the result of his repudiation of his desultory past with its failures, guilt and calumny. It had been left behind; Jesus had dealt with that on his cross, redemption had taken place, healing had flowed from the rock, and life could begin again.

Phenomenologically-speaking, this 'exchange' of worlds is what in Husserl's terms might be called the transition between the homeworld and the alienworld (Steinbock, 1995: 179-82).\(^{10}\) Normative human existence requires the constitution of a 'homeworld' through a process of world-constitution. This world is a familiar world in which all relations are normalised, and the human self adopts a static or 'genetic' existence within its safe and

\(^{10}\) I have used Steinbock as my primary source for Husserl's constitution of homeworld and alienworld for two reasons. First, he has drawn all Husserl's material on the topic together in a single source; and second, he has done so from original sources unavailable to me. These are published in the *Husserliana* series; (see Steinbock 1995: xvii f.)
nurturing parameters. However, as soon as the human agent recognizes itself as existing within a homeworld which is 'normal', a counter-realization occurs.

Through the process of co-constituting a homeworld as normal or as typically familiar, a "world" is simultaneously co-constituted as not belonging to our conceptual systems, our normality, our values, norms, traditions etc., which is to say, it is constituted as alien, unfamiliar, atypical, "abnormal." In short, an alienworld is co-constituted through the constitution of a homeworld as not normatively significant in the same way that a homeworld is for homecomrades (ibid: 180).

Given the high state of anxiety and discomfit in what was the convert's homeworld, a process of relocation takes place in which the secular, pre-conversion homeworld and the uncomfortable religious 'world' are exchanged. No longer is a static or genetic existence envisaged; a doxastic and generative decision is made to move-house, like a snail changing shells. The reversal referred to requires an about-face wherein what was previously known as normal is now perceived as abnormal, and what was previously abnormal has become normalized. Two further things can be noted about this transition. The first is that the transition does not 'annihilate' a world, despite Husserl's use of that term (see Welton, 1999: 82); rather the worlds referred to are mutually delimited. They continue to exist, but for the human agent one is highly valued, and the other is reconstituted and portrayed as being without value. The second is that the experience of choosing to undergo an exchange of worlds involves the experience of liminality. Whereas one was previously 'inside' a world, now one finds oneself 'outside' that world and inside another.

(8) Freedom from guilt:

Samantha underwent recurrent incidents of hurt and pain which resulted in a festering wound in her emotional life. She experienced everything which had taken place in her life as wrong. She described herself as having poor self-esteem and being an unattractive person. She experienced high levels of anxiety and guilt and felt there must be something more to life other than what she was presently experiencing. She also felt she had no-one to turn to; abandoned and forsaken, she determined to resolve her crisis. The quest which Samantha undertook was a
spiritual quest for something which would meet the innate longing within her to be loved. Meeting Jesus was like “having shackles broken off you ... freedom, relief and happiness”; because she saw what a mess she had made of her life and was convinced he could do a better job. Samantha’s quest was for that freedom which would provide exoneration from her past guilt and transmute her existential status of guilt before her own conscience and God’s divine ledger to that of someone acquitted of her past sins, whose every blemish was completely expunged.

In the moment of conversion, Samantha “felt loved, completely warm ... all over [her] body”; her experience of conversion was one of “being hugged”, of being freed into a space where there was complete love and acceptance for her. The physical gesture Samantha made when she spoke of freedom was that of loosing a shackle from her wrist. This kinesthetic performative act represented in the physical realm the deeper originary experience she felt of entrapment and imprisonment within herself; and of the sensation of being released into a space before God where she was forgiven, cleansed and made whole. She felt accepted on the basis of her new position as someone who was properly related to God as the Judge of all Judges whose verdict of ‘innocent’ is beyond being challenged.

(9) Healing and restoration:

Janice always thought there was “nothing there for her.” Her early life was filled with the difficulties of poverty and the responsibilities of caring for her family. She rejected the possibility that she was destined by some unknown and evil fate to be a lesser being, an outcast all her life. She actively sought for some avenue of freedom and new beginnings. Janice was used to receiving impersonal charity in reply to her requests for help from those around her. Suddenly and unexpectedly she felt God was present to her, offering her a new beginning. Becoming a Christian meant she could become a “whole person” and have a better life. For the first time in her life she felt she had access to a new source of energy and strength to overcome her addictions; a source which was located in God’s powers of love and healing. Whereas she once resigned herself to the thought, “I’ve sinned and God doesn’t want me any more; ” she
was now convinced that God accepted her just as she was. She came to believe that God did not judge her for what she was in the past, and that his touch on her life meant she had been completely forgiven, healed and restored.

Janice was sensitive to peoples' attitudes towards her. She had encountered many people—church-goers included—who she felt were contemptuous and condescending toward her because of the way she spoke or looked. But that was not her experience of God; when she felt God offering her the opportunity to be healed and restored, she “grabbed hold of it.” She experienced God as non-judgmental, forgiving and completely accepting. At the moment of her conversion she felt “all my troubles lifted off my shoulders;” she felt clean and free of everything which had oppressed her.

Janice is the quintessential pilgrim who in progressing towards God had her burden of troubles removed. Instead of being excluded from the heavenly city because of her past experience and status in life, she felt she was wonderfully included in its community and its benefits. The proverbial wisdom of Ecclesiastes 9:11 applied to her in a unique way; “The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong.” So when time and chance presented themselves to her for a new beginning and a reversal of her previous fortune, in good faith she responded in the form of a whole-hearted commitment to God, and to love him and receive his love in return. The result was that she felt herself to have become an entirely new person whose fate had been radically reversed and who had entered into a new and better life.

(10) Awakening from sleep:

Anne experienced conversion as an awakening from the soporific and dream-like sleep in which she felt herself to only half-exist. The experience of sleep-existence is not limited to Anne alone. C.S. Lewis (1955: 223) refers to a similar awakening at his own conversion as a necessary structure within every conversion; “like when a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake.” Metzner, in his ‘Ten classical metaphors of self-transformation’ (1980), likewise listed ‘awakening from sleep’ as his first metaphor of conversion. Anne felt her pre-conversion existence to be like a “cloud” or a “bad
memory” which she experienced as darkness and distress. Despite her initial resistance in which she preferred to be known as a Catholic rather than a Christian, Anne nonetheless found herself gradually developing an attitude of openness towards Christian belief and the world of new meanings it contained.

Previously Anne had seen things through a dimmed consciousness, a “murky window.” The reference to murky window is a biblical intimation of which Anne was quite aware. It is an allusion to the polished bronze or brass mirrors of first century Palestine which rendered the visage of the reflected object imperfect (Greek ainigma), as an enigma, obscure and indistinct. While Anne’s application of this text in support of her clarified sense of spiritual sight bypasses the Apostle Paul’s reference to that moment in the eskatos when humans will apprehend God and will see him as he is in himself; nonetheless she experienced her spiritual transformation at conversion to be a deliverance from an incomplete and inadequate form of knowledge into a perception which sees (however enigmatically) everything as God sees it.

Anne found herself beginning to perceive another world, a world beyond her tactile sensory experience to which she was accustomed, which purported to be more real than the one she presently inhabited. It was a supernatural world populated by dead people, saints and angels, a world about which her family members, nursing colleagues and university friends would have taken fright. Greeley suggests:

Catholics live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints at a deeper and more persuasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. As Catholics, we find our houses and our world haunted by a sense that the objects, events, and persons of daily life are revelations of grace (2000: 1).

At her conversion Anne imbibed another world through the reading of Scripture and related Christian material; a world connected not only with the “Catholic imagination” as

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11. 1 Corinthians 13:10-12, “When perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”
Greeley calls it, but with the Christian sense of reality. That sense of reality is often out of step with the kind of one-dimensional reality which Western culture with its positivist orientation sees, but an enchanted Reality which perceives God at work in every corner of the physical world, in every circumstance of the experiential world, and at every point of one's life history.

**Feelings of faith:**

Cynthia experienced the reception of faith into her life as a deeply convincing and authentic experience. After doing a series of Bible studies with E—and being challenged to consider making a decision to believe, Cynthia felt trapped. She wanted to respond but worried about what others would think. After several weeks of thinking about it, she decided to "let God into my life" and agreed to sign her name on the dotted line on the response card. Her "feelings of faith" did not arrive immediately; they took several days to become activated and for her to actually sense that she 'did' believe. When they did arrive, they were entirely convincing to Cynthia; she felt faced with a simple choice, "You either stay here and go nowhere or you take a step forward." She felt "really good" about having her sins forgiven and being in a right relationship with God. The physiognomic sense that being forgiven manifested in her body was in the form of feelings of peace and being relaxed. Cynthia's most intense feelings of faith are in the form of her "emotions" which well up within her during times of corporate worship. She usually cries a lot when she has this emotion. It is like a physical proof of the existence and loving attitude of God towards her. She feels humbled and happy; "a happiness that makes me cry." The emotion comes largely as a consequence of feeling deeply loved.

In her own words, Cynthia is not a deep thinker; she says, "My mind just stays on my emotions." Yet Cynthia perceived these emotions as being a form of reasoning because their effect on her is to convince her of God's presence, purpose and power. She interprets these manifestations as something deeply convincing of a reality which lies beyond sight, but is

12. Brueggemann speaks of this as the 'prophetic imagination'. I will withhold discussing this here in favor of a fuller discussion in the nomothetic section at the end of this chapter.
nevertheless within reach and which provides her with a way of seeing or "knowing." C.S. Lewis (1955: 222) discovered at his conversion that Christianity was not an empty religion or a dry philosophy but rather the actuality and fulfillment of every kind of wisdom. In the same way, Cynthia's emotions tutored her out of her prior skepticism towards Christianity, and convinced her to accept it as a valid and truthful system of belief. Thus her emotions caused her to forgo the usual period of assessment of anything new, and caused her to accept without further question the truth-claims of Christianity as being 'true', and to integrate them into her life. She saw God's Spirit as breathing in her breath, as indwelling her every living moment, and as energizing the very turning of the earth on its axis.

Summary:

These idiographic representations of the interpretive themes identified in co-researchers' transcripts of the Self in its Lifeworld have unveiled a number of primary or eidetic structures which I have discerned to be invariant and universal features of the conversion experience itself, not simply those conversions recounted here. In the following section I will address nomothetically these invariant features, addressing the ways in which pre-religious knowers come to imbibe and accept new religious knowledge, and the experiences which lead non-religious agents to take on previously unacceptable religious beliefs as the foundation for an entirely new worldview. I will do this by discussing below three explicative themes which introduce a series of inter-connected primary structures; the connection between the self and its lifeworld; knowledge as experience-based; and transcendence in the midst of immanence.

1. The Self and its Lifeworld:

The above explications of respondents' transcripts reveal the human Self as a dialectical entity constituted as a self-in-response-to-itself and as a self-in-response-to-its-lifeworld. This 'self vs. lifeworld' dialectic is a feature of the self as it relates to multiple horizons simultaneously within the world as an enormously complex agonistic flux. Respondents moved to enter the conversion process primarily through a crisis within
themselves and their lifeworlds which can be characterized as something akin to an 'end of self'. Following a crisis within their lives a secondary and deeper level of inward reflection invariably came about, rather like a post-viral infection in the medical realm. In a state of concentrated self-analysis respondents weighed up the evidence which emerged from the encounters between the self-in-response-to-itself and the self-in-response-to-its-lifeworld and 'saw'—at first with confused vision but later with crystalline clarity—the plight of their situation. On the basis of the mounting accumulation of evidence they apprehended, by a process of illative reasoning, that something was amiss; that the resources they thought they possessed for coping with the exigencies of life did not measure up to the demands of human existence. It became what Keats called a realization of 'negative capability' (cited by Fauteux, 1994: 139), which exhibited a fundamental disassemblance within themselves. That realization brought about a major life crisis which did not arrive immediately but was 'incubated' (ibid: 138) over a period of time. The ancient ritual of incubation is useful here, as the practice of sleeping in a temple or sacred place for oracular purposes. Dante, in his Divine Comedy (Purgatorio, 10), portrays the image of a butterfly as symbolic of the emergence of a spiritual being from its earlier cocoon-state of ignorance in which it was both unaware of and unable to proceed to the transformed and fully-formed state of their beings.

Respondents appeared to be thinking not only about their earthly existence but about a series of foundational questions addressing the fundamental human condition as something ontologically problematic. Evidently a series of questions were asked as represented by those suggested by Walsh and Middleton (1984: 35); Who am I? Where am I? What's wrong? What is the remedy? Vatican II (Flannery 1975: 738, cited by Wright 1992: 123) suggested a series of questions common to all humans: What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgement? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery beyond human explanation which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend? These are classical worldview questions which relate to the self and its existence in the
This notion of the 'self-in-response-to-itself' and the 'self-in-response-to-the-world' which I have observed to be a recurrent theme in the experiences of respondents in conversion, provides an outline for a phenomenological description of the shape of the Self in the context of religious conversion. The self can be construed as two sets of entities in tension with one another, forming two intersecting axes. The first axis is the self-pole to the west and the world-pole to the east; and the second axis is the pre-conversion state to the south and the completed post-conversion normativized state to the north. The first of the two intersecting axes relates to the motif of existence (self and world); and the second axis relates to the motif of *qualia* or the quality of one's experience within the world (the evaluative judgement the self applies to itself and its ongoing transitive existence).

![Diagram 3. The self depicted as an intersecting axis.](image)

Thus I conceive the self as a co-axial being, constantly held in tension between itself and its lifeworld, between the real and its ideal. It is this tension which enforces the necessity-to-act which is the primordial prerequisite which founds the possibility, and later the necessity of conversion.

This co-axial 'shape' of the self discloses the self to be a 'reflecting-I' which makes judgments about its self and its lifeworld. It does not make the abstract distinction—so prevalent in the Western worldview—between its subject and its object, its mind and its body, its self and
the Other. Rather, the self recognizes that it exists within its lifeworld as an integrated being within horizons comprised of the indices of time, space, movement, and referential relations. Each of these co-variants places the self within an inter-connected web of causality, and therefore the self cannot be 'left behind' (Csordas, 1994) in conversion. In order for conversion to take place, the self must first recognize its poverty and bankruptcy, renounce its own willful exertions as destitute and indigent, and locate some new source of potency for its future life and existence. In short, conversion is a crisis of ultimate proportions for the human self as it perceives itself to come to an end of its raison d'être, and successfully locates some new object to attach itself and around which its ongoing existence may revolve.

Emilie Griffin referred to the recognition for the first time of sudden isolation and helplessness on the part of the self as in these words:

To know all at once that we can never provide for ourselves, under our own power, our own fulfillment. We see that we are not enough for ourselves, by ourselves; and that others—friends, wives, husbands, lovers—cannot satisfy us in that deepest part of ourselves where this heartfelt longing dwells. We know that we need something or someone, even if we cannot yet call that someone God. In fact, this new knowledge is profoundly disturbing, for we are not yet able to admit our need of God to ourselves out of a fear that he may not exist, after all (1980: 46).

Griffin elucidates the stages of her own conversion as turning, desire, dialectic, struggle, surrender, and afterwards; and operationalizes these as the basic structure of every conversion. She places this realization of the knowledge of one's own isolation and helplessness in the 'desire' phase of conversion. In order for the crisis of the self to be resolved, one option is for a 'greater Self' to be located and made the center of the percipient's plausibility structure. Hocking (1912: 236) makes the statement that, "To me [the] source of the knowledge of God is an expedient which might be described as an experience of not being alone in knowing the world." And if one comes to the end of oneself, it is normal to seek to find someone who is adequate to the task of supervising and resourcing the lived life. Thus from the experience of human inadequacy comes the notion of the adequacy of God; "I know not; but He knows"; and "I cannot, but He can" (ibid: 237-8, author's italics).

One emergent theme which demonstrates its relation to conversion is converts'
awareness of themselves in the midst of conversion. Respondents were aware of themselves in different ways in conversion but the recurring feature of their self-awareness was their reflexivity. They could see themselves as they were converting and make meaningful comment on their experiences of transformation. That respondents are aware of their 'situated-ness' is also apparent in that their dissatisfaction with their situation is what pervades their reflexive awareness of themselves and acts as the catalyst for change. Some form of deep presencing of themselves as selves-in-the-presence of one who is a Self who is greater-than-self lies at the roots of conversion. In that unequal relation—due to a failure of the self-in-response-to-the-world to overcome the embarrassment of the end-of-the-self and provide the promise of a satisfying new beginning—a poiesis or a position-taking is made which calls for some new strategy, based upon the resources provided by the Divine being.

2. Knowledge as Experience-Based:

The above explications disclose the habitual openness of individuals to the experiences they encounter within themselves as encounters between themselves and others in the worlds in which they live. Loder (1981: 31) holds that the acts of willing, acting, choosing, thinking and reflecting are carried out as 'situated acts', never as abstracted from the contextual or contingent events of the human world. Recognition that human existence is dependent upon an acknowledgement of interconnectedness calls to our attention the fact that it is the nature of human existence to be deeply intertwined with its environment. The egoistic status of the reflexive-I is essentially experienced as an ecological co-dependence between self and other. Buber (1958: 15) writes, "Relation is mutual. My Thou affects me, as I affect it." The knowledge which respondents applied to their own lives in preparation for their conversion was essentially a kind of practical wisdom designed to overcome the threat of the demise or destruction of their selves, in a search for new and creative options for their restoration and new birth.

The form of knowledge respondents applied in their preparations for conversion was not the abstract logic we are used to see in science, mathematics and philosophy, but rather a relational and experiential form of reasoning which considered the whole magnitude of their
lives. Such wisdom was not learned in the first instance as the contents of a book or as an outline of truth mediated through the testimony of some unknown believing soul, but was encountered within the life-experience of the respondents themselves. Cynthia was tutored by her own emotions; Mark by his weeping; and Anne self-diagnosed her unfavorable spiritual condition and took action to bring about change. Augustine referred to one’s own inner wisdom which informed one’s actions with regard to one’s soul as the magister internus.13 Augustine understood the magister internus to be an inward teacher with oracular powers which stood at the door of the soul and gave advice on matters of ultimate significance.14 For Augustine the teacher was none other than the spirit of Christ himself in concert with the active conscience of the believing soul. This supports my speculation about respondents’ recognition of their inward crisis, and thematises the importance of listening to one’s own conscience and inner-voice. Husserl himself cited Augustine’s words, “Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself; truth dwells in the inner man” as the closing lines of his Cartesian Meditations 1973: 157), which indicates the importance of experientially-generated self-knowledge in all aspects of human knowledge, including the religious. Hocking (1912: 154-5) adds, “Religious truth is founded upon experience.... If there is any knowledge of God, it must be in some way a matter of experience.”15

Husserl’s use of the notion of lifeworld (Lebenswelt) begins its analysis of reality not with the idealized world of natural science, but with human experience of the everyday world as it is given to our intuition, adumbrated as a sequence of objects, qualities and relations, and which is simply ‘there for us’. It is from experience acquired within this quotidian lifeworld

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14. Ryba notes Augustine’s tendency to conflate the neoplatonic notion of logos or nous with the Christian notion of Jesus Christ as incarnate Logos; (1991: 317).

15. Another author who supports this position is Evans-Pritchard (1965: 21), who states, “All human knowledge comes through the senses, that of touch giving the sharpest impression of reality, and all reasoning is based on them, and this is true of religion also.”
that the self finds itself grappling with sets of agonistic circumstances which provide the provocation toward new configurations of belief and constructs of truth. The way in which human knowledge migrates from inchoate appearance into doxastic possibility and into apodictic knowledge appears to be through the percipient’s elaboration of and response to their experience in their everyday lifeworld, intended in the natural attitude.

3. Transcendence in the midst of Immanence:

To the extent that the notion of ‘transcendence’ is outside respondents’ language it is an introduced, and therefore an abstract idea. Yet I have observed that transcendence as a concept is ubiquitous throughout the transcripts, as a dominant concern in the apperceptions of percipients as they recounted their experiences of meaning-change in conversion. They were concerned for the wellbeing of their entire selves including that aspect of themselves which is spiritual, and their repeated concerns for an agenda which is other-worldly is remarkable. For example, Jamie was aware of the likelihood of his being damned to Hell in the event of his death unless God intervened; and Janice sought alternative avenues of solace and life-support than those which were already available to her.

In its broadest definition there are two meanings to the word ‘transcendental’; the first is essentially a theological distinction made to differentiate between anything whose nature is transcendent or which exists above and beyond material objects, such as spiritual beings, fairies, angels, and those spirits which are non-natural and dwell in a larger metaphysical realm; including God. The second is a philosophical use which is a distinguishing within the self between the body (as a hyletic entity) and the thought-processes which seek to make sense of the presentations of non-body entities such as memory, meaning, value and significance. This is the usage which Husserl applied when he said:

I myself use the word “transcendental” in the broadest sense for the original motif ... the motif which ... seeks to come to itself, so to speak—seeks to attain the genuine and pure form of its task and its systematic development. It is the motif of inquiring back into the ultimate source of all the formations of knowledge, the motif of the knower’s

16. The word ‘transcendence’ does not occur in any of the transcripts.
reflecting upon himself and his knowing life in which all the scientific structures that are valid.... This source bears the title *I-myself*, with all of my actual and possible knowing life and, ultimately, my concrete life in general. The whole transcendental set of problems circles around the relation of *this*, my "I"—the "ego"—to what it is at first taken for granted to be—my soul (1999: 97-98).

In speaking in this way of the essential "I-myself" and the knower's reflecting on himself and his reflecting life, Husserl is thematizing transcendence as an elaboration of the self in its interior life. The reflexive-I is its own *expert* in a way that no other being is. It alone knows its myriad intrinsic and extrinsic relations, how they came into being, and the implications of undertaking certain courses of action in so far as can be known by human epistemology as contingent, imperfect and therefore uncertain. But what is certain is that the self as the prime agent-of-the-self has direct control over the way in which it directs its intentionality toward its object within the noematic realm. The self as a free agent in its willing, acting, choosing, thinking and reflecting has privileged knowledge of itself, and this knowledge comes into play when the self (usually as a result of crisis) prioritizes the spiritual object or realm as being the source of ultimate good or value.

Husserl characterizes the 'soul' as the ultimate source of the formation of knowledge of the self whose function is the realization of the knower's reflecting upon him or herself and his or her own knowing-life. Edgar introduced the term "the theoanthropological functions of the human soul", 17 which is a further attestation to the operations of the self in relation to its transcendental functions. At least one of the functions of the soul is to adequately constitute to its own mind the reasons for the predicament of human existence, and to set about locating those solutions which hold promise for the resolution of the crisis. This most primary of all higher-level tasks is the theoanthropological function which the soul performs by bringing its own reflective powers to bear on its own experiences of its own knowledge, with the help of the

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17. 'Theoanthropological' is a term coined by Brian Edgar in an unpublished PhD dissertation, "The Theoanthropological Functions of the Soul", (1992) Deakin University; where he defines theoanthropological as being "a section of theology dealing with the human person. In this case not only does the soul serve as the distinguishing marker of human-ness and the basis of human uniqueness, it also provides a theological basis for (a) the possibility of a relationship with God and (b) the possibility of life after death" (p. 3).
magister internus in order to answer the deep questions in order to give account for its reason for being. Those questions are hidden in the thousand outward circumstances which serve to remind the human self of its obfuscation and exacerbate the inward frustrations of their own personal limitations, mortality and finitude. The human soul is subject to a deep existential ‘ache’ or longing for something more which admits the possibility of that ‘something more’ being a reality which not only exists but provides the evidence-base for the truths the self senses it requires in order to make its continuing existence meaningful. This is one reason why phenomenology is essential to an unveiling of the soul’s inward reasoning processes as it addresses its own being in the presence of that which is transcendent and holy. By means of its ‘presence-absence’ analysis it is able to unravel what was always felt to be there but never known or experienced as being such.

Conclusion:

For the human soul struggling to make its way in a morass of outward cloud and inward perplexity, there is little to which it can turn except its own inward counsel. Religion does not become a strategy for change for the contented and self-satisfied person, but the person facing the destruction of their very being; it becomes a matter for one reflecting on issues of ultimate concern. As Bede Griffiths found (ibid: 118), “where all other landmarks fail, when that inner counsel bespeaks a new wisdom founded on religious principles, the soul cannot resist; it must follow.”

18. Cf. Merton’s voice, “Go to mass; go to mass!” (Griffin 1980: 104); or Griffiths’ urgent sense, “I must repent, I must repent!” (ibid: 116). Biblically these inward promptings are according to the light which each person has. In Romans 1:21f, an innate knowledge of God is assumed to be available to every human’s intelligence, despite its being resisted in acts of sin.

Introduction:

The definition of conversion used in this research has been supplied by Kreider (1999: xv), who defines conversion as a “change in belief, belonging and behavior—in the context of an experience of God.” This chapter addresses the element of ‘belonging’, both in terms of converts’ associating themselves with the Christian faith community as a distinct sub-community within the wider world; and in terms of the ways in which respondents experienced the inception of the Biblical worldview on entering into the Christian community.

The interpretive themes dealt with in this chapter are; the Bible as agent of truth and faith; manifestations of godliness; being in community; conversion as entry into the Church; authentic religion; unexpected discovery; becoming informed; ministry and mission; witnessing to faith; the strangeness of Christianity; and acts of worship and service.

(1) Manifestation of godliness:

At a transitional time in her life when she was open to change and considering new beginnings in her life, Anne encountered J—, a fellow student whom she describes as “such an inspirational person, so kind and loving.” He required nothing of her for himself through the relationship but sought only her wellbeing. Anne felt she could “see Christ, or God in him.” J—’s character and love of life conveyed the hope that it was possible for Anne to approach God as someone who was a personal, present and potent force for good in her life. She perceived J—’s life as the quintessential model of a living and breathing ‘saint’. Her prior rejection of Christianity was reversed on the evidence of someone who didn’t just claim to be a Christian but actually was one; someone who regularly attended worship, whose life was consistent with the faith he professed, and who impressed Anne by the quality of his life.

It was not important for Anne that J— hold correct doctrine (a measure often applied by institutional religion). It was important that his life exuded a quiet and refined certainty
concerning the existence and being of God. J—’s faith exhibited an inner personal certainty about God’s existence and character. Anne was forced to “correct herself”, and to “awaken” as if from sleep, in order to “explore” religious faith for herself, because of the convincing quality of J—’s life.

Throughout the history of conversion a consistent pattern emerges of the important place of a spiritual mentor for the convert; someone whose life and words act as an exemplary model of the reality towards which their lives pointed. For Augustine, the preaching of Ambrose and the conversions of the Apostle Paul, Antony of Egypt, and Victorinus acted as the ‘stepping-stones’ which he traversed in order to arrive at his own conversion (Morrison, 1992: 18). The exemplary life and witness of the Moravian Peter Böhler was critical to John Wesley’s conversion (Kerr & Mulder, 1983: 55). For Thomas Merton, people like Mark Van Doren and Dan Walsh gave input and advice, the importance of which Merton himself attests (Merton, 1978: 178 & 220). He wrote of Walsh, “I pray to God that there may be raised up more like him in the Church and in our universities.”

A ripeness for change, a state of spiritual readiness occurs in the life of the religiously sensitive person when a confluence of agonistic outward circumstances and inward confusion intersect to bring about a crisis. Precisely at that moment, someone of outstanding character and godliness shows up as a ‘manifestation of godliness’. Such a person is a signpost of the presence of the Sacred, a representation of hope manifested through a believing soul who represents in embodied form a pathway to God. God, perceived as the absent-Other, seems to be acting by sending his representative to reveal his presence to the now readied and listening subject. The Christians who go ‘at-large’ in the public-arena act as ‘carriers’ (Lewis, 1970: 159) who witness through the authencicity of their character and faith to the existence and veracity of God and the theistic worldview. Their words and actions are a direct challenge to others in that social space. They cry, “There is a God, there is a God”¹ which acts as a fundamental challenge to the soul-in-transition and on the threshold of being aware of their need of God. Through the modelled sainthood of the Christian carrier as a ‘templative’ other the questing

¹ In juxtaposition to Nietzsche’s madman who cried, “God is dead, God is dead!”
soul is able to locate a manifestation of godliness which stands as an invitation to alter their passive quest toward the religious possibility into an active, passionate pilgrimage.

(2) Becoming informed:

As Anne began to consider the options for change within her life and to speak about her interest in Christianity, her mother recommended the writings of C.S. Lewis. Anne’s mother at that time was a lapsed Anglican\(^2\) who considered herself to be an atheist. She had read Lewis’s *Narnia Series* to Anne as a small child. When she read *Mere Christianity* she felt deeply touched by Lewis’ description and defense of the Christian faith:

> If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you, brains and all. But ultimately, it works the other way round. Anyone who is honestly trying to be a Christian will soon have his intelligence being sharpened: one of the reasons why it needs no special education to be a Christian is that Christianity is an education itself. That is why an uneducated believer like Bunyan was able to write a book that has astonished the whole world (1970: 71).

This statement impressed Anne as a description of Christianity ‘as it really was’. She thought it a creditable defense of the reasonableness of the basic tenets of the Christian faith and experienced it as deeply convincing. She identified reading Lewis as *the* defining point in her conversion; saying “I felt that was ... when it all came together.” Anne recounted without strain and from memory Lewis’ description of Christian moral philosophy using the metaphor of a fleet of ships sailing in formation; “the voyage will be a success only ... if the ships do not collide and get in each other’s way; and secondly, if each ship is seaworthy and has her engines in good order” (*ibid*: 66). Anne described the outcome in the following way:

> In the parable of ships sailing in formation, and in the way society works, [is] the idea that you have to work together. And what ships do together influences the fleet. And also what each individual ship does influences how all the others behave. And coming from a society where there’s the buzzword, of “well if it’s not hurting anyone else why

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2. Some 18 months after my interviews with Anne, I visited her home to check on some details related to the substance of an article I was writing for a Conference paper and met her mother. She informed me she had been so impressed by the changes in Anne’s life that she too had become a Christian and was presently progressing through the RCIA program of adult induction into the life of the Catholic Church.
does it matter what I do?" And having used that to justify my own actions a lot in the past, that was a fatal blow. That’s very true. That influenced me a lot.

Lewis’ description of a Christian moral philosophy as one of mutual obligation and responsibility struck a chord within Anne. It provided an apparently satisfying counter-instance to the narcissistic individualism of her own actions to this point in her life. It became the “fatal blow” which influenced her away from her previous beliefs and practices toward the Christian position of being one’s ‘brother’s keeper’ (Genesis 4:9). It reiterated the golden rule of Jesus’ teaching, “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

Becoming informed for Anne was the result of being exposed in a meaningful way to the deeply held convictions of the Christian faith tradition through the eyes of one of its carriers (Lewis himself). Although Lewis’ stated aim in *Mere Christianity* was not to try to convert anyone to his own position but simply to explain and defend beliefs which he believed were common to all Christians at all times (1970: 6), nonetheless that was what happened in Anne’s life. Lewis realized there was something in the quiddity of the Church as a community of faith which acts to draw others into its very life. “The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men to Christ, to make them little Christs” (ibid: 166).

When the soul-in-transition who is open to change encounters the authentic religious-other from the redeemed community he or she is likely to ask themselves, “Can I be like that?” The self becomes aware of its own dysfunctionality and of the apparent “togetherness” of the religious-other, and begins to consider the possibility of taking its place within the Christian community and accommodating its identity ‘to’ the shape and circumference of its teachings. Within Christianity lies the believing community within whose parameters include nurture, encouragement, protection and a Christo-centric worldview shared by its members. In the context of the *ekklesia* the individual becomes a ‘part’ embraced by the ‘whole’, and a participant within a greater aggregate in whose generative ‘world’ the newly believing soul can find healing for what ails them, a radical new commencement for their lives, a supporting community of others who share a like mind.
(3) The Bible as agent of truth and faith:

The Bible is a recurring generic theme in the protocols of all seven respondents. Anne referred to the Bible only twice, but Mark referred to it 21 times. In this section I will discuss the transcripts of Mark and Samantha.

When Mark began reading the Bible he placed it “in the mythological category.” He stated that prior to his conversion, “God revealed himself to me through his Word.” Until he read the Bible, he said “I didn’t really know God.” Mark identified his exposure to the Bible as that moment when he began to perceive a spiritual reality beyond the everyday world, and as the point where “my attitudes (towards God) changed.” In the reading of Scripture things became “self-evident to me”; and, “When I read the Bible it knocked me for six.” After studying the Bible for himself Mark became sure it was the “way to go”; he began to take the Bible to be “literally true.” He recognized that a process was taking place by which “some kind of truth ... something just hit me.” Mark memorized sections of the Bible and quoted it verbatim from memory in his interviews.

When Samantha first read the Bible she “just read it as a story”, in just the same way as Bede Griffiths read the Bible: “We began to read [the Bible] first of all for its literary interest, as part of that great seventeenth-century prose to which we were ... attached.... But it very soon ceased to be of merely literary interest” (1979: 76). The same process took place for his reading of Thomas a’Kempis’ Imitation of Christ (ibid: 91). For Samantha the Bible at first had the appearance of being a fictional narrative with no application to her life. Yet the more she read the Bible, the more it appeared to her as being “true.” In response to reading the “stuff written in the Gospels” she sought to bring about changes in her life because “as I read the Bible I

3. Anne’s reticence when it comes to the Bible is understandable in the light of her comment, “I tend to listen to what the Church has interpreted for me over the centuries rather than the Bible.” Anne’s statements, “People justify anything by appealing to the Bible”, and “I’m not particularly good at Bible interpretation, so while I read it, I find it hard to say, ‘Well I do this because it says so in the Bible’. Ahm... so I did tend to follow what the Church has interpreted for me over the centuries, rather than trying to work out my own interpretation” indicate her conformity to an approach typical of Roman Catholics who prefer to locate their main source of authority in Church tradition rather than in the Bible.”

4. Verses quoted by Mark were John 3:16, and Psalm 119:105 & 11.
began to see what I was doing was wrong."\(^5\) Over time, Samantha began to understand the Bible as conveying "truth" as a kind of narrated reality. She reached a point where she achieved a state of readiness to believe the Bible and its contents with what she termed a "rank acceptance." This resulted in her "completely cutting off everything I once believed in." She just "cut it", saying "only God is true." As she said this she slapped her hands together; a gesture which served to emphasize the intensity of the experience for her and the depth of her new commitment. At that moment a greater truth had broken into her awareness and over-writ her previous proto-theology. The realization came to her that, "Jesus' blood had been shed for me and that I'd been forgiven." She stated, "I didn't actually know that Jesus was God's Son until I read the Bible."\(^6\) As a direct result of reading the Bible Samantha rejected evolution as a convincing model of the earth's coming into being and accepted God as its creator. She arrived at a place of peace where her prior inward agony and distress were overcome. She became conscious of a reasoned and meaningful understanding of the Christian gospel message in the form, "Jesus is God's Son, he humbled himself to be a man and then die on the cross a shameful death, he shed his blood and rose from the dead to God the Father; he died for me."

For both participants, the Bible exerted a subversive influence on their previous belief systems. It acted in this way by delegitimating their prior beliefs about God, Jesus, the world, and their own existence. Mark came to know the Bible as the source of true knowledge concerning God when it impacted him in an almost physical way ("something just hit me"). This physical 'collision' jarred his perceptual apparatus into jettisoning old forms of knowledge and belief, and occasioned new ones. The phenomenological comment I made in cataloguing this item was that, "At conversion P. (the participant) was impacted by a hagioscopic realization

\(^5\) A similar statement is made by a respondent to Ammerman's questions concerning conversion, "I developed a consciousness of the things I was doing wrong, whereas before that I think I had so much sin in my life and so many things wrong that my conscience was seared." Nancy Ammerman, 1987, *Bible believers: fundamentalists in the modern world*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. 157

\(^6\) A similar comment was make by Greg; "I only committed to Jesus when he spoke to me out of the Bible(s) pages."
to which he accorded the status of truth." Mark experienced an in-breaking of apperceptive truth which he felt to be profoundly self-authenticating, and which he "knew" was from outside this world. He responded by opening himself to the new truth and allowing it to take root in his life. He did not resist it, but became malleable in the face of his suspicion that it was not only something radically true, but which could provide him with a new beginning by solving his interior problem of dissolution and dis-ease.

Samantha identified reading the Bible as the point at which she decided to disallow her previous beliefs as being completely unworthy of any further attention. She rejected them totally and accepted the Christian gospel as the sole authoritative source of truth for her life. The extremity of her inward pain and anguish were undoubtedly the stimulus toward such radical change. This highlights self-interest as a primary motive in deciding to invest new knowledge with the status of ultimacy. Her previous knowledge did not appear to ameliorate the presenting problems of anomie, but the radical departure of faith in Christ did so, therefore it "must" be true. The new reference point, with Christ as its center disclosed itself through the hagioscopic window of the Bible. She responded by making the judgment that the crucified Christ was God's son and her Savior.

Willimon (1990: 73) says of the narrative depictions of truth found in the Bible that they tend to be a catalyst for the imagination; they are experiential, and such stories tend to be communal in nature. Furthermore, he states, "Texts like Scripture are constitutive, that is, they are busy constituting new worlds. The Church is the imaginative projection of a Biblical text. The Bible is not merely describing a new world but also constructing one" (ibid: 61). Newbigin (1986: 56) observes that, "Every Christian reader comes to the Bible with the spectacles provided by the tradition that is alive in the community to which he or she belongs.... This is the hermeneutical circle operating within the believing community" (author's italics). For both Mark and Samantha, the Bible was the authoritative text out of which they constituted the source of their new lives and identities on their way to a heightened and improved existence, based on a Biblically-directed future.
(4) The strangeness of Christianity:

Prior to his conversion to Christianity, Mark used to think Christianity was strange. He reports his non-Christian work-colleagues as suspecting that convinced Christians are “wacky and strange.” Samantha reported, “Before [I went to] Church my impression of Christianity was that it’s weird (x2).” Anne described her perception of Christianity prior to her conversion as being awkward and alien. She described the perception held by her flat-mates in the following way: “Christians were a joke ... ‘those goody two shoes’.” Although she had attended church as a child, once she began thinking seriously about accepting the teachings of the Church she remembers restraining herself by thinking, “I hope this is the right thing to do. I feel a bit daft.” She observed that Christianity is “embarrassing when you’re not part of it.” Anne acknowledged being more comfortable admitting to being a Catholic than a Christian, and she experienced a wave of revulsion in reaction to the thought of allowing Jesus into her life and becoming religious.

Respondents identified their initial contact with the institutional Church as feeling alien and unwelcoming. On their initial contact with the language, symbols and cultural morés of the Christian faith, they experienced a sense of bewilderment which created a disjunctive dissonance and served to push them away from Christianity. Their unfamiliarity with the signs and sacraments of Christianity meant those symbols did not reveal themselves or speak to them in a voice which ‘gave up’ their inward metaphysical and mythically-rooted meanings. The cross is the most available symbol of Christianity, but for those who reside outside its symbolism its meaning remains hidden; somehow cold, detached and clinically separated from the observer’s life and experience. It answers no need and does not evokes the presence of a Saviour. Those observers not yet inducted into the narrative and mythic world of the Christian imagination are bewildered and discomfited because of their general failure to recognize as discernably meaningful the imaginative landscape which Christians call ‘home’. A kind of cognitive vertigo is experienced; the kind which disorients one in the presence of the signs and symbols there to be interpreted, yet with no hermeneutical key within their possession to provide a meaningful interpretation. They suffer a disconcerting anxiety of being in an alien
environment and enjoy no sense of 'being at home'. No hierophany or revelation of the sacred is possible amidst the strangeness of the profusion of symbols and rituals. The outsider remains passive, a stranger who is un-engaged with the underlying symbolic universe of Christianity and feels it to be an abnormal rather than a normal state of affairs. Religion is and remains for them the land of the *terra incognita*.

Yet for the convert who has come to 're-cognize' (Hart, 1997: 39) Christ as the interpretive key to the Christian plausibility structure, *everything* speaks of God's presence, power and purpose. The world has been turned upside-down⁷ so as to be observed in a new light. Paul's preaching sounded foreign and absurd to his hearers, yet to those who became Christians these truths became the primary values for which they were later martyred or lived out their lives in opposition to the competing truth-claims of alternative civic and religious formulations. David Tracy (1981) spoke of the Christian imagination as an 'analogical imagination' where there is no mere 'fact'; rather everything in our cultural lives serves to inform and indeed 'transform' the parts of human life into a whole (1981: 159); a whole which was Christologically centered. He refers to the 'religious classic' which acts as a moment of disclosure or manifestation of the divine through a limit-experience of some kind (1981: 172). He says, "That event of self-manifestation by the power of the whole [is what] Christians and Jews name 'revelation'" *(ibid: 173)*. For Christians the classic religious event is bound up with an encounter with the Risen Lord who is the crucified Jesus of Nazareth (1981: 249). According to Greeley:

The Catholic imagination ... tends to emphasize the metaphorical nature of creation. The objects, events and lessons of ordinary existence hint at the nature of God and indeed make God in some fashion present to us ... Everything in creation, from the exploding cosmos to the whirling, dancing, and utterly mysterious quantum particles, discloses something about God and ... brings God among us ... God lurks in aroused human love and reveals himself to us *(2000: 6-7)*.

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⁷ The idea of reversal or of inversion comes from the Revised Standard Version (1972, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc.) rendition of Acts 17:6 which reads, "these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also." The reference is a reported accusation against Paul and Silas during their preaching of the message of Christ in Thessalonica. The NIV refers to them as having "caused trouble."
Unless one has been inducted into the 'world' of the Christian metanarrative the task of interpreting the language, Scripture, actions, rituals, and icons of Christians without the hermeneutical key which provides the necessary interpretive device is bound to leave the uninitiated observer in a quandary. However with that 'key' in their possession, the world of Christian faith is experienced as a comfortable and reasonable existence.

(5) Authentic religion:

All this is not to say however that every expression of religion is authentic. Anne experienced her early encounters with Christian churches as being inauthentic. When she was first “opening herself to God” and seeking to rid herself of those things which hindered her progress towards faith, a flatmate suggested she attend a Pentecostal church. Her flatmate was homosexual and using drugs at the time. Anne considered it to be hypocritical that he was criticizing her for the way she was living. When she went forward in the service to receive healing on his behalf, the stewards “were pushing me backwards to try and make me fall down.” She cried out, “Stop pushing me.” “That really put me off” she reported. In reconstituting the prior intentional moment in her interview, Anne contorted her facial muscles to convey her disgust at that kind of human manipulation of the sacred through a farcical manufacturing of a false appearance of God’s in-breaking into the experiencer’s life. Anne felt this to be inauthentic. She said, “The Pentecostal Church let me down”; and “I just thought it was a fairly unsatisfying thing.” What she experienced was far removed from the genuineness she recognized in J—’s life and the representations of the ‘real’ spiritual world she thought she perceived in the Bible. In Anne’s experience the high levels of noise and the pressure to join the Church were not supported by any spiritual substance. She felt the attestations of spirituality she was being exposed to were “mis-representations” of authentic religion.

Also when worshipping in an Anglican Church, Anne came to the opinion that that tradition misused the elements of the host during the Eucharist by not treating them with adequate reverence. She said, “I didn’t feel the Eucharist was treated as it should have been in the Anglican Church ... they let me take it without going through confirmation ... ‘Oh just help
yourself." However on attending a Catholic Church she experienced an immediate recognition of Christ as being present in the Eucharist. Anne now attends the Catholic service of Mass daily. She says it "has become a really strengthening part for me." Yet she is careful about seeing the Catholic Church as her ultimate source of spiritual authority. She doubts that Papal Bulls are of any spiritual benefit, and does not read them because "I find them too wordy; it's usually not that interesting. It's hard to get my head around." She has observed that the formalized liturgy of the Catholic Church can prevent worshipers from encountering God, because "while doing religious things, they can sometimes not be experiencing God."

The incipient religious person recognizes there is a fine line between the saint and the charlatan. He or she knows that for want of greater vision, human agents can turn the grace of God from free-will into 'cheap grace', resulting in a practical antinomianism. There are times when the very forms of ritual and liturgy of the Church leads worshippers away from the presence of God rather than 'to' it. As Bonhoeffer states:

Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian "conception" of God.... The Church which holds the correct doctrine of grace has, it is supposed, ipso facto a part of that grace. In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin (1959: 35).

Kierkegaard's 'Religiousness A' is representative of such cheap grace, in that it uses those same rites and liturgical activities as the more authentic 'Religiousness B', but does so in a nominalist sense and remains 'blind' to the realities which Religiousness B is able to ascertain. Jesus had to cleanse the Temple and turn momentarily into an iconoclast to restore the Temple to its right use. As Goethe's Faust despairs, having studied philosophy, jurisprudence, medicine, "and even, alas, Theology all through and through with ardour keen! Here and now I stand, poor fool, and see I'm just as wise as formerly" (cited by Wink, 1973: 26).

Hauerwas & Willimon (1989: 49) describe the church as a community of 'resident aliens', a colony of salvation on earth. But it is a neighborhood populated by sinful and imperfect people whose culturally-shaped institutions and worship styles require critique and
constant renewal. But the Church is a neighborhood, nevertheless, where one can address one's spiritual yearning in order to cross the divide which separates heaven from earth and then press forward into the Kingdom of God.

(6) Unexpected discovery:

Greg had contact with Christianity during his childhood, but it was not meaningful for him. As a child he had characterized the world of the Church as no more than musty choir crypts and ancient clergymen. At a time of crisis later in his life Christianity did not present itself as a viable source of rescue. His perception of its weakness meant it did not appear to offer any comfort, solace or potency for healing. Greg thought only to look for resources in the New Age and self-help movements. There he discovered the writings of Norman Vincent Peale who unbeknown to Greg happened to be a Christian minister. In one of his books Peale suggested his readers should underline positive statements in the Bible. Once Greg began underlining he soon “forgot” to continue and became engrossed in the Biblical narrative. As he read the narrative the world of the Bible became a living entity to him. Words of ink became living truths. His life began to be enveloped by the text of the Bible, and he felt Jesus' words “before Abraham was, I am!” were no longer addressed to others, but to himself. Lynn Arnold gives an account of an African woman chided by her friends for always carrying her Bible around. In her defense she replied, “[The Bible] is the only book that reads me.” Greg experienced his life as being addressed and “looked at” by Jesus. He realized that “God has guided me”, and the conviction grew that a revelation had taken place; a revelation which he welcomed but had not expected. Thus Greg’s life was “accidentally” re-connected with his childhood roots.

The serendipity of finding God in the world of Christianity surprised Greg. He was taken aback. No one had ever told him God could be found in Church! Whereas he had thought Christianity to be shallow and jejune; he now found within it a depth and robustness

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he had not thought possible. The existence of previously hidden resources within the faith of his childhood were revealed. The ‘forgetfulness’ which Greg exhibited is a forgetfulness of preoccupation with a greater goal. His forgetting to ‘do’ the task of underlining was because he was ‘doing’ the greater task of recovering from trauma to the self using the healing resources of Scripture. In the first instance, it was not the Bible he was interested in, it was recovery. His forgetting to underline elaborates the Biblical text as a ‘speaking text’; a text which when listened to undertook in a supererogative way the task of recovery he sought. In his forgetting to underline the sentences, an underlying synchronicity was taking place, in which the act of underlining words was replaced by the act of imbibing the truths to which those words referred into his mental structures. There the self mulled them over and clutched them near to its bosom. The realization soon emerged that these were no mere placebos, but the medication he had been seeking from the beginning.

According to Steinbock, Husserl characterized forgetfulness as a feature of the natural attitude (Steinbock, 1999: 271). The consciousness which fosters it is a naive realism which thinks it knows what it knows without availing itself of the possibility of looking twice. Ricouer spoke in *The symbolism of evil* (1969) of a ‘second naivety’ which retained its autonomy even after having taken a second look. Through the immediate task of performing actions designed to evoke the possibility of a new beginning in life, something of greater importance becomes manifest through the object ‘to hand’. Through reading the Bible and participating in Christian worship the presence of the divine emerges in such a way that the believing soul perceives ‘traces’ of the desired new beginning itself. But this was not because of any particular value he had placed on those objects themselves. Greg’s desire was to begin again, to locate a source of higher existence which did not damage his being, his self. He sought what he thought would provide it; the new, the exotic, the religion recommended by those around him. This is what he valued. In so doing we learn that the self can mislead itself; that “transcendental” knowledge of one’s own affairs is partial, conditioned and relative. It awaited fulfillment from sources outside itself.

Watts and Williams are critical of those churches who are cautious about promoting
religious experience and the knowledge it engenders. This result, they say, is an enervating spiritual starvation diet for those brought up within Christianity and the tendency for people to leave the churches to seek spiritual vitality in other faith traditions. They do not realize that the promise of a rich and fulfilling spiritual experience awaits those who invest the same effort in their 'home tradition' as they do in the new ones (Watts & Williams, 1988: 3).

(7) Conversion as entry into the Church:

Cynthia underwent a conversion to Christianity while attending a local Church with her son, and as a result of participating in a series of Bible studies lead by E—, the minister's wife. The lessons were taught as a weekly class in E—'s home, with just the two people being present. After completing the studies she resisted making a commitment. E— challenged her, "What would it take for you to believe?" Cynthia made a deal with God which she felt was circumstantially fulfilled within several weeks. She was then willing to "sign on the dotted line." At that moment she believed herself to be completely submitting herself to God. Afterwards she informed her unbelieving husband of her decision and stood in the weekly worship service to nervously announce her new faith. Subsequently she attended regular Bible studies and prayer meetings with other believers.

Anne's conversion to Catholicism was much more formal and ritualized. Having rejected the Pentecostal, Baptist and Anglican versions of the Church she decided to attend a Catholic Church and began attending the RCIA course. Over a nine month duration she and another novice met weekly with spiritual mentors to study through topics such as "in search of God", and "the sacraments of initiation: Eucharist." A complex network of support was put in place, from a priest describing in detail the Mass, to the example of a devout exemplar during

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9. The lesson material appears to have been prepared in Australia for a program entitled 'Baptist Church Life and Ministry' and titled 'My Commitment'; perhaps along similar lines to material previously prepared in the United States. No publishing details are recorded on the literature.

10. From the RCIA (Rite of Catholic Initiation of Adults) booklet, *At Home With God’s People: book of texts*, Fr. Bill O'Shea & Peter Gagen, 1990, Brisbane: Catholic Adult Education. This is a series of three books designed for use in Catholic churches throughout Australia. Twenty five topics are listed for discussion by initiates.
the RCIA course who prayed in a fit of devotional ecstasy "O Jesus, O Jesus", and caused Anne's embarrassed remark, "Yuk, stop it!" Yet his example caused her to reflect deeply on what Jesus had done for her; and she thought, "That's really lovely." Later she was welcomed into the Catholic Church at the Cathedral by the Bishop in a Rite of Election at Easter. This was an "amazing experience" for her. She signed her name in a Book of Life, never to be erased, indicating that her membership in the Church and her salvation were to be permanent. She read *Becoming a Catholic*, and Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, which were significant factors in her conversion.

I did not originally classify conversion as an interpretive theme because the experience of being converted is itself the meta-theme whose underlying structures this research seeks to explicate. However, I have included it here in order to draw two elements within the broader horizon of conversion into the foreground. The first is the way in which converts experienced conversion as entry into the life of the Christian faith community. The second is converts' experiences of the social and ritual components of conversion as they were making their way into membership within their respective congregations. These are important aspects of conversion which I believe are not adequately dealt with in the literature of conversion. The most thorough treatment of ritual conversion is by Donald Gelpi (1998). A phenomenological discussion of this aspect of conversion will be held over until it can be treated as an explicative theme at the end of this chapter under the heading, 'becoming a member of a believing community'.

(8) **Being in community:**

Janice experienced a change in her home-community at conversion. She says of her non-Christian friends, "I choose not to associate with them any more." Following her conversion, Janice felt herself to belong to a community at the Church where she was accepted and valued. She stated, "I don't have to be afraid because they don't judge me on who I was ... They judge me on who I am now." She says she has "a feeling of love and kindness" directed towards her from the people in the Church. With reference to her conversion, Janice says, "I've
become more than what I was;" and that "[God's] giving me more than taking from me"; and that now she has become a "whole person, not just a person living on this earth." For Janice, part of the wholeness she now experiences is as a result of being placed in a community of people who accept her just as she is. She now attends the cafe each week in order to sit down with "drug addicts" and those who "can't feed themselves" in order to tell them what has happened to her; that she has become a Christian and that her life has been healed. Janice is very aware of having distanced herself from the community she was previously part of in order to belong to a new community. This is because she has completely re-evaluated her life. In accepting God she feels she has become part of an entirely new and supportive community; a community where she is loved and valued more than she had been before.

It appears from the above that in genuine religious conversion, there is the need to be converted 'into' a community of faith. This is so that the incipient religious soul becomes integrated into the life of the community for whom the Christian gospel is its paramount truth, and not remain in isolation from other human actors who believe and embody the faith as living progenitors of its teachings. This necessity for faith to comprise an incarnational aspect is referred to by Merton, who makes the comment:

God has willed that we should all depend on one another for our salvation, and all strive together for our own mutual good and our own common salvation. Scripture teaches that this is especially true in the supernatural order, in the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ (1976: 177).

According to Hauerwas and Willimon an individual cannot make a radical change within his or her own life without belonging to a community who can support and encourage them through the transition:

Practically speaking, what the Church asks of people is difficult to do by oneself. It is tough for ordinary people like us to do extraordinary acts as Jesus commands.... What the Church asks of people is difficult to see by oneself. Christian ethics arise, in great part, out of something Christians claim to have seen what the world has not seen, namely, the creation of a people, a family, a colony that is a living witness that Jesus Christ is Lord (1989: 72).

The authors capture succinctly the connection between several topics related to this section,
especially in the fact of the believing community as harbinger of the Christian message. The message of Christianity can neither be conceived of nor maintained in isolation.

For Janice, the encounter with God required there first to be an encounter with a loving and non-judgmental human community which lived and loved in God's name, acting as his representatives on earth. Her concern was not with correctness of doctrine, but with the quality of personal relationships, with healing, and a place where one could work out the elements of a new life with the support of fellow-believers who provide the necessary acceptance and friendship in order to facilitate the changes in belief, belonging and behavior required in conversion.

(9) Witnessing to faith:

Following his conversion, Mark tried to communicate his new faith to friends and work colleagues. But just as Greg and Samantha found in seeking to communicate their new-found faith to their mothers, success is not guaranteed. For the most part Mark's friends and work-colleagues neither understood nor accepted his attempts, they "only rubbish[ed] me and ... God." This caused Mark "distress"; it is painful having one's new identity and one's new treasure rejected when "my faith means everything to me." He refers to his being overly "enthusiastic" while witnessing, and says that it has sometimes "backfired." He has discontinued the practice of engaging groups of people in conversation regarding religious topics, because his experience has been that it is "unproductive." However, he continues to share these ideas with individuals with whom he has a rapport and whom he believes to be receptive to faith.

Statements about the sacred are not readily communicable outside one's home-community. People of a like-mind who are able to read the cues and who can guess where the religious communicator is going before they get there easily pick up the nuanced cues within the message. But crossing the ideological chasm which exists between in-group and out-group cohorts is difficult. Lesslie Newbigin, in making a delineation between the 'facts' of science and the 'values' of faith, states:

In the missionary encounter between the gospel and our culture, the first party will be
represented by a community for which the Bible is the determinant clue to the character and activity of the one whose purpose is the final meaning in history. The boundary between this community and the society for which the Bible is not determinative is marked by the paradigm shift that is traditionally called conversion. However this conversion may occur—and it can occur in many different ways—those who belong to this community inhabit a different plausibility structure from that of their contemporaries. Things that are myths or illusions for others are real for them. God's power active in world history is not a mythical way of speaking for them, but an account of reality. But it is so only in the context of an active engagement with current events that corresponds to and continually renews this experience (1988: 61-2).

Mark now belonged to a community who operated out of a plausibility structure for which the Bible acted as the great 'clue' to the universe. That plausibility system had miraculous, supernatural, interventionist and salvific motifs at its center. Beliefs concerning answers to prayer, personal guidance, miracles and inner healing were posited on the basis of an unshakable prehensive assumption that 'God is real'. Mark's faith was proven to him through his experiences of answered prayer and incidences in which he felt God's presence. This stood in opposition to the plausibility structures claimed by Mark's listeners. These tensions reflect what for Mark remained the incommunicability of faith; something he appears determined to continue to struggle with.

For the newly-believing soul, the faith to which it has turned and for which it strives is so convincing, so utterly plausible and 'common sense'—because it has been the source of its own radical restoration and healing—that it will make extensive and sometimes unreasonable attempts to communicate that faith to others. But others are simply unable to 'hear' what is being said. For the convert, the message of the Christian gospel has become a 'universal' law of grace which applies to every culture, age, religion and person. In practice the convert applies the gospel as a totalizing ideology to his or her own life, and dispenses this new knowledge to everyone he or she meets. The chasm between the communicator and the recipient of the message is brought about because of the extent of the convert's 'revision' of the meaning of the cosmos and his or her participation in the divine entelechy (Hart, 1992: 66) based around the

11. A Biblical concept from Colossians 1:17, "He (Christ) is before [prior to] all things and in him all things hold together."
redemptive purposes of God in Christ. To the recipient of the alien message however, it is heard as something unintelligible, harsh, judgemental and insensitive. To the propagandist, the communication of their newfound faith is the only course available to them, and regardless of the response of their hearers, they continue to attempt to extrapolate into the external world, the state of affairs which has come to reign supreme within their internal worlds. But does the rejection of the Christian message by hearers unfamiliar with it mean they are unintelligent or 'blind'? No. What it means is they have yet to undergo the radical realignment which conversion brings in the form of a re-cognition in their underlying perspectives of reality, in order to obtain an insider's view of the spiritual world of the Christian believer.12

(10) Acts of worship and service:

Following her conversion, Anne began to place emphasis on two kinds of acts; those of worship and those of service. She now locates the practice of ritualized worship at the center of her faith. She attends Mass daily and describes it as being the “most important part” of her faith. When she attends Mass, Anne “just knows Christ is present”, and has no sense of it being strange or untoward that her religious world “revolves around dead people, as part of the supernatural world populated by saints and angels.” When she looks at the crucifix it “reminds me of Christ’s broken body and his self giving love.” She began a program of Christian meditation and “felt a more loving relationship with God” as a result. During her times of worship Anne “felt a sort of rush of sensation which communicated the perfection of ... God’s love” to her. In her worship and prayer life Anne has developed a focus on the person of Christ; the first time she prayed, “I prayed to Christ because of his suffering and death. I feel

12. There exists a useful discussion by Hebblethwaite which addresses the question, “Can there be genuine dialogue between the believer and the unbeliever?” (1982). Beginning with the importance of phenomenology to interfaith religious dialogue, the author suggests a similar application can be made to the believer-unbeliever dialogue. He states:

“In the case of dialogue between the believer and unbeliever, the further aims can have little hope of realization if the partners in dialogue cannot really understand each other. In other words, biological understanding remains a necessary condition of genuine dialogue between belief and unbelief” (1982: 251). I have not addressed Hebblethwaite’s contribution in the body of the text because I have adjudged his comments to be only tangentially related to the experience of either communicating religious belief, or the unbeliever’s hearing it communicated and forming a response to it.
much closer to him." Anne experiences worship as a deeply-felt expression of grateful thanks, on the basis of Christ's sacrifice for her on the cross. In worship Anne understands "Christ as someone who suffered, wept, and went through the experiences I have gone through." Christ then is someone whom she experiences as being approachable, and as understanding her needs as a mortal being. A particularly important sacred act was Anne's confirmation, which she counts as being the moment of her "formal conversion" to the Catholic Church.

Anne has also emphasized service as a theme in her life. She says a "big change following my conversion is I see Christ in other people." This flows over into a desire to serve others. She reports, "I have become committed to social justice and helping the poor." She now "tends to support the underdog" because she has "become more sympathetic towards people." Since her conversion, a significant change Anne has noticed in herself is a recognition of the "sanctity of life, especially (concerning) abortion." She is active in the service of other people within the setting of her Church's relief and welfare services, such as her involvement with the poor at St. Vincent de Paul's. She works among elderly clients as an aged-care nurse. Anne has watched a Religious Sister in her congregation and has said "that's what I should be doing" ... "anything else is a cheap copy of how I should be living." Anne has felt a sense of "religious calling" in her life, and is currently considering taking religious orders.

The newly-believing soul finds the setting of corporate worship to be an enlivening experience; a participatory opportunity for spiritual intensification of their faith in the context of hearing Scripture read, sermons preached, hymns and canticles sung, and the elements of the Eucharist placed in the mouth and ingested into the body. The Mass, administered by the priest as a formal representative of the Catholic Church, is an especial focus for the sustenance and development of her faith. The idea of Christ being "literally present" in the transubstantiation formula of the Eucharist helps the believing soul to apprehend in a direct way the person of Christ in the ritual. The wafer is Christ's body broken for her. The cup of wine is the blood of Christ shed for her. These things have paid the penalty for her sin. It is 'as if' the words of Isaiah apply directly to her life:

He was pierced for our transgressions
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him
and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

The intervening time and geography which separate the writer from the contemporary worshiper appear not to present a problem. Kelsey suggests that the early Christian believers conceived of the doctrines of incarnation and atonement not as idle speculation, but as the explanation for the "incredible experiences of transformation and renewal" they had gone through (1972: 168). And further, "Since there is no space or time in the spiritual world, then there is no reason that these experiences which occurred in 35AD should not occur in 315 A.D. or even 1972." Anne made the statement that her experience of the internal consciousness of time in corporate worship services took on a sense of "sacred" time; she reported that "time in a worship service doesn't feel like twenty minutes by the clock. It has a transcendent sense." Here we are approaching the concept of mythic time because the Eucharist is above all else the re-enactment of the Christian mythical moment. Christ's death in the Mass is re-captured, re-told and re-enacted in dramatic terms as the story of redemption for the believing soul in such a way that she 'enters in' to the act herself and becomes a participant. The outcome of participating as an initiate is that the sinner becomes redeemed and thus becomes a beneficiary of Christ's salvation. In this one ritual act the world is 'restored' to its original creative perfection, untrammeled by the stains of sin and human depravity. The cosmos has been righted, the sins of the penitent absolved, and God is elevated to his rightful place as preeminent, all-powerful and the one who in grace justifies the guilty. His Kingdom has come and his rule is assured. As Brueggemann states, "The Church in word and by steeple clock announces what time it is and that we must live in God's time" (1985: 53).

(11) Ministry and mission:

Soon after his conversion Greg attempted to explain his new faith to his mother; "She just shook her head, and [there was] silence." Greg's attempt at proselytism was unsuccessful and he felt frustrated at the difficulties of being unable to adequately conceptualize his new
beliefs and to express them to someone close to him. The "bridge diagram", with its depiction of "God on one side and sinners on the other", provided Greg with a mental picture of how lost people can be restored into a right relationship with God by turning to Christ and receiving his forgiveness.

![Diagram of the bridge concept](image)

**Diagram 4: The bridge diagram, illustrating a commonly used tool for communicating Christianity.**

Greg experienced a great deal of "urgency" in seeking to tell people about the love of God. He accepted without question his Pastor's wife's statement, "We exist to save souls", and his conviction of the importance of mission and evangelism grew. Greg began to see people as "sliding away into a Christless eternity," and as risking the eternal judgement of God. He read widely in the literature of Christian missions and later attended Bible College in order to receive training to allow him to return to Japan as a Christian missionary. Once there he sought to evangelize his Japanese friends, especially his Japanese landlord and his language teacher. While in Japan he began to write to his ex-girlfriend about his newfound faith. Initially she reacted negatively toward his communiques, but through a crisis in her life she too became a Christian and wrote, "It was as if I had come home to a home I never had before!"

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The impulse toward testimony, mission and service is endemic to the state of being converted. Anne is considering entering a religious vocation; Greg has gone to Japan as a missionary; Samantha is involved on the pastoral team of her church; Cynthia is now leading Bible studies to assist others to come to faith as she has; Janice is talking to drug addicts about what has happened to her life; Mark tries to speak about his faith to those who express an interest; and Jamie is attending Bible College preparing to become a Minister in his denomination.

The new religious convert feels internally compelled to act-out the faith which dwells inside his or her mind, life and body. Jeremiah the prophet stated, "His [God's] word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot" (Jeremiah 20:9). The Apostle Paul experienced himself in terms of being a 'debtor'; someone "obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish" (Romans 1:14). There is a sense here of being so caught up, so included in the goodness of God as an undeserving beneficiary of grace and so affected by the urgent need of those outside the believing community to 'come to faith' and to experience salvation for themselves, that converts appear to have no other choice. Hocking states, "He who has had a profound religious experience must become a teacher or else a hermit or an outcast" (cited by Joachim Wach, 1958: 60). Archbishop John Henry Newman wrote:

God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another... Somehow I am necessary for His purposes, as necessary in my place as an Archangel in his—if, indeed, I fail, He can raise another, as He could make stones children of Abraham. Yet I believe I had a part in this great work ... Therefore I will trust him (cited by Luzbetak, 1991: 6).

The Christian disciple not only has an alternative plausibility structure which requires him or her to think differently; this same alternate sense of reality bequeaths the necessity to act differently. According to Schliermacher, "Spontaneous activity in living fellowship with Christ begins in the moment of being received into His fellowship. There is no interval. Conversion may be said to be just the evocation of this spontaneous activity in union with Christ" (1986: 494-5). Inherent within the framework of grace is a denouement, a bestowal of the role of
activist and prophet whose task it is to annunciate God's message of condemnation for sin and the possibility of salvation for the penitent through repentance and faith. The self which has been suffering in a world of darkness and despair has suddenly been ushered into a world of grace and goodness where former confusion and troubles have been lifted from their shoulders and in its place they have received the unconditional love of God. They feel they have been totally delivered, utterly set free, profoundly uplifted into a higher stage of life and existence, and as a result they feel themselves to owe a debt of grateful thanks for the gift of their very selves. Thus a three-fold mechanism can be observed; (1) the pre-convert experiences themselves as lost; (2) they encounter God and, in an unanticipated act of mercy, they are delivered from their lostness; (3) they experience an enormous, even a superlative sense of gratitude and thankfulness, part of which is expressed to God in worship, and the other in acts of service\textsuperscript{14} and testimony to others, seeking to rescue others from their lostness. The reality of God who graciously acted to overcome the individual's crisis of body, mind and spirit, is experienced within one's body as an urge to act, to externalize the impulse of worship out into the physical world. This impulse literally 'forces' converts to act. Such 'acting' exerts a reifying influence on the realities of salvation, redemption and sanctification as inward realities 'outward' into the social world through acts of service and testimony where they can be heard and seen by unbelieving others.

Summary:

This concludes the discussion of idiographic representations of the Interpretive Themes I have placed under the heading of 'The Christian religious tradition; harbinger of the theistic vision'. I have sought to elicit those features of respondents' self-reports which uncover and reveal structures lying deep in the super-structure of religious conversion, and act as invariant features of conversion as a universal experience. In the following section I will discuss

\textsuperscript{14} The co-incidence of worship and service is interesting, because that is the point of Paul's injunction in Romans 12:1, "I urge you therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship." This latter phrase "spiritual act of worship" hangs on the Greek \textit{latruevo}, which can be translated as both worship and service.
nomothetically three sets of inter-connected primary structures which I have called explicative themes. These themes are: becoming a member of a believing community, the social as emblematic of the spiritual, and the theistic vision of the Christian faith community.

1. Becoming a member of a believing community:

Three routes were taken by respondents into the Church in this research on their way to becoming active participants in their respective religious communities. The first group (Greg and Jamie) encountered God outside the Church, and joined a local Church in order to move closer to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. The second group (Cynthia, Mark, Samantha and Janice) began attending Christian worship services, and in the course of joining the activities of worship with the believing community experienced a growing awareness of a sense of the Holy. They began to perceive 'traces' of another world. They wanted more, and became further involved in the life of the Church as a strategy for deepening and intensifying their inward hunger for the Divine. The third party was comprised of a single representative (Anne), who became aware of the Holy through an encounter with worthy representatives of the believing community, and set herself the task of preparing to meet God. After putting herself through a season of preparation and catharsis she reached a state of readiness. On entering the believing community of the Catholic Church she began to sense the presence and power of God. In each case the believing community was initially considered unimportant or as possessing little inherent value prior to the God-encounter, but subsequent to the God-encounter the believing community became highly valued. Only after an encounter with the other-ness of God with its appearance of beauty and mystery, did the religious convert ascribe a positive value to the believing community.

Respondents had previously described the Church in negative terms: Christians were Bible-bashers, worship-services were boring; Church was a place where hypocrites went; as a strange and uncomfortable place. Yet following the God-encounter, church was perceived as a place frequented by people who were representatives of heaven, whose role in the world was to act as harbingers of an alternate reality to which they now aspired themselves. That aspiration
was experienced physiognomically as a kind of hunger or thirst. They found themselves with an ache, a longing which was felt to be the opposite of a toothache or a migraine; it was something which attracted and called them with a siren song. Like addicts longing for a fresh 'hit' or sexual beings in a state of arousal they 'hungered and thirsted' after the nectar of the supernatural and spiritual. The longing was experienced as something inexplicable and beyond their capacity to identify or describe; like the urge of migrating birds to fly north, they could make no move to resist its compelling force. Greg couldn't wait for his next 'fix' of the Bible; Anne attended Mass daily and sometimes twice daily. They experienced a sense of urgency, as if their very existence was under threat and this movement 'upward' into God was an innate and involuntary movement towards self-preservation and the final maneuver in their reason for being in the world.

The human experience of transformation requires that a transference or a 'becoming' take place. Not only does a transformation occur within the self (from darkness to light, from blindness to sight, from bondage to freedom, Metzner, 1980); in order for a transformation to be completed it must also occur within the realm of the 'social' as both a personal and a communal transformation. The blind and blighted past with its fragmentation, guilt and culpability are left behind in favor of new possibilities, new beginnings filled with hope and the prospect of a move toward personal wholeness as a member of the redeemed community. The self as a self-in-isolation and a self-in-transition moves towards the visible center of the Christian sacred realm in the form of a living, confessing, worshipping and sacramental community. The self moves towards becoming a new person, seeking to establish its identity as a convert in the midst of this believing, acting and confessing society of saints. The very existence of the Church, with its claim to be God's redeemed people in the world at once challenges the newly believing soul to 'leave all that is past', and to join its ranks as it marches victoriously towards the apocalyptic close of history.

New religious converts, as converts in process exist within a space we may call marginal or edge-spaces; they are beings in transition who are in a place of threshold, neither dis-engaged from their past lives, nor yet are they properly engaged with their new lives. Olthuis
(1997: 241) cites Jacques Derrida who wrote of himself, "We are still on the threshold." In this case the threshold is a place of passage which gives access to God. This existing at the threshold, on the margins of existence, is a liminal moment between separation from one's past life and community, and incorporation into one's future life and identity. Victor Turner wrote of the ambiguity of the status of the liminal person:

The characteristics of the liminaries ... are ambiguous, for they pass through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. Liminals are betwixt and between. The liminal state has frequently been likened to death; to being in the womb; to invisibility, darkness, bisexuality, and the wilderness (1978: 349).

Turner is here envisaging liminality within a ritual context which is both symbolic and social. He applies the term 'communitas' to that sense of camaraderie and special bonding which participants as a group experience together as they transit through times of crisis and liminal transition. He defines communitas as:

A relational quality of full un-mediated communication, even communion ... Which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations and circumstances. It is a liminal phenomenon which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship ... [which] is an essential and generic human bond (ibid: 350).

In this context Turner relates communitas to Christian pilgrimage and not to the drama of conversion, although his processual analysis is uniquely suited to both situations. In associating communitas with pilgrimage, Turner links two essential features of religious experience; the first is intensification in the context of a group of journeying pilgrims, and the second is intensification in the context of ritualized induction into a higher stage of religious life. Once again this higher stage is set within the life of the larger religious community. What is not clear here are the implications of communitas for religious conversion, where converts are entering the religious life rather than progressing to a higher stage within it; and in settings where conversion is experienced as an isolated and singular episode, as was the case with six of the seven respondents in this research.15

15. Conversion, while it can sometimes be in concert with others in the form of a group conversion—is often painfully singular; and is not always ritually expressed. Anne is the sole representative among the respondents who could properly experience communitas with other converts in the context of the RCIA educative and induction
The 'becoming' we are speaking of also requires an 'un-becoming', or a moment of un-doing. It becomes necessary to renounce one's past life; to ex-communicate one's past associations and beliefs in order to commence negotiations towards a connection with the redeemed community. Part of this un-becoming behavior is the need for repentance. Repentance, far from being a revenge upon oneself, is—as Scheler (1972: 35-43) describes it—a "God-intimating function" which takes the form of a self-healing in an effort to "re-appraise part of one's life." For Scheler, repentance is a "re-possession of the very situation appearing in the phenomenal past" in order to array it as a "vehicle of truth against oneself." Repentance then is:

A purposeful movement in the mind in relation to guilt, aimed at whatever guilt has accumulated in the human being. The goal of this 'movement' is an emotional negation and neutralization of guilt's continuing effectiveness, an inner striving to drive guilt out of the vital core of the Person, to make that Person whole (ibid: 53).

In a large portion of the Christian Church, repentance is done as a public confession of one's sin, guilt and failure. This discipline has its roots within the biblical injunction to "confess your sins to one another" (James 5:16), and has as its object to make the believing soul ready for prayer in order to make prayer more efficacious so that "you may be healed." Although Anne disliked public confession and determined not to use it again, she nonetheless became a member of her believing community through experiencing communitas. On entering the Catholic Church she felt as if she had "come home"; she describes a primary benefit of conversion as "coming into the community of the Church"; on signing her name in the book in the cathedral, "never to be erased", she used the words, "amazing", "inspirational" and "incredible." Anne described her confirmation in terms such as, "just fantastic", "really very special", and "really special."

The 'becoming' we are speaking of is essentially a social becoming, an entry of the self into a new community of like-minded others who welcome the convert not as a stranger but as a fellow member of the faith community; someone who is one with and one of them.
This offers a socially-validated home-world within which the neophyte can belong, establish themselves as a disciple, and flourish into a believing, acting and worshipping saint.

2. The Social as Emblematic of the Spiritual:

William James (1928: 29) chose to ignore the institutional branch of the Church and to “say nothing of the ecclesiastical organization” in order to confine himself “to personal religion pure and simple”; to the “feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude” (ibid: 30). Doubtless James’ choice to prioritize the individual believer over the believing community was an attempt to delineate his subject-area as private faith rather than to fall victim to the quagmire of ecclesiastical affairs. Perhaps James’ decision to thematize private experience over the religious community was correct in the face of his further comment:

Churches, when once established, live at second-hand upon tradition; when the founders of every church owed their power originally to the fact of their direct personal communication with the Divine. Not only the superhuman founders, the Christ, the Buddha, Muhomet, but all the originators of Christian sects have been in this case;—so personal religion should still seem the primordial thing, even to those who continue to esteem it incomplete (ibid).

Yet such a division between the dynamism of the prophetic vision of religious founders, and the caricature of a static and institutionally-restricted spirituality does not do justice to those religious believers who live and worship happily in local churches. In my view, James’ representation of faith as being essentially private is a misrepresentation of the genuine convert’s experience of looking to the religious community for support for their new-found beliefs. Not only is he wrong in terms of the habitual practice of new believers—as expressed in respondents of this research—in associating themselves with a religious community, but he ignores the necessity of the social construction of religious reality as alluded to in Hauerwas and Willimon’s statement, “What the Church asks of people is difficult to do by oneself” and “What the Church asks of people is difficult to see by oneself” (1989: 72).

A phenomenological investigation into the believing soul’s acquisition of faith, its transition toward the confession of a new religious creed, and the sustenance of that new faith
in the presence of the mundane world cannot take an approach which views the religious agent in isolation from the believing community. For the newly believing soul, the 'social'—as represented by the living, praying, worshipping and serving religious congregation—is an emblem of the 'spiritual' presence of the Holy. The Greek *emballo*, to cast into, an insertion, provides the sense which I am seeking to invoke, where the community of faith is perceived by the believing soul as a place where God can be encountered in the midst of the assembly; where God 'dwells' in the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3). It is there in the worshipping congregation that the neophyte finds confirmation of all the secret mysteries revealed to them through the Scriptures and the inner voice of the Spirit, in the embodied form of worshipping others. The Church is perceived as God's appointed place and people, his 'insertion' into a dark and untrustworthy world. The dominant pattern of religious behavior is for believing souls to associate themselves with others of like minds in order to establish a legitimated structure of existence, in order to stave off anomie, in order to live by the *Weltanschaung* of the established religious tradition to which they now belong, and which embodies the expression of the sacred in the profane realm. In this way the Church becomes the social space where the numinous is revealed, and where worshipers, having got wind of the 'rumour' of God, can presence themselves in search of his substance. Just as we have previously discovered in this dissertation that the human body and the human spirit are inseparably linked; so it can be recognized that an analogue exists in the inter-connectedness between the Church as the locality where believers find access to God in the midst of the congregation, while being involved in corporate worship, the sacraments, the confession of the Creed etc. The Church is the locality of spiritual activity within the earthly sphere where God's presence is especially concentrated in an *axis mundi*, or the physical, earthly element in Eliade's 'cosmized' sacred space (1987).

For the individual who comes in from the cold and becomes a member of the local Church, that Church acts to publicly validate the faith towards which they are striving. In an uncertain world in which religious souls encounter their lives as contested existence, to remain a single convert is dangerous and fraught with difficulties. As Berger and Luckmann stated, "To
have a conversion experience is nothing much. The real thing is to be able to keep on taking it seriously; to retain a sense of its plausibility” (1966: 177). The ‘sacred canopy’ referred to by Berger is in the final analysis a banding together of humans in the face of madness, the precarious nature of human existence, and ultimately of death (1969: 51). Speaking of a society's institutional arrangements (but just as applicable to religious ideas), Berger states, “As long as these ... are confined to the individual’s own consciousness and are not recognized by others as at least empirical possibilities, they will exist only as shadow-like phantasmata” (1969: 10).

3. The Theistic vision of the Christian faith community:

As a result of exposure to the symbolic representations which carry the meanings of Christianity (Bible, educational literature, and Christian believers who act as examples of saintliness), the new religious actor becomes ‘infected’ (Lewis, 1970: 149 & 159) with the idea and possibility of becoming a Christian. The self who is open to change and willing to imbibe the meanings inherent in the ‘world’ of the Christian religious system, begins to take on the shape of that ‘world’ and to regard it as increasingly plausible. The experience of being converted brings about a change; it throws a switch in the will and affectations of the new religious convert so that the state of convertedness implies a conformity to the ‘truths’ of the divine Being to whom they turn, and the teachings of the tradition which represents it on earth. If the doctrine of creation is taught, then it is accepted as the new basal ‘fact’ upon which the entire world is founded, with the increased benefit that the self now belongs to God. It is not conceived as a dry doctrine but as a living truth. If the doctrine of election is taught, the convert becomes certain of his or her own election as a loved and embraced child who is no longer a stranger in the world, who is ‘thrown’ (Heidegger) into the world as a random and meaningless being. Rather the convert begins to take on the role and demeanor of one who belongs to the household of God. If the doctrine of salvation is taught, then it is no mere dogma. Salvation becomes the hermeneutical device by which all of existence is interpreted. Through salvation, God reached down in the incarnation of Christ in mercy and grace to
relieve the guilt and sufferings of human beings who travail under the load of their sin and depravity. If the doctrine of sanctification is taught, then the newly believing soul—having learned of Christ's death on its behalf—is in no mood to deplore it as an unethical or unwarranted act. Neither is it willing to perceive it as a mere poetic representation of goodness at work in the world. The impression of the realism of the act of Christ first arises within the cognizance of the believing soul, and later increases in value to the extent that it becomes 'true'.

Samantha described the Christian gospel in this way: "[The] message that Jesus is God's Son, he humbled himself to be a man and then die on the cross a shameful death; he shed his blood and rose from the dead to God the Father; and he died for me." This statement is a confluence of at least two Bible verses, Philippians 2:8 and Hebrews 12:2,16 which had been memorized and carefully integrated into her patterns of self and world-perception. They are perceived as authoritative because they derive from the Bible, which is understood to be God's self-revelation to his followers as his personal communication to them and their only rule of faith and life. It is also a prophetic word of rebuke directed toward the unbelieving world. Truth from the Bible becomes deeply convincing precisely at the point where the so called 'truth' meets the existential problem of the believing soul.

Hebrews 12:2 reads: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God." It contains an injunction to 'look' at Jesus, the Divine Other, who originated the Christian gospel by means of his self-sacrifice and costly altruistic commitment to obeying God on the one hand, and to bringing salvation to humanity on the other. The invitation here is to 'mimic' the actions and attitudes of Jesus. Citron describes converts as re-living the life of Christ and his disciples over again, and that "individual conversion experience is the extension of the promises, trials and triumph of Christ" (1951: 10). What is apparent here is the tendency of new converts to consider Christ as a divine-human 'TEMPLATIVE' model of what God requires of the human-spiritual being. He is both prototype and archetype of God's self-revelation.

16. There are also possible allusions to 1 Thessalonians 4:14 and John 20:17
toward mankind. As such new religious believers are profoundly aware of the Christo-centric nature of their faith. According to Newbigin (1991: 33) it is a central claim made by Christians that Jesus is the true and living way, the 'master clue' to ultimate truth. Christian disciples pray to God through Christ as their mediator; they scan the pages of the Bible searching for the words of Jesus\(^\text{17}\) and consider them to be infallible; in testimonies they confess what Christ has done for them; they seek to do the works of Christ, as Jesus said they would (John 14:12). The divine Christ becomes not only the quintessential model on which to base one's life, thoughts and actions; he becomes a co-agent working in and through the believing soul to achieve ends consistent with the Kingdom of God.

Thus a practiced 'collusion' takes place between the truths found in the Bible and the self-understanding of the Church. The collusion is a mutually energizing force, in which, according to Walter Wink (1973: 76), "A particular characteristic of the Bible is its concern to establish a community around the reality to which it bears witness.... In the final analysis the Bible is the Church's book." Yet on the other hand the Bible remains disembodied and unrealized until it is brought into the public space as a 'public truth' in the form of a worshipping community of believers. Newbigin makes the statement: "The local congregation is the place where the truth of the gospel is tested and experienced in the most basic way. But it must be a place where the gospel is preached and believed" (1991: 87). The local Church then becomes the social space and physical place where the 'infected' (Lewis, 1970) convert begins to 'indwell' (Polanyi, cited by Newbigin, \textit{ibid}: 45) the clues provided by the plausibility structure described and presented in the Biblical metanarrative. The Church is the emblem 'through' which individual believers live their lives, and where their faith is constantly intensified and renewed.

The truth of the Christian religious tradition, mediated through public worship and personal experiences in prayer and Bible reading, establishes the 'truth of the Church' in the

\(^{17}\) Bible Publishers have since the 1960s developed a preference for printing the words of Jesus in red ink, to differentiate those words, the \textit{ipsissima verba} of Jesus from the words of other less notable actors in the Biblical drama.
form of a shared vision, a shared world, expressed through a shared language, in which meanings are co-terminus and co-convincing as a form of communal reality. This effectively results in a consciousness not of I-Thou, but of 'We', in which a con-sanguine and co-cognizant community of believers express their faith in the credal expression of the Church; in the “We believe ...” of the Nicene Creed, and the Te Deum, “You are God, we praise you, etc.” When this new plausibility structure is established within a worshipping community of 'We's who indwell the new reality in an uncritical way (Newbigin, 1991: 53), where no distinction is made between faith and knowledge (ibid: 32), then the Church becomes a counter-culture which has an alternative mentality or plausibility structure, a contrary place to stand. And from this alternative Archimedean standpoint, it offers a subversive critique of the false religions of the mundane world. The Church assumes a stance which sees it become a 'carrier' of the message of Christ packaged in the form of its gospel of good news. This gospel 'must' be preached by the new convert. The message of salvation and the hope of rescue becomes a compelling and irresistible force within the believing soul. Like a spiritual reflux it 'must' overflow in his or her language, actions, self-identity and public persona. Jeremiah could not 'hold it in' any longer (Jeremiah 20:9). Hocking concurs when he states, "He who has had a profound religious experience must become a teacher or else a hermit or an outcast" (cited by Joachim Wach, 1958: 60). When the conviction of the convert takes the stance of a superior knowledge based on his experience of hierophany and theophany, then the Church is in the process of undertaking a 'mission' to the world.

Conclusion:

This chapter has sought to address the interface between the convert and the faith community which serves to support and deepen it. In discussing the selected interpretive themes idiographically, and the explicative themes nomothetically in this chapter, it can be seen that the first impulse of the newly believing soul is towards two equally primitive actions. The first is to 'congregate' with others who indwell a similar symbolic universe and confess a similar faith, and the second is to 'propagate' that faith among those who do not believe as a
matter of urgency. This bears out the functions of the Christian religious tradition as harbinger of the theistic vision, as it maintains that vision as the source of its internal homeworld, and extends that vision as an external validation of its truth-claims.
Chapter 8: The Self in the Presence of the Sacred: the God who Fascinates

Introduction:

I have reached the penultimate stage in this research as I now turn to address the experience of the human self in its encounter with the Divine. The primary interest here is how the encounter between the human and the Divine effects changes in the belief-structure and reality-concept of the human agent.

The interpretive themes addressed in this chapter are; transformation of the God-image; God as the underwriter of existence; the call of holiness; being lifted up; life of prayer; weeping as religious act; burning of the Spirit; fire of the Spirit; and need for a saviour.

(1) The call of holiness:

Since his childhood Mark has felt he had been "searching for something" because he had experienced an "emptiness" in his life. Despite the apparent normalcy of his outward life attending football matches, his drinking, and his enjoyment of sailing, in his inward life Mark was struggling to maintain a stable and meaningful existence. This deep inward hunger was experienced as "struggle" and "pain." He "wasn't happy" about himself, describes his behavior as "totally worthless", and saw himself as being in a "hopeless condition." In the earlier stages of his spiritual search Mark resorted to the use of pornography as a way of addressing this deep yearning in his belly for intimacy. He refers to himself as having "impure thoughts" which he later rejected as offensive to God. Mark's conversion was a series of bouts of brokenness and repentance, often manifested as a physical and emotional catharsis through weeping and tears. His proto-theology was composed of "sketchy opinions" about God, largely because he felt "God was unknowable." Yet he continued to "look for the truth", because there was a "real thirst" within him which urgently needed to be assuaged. Mark began reading the Bible and God's "character started to become evident" to him as a form of "self-evident" truth. He attributes the "amazing changes" in his life to reading the Bible and becoming aware of the presence and power of God. These things "went straight to my heart and my mind", and he
"felt the immediacy of God" as someone who was present in his life. He says, "being like Jesus" was "part of God's plan for me." At conversion Mark experienced a raised heart rate which he described as being "the heart murmurs of [his] love" for God. He experienced a "sensation sort of like 'God is inside me'." This was the "distinct time when I gave myself personally to the Lord", and felt “accepted by God and by Jesus” in an unconditional way. The outcome of this total commitment was a growing “sense of holiness; a need for holiness.” As a result Mark experienced God’s presence in an immediate way.

The call to holiness was a call which emanated from within Mark’s being which attested—through the void of his hungering and thirsting—to the existence and veracity of some unseen and unidentified source of help. The initial stages of his quest progressed through body-centered steps of alcohol and social miscreance, to the more basal realm of the secret delights of false-intimacy and pornography. Spirituality and sexuality have long been associated as similar although discontinuous human appetites. Brereton, in reporting early Protestant womens’ experiences of conversion reports:

Traditionally writers who have attempted to describe the intense time of contact with God or Christ have resorted to sense images—taste and touch as well as sight and sound. Furthermore, those who wrote of communion with the divine have often turned to sexual imagery. But as good Victorians, most nineteenth century narrators—and women in particular—shied away both from sensuous imagery and any conscious use of sexual metaphor (1991: 21).

Yet sexual imagery is common throughout the Old Testament (especially in the Song of Solomon and Hosea), and the language of the human-divine relation is replete with the Hebrew verb yadab (‘to know’) which is used both for sexual intercourse (Genesis 4:1), and of human knowledge concerning God (1 Samuel 3:7). The nuptial liturgy of the Catholic Church makes use of the words: “Love is our origin, love is our constant calling, love is our fulfillment in heaven. The love of man and woman is made holy in the sacrament of matrimony and becomes the mirror of your [God’s] everlasting love” (Greeley, 2000: 78). The writings of

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Christian mystics are likewise replete with references which link sexuality to spirituality, such as the writings of Mechtild of Magdeburg and St. John of the Cross. Bernini’s statue of St. Teresa being transfixed by the arrow of divine love portrays her ecstasy in explicit orgasmic terms. Likewise nuns are known as the ‘brides of Christ’ (McKenzie, 1988: 118). The idea of religious emergence is reflected in Weil’s reported predisposition toward the use of the sexual “nuptial yes” (Fiedler, in Weil, 1973: 38). Indeed it is possible to picture every form of human endeavor through music, art, literature and dance as an inherent search for religious truth and experience (Dupré, 2000: 69ff.).

In his search for the Holy, Mark found human sexuality to be an unfulfilling and inadequate representation of the transcendent. After emerging from the shadowlands of unfulfilled desire Mark began reading the Bible and encountered God as the Holy, the entirely Other, the ineffable. He experienced his inward yearning as a ‘deep calling to deep’ (Ps 42:7); a ‘thirsting for God’ (Ps 42:2) which could not be met by any mere substitute for God, but only God himself. The God who had previously been the God who was unknowable began to reveal himself as the one who was knowable, and in whose light “in lumine Dei” (Scheler cited in Twiss & Conser, 1992: 92) he encountered the true object of his desire, and he found himself “laying everything on the line” in a moment of absolute contrition and submission to God. The myopic miscreant had become the true mystic, and the pseudo-mystical had given way to the pleasures of spirituality (Gillen, 1987) in knowing a pristine new beginning in the soul.

(2) Life of prayer:

Following his conversion Mark committed himself to a life of prayer. He considered the only appropriate response to meeting God was the ardent application of the disciplines of prayer and worship to his life. He had been prayed over as a child and found it to be an “amazing experience.” Later, at the time of his conversion, Mark had been reading the Bible

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2. McKenzie describes the symbolic nuptials in Benedictine convents. “A bridal bed would be prepared, following the nun’s taking of the veil, and decorated with flowers. The rite of dedication to virginity ... is the marriage to Christ as bridegroom. A crucifix is placed on the pillow, in company of which the newly-wedded virgin celebrates her wedding night.”
alone at home with "only me and God present"; Mark prayed to God to indicate that he was now committing his life to God without reserve. When recollecting the moment he stated, "That was a definite moment when I gave my life to God." Subsequent to his conversion Mark has had bouts of "weeping" which have occurred particularly in the context of prayer. Mark relates the "big factor" in his conversion was that he could know God and communicate with him "through prayer." He no longer thought of God as a "distant entity that I couldn't have a relationship with." This changed understanding of God was what helped Mark make the decision to commit himself to God and become a Christian. Mark now prays for himself, his family, his friends and for the world. In his personal prayers he reports, "I ask first that the Holy Spirit lead me in prayer, but I always pray in Jesus' name." Mark thinks of Jesus as his "mediator" because, "I couldn't possibly expect to speak with the creator of the universe out of my own strength." It is significant that whereas Mark's proto-theology was composed of "sketchy opinions" about God, largely because he felt "God was unknowable"; he now experiences God as "knowable" through prayer. Mark reports that he is most consciously "aware of the presence of God" in prayer and specifically seeks to evoke that presence in prayer. He describes his practice of prayer as sitting with his hands together in his lap. While he usually prays alone, he often prays in Church with other Christians because praying together "gives me strength", and prays at work while on break. He experiences the greatest intensity in prayer when he is kneeling; "It's almost like I'm forced to my knees sometimes."

Prayer is the act in which Mark both identified God as being "knowable", and through which he chooses to make his response in total submission. Prayer is what Mark most desires to do now that he has given his life over to God; "I want to spend time in prayer." This sense of necessity, oughtness, and being "forced" to his knees as the direct result of having encountered God as the wholly Other; thematizes prayer as the characteristic expression of religious life (Kristensen, in Twiss & Conser, 1992: 168). No other act or attitude is so necessary to the believing soul as prayer, for in prayer the Divine object is most readily accessed, and more importantly, experienced. Having heard the speech of God in silent oceanic waves of love, mercy, forgiveness, healing and unconditional acceptance, the believing soul is overwhelmed
by the need to pour out its soul in an overflow of communication through grateful praise, worship, and communion. Prayer is not dependent on the mechanics of communication; nor evidently on the worthiness of the supplicant, but on the potency and overwhelming presence of the Person to which it is addressed. Prayer is the ultimate I-Thou encounter; a relational tête-à-tête which takes place in the temple of the supplicant's consciousness, under the jurisdiction and aegis of God.

In prayer an intensity of feeling, matched with the certainty of the existence and power of God as its object is given to the beseeching soul. The new Christian on entering the presence of God in prayer, in the name of Jesus the mediator, has no doubt that his or her prayers are being heard by the ears of heaven. Although “no religious act is so hidden and so difficult to evaluate as prayer” (Kristensen, in Twiss & Conser, 1992: 168), nevertheless in moments of ecstatic mergence such as weeping, glossolalia, kneeling and prostration, the essence of prayer can be identified as something is transacting (James, 1928: 465). James cites the French theologian Auguste Sabatier who treats prayer as:

The very soul and essence of religion ... this intercourse with God is realized by prayer. Prayer is religion in act ... Religion is nothing if it is not the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it draws its life ... Putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence (ibid: 464).

Phenomenologically, the Holy which in its manifestation is 'absent' to the human senses (the eyes, ears, touch, taste and smell of the percipient), becomes fully present to the inward senses of perception, belief, and doxastic knowledge, through the hierophanic and relational 'moment' of prayer. The distinction between noema and noesis as integers of the soul blurs into a pattern of mergence in which the human self becomes enveloped and subsumed into the essence of the Divine. The process of passive surrender ensures that human autonomy is not only fully relinquished, but comes to be actively reappropriated under the terms of a new constitution of love. A part becomes the whole, absence becomes presence, empty intentions become filled, the contingent becomes essential, and the Being of God spreads to fill not only the being of the worshipper, but the entire world. Prayer is the place in
which the supplicant most carefully learns of God’s character of love and mercy, and of his intention to do good in one’s own life and in the wider world.

(3) Being lifted up:

Janice had experienced problems in her life and was looking for reassurance and a “new start.” She began attending Church because her daughter had come home from a Youth With a Mission children’s meeting yelling, “I’ve become a Christian.” While people were praying for her in a worship service she felt “cleansed of all my sins” and reported afterwards that she had become a “new person.” She experienced a sense of well-being which was beyond her capacity to describe, and felt all her “troubles lifted off my shoulders.” This sensation was one of being relieved of a great weight of anxiety and heaviness. She felt “clean, like I had been cleaned out.” While she was standing worshipping God, she felt as if “something just lifted me up”, and she began shaking “like something had come over me.” She attributed the source of the lifting to God, and described the moment as “sensing that he [God] was there. I felt his presence.” She subsequently spoke of the event as the actions of the Holy Spirit, saying, “I felt like the Holy Spirit had come over me.” Further, she experienced a “dark shadow” behind her, not a threatening and sinister presence but something accepting and affirming. As a result of these events, Janice became convinced of the reality and power of God because these things “proved to me this was true.” She began to accept “at face value as being true” what she read about Jesus in the Bible, and began to “know everything’s going to be all right.”

Whereas previously Janice believed God to be either dead or impotent, she now describes him as a “person like you and me”, although he’s a divine being and therefore “not human”, God is someone who is good and honest; someone who is “there for me in the tough times”, who answers her prayers, provides guidance for her life, and who “speaks to me through the Bible.” Janice reports that God is “everything” to her and that she “loves” him. She has thought about the extent of the changes in her life since her conversion and is perplexed about them.

Janice experienced her conversion as an elevating experience. A whole cluster of
oppressive entities were removed from her; her negative self image, her past alcohol and drug
abuse, her sense of hopelessness in life, her being weighed down by worry and anxiety for her
family, and her dual sense of God's impotence (on the one hand), and (on the other), his
judgement of her. In a footnote Pruyser (1974: 99) wrote of his preference for the word
'uplifting' in favour of 'transcendence', which he felt was badly used because most authors fail
to say what they meant by the term. He prefers 'uplifting' because the image of a child, for
example, being raised aloft by a loving parent one can sense the response of delight and
absolute glee of the child, demonstrates physically the parent's delight in the child. In the
moment of her conversion Janice experienced herself being elevated into close proximity to
God as the Ultimate Other, whom she recognized to be a Self who was Greater-than-self who
had made her the beneficiary of his largesse. Following her conversion she became convinced
that "God loves me", and reports that "it feels good" to be loved.

Janice's conversion has meant a deliverance from her weight of sins, guilt and past
failures. This experience of deliverance is parallel to Bunyan's 'Pilgrim' who was delivered of
his burden on arriving at the Place of Deliverance (1998: 49). Pilgrim identified the weight as a
"great burden on his back", which he revealed to be an "inner turmoil because of a burden
which lays heavily upon me" (ibid: 3). In Bunyan's allegory the burden falls off when Pilgrim
approaches the cross and receives salvation at conversion. In Janice's conversion, long-
recognized self-limitations were cast off and in its place were supplied all the wealth and
possessions of God. She felt she could appropriate the inexhaustible riches of God in order to
deepen, extend and elevate her natural self by supernatural means.

The resolution of her problems by this means powerfully demonstrates the authenticity
of her new status as a child of God whose existence had been translated from a lowly earthly
nonexistence to that of a person of worth whose existence has been animated from within by
the Spirit of God. Corlett and Moore in The Question of religion describe the sense of relief
that is to be found when the concept of a merciful deity is accepted:

The moment I have proposed and then subscribed to the god-idea, many of my
problems are resolved. I now have "someone" who is superior to me and, because "he"
is superior, "he" is the answer to so many of my problems. "He" caused me to be. Why?
For reasons of “his” own. “He” made me the way I am, with all my strengths and weaknesses. Why? For reasons of “his” own. “He” made the world and all that therein is. Why? We do not know; because “he” is superior, both in heart and mind. “He” moves in mysterious ways ... the relief is immense (1978: 18-9).

It is common for the Christian convert to experience the sensation of being upheld, sustained and supported by God. The Christian religious tradition pictures God as saying, “I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you” (Isaiah 46:4); and as the one who promises that “those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Christian converts, in giving their lives to God, are most likely to constitute the substitution as a beneficial transaction to themselves; a transaction which sees a transference from poverty to riches, from periphery to center, from exile to homecoming. Simone Weil makes the comment, “We cannot take a single step toward heaven. It is not in our power to travel in a vertical direction. If however we look heaven-ward for a long time, God comes and takes us up ... We cannot rise without being lifted by grace” (1973: 36). In this regard, the believing soul takes refuge in the “spiritual foundation on which both man and the world rest” (Kristensen, in Twiss & Conser, 1992: 172).

(4) Weeping as religious act:

Mark has experienced episodes of uncontrollable weeping at transitional stages in his spiritual journey. There have been four occasions which Mark has identified as being unusually intense and meaningful. The first was at the conversion moment itself when he describes himself as giving himself “personally to the Lord.” At that time he “broke down and cried ... I just lost the plot.” He describes his weeping as an “emotional outpouring” which he was unable to stop. Following the tears he experienced himself as feeling “totally released”, like “God has washed me all over.” He puts the cause of the weeping down to a deep repentance, a feeling “very sorry for my sins, and the life I had been leading.” Subsequent times of weeping have occurred especially during worship and prayer while sitting at home alone. On the occasion of
Mark's conversion he was listening to a worship song entitled 'Hymn', whose words read:

(Verse 1) Oh refuge of my hardened heart, Oh fast pursuing lover come;
as angels dance around your throne, my life by captured fare you own.
(Chorus) Oh gaze of love so melt my pride, that I may in your house but kneel;
and in my brokenness to cry, spring worship unto Thee.3

Mark described the moment as a realization of some sort in which the tears "just started coming and I began crying." He experienced weeping as an "endless stream of tears", after which he felt emotionally cleansed, contented and "completely healed." The healing was not a physical healing; rather he had previously experienced himself as being "in pain ... on the inside of my heart and mind." On another occasion he was strumming his guitar and singing a worship song entitled, 'Jesus what a beautiful name'; and asking God to reveal himself saying, "God show me that you're there." Without warning Mark began to weep, describing the tears as coming on like a flood. "I just had to stop playing; I just prayed after that ... it lead me into prayer." No vision or "booming voice" accompanied the experience, but instead an "incredible peace" overwhelmed him, and he "wept and wept."

Underlying the experience of Mark's weeping there rests a number of substrate themes which contributed to his transformational experience and are therefore important to the phenomenological analysis. Each of these substrate themes relate to identifiable transition points between states of existence in the human religious journey. The first is Mark's weeping as his finite, dependent human response to God as the utterly ineffable Being who inexplicably offered the life of his divine Son in a vicarious death on Mark's behalf, resulting in a stay of execution on Mark's life. The statements of unconditional and costly love—contained within the myth-like account of the biblical narrative—are completely overwhelming, and defy any locution which might present itself as anywhere near adequate. Here the human self is put under obligation by a Greater Self beyond any capacity to make repayment. The exorbitant debt is felt to be forgiven in its entirety by an elevated personage so that the response is at once a statement of embarrassment, of gratitude, and of enormous relief. The weeping is an anoetic

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3. Jars of Clay, from the 1997 album 'Much Afraid'.

locution expressed by Mark's spirit through his body as a kind of 'sounding-board' for the soul, in the same way that a musical instrument conveys the tune 'instrumentally' from within a musician's being into the outward atmosphere. The expression is one which goes beyond rationality because it expresses more than the mind alone can say.

The second theme is the transformational tension-point between the natural attitude and the phenomenological or transcendental attitude. Hart stated that most religion takes place within the natural attitude (in Embree et. al., 1997: 599). Mark's bouts of weeping occurred at points of liminal transition or at the critical junctures in his spiritual journey toward an existence which was only grasped in a prescient and prehensive mode. Yet the religious believer has access to their inward meanings and desires by means of a maieutic 'knowing'. This higher order knowledge of one's own knowing represents the transcendental ego of the phenomenological attitude. Mark knew what he wanted in the natural attitude. When he achieved it, his response was an extraordinary response coming out of the transcendently self-aware magister internus. An elevation of the self was taking place through the dramatic crisis of a new birth into a higher order of existence.

The third substrate theme is that of resolution of tension, in which Mark experienced his weeping as a cathartic lustration which enabled the expression of the release of his prior guilt, fear and anxiety, and resulted in his feeling washed, released and given over to God. This deep level resolution was conveyed to him by means of an awareness of the strange nature of the weeping; Mark identified the tears as being abnormal in their lack of an identifiable cause, their duration (lasting approximately 30 minutes in each case), the immediacy of the weeping, the complete lack of sadness which normally accompanied his tears, and the resultant sensations of an "amazing peace and contentment" which follows. The result was his awareness that he had achieved his goal of solving the problem of his personal and religious crisis, and was now a 'new being' whose status before his own conscience and in the presence of God had changed. His longing and desire as empty intentions had been exchanged into an 'actuality' in which he felt himself to have achieved the goal of his longing; namely the appropriation of God as the object of his highest value, and subsequently the deliverance of his soul through
radical surrender. The tears then can be described as the sign of the resolution of the tension, and his arrival into the status of a grace-dependent disciple after the gruelling trial of the liminal rite of passage.

(5) Need for a Saviour:

Jamie understood his conversion to be the transition point between his “old” life of bondage to guilt and sin, and his “new” life of freedom and forgiveness. He reasoned that he needed to go through a season of suffering in order to bring him to a point of “heartfelt need for God.” His inner life was experienced as a morass of “pain”, “brokenness” and “dying on the inside.” Following his night of terror at a nightclub where he feared being attacked by an evil presence, he began to reconsider his recalcitrant attitude towards God. While “running from God” as a fugitive, he became extraordinarily wearied and sensed the possibility of rescue. He began calling out repeatedly, “I need you, I need you!” to God. Jamie reported his need of a saviour to protect him “from myself” and from his “fear of death and judgement.” He became a Christian because, “Jesus took my pain away.” In the moment of conversion when he gave his “heart to the Lord”, Jamie experienced a radical in-breaking of God’s presence and power into his life and exclaimed “Wow! I got stitched back up.” Whereas previously Jamie had seen Jesus simply as a fictional Bible character, he now saw him as the “bridge between God and man”, as the one who reconciles the prodigal son back to the Father. He believes God revealed this to him in a moment of epiphanic insight when God said to him, “Now you know why Jesus died on the cross.” Jamie is now able to say, “I have a Saviour ... there’s nothing I can do to get right with God, but God has done it all for me!”

Jamie’s restoration after arriving at a “rock bottom” destination called for what Sokolowski names a “theology of disclosure” (1995). A disclosure of the divine did in fact take place; it was not Greg’s revelatory statement by Jesus, “before Abraham was, ‘I Am’”; neither was it an epiphany in thunder, lightning, storm and meteor (Ricoeur, 1995: 52) such as Luther experienced on horseback in the storm. For Jamie it was the experience of being saved, rescued and delivered in answer to his cry of dereliction, “God, where are you?” His statement,
"I got stitched back up" signifies the salvation experience as being applicable to the totality his physical, emotional and spiritual needs for deliverance. The 'disclosure' which took place was a disclosure of God as personal, active, and salvific. In the well known "servant songs" of Isaiah (50:4-9; 52:13-53:12), a servant-figure whose obedience to YHWH lead to his undeserved death is the means of the restoration of many in Israel; "by knowledge of him, my righteous servant will justify many" (Isaiah 53:11b). While there is controversy among scholars as to whether the servant-figure is collective or individual, the figure stands nonetheless.

At a critical point in her life, Simone Weil, notable French philosopher, theologian, social critic and political activist (1909-43) experienced a startling divine disclosure which can only be described as a Christophany. While a young radical committed to the cause of justice in Spain, she was burned with boiling oil in an accident of ironic proportions—she was more likely to have suffered disease, injury or death in a concentration camp, as did her fellow Catholic Jewess, Edith Stein, than in a domestic accident. While convalescing from her burns a Christ-figure revealed itself to her. She writes, "A presence more personal, more certain, more real than that of a human being, though inaccessible to the senses and the imagination" came to her (Weil, 1973: 24). That presence conveyed a deep sense of the possibility of a religious rather than a political salvation; a shock to someone committed to Communist leanings and programs of social agitation.

I had never foreseen the possibility of ... a real contact, person to person, here below, between a human being and God. I had vaguely heard tell of things of this kind, but I had never believed in them.... Moreover, in this sudden possession of me by Christ, neither my senses nor my imagination had any part; I only felt in the midst of my suffering the presence of a love, like that which one can read in the smile of a beloved face (ibid: 69).

Jamie used the phrase, "I need" 22 times in the referring to his urgent need of God's intervention in his life. He knew without doubt his emotional and spiritual need for a Saviour; only a Saviour could protect him from the evil he was facing and make him "eternally safe." For Jamie conversion was all about "rescue." It was also about the one who would act as Saviour and deliver him from the fear of "falling into the hands of the living God." It was about
the transition from judgement to mercy, from sinner to saint, from being God-forsaken to being God-chosen. And it was the Christ-figure, the suffering servant, the surprisingly human visage of Jesus who integrated the human and the divine into a single being; and who as Saviour was able to deliver Jamie through some unknown forensic and relational transaction. This transaction was based on an undeserved and free grace which turned him into a child of God who by divine pronouncement bore the right to claim God's name, and of entry into his household and Kingdom.

(6) Burning of the Spirit:

Two interpretive themes were located in respondents' transcripts relating to a physiognomic experience at conversion which incorporated episodes of heat in the body. While they were similar, I have chosen to keep them separate in order to maintain intact their particularity.

Samantha reported that her conversion was accompanied by a physical sensation which she attributes to the presence of God entering her body. Prior to her conversion she had experienced an acute attack of anxiety. On the occasion of her conversion, while lying weeping on her bed on her back, she called out to God in a prayer of ultimatum, "God I need you. You have to prove yourself to me; reveal yourself to me!"; "I have to know tonight or else!" She had reached the point where she could go no further alone, and her will was in the process of resigning itself in submission to God's rule in her life. At that moment she experienced God moving in her life, describing it as "he reached out and touched my heart; and this warmth and a peace spread throughout my entire being, and my spirit and my physical body." At that point Samantha became aware of her body being "set on fire." The burning sensation was more than warm, "it was hot", and "spread from my heart throughout my body." At that moment she ceased crying and just lay there "feeling this warmth and complete peace" which she had never experienced before.

It was like I was being hugged. Like when you're little and you hurt yourself and you go to your parents and get hugged and you feel secure and safe. That's what it felt like; God had shown me I could feel safe with him ... there was a peace that hung over my
whole being, my physical being and my spirit, just knowing it was OK; and when the tears stopped there was this complete calm. And I was complete; he filled all the gaps, all the voids, all the holes in my heart and in my mind and I became a complete person.

Samantha has not been the only person to experience the bodily sensation of heat or burning at conversion. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) recorded the following words in a note found sewn into the lining of his coat at his death:

In the year of Grace, 1654, on Monday, 23rd November, Feast of St Clement, Pope and Martyr.... From about half past ten in the evening until about half past twelve. FIRE. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars. Certitude. Certitude. Feeling, Joy, Peace. God of Jesus Christ. My God and your God. Your God shall be my God. Forget all the world and everything but God. He is to be found only in the ways taught in the Gospel. Greatness of the human soul. "Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." Joy, Joy, Joy, tears of joy. I have departed from him. "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water." My God, will you forsake me? May I not be separated from him eternally. "This is life eternal. That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. I have departed from him. I have fled from him, renounced him, crucified him. May I never be separated from him! He is preserved only in the ways taught in the Gospel. Renunciation total and sweet (1985: 309-19).

For Pascal, it was fire as both experience and as metaphor for its incommunicable nature, which filled his conversion narrative and which represents both the powerful cleansing of the Spirit in repentance and conversion, and as the deeply convincing experience of being in God's presence.

In the Christian tradition, the imagery of fire is evocative of a number of religious themes. The first is a grouping of theological themes which relate to the existence of God and those heavenly beings associated with his Kingdom, in which God is described as being a 'consuming fire' (Deuteronomy 4:24). Ezekiel saw a vision of God and describes him as dwelling in fire: "high above on the throne was a figure like that a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire, and a brilliant light surrounded him" (Ezekiel 1:26-27). This vision of God as dwelling within a domain of fire is corroborated by Daniel, whose vision of God reads:

Thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as
white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming like fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him (Daniel 7:9-10a).

The second grouping relates to the activities of God among mankind. This category is represented by such moments of revelation and hierophany as Moses' vision of the burning bush; Elijah's defeat of the prophets of Baal when fire came from heaven and consumed his sacrifice and his departure from this life in a fiery chariot; and in the New Testament this category is powerfully represented by the outpouring of the Spirit on the early church at Pentecost (Acts 2:2), when 'tongues of fire' came to rest on each of the disciples present.

The third grouping relates to the experiences of human beings as they encountered the Divine. It is this category which is of most interest for this research, because it addresses the actual experiences of religious converts in their encounter with God. When King David was worshipping before God, he said, "My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned" (Psalm 39:3); in Luke 24:32 the disciples agreed that their hearts burned within them when they spoke with the post-resurrection Jesus; in Romans 12:11 Paul exhorted the Roman Christians to "never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor" (NIV). The Greek zeontes (boiling) is a metaphor for fervency. The Phillips translation reads, "Let us keep the fires of the spirit burning as we do our work for God."

Phenomenologically the experience of 'spiritual burning' by means of a strange fire draws into the horizontal foreground the phenomenon of fire as an opportunity for God to present himself in person as a being who is present-while-feigning-absence to his subjects as a disembodied being, thus allowing him to assure them of his presence and power without compromising his hiddenness. The dazzling, ravishing and burning revelatory event of fire allows God to touch without being touched, to be seen through candescence and yet to remain hidden, to reveal his being without being fully revealed. In the urgent moment when Samantha "needed" to know with certainty that God existed and that she could trust him ("God reveal yourself to me!"), an all-embracing phaino or phenomenon occurred which addressed her

body, her spirit, her emotions and her painful past lack of parental love. In that moment she became convinced that God had answered her in an immediate and powerful way. Samantha's need to know had effectively been addressed through a relational contact which gave her a 'knowledge' beyond all other kinds of knowledge that God was real. For Samantha, the experience of fire was an irreducible proof of God's presence. It was not a consuming fire as with Moses' experience of fire. The motto of the Presbyterian Church in Australia is nec tama consumabatum; 'burning but not consumed'. This is an important element in ecstatic and experiential mysticism such as is found in Saint Teresa who uses the figure of the 'little spark' to represent the spiritual life and its need to be kindled and nurtured but not to allow it to escape and become a destructive bushfire (Merton, 1976: 167).

(7) Fire of the Spirit:

Jamie also experienced a bodily sensation of heat associated with religious experience, this time not specifically related to his conversion but four weeks later on the occasion he refers to as his “baptism in the Holy Spirit." Prior to his conversion Jamie had been struggling with addictions to pornography and drugs. He had struggled to rid himself of these but could not shake himself free. He “hated himself” because of his impotence to throw off these things which he knew were “destroying me.” At the moment when he left the Pastor's study and subsequently when he was filled with the Spirit he recognized, “The Spirit burning within me [was] God convicting me.” The baptism of the Spirit had an immediate effect in cleansing his life of these two long-term weights in his life, and granting him the power he needed to resist temptation and bring change into his life. Jamie has on-going experiences of the “fire of the Spirit.” He feels the burning of the Holy Spirit “nearly every day”, and reported, “I can feel it now” as he was being interviewed. The meaning of the experience for Jamie is “a reassurance that I belong to God” and that “God [is] inside me.” The intensity of the “fire” is acute; Jamie describes it in terms of “someone's got a blowtorch inside my body.” However, as conveyed by Samantha's report, the burning sensation is not destructive. Jamie uses the description of “absolute bliss” to express how it feels to have the “fire of God inside you.” Thus a mystical
element can be perceived in these experiences and their tendency—through experiences
founded in the body—to confirm the authenticity of new religious knowledge in the mind and
spirit. This can be seen in Jamie’s likening the “fire of the Spirit” as it manifests itself
physiologically in the body to his experience of taking LSD and heroin; he reports the
sensation as being one of complete unity of his entire being, “my whole body felt the sensation
of oneness”, with his feet and hands feeling “connected” to his head in a way he had never
experienced before.

For Jamie these experiences of “burning” created an urgent inward compulsion to
worship God and provided an accompanying facility to do so through glossolalia. It also
prompted an outward compulsion toward the practical service of God and his fellow man. A
comparison can be made with the Apostle Paul’s conversion, which functioned as the bestowal
of new life in conversion, and served as the moment of the reception of his apostolic call to
ministry. In like manner, Jamie’s baptism in or by the Holy Spirit contained a dual-function of
the baptism with the Holy Spirit which enhanced his ability to worship God, and his call to
ministry which laid the foundations for his later service of God. The symbol of fire can have a
negative connotation, indicating danger and destruction (as in the case of Anne’s dream of the
devil burning her house down, and Janice’s dangerous kitchen fire incident); but in Jamie’s
case the symbol of fire is entirely positive. Through it he felt himself to have received
forgiveness, freedom from the bondage of addiction, entry into the household of God, a new
life, the capacity to worship God through receipt of the gift of tongues, and ‘proof’ of God’s
calling to ministry. Any destructive element related to Jamie’s spiritual fire exerted a positive
outcome in that it ‘destroyed’ the cancer of the sin which he felt was destroying him.

For Jamie the presence of the Spirit, elaborated through fire and burning, was
consistent with the idea of a crucible whose function it was to cleanse his soul and prepare it
for fellowship with God: “Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy
place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (Psalm 24:3-4). The burning facilitated the
removal of dross and foreign matter from the molten metal and, as a consequence, ensured a
concentration of the purified metal into a single consolidated spiritual essence worthy of
entering the presence of the Holy. This is consistent with Malachi’s imagery of God as a refiner’s fire or a launder’s soap (Malachi 3:2) purifying the people of Israel in order to make them acceptable to the Lord.

(8) God as the underwriter of existence:

Janice experienced her early life as a tenuous existence. She felt robbed of her childhood by her mother’s departure from the family home when she was a small child and her father’s disruptive alcoholism. She brought up her younger siblings single-handed, and had a child of her own by age eighteen. She states, “I used to ... use drugs and drink pretty heavy.” Janice has often felt “bad” about herself and over recent years has been seeking a “new beginning.” At the time of her conversion she felt all her troubles had been “lifted off my shoulders.” She experienced “happiness and release” as a result. Christianity became an option for Janice because “its a better way of living”, and she decided she wanted to become a Christian in order “to change my life.” At first she thought “well I’ve sinned; God doesn’t want me any more”, but she learned that God looked beyond her sin because he’s “dealt with them and put them aside.” This resulted in Janice realizing there was “hope” for her.

Faced with a great deal of uncertainty in life, Janice stated that she “needed to know [God] was going to be there for me, as insurance.” This knowledge made Janice “feel good that he loves me.” The uncertainty felt by Janice included her need to continue providing for the five children still living at home with her as their mother and provider. She said the “knowledge that ... he is there ... helping the children as they’re growing up, to give them an advantage in life” greatly reassured her, and that as the mother of seven children, and living on social welfare she needed God to underwrite her existence and that of her family. When asked the question, “is it like a trapeze artist, there is a safety net there for you?”; Janice answered, “Yeh, God makes me feel safe.” Janice now feels that “nothing can go wrong”, and that if anything does go wrong, “God has over-all control of my life and no matter what happens good will come of it.”

Janice’s quest has in part been for an immovable place in life, a place in which neither
her life nor her children's lives are in any way threatened. The security being sought for appears to incorporate both the physical security of needing food to feed the children and a roof over their heads; but also that security which acts as a hedge against a destructive anomie which threatens to make life meaningless, uncertain, and emotionally unstable. Essentially it is Tillich's view of life which sees religion as 'ultimate concern', and which arrives at God as the 'ground of being'. And it is that 'feeling of absolute dependence' (Schleirmacher) as that admission which owns the non-possibility of the self taking control of the exigencies and uncertainties of life and finds the necessary potency in God. Janice's finding of the immovable ground for which she sought in God is a radical turn-around from where she began. Whereas her proto-theology began with "he can't, he's dead", it moved to a mature theology of dependence which said, 'I can't but He can'; and 'I don't know but He does'. It requires a vision of the deity as a being who can not only bring about deliverance but who is also trustworthy enough to allow a residue of autonomy after the deliverance event so that the self is not enslaved or oppressed. Janice was able to find that immovable ground she was searching for in a divine being who said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

A phenomenological analysis of Janice's discovery that her existence was underwritten reverts to that sense of immovability alluded to above, but it does so in the following way. When the believing soul surrenders the entirety of their being over to the One who is Greater-than-self, it becomes annexed to the fortunes of that One and its destiny. Buber's (1958: 15) words, "relation is mutual. My Thou affects me, as I affect it", remind us of the interconnectedness between human subject and divine object. But in a world where plural and competing truth-claims have the tendency to relativize that connection, the human-divine connexion remains in need of constant reinforcing. It is not threatened because the believing soul locates an absolute-ness in the ability of the Divinity to cope with threats to its existence due to an excess of potency inherent within it. If it is able to underwrite the believing soul's existence, so too it will surely underwrite its own. In the end, all relations and objects derive their origins and being from God who is thought to be the source, the essential 'ground of being'; everything else is felt to be contingent, trifling, irrelevant. From that perspective the
believing soul stands with Luther who is said to have cried, "Here I stand, so help me God!" (Bainton, 1978: 189).

(9) Transformation of the God-image:

This interpretive theme was initially encountered in Anne’s transcript but subsequently it made appearances in the transcripts of three other respondents. Other respondents who made references to a transformation of their God-image were Jamie, Cynthia, and Janice. For Jamie, God was an impersonal force who imposed his will on his subjects in an interventionist and unwelcome manner. He perceived God as saying, "Oh look you've just sinned! O there you go again" while writing on a big note pad recording his misdemeanors. When he described this Jamie made a series of hand movements dramatizing the scene he was describing, and said, "Cross, cross, tick, tick." Following his conversion, Jamie described God as “Saviour”, and "someone there to fall back on"; someone to could be counted on to rescue him. Cynthia initially didn’t think about God at all, but following her conversion was surprised to discover a forgiving God who was “in control” of the world. As a result, she was now able to “make sense of how the world is”, and was able to ascertain that “everything is happening for a reason.” Janice always believed God was there but he could never help us, “he couldn’t help us. He was dead”, so we would have to look after ourselves. Following her conversion she came to believe God was present, good, approachable, honest, and non-judgmental. He was someone who exhibited the power and strength she needed to live the kind of life she aspired to. Apart from conversion itself and regular allusions to meaning change in the context of conversion in respondents’ transcripts, change in the God-image represents the most frequently occurring interpretive theme occurring four times in this research.

Prior to her conversion Anne described her proto-theology as envisaging God to be “that old man on the cloud judging me ... saying, ‘You shouldn’t do that!’ [shaking her finger].” Whenever she thought about God or reflected on the supernatural, it involved “a lot of fear.” After meeting J— and reading Lewis’ Mere Christianity she began to perceive God as someone who was “working in my life.”
Two factors emerge as being thematic in her transference from disinterest in God to becoming fascinated by God. The first was her physical responses to the Divine. She states, "The first time I encountered God I felt great feelings of smallness, shame and inadequacy." On attending Church she "often felt quite guilty", and began to "feel a lot of emotion [in my prayers]." Anne began to experience a "healing" taking place in her life, and felt as if she had become "a brand new person." She experienced a "rush of sensation which communicated the perfection of ... God's love" welling up within her life.

The second factor was the growing cognitive awareness of God and his work in her life. Anne felt "guided" by the Spirit and by grace. She experienced a kind of spiritual enlightenment which she reported in terms of the biblical metaphor of "scales falling from my eyes", and the experience of beginning to "change my mind" at conversion. This change was general in the sense that "God has a plan for every human being"; but also in the sense that much of the cognitive changes which took place were related to the person of Jesus as the primary agent in her life. Following her initial aversion to Jesus ("He's not coming in!"), she thought worship offered to Christ by others was "really lovely", she prayed to Christ and began to realize his death and suffering were actually on her behalf. As a result she "felt much closer to him." Christ was someone who "suffered, wept and had gone through experiences I had gone through", and Anne came to sense he was the human face of God. As a result she felt great empathy and closeness to him. She began to attend Mass on a daily basis because "I just knew Christ was present in the Eucharist. At the time of her interview Anne reported her favorite song as being "Jesus lover of my soul." Together these two factors represented a deeply-convincing and self-authenticating body of collateral proof to Anne for the existence and power of God and of His particular interest in her life. The combination of physiological and psychological phenomena demonstrated to Anne the reality and potency of God in her life.

The security and centrality of the human self is displaced when it encounters the God who is the 'wholly Other' (Buber, 1958: 79). The 'I-thou' relation between the human and the Divine is not that of equals, but of a lesser to one who is greater. God is always encountered as someone who is "Greater-than-self" (Boisen, 1936: 299), as an "awesome, powerful
manifestation of reality, full of ultimate significance” (Chidester, in Tymieniecka, 1994: 211). The God with whom we have to do is able to destroy both body and soul (Matthew 10:28) and engenders a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (Otto) as someone who causes both terror and fascination. Anne perceived God in a powerful, forensic image as a malevolent Judge; distant and unapproachable, who jealously guarded his sovereignty over against her rights as a created lesser being.

The question “Can men see God and live?” (Boisen, 1936: 169) is a relevant question in the light of the comprehensiveness of the ‘Otherness’ of God. The Apostle Paul described God as “Lord of Lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Timothy 6:16). Yet Isaiah ‘saw’ the Lord “high and exalted”, the train of whose robe “filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). Isaiah’s response was to lament his mortality, crying “Woe is me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah did live, but only because he recognized there were limits to his existence. His fear and dread of God cast his relationship completely within the parameters of a lesser to a Greater being; whereas Uzzah touched the Ark of God in an ‘irreverent’ act, thinking to prevent the Ark from falling, and the anger of God broke out and struck him dead (1 Chronicles 13:9-10).

The self feels it must acquiesce totally, profoundly, utterly, completely and comprehensively to God. There is no other option because God is the one who can see into the inner recesses of the soul. Anne’s experience of herself in the presence of God was of someone who was guilty, small, ashamed and inadequate. The God to whom she was relating was the “Judge of all the earth”, who knew her every thought. The Letter to the Hebrews speaks in terms of “nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13). The Prayer of Preparation in the *Anglican Prayerbook* reads:

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnifying your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen (1978: 114).
The critical factor in being transparent before God is that if one is subject to condemnation before the bench of one's own conscience, how much moreso before God's? Greg had the experience of being "looked at" by Jesus. When Jesus turned to him and said "before Abraham was, I Am", Greg believed that Jesus "looked through" the pages of time, "As if I was there in the crowd and He were speaking directly to me." It was being the subject of Divine scrutiny and address which made him realize Jesus was God. Something similar took place in Anne's life and which forced her to radically re-negotiated her status before the Divine to the position of a lesser to an Ultimate Other.

The transformation of the God-image first necessitates a transformation of one's own image and ontological status before God. Only after making the initial adjustment of self-to-self can the paired adjustment of self-to-Divine take place. In the face of the threat of an end-of-herself in her own experience of her need-for-healing and her perception of the imminent and life-threatening judgement of God, Anne relented her wilful resistance and relinquished her life to the mercy of God. The transition from condemnation to mercy took place at the point of realization that Jesus' death was on her behalf; that Jesus the God-man who has intersubjectively experienced her struggles, 'knows' the limitations of her mortality as an adumbration of his own human experience in the incarnation. Amazingly, the transformation in the God-image becomes complete at this point. This transition is accompanied by a movement from fear to love; when God is no longer conceived of as the angry old man in the clouds shaking his finger judgementally, but the loving Father whose every thought and concern is for the wellbeing of his child. "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3).

Summary:

The idiographic representations of interpretive themes which relate to respondents' experiences of themselves in the presence of the Divine, as identified in transcripts, have yielded a number of concealed invariant features and universal essences which I will discuss nomothetically in the three explicative themes of this chapter. I have titled these explicative
themes the knowability of God; the love of God is our knowledge of him; and the assumption of God’s character and perception.

1. The knowability of God

Phenomenological analysis cannot begin its task—as theology does—by beginning with a presupposed commencement-point which assumes the existence, character or will of God. It must, as Westphal states:

Deliberately set[ting] aside the question of the truth or falsity of claims about God’s existence in order to focus attention on the ways he is present to human experience, regardless of whether that presence is to be taken as veridical perception or some kind of illusion (1987: 4).

Laycock’s attempt to instigate a phenomenological theology begins with the statement that he is not seeking out “God simpliciter, but ... God as appearing: the God-phenomenon” (1988: 233). He reminds us that the central problem of philosophy for Husserl is the “problem of God” (ibid: 9); and that Husserl’s primary interest in God was of “describing the experience of God” while treating as inadmissible beliefs concerning “God and the divine nature” because they were to be bracketed as part of the phenomenological method (ibid: 19). For phenomenology, the priority in the human-Divine encounter is always the religious encounter ‘as experienced’ by the human percipient. Thus in this analysis we are not concerned with the ‘God of the philosophers’ mentioned by Pascal, nor with the ‘God of the theologians’ (Farley, 1975; Marion, 1991), but with the God who is the object of the worship of the believing soul. As Scheler would have it:

The God of religious consciousness ‘is’ and lives exclusively in the religious act, not in metaphysical thinking extraneous to religion.... The God of religion is the god of the saints and the god of the people, not the cerebral god of the ‘intellectuals.’ The fount of all religious truth is not scientific utterance but faith in the words of the homo religiosus, the ‘holy man’ (1960: 134).

At some point prior to conversion and thereafter, God has already made his presence felt within the consciousness of the religious believer. That is to say, he is presently being experienced and is the primary consideration within the noema-noesis relation of the religious
intentionality. For the believing soul (Scheler's 'holy man'), God does exist; his power, presence and purposes have arrested the believer and caused a transformative change within his or her very being.

The knowability of God for the respondents in this research is beyond question: for them God is knowable. Janice was able to state with clarity and conviction, "I've stopped thinking; I know now!" The doxastic certitude of faith reflected in this statement is paralleled by Jung's statement in an interview on BBC radio: "Suddenly I understood that God was, for me at least, one of the most certain and immediate experiences ... I do not believe; I know. I know" (cited by Kelsey, 1978: 119). The question 'in what way is God knowable?' must remain unanswered until the discussion in Chapter 9. What is important here is how respondents' knowledge of God changed over time.

This notion of change recalls the research question in its triangulated format: What (1) changes in belief, attitude and action (2) relating to God, self and world (3) took place before, during and after conversion? In each case respondents underwent a change in their God-image. That change invariably began with a proto-theology formed by a kind of naive, uninformed and socially sculpted volksgeist or folk-theology. It imagined God as overly transcendent, disinterested, and either judgmental or impotent. Following the drama of conversion however, respondents uniformly believed something altogether different. Now, God is imminent, compassionate, merciful and omnipotent. What steps did respondents go through in order to arrive at this radically new perspective?

Whitehead has suggested an evolution within the religious consciousness in its journey toward a knowledge of the Divine. He characterized the journey toward God as involving a three-step journey of transformation. "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness. It runs through three stages, if it evolves to its final satisfaction. It is the transition from God the void to God the enemy, and from God the enemy to God the companion" (1927: 6). This transformative change in the God-image is accompanied by a change in the human component of the 'God-phenomenon'. These changes in belief, it would appear, are based on experiences of the Divine which bring about a radical change in perspective. Jamie began his
religious 'career' believing that "it was a story; to me God was just God, supreme, Lord over all; my judge." This stage corresponds to Whitehead's formulation of "God as void." The next phase in Jamie's journey of faith saw him existing in mortal fear of God; fear of condemnation, and fear of being cast into Hell. He describes himself as being "fearful of death because I feared judgement." This corresponds with Whitehead's formulation of God-as-enemy. Next, there was the God as 'companion' or friend phase. An example of this in Jamie's immediate post-conversion experience was his sense of being "rescued" by a Saviour, by whose agency he came to see Christianity as "life-saving. It is the very essence of life." His "running from God" became (in Samantha's terms), a "running to him." Bailey speaks of the moment of 'nuclear fission' in human consciousness (1998: 11). This stage can be represented by the tacit-moment of soul-negotiation where the self's transcendental wisdom negotiates within its-self—because of the impossibility of the impasse it has encountered—the costs and benefits of going over to the enemy, and on making the decision to do so, draws up the 'terms of settlement' required for the transaction.

The ways in which God is known are the imaginative, the relational and the experiential. Each of these have their own forms of rationality and are consistent with other less metaphysical components of the quotidian human life. The imaginary is provided by the mythical world of the biblical narratives, in which the scene is set for the existence of a number of key factors in the Christian religious worldview. They are the elements of original sin, of God's gracious dealings with a people called after his own name, and of the possibility of forgiveness and incorporation into the largesse of a gracious and merciful Father who calls lost sinners to himself. Macneile Dixon, in his 1944 Gifford Lecture, makes the following statement concerning the place of imagination in human spirituality:

If I were asked what has been the most powerful force in the making of history, you would probably judge me of unbalanced mind were I to answer, as I should have to answer, metaphor, figurative expression. It is by imagination that men have lived; imagination rules all our lives. The human mind is not, as philosophers would have you think, a debating hall but a picture gallery (cited by Dillistone, 1945: 105).

Within the human imagination however, God is experienced as a relational Being who, in the
person of Jesus, not only shares our humanity and knows the struggles of mortality, but who has been appointed “mediator” by God. He intercedes for us before the Father, and as the Christ-figure breaks through the barriers of time and distance and intersubjectively “speaks” to the soul in need of deliverance and mercy. For the recent Christian convert however, God is known through an experiential encounter through moments of answered prayer, provision of guidance, a ‘word’ from God through the Bible, encounters with God through hierophany, circumstantial coincidences which are interpreted as God’s providence, and the irruption of the sacred through dreams, prayer and through times of corporate worship. It is through such transcendent ‘brushes’ of imagination, rational encounter and felt experience that converts feel they ‘know’ God as someone whose presence is meaningful for their lives.

2. The love of God is our knowledge of him:

Respondents' accounts of their proto-theologies have been recorded in section 9 of this chapter, and the cognitive outcomes of their new faiths has also been discussed. What has not been discussed are the emotional states which accompanied respondents' new confessions of faith. Anne experienced a “sensation” which communicated the perfection of God's love to her. Cynthia mentions love as a primary component of her relationship with God, and feels loved and “looked after” by him. Greg came to the realization that “God loved me personally.” Jamie stated that whereas he previously knew the “fear of God”, now he experiences the “love of God.” Janice can now state, “I know God loves me”, and that “I love him” in return. Mark experienced “heart murmurs of love” for God. Samantha realized that God was a “God who loved me and could show me the way to truth and peace.” The song “Jesus lover of my soul” was mentioned by two respondents as their favorite chorus. Thus the notion of 'theopathy', or religious emotion excited by the contemplation of God (Macquarie Dictionary) and his jealous, costly and exclusive love for the individual, forms an important part of the conversion experience.

The words “the love of God is our knowledge of Him” placed in the heading of this section derive from the mystic Cistercian William of Saint Thierry (cited by Merton, 1976: 204).
They evoke the potentiality of a linkage between loving God and knowing him. This potentiality is affirmed by Jamie who reported that “[God] has pulled the shutters from my eyes, [which] is the revelation of the understanding of God’s love.” Likewise Samantha reports, “It’s only been since becoming a Christian and feeling his love that I’ve loved him back”; to which I added the comment when I was undertaking an initial explication, “P’s increased love for God was contiguous with her increased knowledge of him.” James Olthuis (1997: 244) in writing about ‘knowing-otherwise’, further extends this potentiality when he makes a play on Paul Ricoeur’s famous phrase “love gives rise to thought”, which elucidates a linkage between loving God and knowing him.

The commandment to love God—so central to Jesus’ teaching—is to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). To this Saint John of the Cross adds, “The soul that is perfect is wholly love ... all its actions are love, and it employs all its faculties and possessions in loving” (cited by Merton, 1976: 115). And in line with which Lonergan comments, “Religious loving is without conditions, qualifications, reservations; it is with all one’s heart and with all one’s soul and all one’s mind and all one’s strength” (in Conn, 1978: 20). For Lonergan, this loving is the result of a desire for self-transcendence and a mergence with the Divine: “Desire turns to joy when religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love” (1971: 242). But it is a falling-in-love which has at its foundation a knowledge of the object of its affection which rests on what is felt to be an adequate basis for the attachment of its feelings of appreciation and adoration. The process of falling-in-love requires that the object-of-affection be within reach, be adequately ‘real’ or imaginable, and has characteristics which are thought to be beneficial to the lover.

The self experiences itself in a relationship with One who is Greater-than-itself; One who has gone out of his way to bring about a change in what was previously an impoverished and dislocative status between himself and the human subject—at great cost to himself. Through the actions of this One the human self feels itself to have benefitted or been elevated
through imbibing elements of his character or largesse into its essential ‘being’ or existence. While God was initially thought to be that which threatened the essential being of the human self, nevertheless through a crisis which delivered the self into a state of ‘end-of-self’, that selfsame God subsequently came to be apperceived as the One who overcame that which threatened one’s self, and to which the titles of Lord, Saviour, Victor, Redeemer, Master and Friend were subsequently attributed. Through the benefactions of God who is ‘merciful’, the offending elements of sin and rebellion which muddied the primal relationship between self and Creator were removed, affecting a reconciliation, restoration and healing of the ruptured ontological connection between them. The ‘it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God’ (Hebrews 10:31) becomes conformed to a higher principle, that of, ‘he who has been forgiven much, loves much’ (a reversal of Jesus’ words in Luke 7:47).

The experience of being loved without conditions and legal impost, affords the perception not simply of the kindness, mercy and generosity of God, but of the beauty and moral perfection of God. The God who once disgusted and repelled the onlooker standing at a distance, on more careful inspection, becomes the God who attracts and fascinates the onlooker who chooses to draw near and discovers she is standing on ‘holy ground’. The mysterium tremendum et fascinans itself undergoes a transformation from that which causes fear and dread, to that which causes wonder and delight. The far-off God who was once perceived as imposing his wrathful Law without fear or favor, is now perceived as the one who:

Upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to be hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, [and] lifts up those who are bowed down ... The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow (Psalm 146:7-9a).

Charles Wesley’s hymn records the experience of the worshiper:

(Chapter 3) Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature’s night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; my chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
(Chorus) Amazing love! How can it be that Thou my God, shouldst die for me?5

Greg named this now traditional Christian hymn as one of the songs which best described his experience of both love and freedom at conversion.

3. The assumption of God's character and perception:

The precept of 'master and disciple' found in many religious traditions is built upon an impulse toward congruence, in which the disciple seeks to move towards becoming 'like' the master. Through the application of the religious disciplines of prayer, holiness, asceticism and ritual practices, the disciple seeks to grow into the likeness of his or her master who has in turn striven to take on the likeness of his own master. This precept in the Christian setting is built upon a weightier foundation of seeking to 'assume' the very character and being of God himself through an imitatio dei. According to Eliade, "religious man is not given; he makes himself, by approaching the divine models." "One becomes truly a man only by conforming to the teaching of the myths, that is, by imitating the gods" (1959: 100). As Bettis says:

Religious man assumes a humanity that has a trans-human, transcendent model. He does not consider himself to be truly man except in so far as he imitates the Gods, the culture heroes, or the mythical ancestors. This is as much as to say that religious man wishes to be other than he is on the plane of his profane experience. Religious man is not given; he makes himself, by approaching the divine models (1969: 212).

Of course one cannot 'become God' says Merton, because "God is, and His Being is infinitely above all becoming" (1976: 209). However, it is possible to take on the likeness of God in a kind of associational character re-assignment so as to be conformed to his image.

In Christian conversion, a molding of one's being into the likeness of Christ the son of God, is consciously undertaken in order to 'reactualize the myth' (Eliade, 1959: 106). In Christian terms the myth is based on a theo-dramatic (von Balthasar, 1982) historical and teleological presupposition, to which writers at the end of chapter two referred. Brueggemann's reference to the victory-proclamation-appropriation sequence can be further extrapolated into a similar but historically-extenuated and sequenced vision of history. Wright (1992: 141-2) describes this same idea in terms of creation, fall, Israel, Jesus, and apocalypse. My own conception of this is in terms of what I call a meaning-string which can be represented as
'creation-fall-election-covenant-redemption-apocalypse-consummation'. What is envisaged here is an unfolding cosmic drama which embraces creation as the Christian cosmogonic 'myth', redemption as the teleology of history from *God's perspective*, and the cataclysmic return of Christ and the proclamation of his Kingdom as the point at which history is brought to a close. It will be my contention throughout the remainder of this dissertation that this envelope of meaning provides the essential conduit or structure which supplies the Christian mind with its basic ontological orientation and its primary root-metaphor or epistemology.

For the Christian neophyte, the biblically-mediated understanding of a 'fall' necessitates a deep longing for entrance into a higher state of existence which mirrors an original aetiological creation in perfection, the degradation of humanity through sin, and eventual restoration on the basis of the redemption provided through Christ, as pictured in the Pauline account of 1 Corinthians 15:49; “just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man (Adam), so we shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven (Christ).” As Eliade states, “Through the reactualization of his myths, religious man attempts to approach the gods and to participate in *being*; the imitation of paradigmatic divine models expresses at once his desire for sanctity and his ontological nostalgia” (1959: 106).

However the 'likeness' is not only a conformity to the perfections of the divine character; it is also a conformity to pattern of the divine perception. In the idol satire of Isaiah 44 those who had chosen idolatry as their mode of worship are depicted as being 'blind and ignorant' (verse 9b). Isaiah describes them as "know[ing] nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand" (verse 18). Essentially those who worship idols are said to become 'like' them. According to Ezekiel, recalcitrant Israel are the same; “They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear” (Ezekiel 12:2). Brueggemann comments on Isaiah 44:18 that contrary to the blinded and be-dumbed idol worshipers, those who worship God truly “see and think and know and act Yahwistically!” (1998: 70). That is, they 'assume' not only his character, but also the fundamental assumptions which underlie the body of revealed religion which can be assigned to the Judaic tradition. And I think this can without adjustment also be equally
applied to the broader tradition of the whole of the Christian religion.

The Christian then is one for whom these stories are paradigmatic, and for whom Christ is the template or model for the entirety of his or her life. Barclay states that, "the Christian is a Christ-filled man living in a Christ-filled world" (1963: 59). Mark made the statement, "I want to be like Jesus, to conform my life to his." This is the theonomous worldview of which Roxburgh (1993: 36) and Dowey (1994: 22) speak, as a worldview which sees "everything as directed by God and filled with his presence." The idea of a theonomous worldview is not new. Much of the theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church is focused around the parallel concept of 'theosis'. Clendenin, in discussing Maximus the Confessor's understanding of theosis states:

God and man are "examples of each other", according to Maximus. As God was incarnated, man was "endivinized." But in utilizing this analogy to Christ the Greek fathers were careful to maintain the distinction just emphasized. Our union with God is not a hypostatic one, as with the two natures of Christ, nor a union of essence, as with the three persons of the Trinity. In theosis God "makes man god to the same degree as God Himself became man" except that God "will divinize human nature without changing it into the divine nature" (1994: 131).

Not only does the new convert strive to 'assume' the character and being of God into their own character through the introduction of mimetic patterns of thought and behavior modeled after the divine original, and not only has an important section of the Christian Church given that concept a specific name and brought it into the mainstream of its dogmatic and doctrinal formulation of its faith, but also the concept of mergence or crossing over into the divine is widespread in Christianity. Wiethaus, in discussing the writings of Mechtild of Madgeburg, uses the term deificatio, by which she means the abolition of one's identity as entirely constructive of a 'human' nature and to recognize one's own divine 'core' (1996: 2). Teilhard de Chardin extends the concept of deification to that of the omnipresence of christification (1968: 123). Christification is for de Chardin the very epi-center of the divine milieu and the cause of the pleroma of the kingdom of God on earth.

By virtue of the Creation and, still more, of the Incarnation, nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see [in a Christian sense]. On the contrary, everything is sacred to the men who can distinguish that portion of chosen being which
is subject to Christ's drawing power in the process of consummation (ibid: 66, author's italics).

For de Chardin, the *diaphany* of the manifold appearances in the natural universe find their interpretive key or 'midrash' toward which every disciple reaches, and whose ultimate fulfillment is the mystical unification of the believer with the active source of his belief; namely God. This to say as much as earlier writers, to whom I refered in Chapter 2, said. The Christian is one who places Christ at the center of their 'controlling stories' (Wright, 1992: 42), their 'control beliefs' (Wolterstorff, 1976: 14), their 'master stories' (Fowler, 1981: 277ff.) and the 'tacit' dimensions of their personal beliefs (Polanyi, 1967 & 1974).

In conclusion then, the longing and desire of the believing soul is for a participation in the life of God by becoming someone who is an enthusiast (from the Greek *en*, in; and *theos*, God; or 'the God within'), whose life and being are inspired (from the Latin *inspirare*, to 'breathe into') by the Truth, the Life and Being of God. According to Loder, "A vision of the Holy is a vision of a reality so magnificent that the human self longs for the Holy to be all in all, totally transforming existence in the fullness of its light and being" (1981: 90).

**Conclusion:**

In this chapter I have addressed the human self in the presence of the Divine being whom Christians refer to as God. The chapter has sought to address changes in the human-Divine relation which Whitehead posed as a change from God as void, to God as enemy, to God as companion and beloved friend. I have found that ultimately the convert's transformation of consciousness revolves around a transformation of their God-image; from a God who is unknown, unpredictable, and disinterested in their existence, to a God who is known, present, loving and powerful. His presence no longer holds the threat of death for the sinner, but is rather the cause of celebration for the saint, who strives towards acquiring the characteristics of the Divine, and whose life-energies are both derived from and pointed towards it as the primary reference point of their existence. For the new convert, there is a compelling sense that they are under an exorbitant obligation to God for his deliverance of...
their soul from death and sin, and that they "cannot rise without being lifted by grace" (Stein, 1973: 36).
Section 3: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF MEANING CHANGE AT CONVERSION

Chapter 9: The Mind in Christian Conversion: Reasoning out the Immutable

Introduction:

The apex of this research has now been reached as I discuss in this chapter the impact of the encounter with the Divine on the mind of the neophyte disciple in Christian conversion. The interpretive themes dealt with in this chapter of the dissertation are; not knowing and knowing; a transformation of consciousness; an altered worldview; spiritual insight; renewing of the mind; and the sanity of believing.

(1) Not knowing and knowing:

Janice stated, "I really needed to know that he [God] was going to be there for me." She used the phrase "I don't know" 42 times in relation to her pre-conversion life. Her rhetoric of "not knowing" is a powerful indicator that she experienced her pre-conversion state as a chaos of uninterpretable events and processes. Over time things like answers to prayer, her experience of being "lifted up", her incident in Church where she began "shaking", and the persistent way in which crises appeared to resolve themselves, "proved" to her that God was present, powerful, and willing to assist her in her struggles.

Following her conversion Janice stated, "Becoming a Christian has made me look at things in a different way;" and "I know that God is there for me in the tough times." Whereas life was once a non-sensical and confusing experience, after her conversion, she stated with conviction, "I've stopped thinking; I know now!" Reporting on her post-conversion experience, Janice used the word "know" in a positive way 38 times. Phrases like, "I know there is a reason for my existence"; "I feel good knowing God loves me"; "I feel safe knowing God is there for me"; and "I know I can pray to him", reflect the positive usage of such knowing.

It becomes apparent then that prior to her conversion Janice existed in a state of 'not knowing' about God, his character and ways; to her mind God was someone hidden and
mysterious. Yet after her conversion Janice experienced certainty in ‘knowing’ who God is, his character and ways, as someone who was no longer hidden and mysterious but as someone who had become to some extent transparent to her mind, leaving her convinced of his mercy, power, presence and goodness. Thereafter life was no longer experienced as chaotic and inchoate but as intelligible and purposive. Janice could say of life, “It makes sense all of a sudden. It is making sense.” For Janice the reception of faith had engendered a knowledge which exhibited great certainty and confidence about the prospect of a hopeful and secure future. Yet despite the apparent transition in her knowledge of God in terms of her nescience ‘before’ conversion and the certainty and apodicticity of her knowledge of him ‘after’ conversion, an element of dissonance and uncertainty remained.

What if we were to introduce an element of variability by superimposing her state of ‘unknowing’ over her ‘knowing’? It is possible that Janice’s earlier paralipsis related as much to her inability to accept the authenticity of her own existence than to any difficulty she may have had in ascertaining the existence and character of God? In the theology of Calvin a close parallel is drawn between the knowledge of one’s self and the knowledge of God; “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.... The knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him” (1960: 35). Given Janice’s prior uncertainty and insecurity, was it actually not possible for her to seek God, given the statement by Lobstein that “if one knows himself, he will know God” (ibid, editor’s footnote: 36). In my view, whatever healing within her own psyche was required in order for Janice to seek God in a proper way, actually took place in the moment of her conversion and allowed her to make the transition from ‘I cannot but He can’, and ‘I know not but He knows’ (Hocking, 1912: 237-8). Whereas prior to her conversion apparently neither she nor God truly ‘existed’ as truthful entities in her consciousness, following her conversion both enjoyed an existence in a way which they could not have before. Subsequently, it was at those times when Janice was most conscious of God that she felt most fully alive and accepted by him. This was an experience she shared with Tolstoy:
I remember that I only lived at those times when I believed in God. As it was before, so it was now: I need only be aware of God to live; I need only forget him or disbelieve in him, and I died ... I live, really live, only when I feel him and seek him. “What more do you seek?” exclaimed a voice within me. “This is he. He is that without which one cannot live. To know God and to live is one and the same thing!” (1974: 64-5).

Life for Tolstoy, pervaded as it was with the enraged beast above and the jaws of the dragon below, had been a ‘meaningless absurdity’ filled with tension (*ibid*: 20). But it was all overthrown at his conversion to Christ. A rescue has been effected wherein the reality of the teaching of Christ brought about a reversal of thought; “The direction of my life and my desires became different, and good and evil changed places. This all occurred because I understood Christ’s teaching otherwise than I had formerly understood it” (*ibid*: 307). The *magister internus* of his inward perception spoke the words which brought about the inward shift; “he is that without which one cannot live!”

Christian converts in the drama of the conversion process appear to imbibe a new kind of knowledge which renders their perceptions qualitatively different to their previous state of knowing. The knowledge they gain is more than simply a cognitive appreciation of the ‘facts’ of Christian doctrine; they appear to enter a state of existence which is defined and shaped by the supernaturalised narrative on the Bible. It is from this living and energized depiction of the sacred world that the religious agent re-creates by means of a generative *poiesis* the outline of a new existence based on a new plausibility structure which reverses the polarity of their old life into a newness which is all-pervading. Darkness becomes light, confusion becomes perspicuous, despair becomes hope, the inward struggle of the self to define its *raison d’être* within the universe is resolved, and the unknown and mysterious God who previously appeared to be condemning and judgmental is now the source of everything good. Indeed he is the source of healing and life itself.

(2) Transformation of consciousness:

In describing her immediate post-conversion experience of feeling the “burning of the Spirit”, Samantha spoke of being convinced of the veracity of God’s love, power and existence
in terms of the "knowledge and the certainty that this is true." She described the experience as becoming "complete" because God "filled all the gaps, all the voids, all holes in my heart and my mind, and I became a complete person." Subsequent to her conversion, Samantha experienced her "thought patterns [being] changed" while reading the Bible, so that although initially the Bible was simply a "story" which gave the appearance of being unrelated to her life, it now became something which was "totally true." She described the in-breaking of the truth of the Bible in terms of "some kind of truth broke in on me"; it was "very much a solid thing."

Initially Samantha rejected the notion of transformation in relation to her conversion but when the idea was put in biblical terms, she was happy to accept it as an important component of her conversion experience. She quoted from memory the biblical verse, "Don't be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"; a quotation from Romans 12:2.\(^1\) Certainly she was aware of a 'bigger picture' whose parameters belonged to the Christian-theistic system of belief, and whose underlying plausibility structure were in the process of imposing themselves upon her perceptual apparatus in a way which she thought to be both providential and beneficial. She was aware of "throwing everything I [previously] believed away", and bringing her attributional scheme into conformity with what she read in the Biblical narrative with "rank acceptance." In this way her prior commitment to evolution was overthrown and God was seen as the active originator in the process of a purposive creation. She stated with conviction, "There has to be a designer, there has to be a God." Samantha felt herself to be able to "see beyond" her previous un-energized perception into the new 'vision' of the Bible and its supernatural, salvific and super-human world which extended her knowledge concerning herself, God and the world.

In her transcripts Samantha exhibits a conscious awareness of changes she noted were taking place within her belief system as a result of her participation in Christian conversion. Her idea of conversion as a 'completion' or 'integration' of her personality and existence resonates with James' definition of conversion:

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an

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1. Romans 12:2 will be discussed in detail in a later section in this chapter.
assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong interior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities (1928: 189).

Samantha's experience of conversion bears out the Jamesian hypothesis of the divided self becoming 'unified' in conversion. The 'firmer hold upon religious realities' referred to by James was—in Samantha's case—the result of an encounter with God which resulted in "scales falling from [my] eyes"; the "penny dropping"; and "some kind of truth" breaking into her mind. She perceived it as a "solid thing"; so solid and substantial that she determined to reassess her worldview, reporting that since "I've made this commitment ... I have to find some fresh meanings." Like Anne, who understood the new perception of reality emanating from her reading of the Bible and participation in the Eucharist as the "only possible consciousness"; Samantha sought to replace her previous worldview with an alternative basis for 'knowing' and experiencing what was ultimately valuable and real. Thus a new conception of her life in relation to God, herself, and the world was formulated under the auspices of a Christo-centric epistemology which I will refer to as a 'Christ-consciousness', in which every object, experience, event and relationship was perceived through the anagogical key of Christ. In the words of Dowey, Calvin believed "there is no redemptive knowledge of God ... apart from the mediatorial office of Christ" (1994: 10). For the new convert then, Christ becomes the cornerstone upon which the edifice of his or her newfound faith and existence is built. Deutsch refers to this as 'subration', defined as:

The mental process whereby one disvalues some previously appraised object or content of consciousness because of its being contradicted by a new experience. A judgment about something is contradicted by a new experience.... From the standpoint of the subject, to subrate means to undergo an experience—practical, intellectual, or spiritual—which radically changes one's judgment about something. An object or content of consciousness is subrated or is subratable when it is or can be so devalued, denied, or contradicted by another experience (cited by Yandell, 1993: 302).

According to Deutsch, the new and higher form of knowledge is not apprehended as simply

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"one form of knowledge among others", but is apperceived as so completely new and profound that it overrides and overcomes any pretension by previous truth-claims to being ‘real’ knowledge. This new form of knowing is “self-certifying: no other form of lower knowledge, such as inference or perception, is capable of demonstrating or refuting it” (ibid: 82). Thus the mundane world turns into the realm of the sacred, evolution is turned into creation, sin is turned into redemption, and the God who was once thought of as stranger and as enemy has now become friend and co-participant in life.

Phenomenologically speaking, a radically new form of existence is brought into the believing soul’s consciousness through the process of conversion; some new and higher world-life is made apparent which exerts a transformative influence on their mind and outlook. So much so that they experience themselves as connecting with an originary life-force which elevates their body, their mind, their soul and the entirety of their beings to another state of existence. In Berger and Luckmann’s terms, they ‘switch worlds’ (1966: 39 & 176).

(3) An altered worldview:

After his conversion Greg became aware that his belief system prior to becoming a Christian was linked to what he had read in his large collection of science fiction books, particularly in the writings of Arthur C. Clark. He stated, “I was soaked in fantasy and science fiction. I had shelves of the stuff.” “In fact my worldview was a science fiction worldview.” Subsequent to his conversion, Greg has felt “convicted to throw away all my science fiction and fantasy books.” Although immersed in this literature, it is of interest that at a point of crisis in his life Greg did not seek help from science fiction but from the “positive mental attitude” school of Norman Vincent Peale. Greg was “seeking answers” to the questions posed by the suffering within his life, and his quest for understanding took him beyond imagination into the narrative “world” of the Christian gospel. Greg describes himself as having become a “weirdo-radical six day creation person” who perceived God as being the literal “creator” of the cosmos whose existence was completely contingent on God’s existence and power. Greg appears to have been particularly aware of the need to change his understanding of the world, the being
and character of God and his own existence. He reports frequent sessions of prayer to God where his primary request was "Lord change my heart, change me!"; and "Break down my wrongness and put in your worldview."

Whereas before, the "question of salvation would not have meant anything" to Greg, after his conversion it preoccupied his thoughts at a deep level. Whereas before "I didn't know there was anything to be saved from", in the months which comprised his preparation for the God-encounter, Greg became aware of his sin, its abhorrence to God, the possibility of salvation, and the need for faith in Christ. Greg stated, "If there's one thing that changes my mind ... its just to walk through the Scriptures;" "I would be reading the Bible over a bowl of noodles; something would grab me and I would say, 'O that's right!'" Greg began to realize "real Christians are different", that they are operating out of an attributional and plausibility structure which is essentially "other" than that of non-Christians.

In conversion, the Christian believing soul comes to suspend those beliefs and values which previously pervaded the inner sanctum of their perceptual lives, and to replace them with alternate beliefs and values to which they have come to attribute ultimate value. According to Bruce:

Actual conversion takes place as one begins to believe a new worldview, gives primary allegiance to Jesus Christ as primary value in his life, and begins to allow subsequent value change to work its way through his life into behavior aimed at pleasing God. There is always a period of overlap with the old worldview, values and behavior as one learns to understand, evaluate, and apply the truth and the standards of God to himself. This is the prolonged process of conversion, but the evidence of real conversion is a life of growing congruence between one's worldview values and behavior, all centered around Christ as Lord (1992: 72).

This movement from a previous set of values and beliefs which provided the basic worldview of the pre-conversion agent, to a new worldview and a new primary allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord is a 'clue' to the fact that conversion at its roots is an exchange of worldviews. An exchange can be said to take place at the deepest level of one's understanding which requires an alignment between one's mind, one's will and one's emotions in order to displace the previous unsatisfactory outlook and to allow the inclusion or 'building-in' of the new
attributional schema. This must be so for the believing soul to undertake the process of ‘founding’ his or her entire existence on the principles of the new worldview or plausibility structure. I spoke to a Catholic Christian I met on the street in August 2001, who said, “For me, everything revolves around Jesus.” Baillie writes of the “Christian faith as a frame of reference which enables the believer to make the appropriate response to every circumstance of life, or translating the Latin word, to all that ‘stands around him’” (1962: 132). He wrote further, “Christianity, then, is a way of living, which includes a way of thinking, a way of feeling and a way of behaving” (ibid: 137).

(4) Spiritual insight:

Throughout Greg’s interview transcripts the motif of ‘sight’ is an important and recurring theme. Greg attributed the cause of his conversion to his “seeking answers” in response to the questions posed by the insoluble problems in his life and the series of realizations which arose out of his search. He had an “incredible realization” that Jesus was divine because he shared the nature and being of God. He “saw” the words “before Abraham was, I Am” in both a physical and a figurative way, and came to understand that they held significance for his own life. On being invited to attend a Christian home group, Greg “saw” a young woman undergo a conversion which left an on-going effect on him. Previously he thought everyone “was a Christian”, but subsequent to observing the young woman’s conversion he became aware of his own need to become a Christian and to undergo the drama of conversion himself. He was aware of Jesus “looking through the pages of time” into his life. He “saw” the bridge-diagram and came to an immediate understanding of its significance for his relationship to God and his own eternal wellbeing. He “saw” Jesus taking the last supper, and could “see” the hairs on the back of Jesus’ hands as he served the bread and wine to his disciples. He was able to “see” God as creator, as someone upon whose existence even the demons depended. Greg began to perceive God as someone who was “totally, totally in control.” Presently he has “visions” of spiritual insight or revelation when he gathers with other Christians for prayer. And finally, Greg had a “vision” which was profoundly vivid to him
which depicted himself as a marionette on a string, acting in obedience to every move that God the puppeteer required of him.

Greg describes these in-breakings of spiritual insight as “extraordinarily powerful.” During his conversion he was aware of himself entering into the Christian faith through a process of acquiring a new form of ‘insight’ which can be described as having its origins within a supernatural or other-worldly realm. The seeing which takes place is founded on the “different perspective” he believes he has acquired as a result of undergoing Christian conversion. The Christian tradition places great emphasis on the element of ‘sight’. Accounts of Jesus healing the blind are reported in each of the Gospels (Matthew 9:20-22, 12: 22 and Luke 11: 14; Mark 8:22-26; John 9); Jesus’ teaching makes reference to the eyes as the “lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light” (Matthew 6:22); and Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians that the “eyes of your heart may be enlightened” (Ephesians 1:18).

For the newly believing soul there is an inherent belief that their minds have been opened to a hitherto unknown and un-recognized dimension of reality through the supererogated moment of a transcendent encounter with God. It is as if they have been given a new Archimedean point from which to view the whole of reality. Not only do they perceive their own lives as being a part of the larger fabric of God’s created universe—and as such have been totally transformed and elevated from their previous lesser existence to a higher and greater existence—but they now perceive the entire universe in its grandeur and majesty as being subsumed under the aegis of the totality of God’s purposes and Kingdom. It has become God’s world which is comprised of God’s purposes and God’s will; and which will be subject to God’s judgement at some future point in time. This transformation of the totality of one’s perception evidences conversion to be an event, the basic character of which is the re-making of the world of the religious percipient whose new plausibility structure requires the acquisition of a new perspective drawn from the ground-zero of God’s character, being and will. Lonergan wrote of conversion in this way:

Conversion is ontic. The convert apprehends differently, relates differently, because he
has become different. The new apprehension is not so much a new state or a new set of statements, but rather new meanings that attach to almost any statement. It is not new value so much as a transvaluation of value (in Conn, 1978: 13).

The 'transvaluation of value' spoken of by Lonergan equates to the kind of spiritual insight which Greg is struggling with as he has sought to put his experience into language. Such 'insights' can be described as an awakening to the truth of something by means of a penetrating mental vision which incorporates discernment and the capacity to grasp the inward meaning of an event or circumstance. In Christian conversion insight has the sense of the percipient being able to grasp the essential 'inner core' of the Biblical story and to perceive himself, or her life and the broader cosmos in the light of its implications. No longer are the dreary external appearances of religious rituals, creeds and orthodoxies perceived as dead vestiges from a past era; once the essential meaning of their underlying plausibility systems are grasped, they become the conduit to another reality which holds the promise of healing and a new beginning for their troubled lives. Learning to see and make use of this new plausibility system is what Lindbeck (1984: 79ff.) and Loder (1981: 37) call the 'grammar' of faith. Such a grammar is the resource-base out of which a perception is supplied to the the new believer and which enables him or her to radically revise the place of the cosmos in God's wider purposes, and their place within that 'new world'.

(5) Renewing of the mind:

Conversion made a large impact on Jamie's mental life and way of thinking. Whereas prior to his conversion he had known "about" God as someone who "created the world" and to whom he felt himself ultimately accountable; following his conversion he came to "know" God for himself. God was no longer simply an "impersonal force" but someone who loved him and had his best interests at heart. It was God who "pulled the shutters from my eyes" and "revealed the understanding of God's love." Jamie describes the spiritual life as "starting to look at things through Christ's eyes", and describes the gospel as bringing about change within the mental outlook of the convert, through a "renewing of our minds." He describes his thinking as
“definitely [having] changed” as a result of his conversion, and states that he senses himself having undergone a radical change in the way he perceives the world; he is now able to “look through spiritual eyes.” This alternative “looking” is the result of a radically different perspective on the world. As he drives to work each morning he sees people who think of themselves as simply going about their business; whereas Jamie sees them as “literally driving to Hell.”

Jamie made the statement that, “the purpose of the Gospel to is make us change; and that includes a renewing of our minds as it says in Romans.” His reference is to Romans 12:2 which says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Prior to his conversion, Jamie was in full agreement with Bonaventure (The journey of the mind to God, 1993) who described the human condition without the persistence of God’s grace as being:

Created fit for the quiet of contemplation and thus God placed him in the Paradise of pleasure. But turning away from the true light to a changeable good, he and all his descendants were by his fault bent over by original sin, which infected human nature in a twofold manner: the mind with ignorance and the flesh with concupiscence. The result is that man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven, unless grace comes to his aid—with justice to fight concupiscence, and with knowledge and wisdom to oppose ignorance. These effects are brought about through Jesus Christ, who has become for us God-given wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption (1993: 7 author’s italics).

In his pre-conversion state Jamie pictured himself as being blind, bent over and dwelling in darkness. Yet through the ‘flash point’ (Haughton 80: 31) of conversion, he feels himself to have been enabled to appropriate the spiritual wisdom which resides in God and is dispensed to those who recognize their poverty and blindness. Jamie had a dream just prior to being interviewed in which he went to a doctor saying, “I’m here to check out my eyes. I’m having trouble with my vision.” The doctor diagnosed Jamie as seeing things through the myopia of his own perspective and concluded that he needed to commence seeing things from God’s perspective. Following the dream Jamie began to pay particular attention to his thought

3. The closing words in italics are from 1 Corinthians 1: 24 & 30.
patterns and sought to memorize as many Bible passages as he could in order to impress their truths deeper into his consciousness so he could live in conformity with the values and requirements of the Kingdom of God.

Following the moment of his conversion Bede Griffiths felt everything about him to be heightened and transfigured:

It was as though I had been given a new power of vision. Everything seemed to lose its hardness and rigidity and become alive. When I looked at the crucifix on the wall, it seemed to me to be a living person.... When I went outside I found that the world around about me no longer oppressed me as it had done. The hard casing of exterior reality seemed to be broken through, and everything disclosed its inner being. The buses in the street seemed to have lost their solidity and to be glowing with light. I hardly felt the ground as I trod, and I think that I must have been in some danger of being run over (1979: 120).

Similarly, Jamie felt his mind to be 'renewed' following conversion as a result of the new power of vision he felt himself to have received. The source of this new vision rested on the certainties of God's existence, benevolent character, creative acts, his choosing to set in motion his redemptive purposes through the death of Christ on the cross, and his establishing human history as 'salvation history'. Contrary to his prior determination to live out of own resources in deciding how best to exercise his autonomous freedom, Jamie now thought it best to draw on a source of wisdom higher and clearer than his own. He now sought to 'think God's thoughts after him' by memorizing Scripture, regular times of prayer, public worship, cultivating an openness to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and seeking to conform his life and actions to the will of God for him. In this way Jamie sought to pattern his thoughts and actions on the template which he believed to have been provided by Jesus, the God-man from heaven.

(6) The sanity of believing:

Mark is a mental health nurse who works at a mental health institution in Perth. Following his conversion he became aware of a category of 'sanity' for which his clinical training provided no grounding and of which he was previously unaware. He knew of the difference between himself as a new Christian and his unbelieving work colleagues; he thought
Christians were normal people who had made an extraordinary discovery, whereas he reports his work colleagues as thinking Christians are “a little bit wacky and strange.” Mark had been verbally attacked by a staff member for speaking about his faith at work and “heaped into the basket” of those clients who exhibited the symptoms of religious delusions. Mark did not normally find it difficult when there were one or more clients on the ward who thought they were Jesus, because “obviously I know the truth that they’re not; that they’re very unwell.” What was difficult for him was the presence of those clients who appeared to have a genuine faith in Christ. On one occasion a 20 year old female client was admitted to his ward, apparently for “some form of religious delusion.” Mark felt she was:

A pleasant girl, smiling at everyone appropriately, and interacting freely with everybody. She said a couple of times to various patients that “I can feel your pain”, or “shall we pray about that?”... So she did, she prayed about that with ... some of the patients. I was watching her, you know, discreetly watching her.

Other staff members treated her behavior with derision and concluded that anyone who exhibited that kind of conduct must be ‘insane’. Mark began to feel placed in a “real dilemma” (x 2), because he was aware that he prayed with his fellow worshipers on Sunday as they broke into small groups for prayer in the context of corporate worship at Church. He stated “that put an incredible strain on me really.” Although he wanted to speak with her about the faith he saw her exhibiting, he avoided doing so because he felt staff members would criticize him. He felt she “did not appear to have any mental illness”, and from what he saw of her it was “strange she was there just based on that;” “She seemed quite sane to me.” The dilemma this placed in Mark was that, “If she’s insane then I must be insane as well.”

For Mark, there appeared to be two competing worldviews at work; the Christian worldview as a belief system which draws its primary inspiration and values from the narrative of the Bible and the person of Christ, and the secular worldview as that belief-system which draws its primary inspiration and values from secular humanism which has been the majority system of belief in Australia over recent decades. What became apparent to Mark was that the distinctions between the two worldviews were deeper and more basic than the more often recognized categories ‘sane’ and ‘insane’. Mark identified the categories of the ‘true believer’,
the ‘non-believer’, and the ‘deluded believer’, but his distinctions can be extended further. There are four categories of people represented here: (1) those well-adjusted but unbelieving staff members; (2) Mark as a well-adjusted and believing staff member; (3) those maladjusted believing clients; and (4) and maladjusted and unbelieving clients. Mark accepted my postulation that given group (1)’s non-acceptance of the Christ-centered worldview, their so-called sanity can be called into question and labeled ‘insanity’ from a Christian believer’s point of view. Whereas group (3)’s so-called ‘insanity’ can be labeled an unbalanced or disproportioned sanity, given the fact that (from a Christian perspective) it is a closer representation of reality on a grand scale than that of group (1)’s position. Mark accepted my designation of his position as being ‘doubly sane’, both socially well-adjusted and spiritually ‘sane’ in the sense that he was operating out of the creation-fall-election-redemption-apocalypse-consummation meaning string which gave shape and meaning to life and the world, in a way which secular options did not.

Precendents exist in the Christian tradition where believers were labeled as ‘mad’ because of their faith. It began when Jesus’ own family-members accused him of being ‘out of his mind’ (Mark 3:21) and his religious enemies accused him of being ‘demon-possessed and raving mad’ (John 10:20). Paul likewise was labeled by King Agrippa as someone who was ‘out of [his] mind’ (Acts 26:24). Each of those accounts revolved around the differences in plausibility structure and religious belief between the accusers and the accused. What is apparent is that the so-called insanity is not a matter of mental disease but of religious-change. Barclay (1963: 42) recounts the story of a soldier attached to the Court of Galerius. Deeply impressed by the courage of the Christian martyrs of Nicomedia, he went to the Christians and asked the secret of their courage. They instructed him in the Christian faith and he believed their message. On the next occasion on which Galerius examined the Christians, the young officer stepped forward and requested that his name be added to the list. “Are you mad?” demanded Galerius. “Do you wish to throw away your life?” “I am not mad”, was his answer. “I was mad once, but am now in my right mind.” And so he died.

Bradford, in The experience of God: portraits in the phenomenological
psychopathology of schizophrenia reports that:

The psychologist of religion interested in the relationship between religious experience in schizophrenia and in the normal population might find it remarkable that the percentage of hospitalized schizophrenic patients reporting experience of God in this study is about equal to the percentage of persons from the normal population of America and Great Britain reporting either an experience of God or a religious experience of a powerful spiritual force (1984, 15; cited by van Staden, 1998: 40).

This would suggest that while there is little difference in the frequency of experiences of God between those suffering from mental illness and those not suffering from mental illness, the nature of the God experience between those two representative groups is in some way qualitatively different. Anton Boisen suggests that:

Certain types of mental disorder and certain types of religious experience are alike attempts at reorganization. The difference lies in the outcome. Where the attempt is successful and some degree of victory is won, it is commonly recognized as religious experience. Where it is unsuccessful or indeterminate, it is commonly spoken of as "insanity" (1936: viii).

Accounts of Jesus' ministry contain the story of the Gerasene madman who lived naked among the tombs, who cut himself, crying out in a maniacal voice, and exhibited an extra-human strength such that no one could restrain him. Accounts of his exorcism and restoration to mental health are contained in the three Synoptic Gospels. Following his exorcism at Jesus' hands, the man was described as being found "sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35).

According to Dupré who grew up in the Flemish town of Geel, religious salvation is above all else the act of being healed because healing is a part of the redemptive process. Dupré develops a connection between those in the Gospels who were demon-

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4. Of the 23 miracles performed by Jesus on people with physical and mental disorders, given the possible connection between demon-possession and mental illness, it is feasible to identify six miracles as being miracles of restoration to a sound mind. A further five miracles deal with the restoration of the sense of sight, a primary sense in the construction of meaning and the attributing of truth (Lion Handbook, 1973: 664).

5. A place dedicated to the care and welfare of those who suffered nervous disorders and mental illness. It became a place of pilgrimage for those who suffered these afflictions and their families, through the legend of a chaste Irish princess whose demented father beheaded her on that site. There they were encouraged to participate in the activities of the normal community life, and took part in working in the fields, doing errands, worshipping in church, attending to children, or if children themselves, attending school with the other children (Dupré 1976: 47).
This is particularly true of mental sickness. When confronted with the mentally ill, Jesus does not elicit faith before curing them, as he is wont to do for other diseases, but first "liberates" them. For the mental patient is a captive, closed up in an unreal self and, like the deaf-mutes of the Gospel, unable to listen as well as to speak. He is in despair if despair means, as Kierkegaard thought, shut-upness (1976: 47-8).

In similar fashion, Jung in his *Psychology and Western religion* wrote:

During the last thirty years, people from all over the civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients, the larger number being Protestants, a smaller number of Jews, and not more than five or six believing Catholics. Among all my patients in the second half of life ... there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook (1993: 202).

It is clear that Jung places the root-cause of much mental ill-health among his client-base as the lack of a religious worldview, with its defence against anomie, confusion and the evils which threaten to destroy the human 'being'. According to Berger, the whole purpose of religion is to act as a safety-hedge against the reality-denying dreams of "madness", and the threat posed by death in its extinction of the human self: "The power of religion depends, in the last resort, upon the credibility of the banners it puts in the hands of men as they stand before death, or more accurately, as they walk inevitably, toward it" (1969: 51).

**Summary:**

All 44 interpretive themes have now been addressed in chapters 5 through to 9. In this chapter I have been discussing the mind in Christian conversion and its reasoning processes as it seeks to deal with its own insoluble problem and the vastness of the generosity and resources of God. I will now bring this chapter to its conclusion by discussing the three explicative themes; the hiddenness of the mind in conversion, knowing with the heart, knowing through the mind of Christ.
1. The hiddenness of the mind in conversion:

The process of phenomenological explication of co-respondents’ transcripts in this research has unveiled changes in the way converts attribute meaning to previously known objects, events and relationships. It is clear that such changes take place as a result of the convert’s imbibing the Christian ‘idea’ or the new referential system of meaning found in the Christian worldview. What is not yet clear however is how that change takes place. To isolate exactly what occurs in conversion is a particularly difficult task as Rahner states, “This fundamental decision [of conversion] is not wholly accessible to analytical reflection” (in Conn, 1986: 204). This ‘difficulty’ is made even more demanding because of the hiddenness of the perceptual procedures of conversion to co-respondents themselves. Despite persistent questioning around the issue no co-participant in this research could reconstitute in any way satisfactory to themselves as the ‘transit passenger’ in conversion, or to myself as researcher (the conductor?), the processes which occurred in their perceptual apparatus which effected conversion.

I began this research by considering Teilhard de Chardin’s statement, “On some given day a man suddenly becomes conscious that he is alive to a particular perception of the divine spread everywhere about him. Question him. When did this state begin for him? He cannot tell. All he knows is that a new spirit has crossed his life” (1968: 128). Hick makes the statement regarding the religious convert’s apprehension of God, that:

The theistic believer cannot explain how he knows the divine presence to be mediated through his human experience. He just finds himself interpreting his experience in this way. He lives in the presence of God, though he is unable to prove by any dialectical process that God exists (cited by Baillie, 1962: 73).

In phenomenological terms this is because consciousness cannot ‘split’ itself by considering two things at once. As Loder describes it, “The thinker cannot catch himself in the act of thinking” (1992: 43).6 As a result of this hiddenness of the mind in conversion, and the

6. William James’ respondent M. Ratisbonne says of his experience of the acquisition of new beliefs: “I could give no account to myself of the truth of which I had acquired a knowledge and a faith. All that I can say is that in an instant the bandage had fallen from my eyes” (1928: 225).
converting soul's blindness to it's own cognitive processes, I have chosen to proceed by way of an imaginative engagement with the literature which interfaces with the moment of transformation in an attempt to bring to the foreground the psycho-spiritual elements within conversion, and to gain a phenomenological understanding of it.

In attempting to establish what processes are involved in the psycho-spiritual transaction of conversion it is apparent that the soul in distress and on the threshold of determining to resolve its overwhelming crisis by means of a religious solution, accesses the primary data which provides the provocation toward conversion in a prescient or prehensive way. The 'reasons of the heart' lie deep within the subterranean recesses of the reasoning and volitional aspects of human perception, and are rarely verbalized into a form which either the self or others could reasonably understand. As Polanyi stated, "We know more than we can tell" (1967: 4). Polanyi describes this kind of prehensive knowing as 'tacit knowledge' which facilitates effective human performance but "exceeds the powers of articulation" (1974: 92). Further, he argues that all knowledge is 'personal' knowledge in the sense that the entirety of its meanings could not be fully conveyed to someone else, and that such knowledge is shown to be personal when it remains within a framework of personal judgments (ibid: 29). For Polanyi, any new vision revealed through scientific discovery is less than knowledge because it is not yet verified and established; and yet it is more than knowledge because it, "Is a foreknowledge of things yet unknown and at present perhaps inconceivable. Our vision of the general nature of things is our guide for the interpretation of all experience. Such guidance is indispensable" (ibid: 135). Such 'uncoverings' as are made through the innovations of creating new knowledge, says Polanyi, are formed by not fully understood symbolic operations which can

(Continued) In the social sciences, Weimer says "There can be no 'simultaneous' research in conflicting paradigms: once the world is seen from a new point of view, it will take the 'gestalt switch' to retrieve the old perspective and like the alternative perceptions of the Necker cube, they cannot both be had at once", W. B. Weimer. 1974. The history of psychology and its retrieval from historiography, p. 382. Cited in H. M. Collins and T. J. Pinch. 1982. Frames of meaning: the social construction of extraordinary science, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 160.

7. A theme instigated by Pascal which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.
be: (a) a fumbling, to be corrected later by our tacit understanding; or (b) a pioneering, to be followed up later by our tacit understanding (ibid: 93). In this way new knowledge 'anticipates' through hunch and instinct realities which are yet to come into being. Further yet, Polanyi states, "Indeed, any modification of an anticipatory framework, whether conceptual, perceptual or appetitive, is an irreversible heuristic act, which transforms our way of thinking, seeing and appreciating in the hope of attuning our understanding, perception or sensuality more closely to what is true and right" (ibid: 106).

For the incipient religious agent caught up in the maelstrom of conversion, their primary interest is not with the perceptual processes of their minds as I am in this research; rather it is with whatever problem they feel threatens the existence of their selves, and with the Divine whom they believe holds the key to their rescue and restoration. Thus on the one hand there is the self with its dis-ease and apparent life-threatening problem, and on the other there is God who—because all other options for rescue have been exhausted—alone holds the key to salvation and the beginning of a new life. Between the self and its problem, and God and his solution there lies the liminal context. This context can be typified as an imbroglio, a vortex or a whirlpool of chaos and movement in which there are no fixed points; everything is in transition, where any previous univocal formation has disintegrated and no new fixed pattern has yet taken shape.

In relation to converts not being able to adequately recount the reasons which they converted, Dante wrote:

I have been in that heaven, the most illumined, by light from Him and seen things which, to utter, he who returns hath neither skill nor knowledge. For as it nears the object of its yearning, our intellect is overwhelmed so deeply, it can never retrace the path it followed. But whatsoever of the holy kingdom was the power of memory to treasure will be my theme until the song is ended (cited by Valle, 1998: xv, my italics).

Similar metaphors which have equivalence are the musician who created a beautiful piece of flowing music which inspires its hearers, but when asked to reconstitute the process of its making, cannot do so. Or the scholar who has written a careful piece of research, but when he or she is asked to reconstitute the process by which it came into being, cannot do so. He or she
cannot retrospectively reconstruct the project in its entirety in detail. Between the 'frozen' state of the old perceptual model and the 'frozen' state of the new model is the 'fluid' process of negotiating the terms and conditions under which any transfer will be effected. Yet having arrived at a solution:

A problem ... once solved can no longer puzzle me; I cannot guess what I already know. Having made a discovery, I shall never see the world again as before. My eyes have become different; I made myself into a person seeing and thinking differently. I have crossed a gap, the heuristic gap which lies between problem and discovery (Polanyi, 1974: 143).

Yet once the new perspective has been incorporated into the plausibility structure, like any new 'skill' it becomes comfortable and part of the ideational resource which informs the project of on-going living. Polanyi uses the example of a hammer hitting a nail; the person wielding the hammer uses it as an extension of himself (ibid: 55). This is also true of any new ideational resource gathered. Finally here, Polanyi also makes use of the notion of 'indwelling' as the interiorization of a system of meaning so effectively that in effect one comes to reside within it, "religion, considered as an act of worship, is an indwelling rather than an affirmation" (ibid: 279). This is parallel to an important comment by Lindbeck, referred to in chapter two, "To become a Christian involves learning the story of Israel and of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one's world in its terms" (1984: 34).

Loder (1981: 30ff.) applies the concept of 'transformational logic' to the in-between or liminal stages in conversion which correspond with the processes of meaning change as reported by the co-respondents themselves in this research. The schema he proposes is five-fold: (1) conflict which recognizes paradoxes and ambiguities of the agonistic human context; (2) interlude for scanning allows for time-out to indwell the problem and its component parts; (3) the constructive act of imagination in which the religious actor seeks to resolve the problem by means of 'bisociation'; the free association of ideas and possibilities in a open-structured reflective process; (4) a dual process of release of pent-up energies from the conflict, and an opening of the knower to the reality of having resolved the crisis, and the prospect of a new life; and (5) the interpretation of the new imaginative solution. Retrospectively there is the
establishing of a congruence with the past life, and prospectively there is a correspondence to
the world as it is intention-ed. According to Loder:

It is in the third step, the construction of insight sense with convicting force, that
constitutes the turning point of the knowing event. It is by this central act that the
elements of the ruptured situation are transformed, and a new perception, perspective,
or a new world view is bestowed on the knower (ibid: 33).

So that:

An emergent synthesis of so-called subjective and objective factors [is established].
Thereby what is known becomes knowledge because the knower has been addressed,
struck, confronted, attacked or attracted by an “object”, and in response he or she has
sensed, felt, or incorporated it on the basis of previous analogous experience.
Whatever has violated the serenity of his or her senses, sensibilities, or good sense
enough to become an “object” has also been embodied by the knower on the basis of
some bodily, sensate, appropriate ... basis (ibid: 24).

In conclusion of this point, I wish to draw the reader’s attention to the applicability of
the transcendental phenomenological method to the experiences of religious converts in this
liminal and transitional phase within the transformation of mind. Despite the hiddenness of the
mind in the moment of the acquisition of religious knowledge, transcendental phenomenology
is effective in accessing, understanding and describing the mind as it undergoes its changes in
regard to God, self and world, in its beliefs, attitudes and actions, before during and after
conversion. Phenomenology as a method was described in chapter three as being comprised of
a four-fold methodology of the eidetic reduction, intentionality, intersubjectivity, and the
transcendental turn. Having applied the phenomenological reduction, it is now time to address
the intentionality of the Christian religious convert, by means of intersubjectivity, carried out
from a transcendental perspective. From a perspective founded within theology, Doran
describes the transcendental method typical of Lonergan’s approach in the following way:

[The] transcendental method recognizes that the data on men and women as selves will
be understood not by studying physics, chemistry, biology, or even sensitive
psychology, but by questioning the data of human consciousness itself, by bringing
conscious operations as potential to bear on the conscious operations as conscious, by
“(1) experiencing one’s experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, and (2)
understanding the unity of relation of one’s experienced experiencing, understanding,
judging, deciding, (3) affirming the reality of one’s deciding, and (4) deciding to
operate in record with the norms imminent in the spontaneous relatedness of one's experienced, understood, affirmed experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding” (1981: 18).

Thus by following the insights provided by Polanyi and the transcendental logic program of Loder, I have been able to gain an intuition of processes within conversion which relate to its perceptual features in terms of meaning and attributional change within converts' minds. Ultimately the new attributional schema which converts arrive at following their transition through the crisis of 'transformational logic' is that frame of reference which they regard as being ultimately true. Baillie cites Kierkegaard (1963: 261) as saying “truth is not an objective statement about certain relations of being, but a form of existence in which such relations are actualized.” Paul's comment that the Christian “lives and moves” and has his or her being in God (Acts 17:28) prepares the way for a conception of the journey the new believer must make in order to indwell that kind of a theonomous world. From the perspective of the believer, Lewis makes the revealing statement, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else” (1962: 165).

2. Knowing with the heart:

In relation to the concept of religious knowing, respondents' transcripts provide a fascinating insight into the linkages religious converts make within their inner perceptual operations between the concepts of heart and mind. Throughout their transcripts the word 'heart' and its derivatives (heart-felt, heart-burn, wholeheartedly) were used 62 times, and the word 'mind' and its derivatives (reminded, mindedness, spiritually-minded) were used 61 times. The close equitability of these terms is a strong indicator that for religious converts the 'heart' has a knowing function. This can be tied in part to a putative use of language such as 'I

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8. Two further accounts of the acquisition of new knowledge are Tippett's 'decision making process' (1977), and Loder and Neidhardt's 'strange loop' model (1992: 54ff.). I have chosen not to discuss them here for the reason that they are not phenomenological in the sense that they are the result of the systematization of thought following reflection rather than of the raw experience of human agents. That does not mean I eschew these models; I particularly like Loder and Neidhardt's 'strange loop' model, and recommend it to anyone undertaking a study of new knowledge acquired through transformational events.
know in my heart of hearts’ or ‘My head tells me one thing but my heart tells me another’. These usages can also be linked to the wholistic psychology applied in the Hebrew Bible which refers to the concept of ‘heart’ (levant) as a primary concept of the human personality in its entirety which alludes to ‘the deep or real center of the person’9 such as in 1 Samuel 16:7 where it is stated that whereas man looks at the outward appearance, “God looks at the heart.” ‘Heart’ is enumerated elsewhere (Harris & Archer 1987: 1070-1) as the center of man’s immaterial disposition, and functions as the element which integrates the emotional, volitional and rational components of the human personality. An instantiation of several parallel usages is given by Mark who spoke of “God work[ing] through my heart and through my mind,” of reading the Bible and its truth going “straight to my heart and to my mind”; of them “hit[ting] me right between the eyes ... right in the heart. There was no doubt about it; I just knew...”; and that in conversion “God has changed my heart.” He “works on my heart. On my mind as well.”

Blaise Pascal is well known for his insistence on the priority of heart over reason in his aphorism “the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.... It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason. That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by the reason” (1985: 154). No doubt this ‘heart vs. reason’ hypothesis was part of his polemic against the ‘philosophers and scholars’ he referred to in his Memorial (ibid: 309), yet it must surely have been part of his own experience of conversion and as such must have formed an important part of his philosophy of religious knowing. For Pascal, faith is the response of the complex but integrated human being to an uncertain, alternate and by-no-means-proved possibility of hope and rescue perceived by the percipient as something which has within it the appearance of being certain, authentic and credible. Contrary to Mark Twain’s defamation of faith as “believing what you know ain’t so” (Morris 1992: 188), Pascal spoke of the heart as the faculty of the human being which has priority over reason because:

We know we are not dreaming, but, however unable we may be to prove it rationally, our inability proves nothing but the weakness of our reason, and not the uncertainty of

9. Lecture 8, ‘Hebrew Psychology’, from a series of Old Testament lecture notes loaned to me on January 12, 1983 while a student chaplain at Royal Perth Hospital. Unfortunately the name of the lecturer (presumably the author of the notes) has not been captured on the photocopies I kept from those notes.
all our knowledge.... For knowledge of first principles, like space, time, motion, number, is as solid as any derived through reason, and it is on such knowledge, coming from the heart and instinct, that reason has to depend and base all its argument (1985: 110).

Calvin is in full agreement with Pascal when he makes the statement, "We are called to a knowledge of God: not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart" (1960: 62). In a footnote, McNeill (editor of the Institutes) makes the comment that Calvin distinguishes between the reasoning powers of the cerebrum and the cor (brain and heart) in relation to the knowledge of God, giving priority to the heart over the mind. The heart then gives the appearance of functioning for the religious believer as the primary organ of consciousness in matters relating to the soul and other key transcendental aspects of one's life. It is the heart which appears to be the integrating, relational intermediary between the complementary aspects of emotion, reason and volition which comprise the human self and its embodied interests in the wider world.

The religious percipients who took part in this research exhibited a tendency toward an ordering of the knowledge affirmed by the heart into a form which the reason can accept as satisfactory and defensible. This opens up a place for the importance of what Otto calls 'faith-knowledge' (1918: 222). Otto points to the Christian confessions, 'I know that my Redeemer lives' (Job 19:25) and, 'I believe in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead', as instantiations of the 'faith-knowledge' of Christians:

To speak of 'resurrection' is to utter a mystery, and mystery is a subject for faith, not science. And, for Christianity, how this faith itself comes to be is no less a mystery, indeed the greatest of all mysteries. But if 'faith' were knowledge, directly attested by the senses or based upon the tradition of a former occurrence attested by the senses, this mystery would wholly disappear (ibid).

Otto's comment draws our attention to the link made by religious believers between the heart and its meaning-making function, and how faith exhibits a preference for organizing its primary objects of faith into an ordered and instituted pattern. An age-old debate has raged between the Augustinian and Thomistic philosophies of Catholic medieval theology, where Augustine took
the position that in order to understand a particular tenet of faith, one must first believe; whereas Thomas took the position that in order to believe the tenets of faith, one must first understand them. Anselm followed the Augustinian school when he avowed, "I do not try to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand" (cited by Laycock, in Tymieniecka 1994: 298). The experiences of co-respondents in this research follow the Augustinian pattern which saw them progress from inadequate knowledge based on their proto-theologies, to belief without having any intelligible grounds for such belief, to the desire to 'found' their faith in a deeper understanding of the basis for faith. This parallels the Augustinian pattern which emulates Augustine's thesis that faith seeks understanding (*Nisis credideritis non intelligitis*, or unless you believe you shall not understand, [Bosch 1995: 49]), and strives toward a sufficient comprehension of the basis for faith and the emergence of its confession within the religious percipient's life.

Max Scheler's *Ordo Amoris* (1973) provides an expansion on the idea of heart as a determinative element in 'knowing'. He states that:

> Man, before he is an *ens cogitans* or an *ens volens*, is an *ens amans*. The fullness, the gradations, the differentiations, and the power of his love circumscribe the fullness, the functional specificity, and the power of his possible spirit and of the possible range of contact with the universe (*ibid*: 110-11).

For Scheler, human values are not found in derivative judgements nor in emotive projections, they are found in acts of feeling based on a hierarchy of values (Spader, 1986: 188). And it is the *ordo amoris* or the ordering of the heart’s emotions which modulates the pressure between one’s loving and one’s hating so that an individual or a group is directed toward that which they ultimately value and away from that which they do not value. Scheler writes, "Love is always what awakens both knowledge and volition; indeed, it is the mother of spirit and reason itself" (1973: 110). Further, it is "the heart which possesses a strict analogue of logic in its own domain that it does not borrow from the logic of the understanding" (*ibid*: 117). For Scheler, the *ordo amoris* is the core of the world-order taken as a 'divine' order, in that the 'seeing' which it provides its subject is a seeing "as if through the eyes of God" (*ibid*: 107). While he agrees humans have no innate idea of God (*ibid*: 133), Scheler's representation of the *ordo*
amorís presupposes that God is the source of all love, wisdom and ethical order, and makes the ordo amorís especially applicable to a phenomenological explication of the sources of religious knowledge and authority for the new religious convert.

I think it necessary, on the basis of the above discussion, to adumbrate the trans-temporal process of acquiring new religious knowledge through Christian conversion as being necessitated by one's ordo amorís or reasoning emotions towards those values to which it is committed. In the acquisition of new religious knowledge and commitments, a movement takes place in the early stages of the dialectics of faith from chaos to order, from darkness to light, and from an inchoate dysphasia towards an ordered, reasonable and defensible formulation of the tenets of faith. The heart, having made the commitment to a new faith-formulation which satisfies one's own needs for meaning and defence against anomie, the percipient must then turn to the process of rationalizing the new-found belief into a formula which satisfies one's powers of reason, and provides a defensible formula in the face of competing truth-claims which contest it in the wider contexture of the world. As the Apostle Peter put it, Christians are called to give account of the "reason for the hope" within them (1 Peter 3: 15). For examples of how this principle has manifested itself over history, I need go no further than to refer to the credal formulations of faith which the Christian Church has produced in the Apostles', the Nicene and the Athanasian creeds, in order to both affirm that which is believed, and to defend those affirmations of faith in the face of the development of heretical beliefs by sectarian schisms.

3. Knowing through the mind of Christ:

In 1 Corinthians 2:16 the Apostle Paul made the statement that he and his fellow Christians were in possession of 'the mind of Christ'. As we discussed in Chapter two that 'mind' equates to a 'Christian mind' which has imbibed a theistic and supernatural epistemology supplied by the Judeo-Christian Scriptures and has at its core a Christo-centric worldview. The transcripts explicated in this research have indicated that at the center of the new disciples' mode of thinking and reasoning as disciples of Christ is an alternative 'knowing'
which was acquired during the experience of Christian conversion. This knowing takes its genesis from the instance of a redemptive encounter with Christ in which the self as religious agent came to accept a proposition made to them on the basis of divine love and forgiveness. The hymn-writer George Robinson (1838-1877) wrote of such an encounter in terms of being ‘loved with an everlasting love’:

Loved with everlasting love, led by grace that love to know
Spirit breathing from above, thou hast taught me it is so.
O this full and perfect peace, O this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease, I am his and he is mine.

Heav’n above is softer blue, earth around is sweeter green
something lives in every hue, Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with gladder songs o’erflow, flow’rs with deeper beauties shine
since I know as now I know, I am his and he is mine.

His forever only his, who the Lord and me shall part?
Ah with what a rest of bliss, Christ can fill the loving heart
heav’n and earth may fade and flee, first-born life in gloom decline
but while God and I shall be, I am his and he is mine.10

For Robinson, as for the many Christians before and after him, the Christian believer is able to see things in a way which the non-believer is unable to see. His phrase, “something lives in every hue, Christless eyes have never seen” is descriptive of the mysterious and beatific vision of the religious mind which those who have not been Christ-ed are unable to perceive. A friend and I spoke about this alternative consciousness applied by Christians in their everyday lives and his response was: “As Christians we see with different eyes; we hear with different ears; we feel with different hearts; and we think with different minds” (Tony van Keule, personal conversation, Bunbury, 1.11.2000). Thus a radical, alien, and henceforth unknown consciousness or vision is applied by Christian believers as their standard formula for perceiving themselves, God and the world, and from which they draw their rationale for being, thinking and acting in the lifeworld. Loder and Neidhardt (1992: 49) describe the mind of Christ as being endowed by the Holy Spirit, and far from being something which is other-

worldly and unrelated to a real assessment of this world, enables the religious actor to "behold this world as if for the first time", because it is knowing the world through the Logos, or the creative and redemptive personage of Christ. Calvin spoke of this vision as being imbibed from the Christian Scriptures in terms of the reception of 'spectacles' which disclose the "pure knowledge of God":

Just as old and bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds ... clearly shows us the true God (1960: 70).

The pre-convert's attitude towards the Christian vision as something either unknown or unacceptable identifies both the Christian vision itself and the crisis-experience which acted as the catalyst in accepting the Christian vision elucidate these entities to be something radical; that is, both the message which evokes the transformation and the process which procures it must be of primary importance to anyone seeking to understand the nature of religious experience.

The radicality of the transformational event of conversion—insofar as it focuses on the cognitive component of the convert's response—places a great deal of emphasis on the 're­cognition' which results from conversion. This re-cognition is a modality of knowing which Hart terms 'knowing otherwise'. Hart's program is to address philosophy's (mis)-treatment of rationality in relation to religious knowledge which has resulted in a proper understanding of spirituality being jeopardized. He postulates that anti-foundationalists, feminists and postmodernists have demonstrated that there are many different kinds of knowing besides rational knowing, and that much of our knowing as human beings is relational, in that knowledge is both personal and inter-personal. With this in mind, Hart makes the following statement in relation to spiritual knowing:

Spiritual knowing is not primarily a matter of religious beliefs or systems of doctrine.... Spiritual knowing or knowing spiritually is more authentically approached as knowing focused in hope and trust. Knowing what direction to take in a universe surrounded by mystery, knowing which guidance to accept in the face of life's existential boundary conditions, is not a matter of faith rather than knowledge, but a matter of fiduciary
rather than rational knowing, even though a rational dimension is not absent (1997: 43-44).

Although Hart's project is to restore the value of spirituality within the wider program of philosophy, I also think it applies well to the ways in which religious converts come to know-otherwise as a result of conversion. Everything stated above relates to the kind of alternative modality of perception I have been seeking to explicate in the experiences of neophyte religious converts.

One of the most useful ways in which phenomenology is able to assist in the program of religious studies is to make apparent the intentionalities of religious believers in the course of carrying out their religious acts of worship. What does this act mean for them? What significance does it have? In bringing this chapter to a close I will address two elements I suggest are significant in the life of every Christian religious believer from a phenomenological perspective; the first addresses the Eucharist, and the second is the function of myth in contemporary Christian religious experience.

First, the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Christian faith found around the world wherever that faith finds expression. It is a daily, weekly or monthly re-dramatization of the redemptive event of Christ on the cross, in the tomb, and on the resurrection morning. And it is one of the most emotive and evocative ordinances of the Christian Church for that reason. Worshipers re-script the crucifixion of Christ by writing themselves into the storyline and perceiving themselves as observers with Mary and the thief on the cross as witnesses to Jesus' suffering and agonizing death in payment of the penalty for their sins. They feel this event has significance for their lives; that it implicates them in the great rebellion of God's creation against his edict to fulfill his moral, religious, and mystical law. In this sense worshipers involve themselves in the kind of active and imaginative meditation which Ignatius Loyola prescribed in his *Exercises* (Ginelli, 1917). Through this imaginative, re-cosmicization of the world around

11. There are several denominations such as the Salvation Army and Seventh Day Adventists who do not celebrate the Eucharist or Communion.
the new world-pole of the sacred, redemptive, supernatural act of Christ on the cross, the
profane world and one’s sin are excoriated and given a new grace-filled existence. The world
and the entirety of one’s life is transubstantiated. Berger (1992: 188) applied the idea of
transubstantiation to the habit of faith to ‘transubstantiate’ the world from the realm of the
visible and the mundane into the verisimilitude of the realm of the superlative, of glory, of that
evanescent realm which represents the dwelling place of God himself. When the divine touches
the human, says Berger, the tendency is to reflect on it and its significance for one’s life:

I affirm Christianity because I have been touched by its symbols, because the reality it
alleges fits with my own experiences of what is real about the world, about the human
condition, and about my own life. Reality “touches” me in an immediacy of
experience, it strikes me, it even wounds me. I think this was invented in the classical
Protestant formulation that the Gospel “convicts” us; in a much lower key, this is what
Alfred Schutz meant by an “aha experience.”... its correspondence moves me to say
“yes, this must be what the world is all about!” (ibid: 152-3).

Having been ‘touched’ by the Holy, the worshipper’s tendency is to fashion the experience into
a reasonable formula which can be both professed and defended. But the worshipper also tends
towards acting-out the newfound belief in a meaningful and repeatable manner. I think this
demonstrates the primary aspect of the liturgical character of Christian belief in corporate
worship. Senn holds—as I do—that Christian liturgy is a dramatization of a primal belief
through re-enactment:

As a ritual system, liturgy expresses nothing less than a worldview ... The Christian
gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ engenders a way of viewing reality;
therefore only the image of a “new creation” is adequate to express the Christian
worldview ... This new reality, celebrated and enacted within the reality of the old
world, expressed a counter-cultural worldview vis-a-vis the cultures of this world ...
while also generating its own culture.... “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new
creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new” (Senn,
2000: xii).12

For the religious believer, participation in the liturgy is a participation in a re-enactment of the
originating drama of the myth from which his or her faith derives its origins, and in this way

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12. For further comment on this aspect of liturgy, see Patricia Wilson-Kastner. 1999. Sacred drama: a
their faith is renewed and revitalized. Berger describes the Christian religion in terms of it being a religion *sub species aeternus* (1992: 194). For the religious believer, the primary goal of participation in liturgy is to encounter God, and thus to have their beings rejuvenated and restored and their existence brought into harmony with the divine will and purpose. The Eucharist represents the pinnacle of the Christian form of Eliade's notion of cosmicization (1987), wherein human ritual acts are performed in order to participate in the power and authenticity of the Divine model.

Second, in respondents' accounts of their acquisition of new meanings at Christian conversion, myth is intuited as a functional category in contemporary Christian religious experience, in which the biblical 'story' consistently provided a set of core meanings or basic beliefs in respondents' transcripts which repeatedly exerted a shaping force on the formation of respondents' beliefs by providing prefabricated insights into the realm of the Holy. The proto-theologies held by respondents prior to their conversion were culturally mediated folk-theologies which usually depicted God as angry, distant and vindictive. Such proto-theologies were experienced as profoundly inadequate and ineffectual to address the spiritual crises they were facing. Following exposure to the biblical metanarrative however, that picture changed radically toward an image where God was benevolent, powerful, personal and present. Some consistent and repeatable set of meanings were mediated through the biblical record which conveyed itself as a living, relevant and life-related modality. It represented something 'more than' the words found in a book, but was the divine reality itself. This reality was experienced as being fundamentally attractive and satisfying and as meeting the deep spiritual needs which, while they remained unmet, threatened the very existence of the person. I suggest that the meaning string I have elucidated previously as 'creation-fall-election-redemption-apocalypse-consummation' can be represented as a myth in the classical sense of it being a 'defining story'.

13. 'Myth' was mentioned in the transcripts only in a way consistent with the natural attitude. Greg reported that a school teacher had told him the Christian teaching was a myth in the sense that it was false (Appendix A); and Mark reported that he himself had supposed the Christian Church and its teachings to be false (Appendix B).
or 'story of origins'. The Easter rite of the Catholic Church, says Dupré (1998: 83), does not commemorate the resurrection of Christ, it re-presents it, year after year; "This is the night on which Christ broke the chains of death and rose victorious from the nether world."

One scholar who has contributed to a contemporary understanding of myth is Urs von Balthasar, both in his Theodramatik (1973-1983) and in his The Glory of the Lord: a theological aesthetics (1982). After establishing a similarity between the themes of the Old Testament and ancient Egyptian, Sumerian and Babylonian mythologies, Balthasar identifies in Jesus—the central focus of the New Testament—someone who fulfills the categories of myth in a surprising way. Citing Bentzen\(^\text{14}\), Balthasar writes, "Jesus ... unifies all the aspects of the primal man and, in the story of his humiliation and exaltation, again brings to bear the whole mythology of the ancient East.... Not all myth can be cast on the rubbish heap of theology" (1982: 1/633). For Balthasar, Christ so fulfilled the type and anti-type of classical myth that he elevates it; indeed he transposes "mythical existence into Christian existence" (ibid: 634). In this case:

> The Biblical and Christian history of salvation was such a totally new beginning over against the mythical theater that it was simply impossible to effect a transposition and assimilation, at least in the early stages. The mystery of God's stepping into the world had to be clearly distinguished from everything mythological. Only at a later stage of reflection, if at all, could this mystery be understood ... as the true drama (Balthasar 1988: 91-2, cited by Nichols, 2000: 22).

Balthasar argues for the continued use of myth as applied to the way in which the Christian gospel functions for the Christian faith community, but is careful to distinguish it from other mythologies which were predominant in the early centuries of the developing Christian self-awareness. Here I see a renewed argument for the distinctiveness of the Christian message vis-à-vis other available mythologies.

Wright (1992: 396) describes the complex story recounted by the New Testament as the 'founding myth' for the community of the first Christians who depended on its meanings so as to conceive of themselves as the 'new order' of God's redemptive program in history. He

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\(^\text{14}\) A. Bentzen. 1948. Messias, Moses redivivus, Menschensohn, Zurich, p. 56.
states: "The Gospels then are 'myth' in the sense that they are foundational stories for the early Christian worldview" (ibid: 426). And according to Gelpi myth as it functioned for primitive Christians in first century Palestine continues to retain its significance for Christians in the contemporary era, "For Christians, the ... story of Jesus functions as myth because it creates the religious world in which believing Christians live and die" (1998: 85).

Obviously this view of the contemporary importance of myth and its application to the ongoing project of Christianity is problematic. First, it contradicts any evolutionary philosophy of religion which draws its source from Comte who perceived a growth of the religious mind across history from the religious or mythological, to the philosophical or metaphysical, to the stage of positivist science (Luijpen 1976: viii). While that description may have held credence for a time, that is not the case today as Australians have become bored and dispassionate about naturalistic science and many have embarked on a religious quest toward Buddhist and New Age religious expressions in search of meaning and fulfillment. This quest is toward what Morris Berman (1981) described as a worldview which envisions the re-sacralization of nature built upon an integrated monistic conception of the cosmos.

Second, this mythical approach to Christianity is problematic because it challenges Bultmann’s long-standing critique of those aspects of Christianity which depended upon a supernaturalist ontology in such doctrines as the resurrection of Christ, miracles, or answered prayer which is attributed to the supernatural power of God. Bultmann himself agreed that the New Testament contains a mythical world-picture and agrees that the content of the New Testament proclamation of the kerygma corresponds with this mythical world picture (1984: 1-2) but—following Comte’s evolutionary conception of history—he evaluates this as problematic because the contemporary audience for Christian proclamation does not think mythologically. His assertion is predicated on a logic which holds that since the arrival of science and technology no one can seriously maintain the New Testament world picture. Hence for Bultmann, the historic Christian worldview built upon such ideas as divine revelation, the virgin birth, miracles, the resurrection, redemption, and the prospect of a future judgement, are little more than outmoded notions which defy credible belief. His famous illustration is
that a person cannot believe in God and at the same time use a light switch (ibid: 4). According to Bultmann such a world picture is ‘finished’ and cannot be repristinated (ibid: 2). On that basis the Christian world picture must be ‘de-mythologized’.

Yet it is possible to debunk Bultmann’s theory by means of a phenomenological analysis of contemporary experiences of conversion. If it can be demonstrated that a mythical consciousness continues to have a place in any part of the consciousness of contemporary human beings—not simply among religious believers—then Bultmann’s project of demythologization has itself been shown to have been de-mythologized. First, Roxburgh (1993: 10) describes Wuthnow as arguing that since World War 2 technology has become the legitimating ‘myth’ that has replaced civil religion in America. For Wuthnow, technology has become the basic structural and ideological feature of modern life. It has become a sacred canopy, the overarching legitimating myth of Western culture. This is a pertinent and powerful account of how a mythical consciousness continues to function as a primary element within contemporary Western society.

Second, Lewis who converted to Christianity in 1929 during the early stages of Bultmann’s career, described Christianity as a ‘true myth’:

Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as [any] other, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God’s myth where the other myths are men’s myths; i.e., the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images He found there while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call “real things.” Therefore it is true, not in the sense of being a “description” of God (that no finite mind would take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties (Green & Hooper, 1974: 116-8).

Lewis insists that for him personally, and for everyone who makes the claim to believe in the Christian ‘idea’, that it is a ‘true myth’. This idea also bears out in the transcripts of the participants in this research. Respondents experienced themselves being caught up in something greater than themselves; something which provided the defining story for their own existence, and a creational story of origins for the entire universe. The experiential component of myth is alluded to by Gaster, who holds that myth is an experiential element within religious
belief which powerfully impacted early believers:

Myth, as an expression of existential experience, is thus the natural language of Religion. It is, in fact, what transmutes historical data into religious truth. The Exodus from Egypt is a historical datum; it becomes a matter of religion only when myth has portrayed it in paradigmatic terms. The Crucifixion is likewise a historical datum, but what, for a Christian, distinguishes the agony of Jesus from that of the two thieves is the factor of salvation—that is, the introduction into the story of that mythic element which expresses the hearer's own situation and concern (1969: xxxvi).

I would argue in agreement with Gaster that myth continues to be an experientially important component of contemporary believers' experiences in a scientifically and technologically developed culture such as is found in Australia. It is my expectation then that this discussion of the importance of myth has demonstrated the importance and validity of myth as a continuing category for a contemporary phenomenology of religious experience.

As I bring this chapter to a conclusion, I have yet to do two final things. The first is to address a phenomenology of myth, and the second is to grapple with Husserl's apparent rejection of the mythico-religious consciousness. First, a phenomenology of myth. Krolick suggests that if a genuine phenomenology of religion is to become an actuality, it will have to include an analysis of myth and ritual as religious phenomena (1987: xv). He cites Penner as follows: "What a phenomenology of religion would have to show is that myths as expressions already have signification. It would then have to be determined what this signification is and how it is given by means of intentional analysis" (from Penner, 1970: 50). I do not intend here to begin a new endeavor by opening a line of inquiry which rehearses the complete literature of myth in any systematic way. Instead, I intend to return the reader to Lewis's observation that for him personally and for Christianity as a religious tradition, the Christian gospel functions in a myth-like way in that it provides the basic statement of the way the world 'is' for those who draw their story-line, worldview or basic set of presuppositions from it. I believe that the 'creation-fall-election-redemption-consummation' meaning-string which I have alluded to provides the palpable 'core' of the myth-like envelope of Christian meaning, and continues to provide contemporary Christian believers with their primary reference points as it did for the early Christians before them. In the explications I have offered above of respondents'
transcripts, it is apparent that new religious believers imbibe this supernatural and theistic worldview in the moment of conversion, and spend a significant amount of post-conversion time in establishing this new model of reality within their attributional and truth-schemes.

Second, the concluding task in this chapter will be to come to an understanding of Husserl's apparent rejection of the mythico-religious consciousness, and the implications this might have for my argument for the continuing applicability of myth to contemporary religious converts. It is Kelsey (1974: 45 & 80) who drew my attention to Husserl's rejection of the mythico-religious attitude, apparently because he felt it to be something pre-scientific and primitive and therefore something which is opposed to the scientific search for knowledge which is absolute and thus 'true'. Yet I do not think Husserl rejected the mythico-religious consciousness entirely, and in this instance I suspect Kelsey to have been too quick to defend religious belief and commitment. It must be remembered that Husserl's project in the 'Vienna lecture' (1935) was to assist the European mind which was in 'crisis' to recover from its 'sickness' or over-dependence on the rational by restoring to it the balancing component of the emotional and spiritual. It is to be expected that Husserl as philosopher would argue for a higher rather than a lower form of consciousness, and in so doing would reject anything which gives the appearance of being fake or improper. The major difficulty I face here is that I am arguing from silence, because to the best of my knowledge Husserl did not address myth in any systematic fashion. This itself is a 'clue'; a warning that any statement concerning the topic must be hedged with caution. Inevitably I am left to ask the question how would a phenomenology in the Husserlian-spirit treat myth? Before I attempt to answer that question however, Husserl must be allowed to speak for himself. I take Husserl in his Vienna lecture to be arguing against a naïveté in both the science of nature and the science of the spirit (1935: 19). According to Husserl, while there never has nor ever will be an "objective science of spirit or theory of the soul", nevertheless the realm of the spirit is capable of being addressed in a "genuinely rational, and thoroughly scientific way" (ibid), and as such it is "absurd" for there to be any dissension between the science of nature, and the science of the spirit. For Husserl it is the 'infinite task' (ibid: 15 & 19) of which Natanson spoke (1973), to reconcile the two in order
to overcome the “unbearable unclarity” for the man who wishes to be both spiritual and rational. “These ... are inseparably united in one task: only if the spirit returns to itself from its naive exteriorization, clinging to itself and purely to itself, can it be adequate to itself” (ibid).

What I see Husserl doing here is acting to bring together into a synthesis a number of projects. First, there is his argument for a radical recommencement of philosophy, founded in phenomenology, as that first philosophy which alone can establish the essential structures of any object in consciousness, including God. Second, there is his argument for a form of rationality in the sciences which is not “one-sided” (ibid: 15) because of an unhealthy over-emphasis of an objectivism which excludes a priori the categories of emotion and spirit without first allowing them to speak through their own voice. And third, his positing of phenomenology as that science of the spirit which is best suited to represent the life of the soul both to itself as a presence-to-itself and as an objective entity to the wider world: “It is my conviction that intentional phenomenology has for the first time made spirit as spirit the field of systematic, scientific experience, thus effecting a total transformation of the task of knowledge” (ibid: 20).

Returning then to my previous question, how would a phenomenology in the Husserlian-spirit treat myth? A number of responses can be given. The first is directed towards the mind of the religious believer whose belief is preoccupied by a prevailing set of truths which are myth-like in their function. If phenomenology is to be an effective science of the spirit, and should the spiritual mind be preoccupied with matters of ultimate concern such as how to rightly relate oneself to a Divinity, then myth cannot be excluded without denying the phenomenon of the ‘thing itself’. Second, the question of the ‘modality’ by which one treats myth must be faced here. Jonas commented concerning myth that, “Myth taken literally is crudest objectification. Myth taken allegorically is sophisticated objectification. Myth taken symbolically is the glass through which we darkly see” (1966: 261). Bultmann’s assertion that a myth once despoiled cannot be repristinated must surely be correct; and likewise Dupré’s insight that myth cannot survive the awareness that it is myth (2000: 111). These comments alert us to the necessity to take care not to over-mythologize, lest everything become myth and
become lost in the nether world of darkness and confusion. Third, as with Lewis's attempt to go 'beyond' myth, it is possible to see in Husserl's comments a quest after apodictic truth concerning the 'real' state of the world rather than to simply rehearse a set of literary conventions concerning the role of myth in religious belief and praxis. In relation to this I suggest there is the possibility—indeed the certain prospect—of the 'founding' of an adequate philosophy of religious knowledge (including a philosophy of 'Christian' knowledge imbibed via conversion), in a balanced application of a Husserlian transcendental phenomenology to religious knowledge and experience. I refer to Laycock's question, "What would it be like to see the world as God sees it?" (1988: 1), and to Husserl's fondness for Isaiah 40:13, "Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" (cited by Laycock & Hart, 1986: 152).

Finally, there is the element of the Christian supposition of the universal validity of their truth-claims; an outlook which is a primary component of myth and unveils claims to universality as an authentic ingredient of myth. The Old Testament prophetic tradition lays claim to the singularity of YHWH in the midst of a cosmic horizon, as represented by Habakkuk (2:14) when he states, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." And in the New Testament, the Apocalypse of John anticipates the second coming of the Christ in universalist terms, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him" (Revelation 1:7). This universalizing intent continues as a strong theme both in those respondents who participated in this research, and in Christian writers and thinkers generally. I can say at the end of this dissertation that while I have not argued for the universal applicability of this research to all Christian converts, those sources which I have drawn upon in this research—the respondents themselves and the Christian religion as a faith tradition—hold as a central tenet of the Christian faith the universality of Christ, and thus by default make their own claim to its universal applicability. Hocking (1932: 325) makes the statement, "The message of Christianity presents a way of life and thinking which the Christian conceives, not as his way alone, but as the way for all men." Thomas N. Smith (1994: 74) cites Kuyper as writing "There is not a single square inch of human existence of which the Risen Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not
Conclusion:

In this chapter I have addressed the subject matter of the mind and its part in the acquisition of new religious knowledge in Christian conversion. Although the human mind is an entity hidden to the researcher in conversion, I have unveiled by means of a phenomenological *intentional analysis* that the religious neophyte knows within itself a form of knowledge which it feels is apodictically truthful, solid and certain. Through a discovery of the healing power of a 'Christ-consciousness', neophyte converts believe themselves to have entered an entirely new world, in which they have the capacity to 'see' the supernatural world, and to 'know' God and his character and purposes, without the normal interruption of the limitations of an imperfect human knowing. With Griffiths, converts believe they have been given a "new power of vision", which when contrasted with the darkness and obfuscation of their previous visions and the visions or worldviews of those around them, gives the appearance of being exceedingly bright, revelatory and "sane". The new knowledge of God brings with it—by means of its own self-authenticating and in-built transformational logic—the appearance of being 'true'. Converts give the appearance of ordering their knowledge of this new world by means of their hearts, applying what Scheler called the *ordo amoris* as the modality best suited for ordering their worlds within the new divine order they have come to indwell and espouse. For the Christian convert, this new knowledge is focused upon the person of Christ, and can be conceived as an experiential participation in the founding myth provided by the biblical record. In the light of this the religious believer seeks to live and act on the basis that God has granted special access to divine reality, on which basis it is assured it is able to live out its mundane existence as if it were essentially holy and the object of God's loving attention and concern.
Chapter 10: A Phenomenological Explication of Personal and Cosmic Transformation in Christian Conversion:

Introduction:

This final chapter will bring the dissertation to a conclusion by discussing in distilled form those eidetic structures and universal essences which are unveiled in converts' experiences of transformational meaning-change in the context of Christian conversion. It seeks to answer the research question which has guided this research over the previous 9 chapters, "What changes in belief, attitude and action; relating to God, self and world; took place before, during and after conversion?" In doing so each of the three defining planes which have provided shape and insight for the research, namely (1) a phenomenological explication of (2) the experience of meaning change (3) while undergoing conversion into the Christian religious tradition; will be woven together into a singular and cohesive explication. The headings which will be addressed in order to achieve these goals are: Farewell to Husserl, a Phenomenological Explication of Personal Transformation and Cosmic Revision in Christian Converts, Suggestions for Further Research, and Concluding Statement.

10.1 Farewell to Husserl:

As the dissertation draws to an end, it is appropriate to signal a brief farewell to Husserl whose phenomenology as 'first philosophy' has provided a useful guide throughout this research. While my primary concern has been to explicate the experiences of Christian religious converts as they have undergone personal transformation and cosmic revision in the course of the changes imposed by the conversion event itself, phenomenology in the Husserlian-spirit has provided a useful systematic methodology by which the research project could successfully navigate its way in the otherwise unlit and unexplored dimensions through which the research has passed. Now it is time for a description of the structures of meaning change in the context of Christian religious conversion itself.
10.2 A Phenomenological Explication of Personal Transformation and Cosmic Revision in Christian Converts:

In this section I will present a phenomenological explication of the transformation of meaning and cosmic revision in the Christian religious neophyte in two parts, first from the experiential perspective of the religious subject himself or herself; and second from my perspective as researcher.

(A) From the perspective of the religious subject:

The pre-conversion soul, through a series of reflexive insights concerning its own reason-for-being in the universe, arrives at a place where it experiences its life as fundamentally problematic. It knows itself as existing in an agonistic environment in which it continually encounters its own finitude and mortality. Against a backdrop of the foibles of its bodily existence of sickness and limitation, its being worn out through its contestations with others, its own moral turpitude, and its underlying existential anxiety, the self experiences a 'need' which transcends its capacity to resolve through its own resources. It arrives in a state of end-of-self.

On coming to the realization that one's existence is under threat, the self experiences a deep-seated fear that it will be unable to escape its state of bondage and decay, and move into a new and free existence in which it is able to achieve the full potential of its reason-for-being in the world. Underlying the sense of one's own existence as problematic is an experience of 'longing' which lies at the core of the self. Whether ignored, repressed or fated, it continually rises to the surface and demands attention. For the pre-conversion soul, the cause of the longing is beyond recognition; it defies naming. Yet its siren-song whispers the name of the soul over and over, and drives it to distraction and even desperation. When fear is overcome by the urgency of one's longing, a decision to risk all and to venture outward on a quest of discovery can be made.

The intent of such a pilgrimage is to overcome its sense of homesickness and to find an elixir which holds promise for the healing of one's ague and infirmity. The urgency of the restoration of the self demands that the assistance of one who is greater-than-self be sought.
The journey is perilous and the way unknown, yet the soul’s argonaut discounts the risk and undertakes the excursion because of the life and death nature of its crisis; no other option having been found. The candidate for conversion has only two things on its mind, sin and the need for rescue (James, 1928: 209). The pre-convert, having discovered itself to be moribund and bankrupt, casts around for an object whose strength and potency holds promise for its deliverance and transformation into a new existence. While it sees clearly its problem as the cause of its dissolution, it perceives only dimly that which calls for its attention. At the early point in its journey it is more ‘pushed’ by its problem than ‘pulled’ to a specific magnetic entity which promises its deliverance.

The visage of God is at first shrouded in cloud and mystery. The self thinks it ‘knows’ him as one who is a moral policeman, a proud deity who threatens to judge one’s past misdemeanors. In its quest for healing the self feels itself to be shut up to the presence of One who has become its adversary. It feels itself to be a Jacob who wrestles with God for control of the domains of its soul (Genesis 32:24). Finally, the soul comes to see its problem formed with crystalline clarity; it must make a choice between one of only two possible options; between life and death. That choice is faced in the extremity of one’s own isolation. The question of belief is asked relentlessly until, in a moment of ‘madness’ the decision is made to believe and the self chooses to relent and to save itself.

Precisely in the moment of choosing, in the nanosecond in which the free choice to ‘leap’ toward faith is made to submit and rescue oneself, God is experienced as releasing his blessing. In that moment an unveiling takes place in which the present but undisclosed deus abdere (God as one who is absent) is dis-robed and revealed as the deus amicus (God as both present and as the object of the believer’s love). In that moment, the soul experiences itself to have been a stranger to itself, and in meeting God as ‘friend’ and as someone who is Greater-than-self, has the sensation of arriving ‘home’. With Job it says, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5). A radical figure-ground shift is felt to occur in which everything within the self and the scope of one’s horizon is transformed and reappraised. In place of judgement is grace, in place
of darkness is light, in place of hatred and mistrust is unconditional love, in place of loneliness is belonging, and in place of despair is a deep and abiding contentment. In that moment when the self is faced with its own dissolution, it feels itself—in choosing God—to be choosing that option which is life itself.

The soul knows it cannot save itself. It also knows it alone can make the decision to save itself by submitting to that One who it holds within its grasp the power of life and death. In that moment a restoration is felt to occur through a reckless abandonment of the self in favor of someone who is superlatively the 'true self' in whom resides all healing and wholeness, and who is henceforth addressed as the object of one's greatest love and affection. The One who was henceforth unknown and recognized only as an enemy, has become the very source of one's life.

In the midst of the conversion crisis the self achieves the realisation that it is unconditionally loved and accepted by God; that it is inside rather than outside the purposes of God, and that nothing it can do or say can change that immovable fact. On realizing that 'grace' is available for its healing and restoration, the self in an act of surrender, relinquishes to God its autonomy and the problem which first sparked its crisis, in a total and complete capitulation to the will and purposes of God. God is felt to know best: 'I can't but he can; I don't know, but he knows!'

An overwhelming sense of relief and delight accompanies the decision to hand over control of one's life, because the self 'knows' with complete certainty that God's intervention in one's life is not designed to control and dominate, but to improve, to heal and elevate one's existence into that of a being who shares God's friendship, God's nature, and God's righteousness. There is a sense of the completion of some originary design which has to this point remained unfinished, but through the living drama of conversion has reached its zenith and proper completion in the soul's ascendancy into the knowledge and presence of God.

For the first time in one's life, the self feels itself to have arrived in a place where it is whole, and that nothing can threaten its existence without first having to pass God's inspection and approval. Any suffering which God might choose to allow into one's life is felt to be in
order to bring about a deepening of one's character and knowledge into the likeness and image of Christ.

In conversion a transformation in the nature of one's existence has taken place. The neophyte religious believer experiences himself or herself to have been lifted out of darkness into a new realm of light, and to have been freed from bondage to sin and decay and elevated into a new state in which it both knows and achieves the righteousness of God. It is a 'becomer' (Miller, 1973); someone who has passed over from death to life, and from ignorance and defeat to a position in which it is empowered by God himself to arrive at a place in which everything—without qualification—is theonomous, that everything takes its origins, its purposes, and its character from the will and intent of God himself.

In conversion the believing soul awakens from sleep and emerges into a new world, a new era, and a new existence, in which it feels itself to have been enlightened and to have achieved a perspicuity of insight and mind of which it never dreamt in its pre-conversion state. For the Christian convert, the outcome of conversion results in every sense becoming a tool of kinesthetic contact with this new world, this new divinity, this new life into which he or she has been transported. They become 'seers' of the supernatural, hearers of mysteries, tasters of divinity, the otherworldly realities are 'touched' by them, their olfactory senses locate the scents of heaven. They 'know' with great certainty that God exists and is active in their lives. They come to 'know' a great deal that they did not previously know. They previously held beliefs and outlooks which were self-centered, earth-focused and contrary to the teachings of the Christian gospel. Yet through conversion they have imbibed a new attributional schema which is derived from the narrativized, Christo-centric and biblically-transmitted Christian 'idea' through which every thought, act and perception is conditioned in a new way. Their minds and lives are felt to be strangely illumined through the acquisition of Christ who has now become the interpretive key to history and to the entirety of one's own existence. A plausibility structure or 'sacred canopy' (Berger, 1969) has replaced that system of thought which induced the crisis in the first place. A form of Christotherapy (Tyrrell, 1975) has occurred, as a result of which previous questions and problems have been resolved, with the
outcome that everything now 'makes sense'. This new knowledge of the heart and mind has led to a new coherence and integration not only of the mind, but of the self in its entirety. Thus the Christian religious convert becomes a hierophant who sees with new eyes into the mysteries of the spiritual world, by apprehending with luminous clarity the realities of the infinite. He or she thinks the thoughts of God after him, by means of the apparatus of the Christian mind, which is the believing soul in possession of the very 'mind of Christ'.

(B) From the perspective of the researcher:

Metzner, in his 'Ten classical metaphors of self-transformation' (1980), lists classical metaphors which transformants and scholars alike have used as descriptors of the transformation process. They are (1) awakening from sleep, (2) transference from illusion to realization, (3) from darkness to enlightenment, (4) from imprisonment to liberation, (5) from fragmentation to wholeness, (6) from separation to oneness, (7) from being on a journey to arrival at one's destination, (8) from being in exile to coming home, (9) from seed to flowering tree, and (10) from death to rebirth. Section A (above) has addressed the experience of transference, as experienced by the human agent who undergoes the reattribution of truth in the context of Christian conversion. Section B attempts to provide a structural explication of meaning-change in the context of conversion, in order to describe the universal essences of the change process itself. In other words, it seeks to go beyond the experience of such changes of meaning, to the structural shifts which accompany the changed attributions of truth.

Those people who undergo Christian conversion routinely report incidences of changed attributions of meaning in relation to themselves, to the world, and towards God. In this research it has become apparent that the transformation of meaning is a primary structure of the event-process which constitutes conversion, and has required careful probing in order to unveil those elements which constitute its core essences. Those people who have come into a recent, authentic, and radical experience of Christian conversion generally undergo a deep re-composition within their ontological and epistemological structures, and this has radical implications for their self-image, the way they value other people and things, their envaluing of
the world and everything within it; including and especially focussed on their perception of God himself. Such an alternate re-cognition amounts to a paradigm-shift within their prehensive or tacit knowing. The narratively represented Biblical 'story' appears to operate as a controlling myth which takes root in the tacit dimension of the ordo amoris (heart-commitment) or imagination of the religious believer, thus determining the parameters within which truth can operate and acting as a subversive counter-ideology to competing truth claims which come against it in the pluralistic environment of post-Christian Australia.

I have located ten invariant and enduring structures which reside within the phenomenon of personal and cosmic transformation within the experience of Christian conversion, and will discuss these in the closing comments of this thesis.

1. Only the self can convert the self:

In Christian conversion only the self can convert the self. That does not mean the self has within itself the power and resources to bring about its own deliverance; that potency is believed to reside with God alone. What it does signify is the neophyte religious believer's sole-authority in the 'moment of decision' of conversion to turn either in the direction of withdrawal and denial of God's offer of salvation; or to make the choice to fully engage with God's free offer of grace and make the decision to abandon its own autonomy and instead to participate in redemption and become the recipient of grace. In the moment of conversion neither God nor any religious protagonist can make the doxastic judgement required to turn the heart and mind of an individual towards religious belief and bring about the inception of faith. Only the complex cooperation of those elements which comprise the entirety of the human personality—the will, the mind, the heart (which Augustine titles the magister internus)—can bring an individual to release itself to make that 'leap of faith' which when it is completed leaves the believing soul absolutely convinced of the authenticity and reality of its new state of existence. It appears that the unique set of agonistic circumstances within the lifeworld which impinge on one's decision-making plays an important propaedeutic and preparatory role for conversion.
2. Conversion is based on the supposition of two worlds:

In conversion, a hierophany is perceived as a message from 'beyond' his or her lifeworld, and the pre-convert is made aware of another world and of its superiority over 'this' world. The impulse towards conversion takes its shape from an ontological distinction between this 'real' but painful world, and a second world which is somehow larger and more perfect, and which contains within it the seeds of one's healing and deliverance. According to James, "in the religion of the twice born... The world is a double-storied universe" (cited by Gallagher, 1990: 51). The heavenly world is construed as a counter-reality which is an 'ideal' yet hyper-real world, in that life in its fullness can only be found within its realm and symbols. It is thought to be characterized by values which are completely alternative to earthly values in which love is valued over power, truth over possessions, death over life, innocence over sin, obedience over rebellion, and altruism over self-interest. Conversion is fundamentally a movement of one's values, priorities and commitments, from the lesser and earthly world, over to the heavenly and spiritual world. Following conversion, religious neophytes come to perceive themselves as being granted citizenship in a kingdom not of this world; in keeping with Jesus' words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and the Apostle Paul's statement that "our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there" (Philippians 3:20). Historical examples of the two-worlds hypothesis are Augustine's City of God, Luther's two kingdoms, and Lewis's fictional Narnia series based upon a double-entity ontology.

3. The conversion experience contains a self-authenticating 'logic':

In the liminal moment in which conversion takes place the self which has been suffering a crisis of seemingly insoluble proportions is primed in a state of 'readiness'. In that state it believes itself to have received a divine revelation which promises to resolve its overwhelming problem and to contain within it the seeds of it's healing and deliverance. Without explanation, the power and potency of God's adequacy makes itself known to the suffering soul. In that moment, "experience, interpretation, and decision occur[s] in one
continuous act" (Dupré, 1998: 135). The decision to turn towards God gives the appearance of being 'right' in that it holds within itself its own self-authenticating evidence and logic which is deeply and completely convincing to the convert. Because it appears to contain its own authentication it requires no validation except that of being consistent within itself, and that of delivering the religious self from anomie and confusion into a new state of peace and freedom. Once the problem is resolved there is neither opportunity nor desire to return to the previous problematic state. Instead, the convert expends energy on establishing him or herself within the 'new' world of faith and belief, learning all they can about God, Christ, the Bible, and Christian belief and behavior.

4. Conversion requires a turning or metanoia:

The Christian religious convert experiences the inception of a new, ultimate and alternate consciousness which is contrary to anything it has previously known before at any point in its existence. It is a metanoia which can be defined as being either 'another mind' or a 'higher consciousness', or with Metzner, a 'meta-knowledge' (1980: 48). This new mind arrives immediately, ready made, as a form of pre-packaged truth from the epistemology provided by the biblical metanarrative and revolves around the meaning string of creation-fall-election-redemption-apocalypse-consummation form of reasoning it has imbibed from the Bible. This enables the Christian neophyte to perceive the world from an alternative viewpoint as a hierophant; as someone who is able to perceive mysteries and insights concerning the teleology of the world as being based upon the character and purposes of God. Having apprehended the divine mysteries, one's reason-for-being of the universe and one's place within it unfold before it in a panoramic, interpretive and unambiguous vision. In an event which parallels the second phase of the Apostle Paul's conversion when scales fell from his eyes (Acts 9:18), the convert undergoes a venturing or opening of the mind toward hitherto unknown and un-recognized dimensions of reality, through the super-erogated moment of a transcendent encounter with God in conversion.
5. Becoming ‘like’ the divine:

In Christian conversion neophytes believe themselves to have entered a realm in which they are totally loved and accepted by God’s unconditional love. In that state they obtain an insight into the character of God who is Greater-than-self and greater-than their predominating problem. Under the instigation of the divine presence and its attributes, the fear of God is replaced by the love of God. Having received the unconditional love and forgiveness of God through the redeeming power of Christ’s crucifixion of the cross, converts desire to become ‘like’ God in that they desire to mimic the holiness of his character, the perfections of his attributes, and the completeness of his outlook in their own lives. They seek to become conformed to the image of Christ’s likeness, who as the Son of God is thought to dwell within the Divine presence and live out of the divine character and potency. Converts desire to conform their lives, thoughts, actions, relationships and inward attitudes to the divine model. Doing so is what makes them happy. Tolstoy’s ‘I only live when he is present’ (1974: 64-5) gives the sense that the farther away from God, the less the convert knows him or herself to truly be alive; and the closer to God, the more the convert feels him or herself to achieve the fullness of the image of God within them.

6. Elevation of the self:

At conversion, the human self, struggling with its inadequacy and finitude, discovers Christ to be the divine model whose perfect life and vicarious death provides a template by which they can live out their lives in a way which trans-values the mundane aspects of their daily lives into something which is blessed, holy and sacred. The possibility of having someone who is greater-than-self at the center of their existence creates a sensation of uplift and elevation. No longer are those values which lie at the seat of the Western value-system (such as the accumulation of material goods and personal autonomy) given ultimate value and meaning. Instead, issues of ultimate concern such as the wellbeing of one’s soul, the primacy of the God-human relationship in this earthly life, one’s service of one’s fellow-man in the name of Christ, and the concern for the reputation of God’s name and kingdom in this world,
take precedence. The previous conception of the Self as being diseased and unclean are rejected in favor of a new conception of the self—following the application of Christ’s cleansing and restorative grace—as something new, beautiful, and worthy of love and respect.

7. Conformity to the pre-existent myth of the gospel:

The Christian gospel as it is heard and experienced by new converts is a pre-existent entity which exerts a shaping influence on them in the deepest levels of their existence, both in their rational lives through their plausibility structures and belief systems, and in their emotional lives through their allegiance and valuational modalities. The process of conversion does not require the individual to concoct their own religious panacea; rather, the impression is strongly given that the contours of the worldview adopted by the Christian neophyte is determined by the mythological construct of the defining story of origins of the universe, its demise, and its restoration to an earlier state of innocence before God, on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ. That death and redemptive resurrection appear to have exerted a power which is universal in its effects as it bestows a new of dignity, significance and meaning on the lives of individual converts in particular, and through being created in the divine image, upon humanity in general. The acceptance of Christ as Savior and the resulting transformation of the convert’s worldview can be likened to Maslow’s (1970) B-cognition, and re-conceived as a C-cognition; which is that kind of spiritually-determined, supernaturalized ‘conversion-cognition’ which one receives in the life-drama of religious conversion.

8. Christian conversion is Christ-centered:

While conversion is a normative process of human transformation, conversion which is ‘Christian’ has as its primary object the person of Christ, as demonstrated by the ‘Christ-consciousness’ which new converts imbibe in the radical event of conversion. It is Christ as the incarnate human ‘face’ of God whom new religious believers experience as ‘mediating’ God’s program of rescue and redemption to them and delivering them out of their prior state of bondage, terror and captivity into freedom and hope. It is Christ the God-man who is
understood to have loved them and laid down his life for them (Galatians 2:20). It is Christ on whom Christian neophytes model their own aspirations towards purity of character through achieving holiness, godliness, and service towards others, based upon Christ as the templative archetype of the ideal human figure. It is Christ whose continuing presence in the person of the Holy Spirit who is felt to provide insight into Scripture, power to overcome sin and evil, the possibility of holiness, and whose immediate and momentary presence enlightens and enlivens their quotidian lives.

9. Personal and cosmic implications:

The title of this dissertation refers to 'personal transformation and cosmic revision'. The sense has been gained through this research that Christian conversion leads to the transformation of the individual convert's self, worldview, identity, and plausibility structures, so that the appearance of the surrounding world as the contexture for their existence within the world is profoundly revised. Their experience of new-birth implies that their existence within the mundane earthly world has now become super-erogated and extra-ordinary in the sense that they are 'ambassadors' for God's kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20); who—while they are aliens and strangers in this world—are nonetheless people of status in an alien kingdom which is 'not of this world', and whose importance transcends the present earthly realm. For the Christian neophyte the arena of the entire cosmos is annexed and co-opted to serve God's salvation history as the locus in which the mythological 'creation-fall-election-redemption-apocalypse-consummation' drama is implemented and brought to fulfillment. While science has progressed away from a Ptolemaic or an earth-centered cosmology toward a complex of galactic universe-centers which places the earth at the edge of cosmic proceedings; Christian religious converts believe that in God's redemptive program the earth and its inhabitants are rescued from irrelevance and restored to the 'center-stage' of the universe.

10. The Christian mind:

The Christian neophyte receives at conversion a new vision for their existence which
resides in and functions at the deepest-level or 'tacit' dimension of their plausibility structure. At the heart of the new attributional schema is the Christian 'idea', conveyed through the mythological forms of the biblical narrative, concerning the truthfulness of the existence, power and qualities of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; the authority and significance of the Bible as revealed Scripture, the necessity and authenticity of the Church as a worshipping community of those who have been 'rescued' from the earthly realm and been made 'saints' by means of God's intervention into human history. This is so in the face of the apparent 'insanity' of these claims when considered from a pre-conversion point in the lives of newly religious agents. Henceforth Christian neophytes live by the beatific vision of the glory and magnificence of God, whose presence within the mundane realm of provision existence transforms it into a very outpost of heaven itself. Griffiths describes what the inception of the Christian mind felt like for him:

I shall never forget the emotion with which I read the words about wisdom: “For there is in her a spirit quick of understanding, holy, alone in kind, manifold, subtil, freely moving, clear in utterance, unpolluted, distinct, unharmed, loving what is good, keen, unhindered, beneficient, loving towards man, steadfast, sure, free from care, all-powerful, all-surveying, and penetrating through all spirits that are quick of understanding, pure, must subtil: for wisdom is more mobile than any emotion; yea, she pervadeth and penetrateth all things by her pureness. For she is a breath of the power of God and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty; therefore can nothing defiled find entrance into her. For she is an effulgence from everlasting light, and an unspotted mirror of the working of God and an image of his goodness. And she being one hath power to do all things; and remaining in herself, reneweth all things: and from generation to generation passing into holy souls she maketh them friends of God and prophets” [(Griffiths 1979: 81), from The Wisdom of Solomon; 7: 22-23].

In bringing this dissertation to a close, as a researcher concerned with converts' experiences of meaning change in Christian conversion, I believe I can describe the experience as one of complete newness, predicated upon a new vantage point, new values, a new identity, a new language, a new morality, a world inhabited by the converting-self, and a new mind which takes Christ as its loadstar and ground-zero. I can also describe the experience as one of remaining the 'same' in every way, culturally, biographically, psychologically, and yet by a process known as subration, the convert perceives God, one's self and the world in a
profoundly new way, based on the myth-like meaning string creation-fall-election-covenant-redemption-apocalypse-consummation which has taken precedence over any previous plausibility structure, and imposes itself as a universally applicable 'truth'. The Christian convert actively seeks to fulfill the biblical injunction to 'take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:5), and in this way the new convert internalizes the Christian 'idea' and obtains what is in effect a Christian mind, or what the Apostle Paul referred to as the 'mind of Christ' (1 Corinthians 2:16).

10.2 Suggestions for future research:

In carrying out this research I have encountered a number of problems which for purposes of containment I have not been able to address in this manuscript. I would therefore like to signal these areas as suggestions for others to undertake in future research. They are as follows:

1. In her article 'Cognitive Conversion' (in Francis Eigo, 1987: 86), Denise Carmody suggests that men and women may differ in their bodily experiences of conversion. In order to retain my focus on perceptual change within the transformational experience of conversion, I have determined not to take into account gender issues. However there may well be differences in the way men and women experience conversion, and I suggest that scholars making use of phenomenological method might take pains to address this question in the future. One place to begin is Virginia Brereton's (1991) From sin to salvation: stories of women's conversions, 1800 to the present, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

2. Henry Dumery (1968) identifies the problem of the repression of creativity for those worldviews which have theism at their core, enclosed as it is within a pre-formulated set of doctrines and beliefs with little potential for negotiation. What place then exists for newness and creativity, given Christianity's unease in allowing the heretic a place within the community of faith? In an age characterized by Berger's 'heretical imperative', the question of the tradition
over against those who wish to alter it for the purposes both of renewal and subversion is of special importance, and deserves the attention of scholars.

3. Although I have almost completely excluded Heidegger from this research, nevertheless he holds an elevated position in the history of the philosophical understanding of religion in the Western tradition. I am of the opinion that a comparison of Heidegger's and Husserl's approaches to phenomenology and its implications for a phenomenology of religious (especially Christian) conversion will produce research which will be of benefit to scholars of religion in general, and theologians and phenomenologists of religion in particular. The work by George Kovak, 1990, *The question of God in Heidegger's phenomenology*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, will provide one possible commencement point for that research.

4. Throughout this research I have suspected that there are many points of interface between a phenomenology of conversion to Christianity, and a phenomenology of conversion to say, Buddhism, Hinduism or New Age spirituality. Because I have been unable to locate any equivalent studies—apart from those already mentioned in relation to Christianity—addressing conversion to other belief systems, I think there is room for parallel research projects in those areas. Such research, in my opinion, should address conversion to secular humanism (such as that experienced by Robert Ingersoll), and to Marxism (such as that experienced by Arthur Koestler). In relation to 'conversion' to lesbianism, Virginia Brereton's work (1991) is again a helpful commencement point.

5. Although I have treated Christianity essentially as a unity, I do acknowledge that a problem exists in the differences of opinion within Christianity, between Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Coptic and Pentecostal sectarian divisions. Usually divisions between denominations are the result of historical fractures based upon contrasting doctrinal, linguistic and cultural distinctions; often entrenched and often severe. Jack Rogers' (1995) *Claiming the*
Center: churches and conflicting worldviews, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, provides a commencement point for an analysis of unity amidst contested diversity. I would like to see responses to this research from Evangelical, Pentecostal, Catholic, Reformed and Liberal quarters of Christianity.

6. There have been a number of junctures throughout this research when I wished my skills in using the apparatus of psychology were more highly developed. While I suspect psychology may have gotten in the way on occasion, a phenomenological psychological treatment of the topic of conversion would interest me greatly, and I hold hopes that scholars in the future will undertake that task, and thereby provide scholars of religious conversion with an update on James' much vaunted and still important Varieties of religious experience (1902).

7. Perhaps the item of greatest uncertainty in my mind concerning the universal applicability of this research revolves around its applicability to ethnic and cross-cultural settings. The question, “Would a similar study undertaken in non-Western cultural settings such as in India, Africa or—for that matter—among Australian indigenous Aborigines, reveal similar findings?” is one which is not addressed in this dissertation, and remains to be answered by scholars with interest and skills in those areas.

8. This research, preoccupied as it is with the notion of privileged access to the thoughts of God, verges in places on gnosticism. Much work within Christian theology has addressed this topic, granting it a unique pedigree and place within the history of Christian theology. While I have paid no specific attention to gnosticism because it presents no specific ‘problem’ in the context of this research or the literature surrounding it; nonetheless I suspect those theologians concerned with the ‘core’ of Christian theology would have much in the way of valuable and insightful comments to make concerning this topic. I think there is room for further work in this area.
9. One final suggestion for further research lies in the realm of the implications of this research for Christian evangelism, both in Australia and elsewhere. ‘If Western Australians convert to Christianity in this way, what are the implications for those who seek to summon people into the conversion process, and how can those undergoing conversion be better supported? It is my hope that this question will be addressed in the future by those scholars operating from within a Christian confessional setting.

10.4 Concluding Summary Statement:

In this dissertation I have said nothing new beyond what every Christian convert already knows by experience and personal history. But what I have done is to explore at a deeper level the human experience of meaning change in conversion, beyond that which has existed in the literature at a systematically developed level. And with this deepening, this opening out of the phenomena of meaning-change concealed within the underlying structures of conversion, comes the necessity to make it known through a process of unveiling or naming the givenness of its underlying essences. This dissertation has been an applied phenomenological explication of respondents’ transcripts, generated by seven co-respondents who have recently converted to Christianity, in order to ascertain those elements of transformation of meaning which are universal structures of the conversion experience.
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