ceptable to males. Alcohol is highly functional in the psychic economy of such a person because simultaneously it can give him feelings of dependence and allow him to maintain his image of rugged virility by “drinking like a man.” It is when, through the effects of prolonged excessive drinking, the self-image of the independent he-man breaks down, that alcoholism develops.

McCord and McCord divided the boys in their study into Protestant–Catholic groups and the parents of each of these into strong–weak religious interest. They found that approximately equal percentages of Protestant and Catholic boys eventually became alcoholics, that the strength of the father’s religion had no relevance, and that the same applied to the strength of religious interest by the Protestant mothers. In the case of the Catholic subjects, however, only 4 percent of those whose mothers’ religion was rated “strong” became alcoholics, whereas 21 percent of those whose mothers’ religion was rated “weak” became addicted. The investigators believe that this outcome is related to what sociologists have called the “Protestant ethic,” which has become the heart of middle-class values for most Americans of all faiths. This ethic is characterized by an emphasis on success achieved through masculine independence, competition and self-reliance. These values tend to increase the prealcoholic’s rejection of his own dependent side. Those strongly influenced by Catholicism with its emphasis on feminine symbols, dependency and being a part of a supernatural organism, have a channel for satisfying their dependency needs at the same time that they assert their independence through masculine success in their work.

In those cases in which the Protestant ethic dominated the home, the prealcoholic probably experienced great difficulty in finding satisfying dependency relationships in the church or in a meaningful relationship to a higher Power. McCord and McCord found that, for the most part, the alcoholics were raised by parents who were nominally religious but lacking in a deep commitment to their faith. They conclude:

Risen in such an environment, it is unlikely that the prealcoholic would place much reliance on the church. Thus, one major outlet of his conflict—submergence in a strong religious faith—would be denied to him. Unlike the strongly religious person, the prealcoholic would tend to withdraw from the comforts of the church; he could not express his dependent longings by seeking direction from God, the priest, the minister or the elders. He could not find, in the church, the sure direction and guidance that he lacked in his early life.26

One might say that the prealcoholic’s early problem with his mother prevented him from finding the experience of trust in “mother church.” The same could be said for the other social institutions in which

26 Ibid., p. 155.