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Public restoration of the fallen religious leader : a rhetorical perspective

David Fleer
Portland State University

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APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

[redacted]
Steve Kosokoff

[redacted]
Larry Steward

[redacted]
Peter Ehrenhaus

[redacted]
David Peyton

This thesis will consider two men who, when caught in moral dilemmas, cited a particular Biblical narrative in their attempt to receive forgiveness and acceptance from their audiences. Both men were significant religious figures within their respective denominations and both men received public scrutiny following their sinful actions.

Norvel Young, when chancellor of Pepperdine University, was driving while intoxicated when he caused a traffic accident, killing two persons. Jimmy Swaggart, televangelist and minister of an Assemblies of God congregation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was seen in the company of a prostitute. When their sinful conditions were disclosed, both men asked for forgiveness. Both men relied upon the same Biblical resources in their explanation, apology and discussion of their status with God and their fellow Christians.

The Biblical story of David's affair with Bathsheba, his murder of her husband Uriah and the subsequent narrative of prophetic confrontation, confession of responsibility and the consequences of the sins is a primary resource for both Swaggart and Young. This narrative will be examined for its thematic development after which the rhetoric of Young and Swaggart will be considered for their specific use of the story. Young's references to David's story are peppered throughout several post-accident speeches. Swaggart's rhetorical use of the David story is found in a single sermon, "The Tale of Three Kings."

The rhetorical theory of narrative as developed by Fisher, MacIntyre, Hauerwas and Lash will provide foundational thoughts for the analysis of Swaggart's and Young's use of the Biblical story.

Three primary questions will give this thesis its direction. First, how do Young and Swaggart use the Biblical narrative to seek forgiveness? Second, to what extent does their use conform to or vary from the original artifact? Third, as Young and Swaggart use the Biblical narrative, what does their usage say about their relationship with their audience?

Initial findings will reveal that in his rhetorical appropriation of the Biblical narrative Young omits any discussion of the consequences of sins. Young moves beyond omission to argue that God uses human weakness to bring about good. Swaggart changes the consequences of sin in David's story to enemy persecution in his own narrative. Swaggart identifies with King David in strong heroic terms portraying himself as victim and those who challenge him as usurper kings.

These men's stories, and use of the David narrative in their development, will provide some insight for narrative theory. Fisher's thesis that stories are judged by audiences who know what is true and just will be questioned. Instead, it will be argued that the Christian communities to whom Young and Swaggart spoke (the "storied communities") are not well acquainted with the narratives of their heritage. Perhaps motivated, as Hauerwas suggests, by a unique desire to forgive, the audiences of Young and Swaggart demonstrate a collective forgetfulness as they fail

to expect their leaders to pay an appropriate price for the sins committed. Moreover, it will be demonstrated that what constitutes "narrative rationality" differs from audience to audience.

This thesis will reveal that Young's Christian audience granted him forgiveness while Swaggart provided "good reasons" from a Biblical narrative for his church audience to choose to follow him instead of their denominational leaders. The thesis will imply that "good reasons" and a sense for the "true and just" are not, by themselves, effective tools for critical judgment of a narrative.

It will be concluded that the Christian audience looks for signs of contrition before granting forgiveness. The secular audience looks for more. In the case of Swaggart the issue of integrity appears to be central. For Young, despite a relatively light sentence, there is evidence that the secular audience extends forgiveness when they find the following qualities: (1) guilt is confessed, (2) punishment is accepted and paid and (3) hypocrisy is confessed.

PUBLIC RESTORATION OF THE FALLEN RELIGIOUS LEADER: A RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

DAVID FLEER

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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of David Fleer presented April 23, 1991.

[redacted]

Steve Kosokoff, Chair

[redacted]

Larry Steward

[redacted]

Peter Ehrenhaus

[redacted]

David Peyton

APPROVED:

[redacted]

Theodore G. Grove, Chair, Department of Speech Communication

[redacted]

C. William Savery, Interim Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Research

DEDICATION

To my family:

For their encouragement and support.

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CHAPTER I

ORIENTATION TO THE THESIS

Recent years have witnessed a close association between public interest and individuals representing church-related concerns. Presidential elections, for instance, have revealed religious clarification (Kennedy's Houston campaign address in 1960) and identification (the issue of candidates being "born again" in 1976). Ministers have appeared as candidates (Jesse Jackson in 1984, 1988 and Pat Robertson in 1988). The televangelist scandals of 1987 and 1988 are further evidence that religious discourse and characters are found in the public arena.

One interesting phenomenon has been the use of religious language and argument to explain actions that have received public attention. This thesis will consider two men who, when caught in moral dilemmas, cited a particular Biblical narrative in their attempt to receive forgiveness and acceptance from their audiences. Both men were significant religious figures within their respective denominations and both men received public scrutiny following their sinful actions.

Norvel Young, when chancellor of Pepperdine University, was driving while intoxicated when he caused a traffic

accident that resulted in the deaths of two women. Jimmy Swaggart, televangelist and minister of an Assemblies of God congregation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was seen in the company of a prostitute. When their actions were disclosed, both men asked for forgiveness. Both relied upon the same Biblical resources in their explanation, apology and discussion of their status with God and their fellow Christians. Three primary questions will give this thesis its direction. First, how do Young and Swaggart use the Biblical narrative to seek forgiveness? Second, to what extent does their use conform to or vary from the original artifact? Third, as Young and Swaggart use the Biblical narrative, what does their usage say about their relationship with their audience?

The second chapter will focus upon the portion of Scripture Young and Swaggart used, the David-Bathsheba-Uriah story. The narrative, as presented in the Bible, will be examined for its thematic development. Recent interpretations will be discussed and one Biblical source, commonly understood to be an autobiographical response to David's affair and murder, will be considered. The latter will be viewed as one means of the sinner finding the grace of forgiveness. This chapter will set the stage to answer the question concerning Young and Swaggart's narrative accuracy in using the Biblical story.

The third chapter will develop Young's and Swaggart's use of the David story. Young's accident will be rehearsed and a brief biographical sketch will follow. Then, the references to David in Young's post-accident rhetoric will be considered. Young will make specific use of the David story, finding key elements to parallel his life. But he will omit another significant portion of the narrative.

The same chapter will treat Jimmy Swaggart in a similar fashion. Following a description of the televangelist's sin and efforts at restoration, a brief biographical outline will be given. Swaggart's use of the David story is elaborated in his sermon, "The Tale of Three Kings." The sermon, its setting in the life and struggles of Swaggart, and its appropriation of the Biblical text will receive further examination. Swaggart, like Young, will find specific parallels of his life in the David story. Swaggart, however, will not only omit an unsavory element of the Biblical narrative, but will twist the text's thematic development to his favor.

The third chapter will begin to address the primary questions of the thesis. Young's and Swaggart's specific uses of the David story will directly respond to the issue of their narrative conforming to the original artifact. The section will provide foundational material for a later reply to the questions concerning forgiveness and relationship with their audience.

At the conclusion of Chapter III, Table I outlines the comparisons of David, Young and Swaggart. This schematic should aid the reader in following one aspect of the thesis' development.

The fourth chapter will consider narrative and some related theories that will prove to be useful resources in giving analysis to the discourses of Young and Swaggart. Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm will provide the basic model for investigation. Fisher maintains that narrativity is a basic part of being human. We are, as MacIntyre proposes, story-telling animals. Elements of Fisher's theory, that stories are judged by their fidelity (whether they "ring true" to what one knows to be true) and probability (the story's ability to "hold together"), will be critiqued. Here, the works of Warnick, Farrell and Rowland will be used. Warnick questions whether people indeed prefer the "true and the just," as Fisher proposes. Rowland maintains that without a "privileged standard" narrative theory cannot escape relativism. Farrell calls for a resurrection of cultural memory and thus "narrative accountability."

The discussion of theory concludes with a consideration of the works of Stanley Hauerwas and Nicholas Lash. Hauerwas applies the theory of narrativity to Christian ethics and emphasizes the centrality of forgiveness to the Christian community. Lash writes of the Christian

autobiography as "making sense" of reality, a reconstruction of "the facts." These theorists will provide important insight and will give the foundational thoughts for the analysis of Swaggart's and Young's use of the David story.

The fifth chapter will be devoted to analysis based on the discussion of the first four chapters. This section will concern itself with answering the primary questions of the thesis. Young's and Swaggart's use of the David story to seek forgiveness and the implications for their relationship with their audience will be given special attention.

Other secondary issues will arise in this chapter as well. The importance of these questions is in helping to determine the speakers' relationships with their audiences. One specific avenue of pursuit will be directed toward Swaggart. The inquiry will be: What enables Swaggart to successfully distort the Biblical narrative? This section will begin by analyzing the "sense making" of Swaggart and Young. For Swaggart the question is asked, "What governs Swaggart's choice to defy denominational authorities?" The author works with suggestions from Swaggart and his critics before offering his own position. Another secondary question will arise from Young's omission of the consequences of sin in his utilization of the David story: Will Young's audience grant him forgiveness? Swaggart's changing of the consequences of sin in David's story to

enemy persecution in his story raises yet another question: Will Swaggart's audience choose to follow him or the denomination?

The final chapter will summarize the findings of the thesis and explore the heuristic value of the work.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF DAVID: THE FALL OF A RELIGIOUS LEADER

The Biblical narrative describing David's sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah is one of the most vivid texts in Scripture. It begins simply enough with the brief introduction, "Then it happened in the spring when kings go to battle" (II Samuel 11:1). David sent his army's commander, Joab, to the siege of Rabbah while he chose to stay behind in Jerusalem. It was on this occasion that David happened to view a woman bathing. The narrator informs the reader that the woman was named Bathsheba, who was "very beautiful" (vs. 3). David inquired about her and discovered that she was married to one of his soldiers, Uriah the Hittite. David sent for Bathsheba so that he might "lay with her" (v. 4). As a result of the affair, Bathsheba conceived and informed David of this development (v. 5).

David's first recorded response to his knowledge of the pregnancy was to call in from battle Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. His wish, evidently, was to fabricate evidence that Uriah had fathered the child. Once David secured information of the status of the battle from Uriah he encouraged him, "Go down to your house and wash your feet,"

a euphemism to have sexual intercourse (Bruegemann, 1985, p. 57; McCarter, 1984, p. 286). For the sake of the battle and his country, Uriah refused to sleep with his wife (v. 11). David tried a second tactic, to lower the man's resistance through alcohol. Uriah still refused to sleep with his wife.

Finally, David sent Uriah back to the battle field with a letter to field commander Joab. The letter requested that in a skirmish Uriah be isolated and allowed to be killed by enemy weapons (v. 15). Joab followed orders and Uriah was killed in battle (vss. 16-17).

A relatively lengthy paragraph details Joab's report of Uriah's death (vss. 18-25). Then in a terse comment, the narrator informs the reader that Bathsheba mourned her husband's death, married David and had the child (vss. 26-27a). The chapter concludes with the only direct editorial comment on the affair and murder: "The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord" (v. 27b).

The twelfth chapter of II Samuel begins with Nathan's confrontation with David. Nathan's conversation with David is initiated with a story of moral corruption. In the tale which Nathan relates, two men lived in a city. One was rich while the other was poor. The wealthy man had "a great many flocks and herds" but the destitute man had nothing, except "one little ewe lamb." This lamb was like a daughter to the poor man who provided it with physical and emotional

nourishment. It came about that the rich man had a visitor but was unwilling to select meat from his own abundance to entertain his guest. Instead, he stole from the poor man, taking the object of his love and affection, the little ewe lamb (vss. 2-4).

When David heard Nathan's story he was infuriated and even passed judgment, "As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. And he must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion" (vss. 5-6). Nathan responded, "You are the man!" (vs. 7a).

Nathan proceeded to inform David of God's displeasure with his crimes and the punishment he must pay. Specifically, David was formally charged with (1) striking down Uriah with the sword, (2) taking Uriah's wife to be his wife and (3) killing Uriah with the sword of the sons of Amnon (v. 9). All of this displeased God.

The punishment phase of Nathan's speech is told with clarity (vss. 10-14). With strong emphasis on the causes of God's action against David, the paragraph is filled with the phrases "now therefore" (v. 10) and "because of this deed" (vss. 10, 14).

Three actions comprise David's punishment. First, "the sword will never depart" from David's house (v. 10). Second, the Lord will raise up from within David's household an evil force against him. Some of the particulars of this

aspect of the retribution are named. Nathan relays from God, "I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight" (v. 11). The irony is not to be unnoticed, "Indeed, you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun" (v. 12). As the third phase of the punishment, the child born to David's affair with Bathsheba "shall surely die" because "by this deed David gave the enemies of the Lord an occasion to blaspheme" (v. 14).

In the midst of Nathan's oration, David confessed guilt, crying, "I have sinned against the Lord" (v. 13). Nathan responded to David's confession by declaring, "The Lord has caused your sin to pass away" and promising that additional punishment for the consequences of his actions will not be administered. Specifically, Nathan promised, "You shall not die" (v. 13).

Subsequent verses in II Samuel 12 and the following chapters reveal details of the fulfillment of the promised punishment. First, David's son is killed. An emotional account is given of David's prayers and fasting as an attempt to prevent the child's death. Nevertheless, the boy died (12:18).

Next, Amnon, another of David's sons, raped his step-sister Tamar (13:14). In retaliation, Absalom (Tamar's full

brother and the favored son of David) directed the murder of Amnon.

The painful exile of Absalom (13:34-14:33) was followed by his call to arms. Relying upon personal charm ("Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom," 14:25) and Israel's growing dissatisfaction with David's reign (15:1-6), Absalom summoned a large following. David was forced to flee Jerusalem in humiliation (15:13ff). To heighten the king's disgrace, "they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went into his father's [David's] concubines in the sight of all Israel" (16:22). An advisor's suicide, further intrigue, and David's narrow escape from capture and sure death were prelude to the narrative's climax. Absalom was finally killed and the attempted coup was thwarted.

The account of Absalom's death is told in dramatic fashion. Retreating on a mule from David's troops, Absalom's hair caught in the thick branches of an oak tree. "Left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going," Joab thrust three spears through the heart of Absalom (18:9-14). Ironically, Joab's act, which one would think would be in David's best interest, was still in violation of the king's command (18:5).

Even more dramatic was David's response to his son's death. Upon hearing the news David "was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he

said as he walked, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son'" (18:33).

HOW THE DAVID STORY HAS BEEN INTERPRETED

The David-Bathsheba-Uriah episode has found a variety of interpretations over the years. This thesis will focus on a specific utilization of the story contained within the succession narrative. The thesis considers Norvel Young and Jimmy Swaggart who, when caught in moral dilemmas, cited the Biblical story. These men, both noted for their work in Christian ministry, have used the text in creative and imaginative ways. Both have used the narrative's discussion of sin and repentance, and have chosen to identify themselves to be men like David. However, Young omits the section which deals with the consequences of sin. Swaggart turns punishment into persecution.

Biblical scholars have generally recognized two major narratives in Samuel that are concerned with David (Bruegemann, 1985, p. 40). The first focuses upon David's rise to political power (I Samuel 16:1-II Samuel 5:5). The second section has been entitled "the succession narrative" (II Samuel 9-20; I Kings 1-2). The David-Bathsheba-Uriah episode is located in the latter section.

The "succession narrative," Gene Tucker argues, "is Israelite history writing at its very best. . . ." He adds,

> [The author] worked his data into a consistent whole, painting a picture which not only describes but also interprets the events in terms of causes and effects. The work is a finely styled narrative, with the drama of a tragedy and the detailed reporting of historical events. (Tucker, 1978, p. 36)

Tucker is not alone in his appreciation of the literary work of the succession narrative. Other critical scholars have termed it "an outstanding example of Hebrew prose" (Coats, 1981, p. 368), as "unparalleled literary genius" (Sacon, 1982, p. 54), "among the most . . . readable in the Old Testament" (Ackroyd, 1981, p. 383), as having "a level of intensity and depth we do not encounter elsewhere in Scripture" (Wharton, 1981, p. 342) and "the most imaginative picture we have of David, or of anyone, in the Bible" (Bruegemann, 1985, p. 44).

Understanding the text, however, has solicited different responses. Otto Eissfeldt has questioned the historicity of the account. He writes, "There is embellishment arising out of poetic fantasy which is marked by good knowledge of the historical reality and a sober sense of what is possible" (Eissfeldt, 1964, p. 141).

Based on the succession narrative's record of several private conversations, Eissfeldt concludes, "It is clear that the account is not a mere verbatim report but an artistic narrative which makes use of the poet's license" (Eissfeldt, 1965, p. 141).

Whybray develops Eissfeldt's theme and maintains, "The succession narrative, although its theme is an historical

one and it makes use of historical facts, is not a work of history either in intention or fact. The author's interests lay elsewhere" (Whybray, 1968, p. 19). Whybray suggests instead that the literature should be classified as political propaganda. He believes the succession narrative was written during the early years of Solomon's reign. He maintains, "It is primarily a political document intended to support the regime by demonstrating its legitimacy and justifying its policies" (Whybray, 1968, p. 55).

In contrast to Whybray's perspective is the growing belief among Biblical scholars expressed by D. M. Gunn. Of the succession narrative he writes, "This is the work of no propagandist pamphleteer nor moralizing teacher: the vision is artistic, the author, above all, a fine teller of tales" (Gunn, 1978, p. 111). Gunn argues that the phrase "succession narrative" is a misnomer because, "the question 'who will succeed David?' is in fact to shift our focus away from its natural center of interest. . . . Above all else [this is] a story about David and not any . . . political successor" (Gunn, 1978, p. 82f).

Alter has observed that the "rise of David" is a narrative focused on the public side of the man. But, with the David-Bathsheba-Uriah episode, "the narrative turns increasingly to reflect the interiority of David, and all the delicacy, ambiguity and freedom that David in fact exercises" (Alter, 1981, p. 119). Bruegemann concurs,

maintaining the narrative emphasizes David as a "paradigm for humanness" (Bruegemann, 1985, p. 46). Wharton notes the theological dimension of the narrative, that the "prime discernable agendum is to take us as deeply as possible into a particular experience of human betrayal" (Wharton, 1981, p. 343).

The succession narrative's emphasis has found other interpretations as well. Vorster has noted the story's use of irony (Vorster, 1985, pp. 109-110) but especially underscores the narrative character of the story.

This reader of the text agrees with Gunn in assessing the content of the succession narrative. The stories are about David. Solomon, the next king, is mentioned (his parents are David and Bathsheba, II Samuel 12:24). I Kings 1:20 asks the question "who shall sit on the throne" and several deaths in the story are of potential monarchs (Absalom, Adonijah and Amnon). However, the concern of the narrative is with David. Moreover, it is the David-Bathsheba-Uriah episode which is the keynote for the remainder of the section. The events that follow II Samuel 11-12 are causally connected with the story of the affair and murder. Tamar is raped, Amnon is murdered, Absalom is estranged from David, lifts his sword against his father and is killed. When Solomon does become king, as Gunn notes, he relives "the circumstances of his own birth: his accession is marked by intrigue, deceit, and murder (within his own

house, moreover, the victims are his brother and cousin) which he employs as the best means of protecting his own interests, just as David had done in the matter of Bathsheba . . ." (Gunn, 1978, p. 82). In all, David loses four sons, the infant and three "by the sword" (Amnon, 14:23-29; Absalom, 18:15 and Adonijah, I Kings 2:25).

Indeed, the story contained in II Samuel 11-12 is pivotal for the entire narrative. In Bruegemann's words, the story of the affair and murder "lays out the inescapable problematic of the entire narrative. From this moment of hubris, there will be no peace for David or for his family" (Bruegemann, 1985, p. 46). The pattern of intrigue, sex and violence is played out within David's family in the subsequent chapters.

PSALM 51: A PLAINTIVE CRY FOR FORGIVENESS

In another section of Scripture is found material relating to the David-Bathsheba-Uriah episode. Psalm 51 has traditionally been connected with the story of David's sins. The title of Psalm 51 reads, "A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." The Psalm is a moving piece of literature, focusing on quiet humility, confession and trust in the virtues of God.

Psalm 51 was labeled a penitential Psalm by form critic Herman Gunkel in his 1930 work (Gunkel, 1967, pp. 35, 36). Since then Biblical scholars have tended to label the Psalm

a personal lament (Westermann, 1980, p. 55; Anderson, 1983, pp. 94-104; Miller, 1986, p. 53; 1983, pp. 36-37). The genre of lament does not bemoan a tragedy which cannot be reversed. Rather, this type of Psalm describes a desperate situation in one's life which can be changed if God intervenes. Anderson contrasts the Psalm of lament with the Greek tragedy which portrays a situation of fate without hope (Anderson, 1983, pp. 75-76).

Psalm 51 follows the traditional form for a lament with an opening address (vss. 1-2), the complaint (vss. 3-5), the petition (vss. 6-12) and the vow of praise (vss. 13-17). The Psalm strongly emphasizes the writer's sinfulness. The author uses an extensive vocabulary to describe his sin. Six different verses contain the words "transgression" (vss. 1, 3), "iniquity" (vss. 2, 5, 9) and "sin" (vss. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9). Westermann has noted that only in a small group of personal laments is the confession of sins a prominent feature. Rarer is the Psalm which makes the petition for forgiveness its central theme (Westermann, 1980, p. 69). Psalm 51 is such a document.

Impressive in Psalm 51 is the author's acceptance of full responsibility for his sins. He writes, "I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (v. 3). The writer is able to appeal only to God's compassion and grace

as the basis for forgiveness. God's characteristics of mercy and steadfast love (v. 1) are mentioned so that the writer's transgressions might be "blotted out" (v. 1).

Brevard Child's study of the historical references to the life of David in thirteen of the Psalm titles has been considered the definitive work on the subject. He notes that for over a century a wide consensus had been reached among Biblical scholars that the titles were secondary additions, "which can afford no reliable information toward establishing the genuine historical setting of the Psalms" (Childs, 1971, p. 137). Childs maintains, however, that the titles represent an early reflection of how the Psalms were understood. This secondary setting became normative for the canonical tradition and the titles are found in nearly all of the current English translations.

Childs notes that the thirteen Psalm titles referring to incidents in David's life are "stereotyped" to a high degree. They all follow the same form. Childs further concludes that these Psalm titles do not appear to reflect an independent historical tradition but "are the result of an exegetical activity which derived its material from within the text itself" (Childs, 1971, p. 143).

In his examination of Psalm 51, Childs mentions three parallels of the Psalm's contents with specific incidents from the David-Bathsheba-Uriah episode. First, both texts have the plaintive cry, "I have sinned." Second, the

Psalm's reference to "blood guiltiness" (vs. 16) calls to mind Uriah's murder. Third, the "broken spirit" and "contrite heart" (v. 19) find parallel in David's repentance before Nathan and God (II Samuel 12:13). Miller (1986) adds a fourth correlation. He points out that "I have done evil in your eyes" (Psalm 51:4) is couched in the language of Nathan's accusation in II Samuel 12:9, "Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight?"

Childs, with great insight, explores the motive and effect behind placing a Psalm within a particular historical setting in the life of David. He writes, "The reader suddenly was given access to previously unknown information. David's inner life was now unlocked to the reader, who was allowed to hear his intimate thoughts and reflections" (Childs, 1971, p. 149).

Miller, concurring with the general observations of Childs, contends that the titles of the Davidic Psalms are now "a way of saying that the Psalm over which the superscription is written makes sense in just such a context" (Miller, 1986, p. 53). The title for Psalm 51 illustrates how a plea for forgiveness and transformation can be appropriate.

In the history of its interpretation, Psalm 51 has been credited to David as an elaboration of his response to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord" (II Samuel 12:13). It is an emotionally moving poem, which takes full

responsibility for sin, begs forgiveness and relies upon the goodness of God. It is perceived as communicating humility, sincerity, grief, openness, and faith. There are no excuses or extenuating circumstances for the author's transgressions.

SUMMARY

This chapter has considered, in some detail, the "succession narrative." This misnamed narrative uses the story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah to set the stage for the horrible tales that follow. Because of David's deeds, the text claims, the succeeding chapters are filled with death, rape and an attempted political coup. The rest of David's life is spent witnessing the terrible consequences of his sins. The general consensus among Biblical scholars is to interpret the narrative as causal with strong emphasis on the interior of the king's life. The moral of the David story is obvious: there are consequences to be paid when one commits a sin. The interior of David is given its most elaborate expression in Psalms 51. In this lament, unique for its description of sin, David accepts full responsibility for his sins and relies upon God for forgiveness.

Nathan's story, which begins the theme of punishment in II Samuel 12, is a convincing story. It persuaded David to react to the injustice of the rich man's theft. Nathan then convicted David with the application and judgment, "you are

the man." Scholars concur, the "succession narrative" is a well-told tale. One wonders, will the well-told David narrative persuade those who wish to appropriate its message to develop its entire theme? Thus, the questions this thesis addresses are: how do Young and Swaggart use the narrative to seek forgiveness? and, to what extend does their use conform to or vary from the original artifact? This chapter has carefully outlined the Biblical artifacts with their attending themes and moral. It has set the stage for an investigation of Young's and Swaggart's use of the story.

CHAPTER III

NORVEL YOUNG AND JIMMY SWAGGART: THEIR SINS AND USE OF DAVID'S STORY

This thesis is concerned with Norvel Young and Jimmy Swaggart's use of the David-Bathsheba-Uriah episode. Both men were involved in Christian ministry and related work when they were caught in activity their church and society perceived to be immoral. Norvel Young, a former minister, college president and at the time Chancellor of Pepperdine University was responsible for the deaths of two women when he was driving while intoxicated. His confession of sin included an appropriation of the David story. Jimmy Swaggart, televangelist and minister for an Assemblies of God church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was caught cavorting with a prostitute. Both Young and Swaggart used the narrative's discussion of sin and repentance. Both men identified with David in strong terms. In some ways, however, their use of the narrative differed. They both omit any discussion of how they handled the consequences of sin. But Swaggart, in his usage of the story, turned punishment into persecution. A schematic comparing Swaggart and Young with the David story is provided in Table I at the

man's background, sin, and subsequent use of the David story.

NORVEL YOUNG

On September 16, 1975, Pepperdine University Chancellor M. Norvel Young was driving while intoxicated. Failing to brake for traffic, he rear-ended a car, killing two persons.

The Los Angeles Times pictured the wreck in its next day's issue and headlined the story: "Pepperdine's Chancellor Held in Fatal Crash" (Jones, 1975). The 59-year-old Young was driving alone when he struck a car that had stopped at a traffic light. One passenger was burned to death at the scene of the accident. Another died four days later. A third person, the driver, was critically injured but survived.

Don V. Miller, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Pepperdine University, said, "We profoundly regret this enormous tragedy. . . . While it has not been generally known, Dr. Young has been under a physician's care for more than three years for a serious heart condition, which has required him to take special medication" (Jones, 1975).

Young, suffering head injuries, minor cuts and bruises, was eventually transported to the jail ward at the County-U.S.C. Medical Center (Jones, 1975, p. 1).

Three days after the accident, criminal charges were filed against Young ("College official faces charges,"

1975). On October 3, 1975, Young surrendered himself for arraignment for felony manslaughter and drunk driving (Kendall, 1975). Young reportedly had a blood alcohol content of .23. California state law had set the legal standard for inebriation at .10 (Farr, 1975). This was Young's second arrest for driving while under the influence of alcohol. In 1969 Young had been stopped for erratic driving on the Harbor Freeway and was charged with drunk driving (Trombley, 1976b).

Young, free on $2,500 bail, appeared in court dressed in "a conservative striped suit and white shirt." He waived the reading of his arraignment and "offered no comment as he left court with his attorney" (Kendall, 1975).

YOUNG'S BACKGROUND

From 1944 to 1957 M. Norvel Young was minister for the Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. During Young's tenure the church was "the biggest Church of Christ in the world" ("Nondenomination," 1957) and active in foreign mission work and orphan homes (Young, 1981). During his tenure at Broadway, Churches of Christ in Lubbock grew in membership from 1300 to 7000. While giving the city partial credit for the growth, Time magazine claimed, "much of it goes to Norvel Young's friendly, reasoning approach" ("Nondenomination," 1957).

Young was editor of the Twentieth Century Christian and Power For Today. The former served as a monthly journal promoting Christian living, the latter a bimonthly collection of devotional readings. He also wrote a weekly column for Lubbock's Avalanche-Journal. Of all 1,200,000 members of the Churches of Christ, Time claimed, "Brother Young is the nearest thing to a binding force among them" ("Nondenomination," 1957).

One of Young's most difficult decisions was to leave the Broadway Church of Christ for the fledgling Pepperdine College. Before coming to a decision, Young claimed, he prayed and spoke with significant church leaders in the nation and on the west coast. With their encouragement, Young made the decision to leave the Texas church for the California college.

This momentous event was given coverage by Time magazine. An article was accompanied by a photograph of Young standing before the Broadway church. With a Bible in his hand he is positioned by a new yellow Buick station wagon, a going-away gift from the church. The caption read, "Broadway Church of Christ preacher is going out to Pepperdine College." This reference in Time is important. It not only gives his life coverage by the larger world but foreshadows the issues ahead. More and more Young would face the troubles of the world Time covered. The gift of a new car represents a congregation's love. The Bible and

church, the tool and audience of the minister, would become Young's history. This was captured in the August, 1957, photograph.

With his appointment as president of Pepperdine College, Young faced an immediate crisis. Finances were in "worse condition" than he had anticipated (Young, 1981). With a limited resource base of 45,000 members of the Church of Christ, Young "went out to the business community" to raise money (Young, 1981). He was successful in fund raising and helped the school reach a level of financial stability.

During his years at Pepperdine, Young secured friendships with several well known personalities. John Wayne and Gene Autry wrote Young letters of encouragement when he was hospitalized in 1975 (Young, 1989). President Gerald Ford visited the campus in the Fall of 1975 ("College official faces charges," 1975). Through Young's arrangements and to then-Pepperdine-President Bill Banowsky's incredulity, the Shah of Iran was awarded an honorary degree in exchange for a million dollar contribution to the school (Banowsky, 1987).

Young's associations with world renowned figures had other consequences as well. As he recalled, "after being some years working as the president of Pepperdine . . . University, seeking funds, traveling on planes a great deal, I began to experiment with alcohol. I have no apologies, no

defense. I knew better. Somehow I thought it couldn't happen to me" (Young, September, 1976a). In 1969 a doctor had "recommended alcohol" for a heart ailment Young suffered. Finding other "justifications" to imbibe, Young occasionally consumed enough "to become drunk. And this, of course, is what happened when this accident took place" (Young, September, 1976a).

The irony of Young's involvement with alcohol is found in his former stance against it. He recalls,

> I spent time working with alcoholics and preaching against the evils of alcohol. I remember at one time in a political campaign we had at Lubbock when I had been there about twelve years. They said, "You know, Norvel Young and the bootleggers are keeping Lubbock dry."

In Young's own words, never would he dream of his involvement with alcohol (Young, September, 1976a).

These were the events as recounted later by Young that led to his "tragic accident" of September 16, 1975. Under the influence of alcohol, M. Norvel Young was driving along the Pacific Coast Highway. Unable to brake in time when the traffic stopped, Young hit a 1957 Ford Falcon. The vehicle, notorious for its "exploding gas tank" (Young, 1981), did just that, killing two persons in the explosion.

The ages of the victims as told by Young vary with the account given in the Los Angeles Times. At Abilene Christian University in 1976 Young told his audience that the victims were two women, one 81 and the other 78 years old (Young, 1976a). In the Los Angeles Times reporters

noted that the victims were two women, Christine Dahlquist, 81, of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Beulah Harrison, 55, of Claremont, California. Harrison burned to death in the back seat of the automobile in which she was riding. Dahlquist was taken to a hospital where, four days after the accident, she died of burns (Burke, 1975, p. 1; Kendall, 1975, p. 20; Jones, 1975, pp. 1, 5). Another woman, Alice Fritsche, 55, of Claremont, California, was "seriously injured" (Farr, 1975, p. 1; Kendall, 1975, p. 20; Jones, 1975, p. 1).

In March, 1976, Young published in his Twentieth Century Christian a message primarily intended to explain the "tragic accident." Since then Young has delivered several speeches describing his involvement. In September, 1976, he spoke to the chapel at Abilene Christian University (Young, September, 1976). His purpose was to warn the faculty and students against drinking alcohol. The details of the accident are mentioned throughout the talk. At the 1981 Abilene Christian University Lectureship, Young spoke on problems related to stress (Young, 1981). Again he centered his talk around the events of September 16, 1975. More recently, Young spoke at the 1989 Pepperdine University Lectureship. He and his wife, Helen, talked about "Roads We Have Travelled." As in earlier speeches, the accident was a dominant feature. These speeches give important details from Norvel Young's perspective of the fatal traffic accident.

YOUNG'S USE OF THE DAVID STORY

This writer's study of Young's rhetoric after his initial explanation in the Twentieth Century Christian has revealed an interesting appropriation of the Biblical text.

Parallels between Young and King David are clear. Both were guilty of wrong doing. Both attempted a cover-up prior to the public disclosure of their sins. Young's secretary and children (with whom he had spoken minutes before the accident) were unaware of his alcoholism. Like David, Young was responsible for terminating human life. Young's murders were not premeditated, however. Nor did Young need a Nathan to call him to repentance. The Los Angeles Times gave the incident coverage. Like David, Young pled guilty to all charges and asked forgiveness. Like David, Young faced certain consequences for his misdeeds. These and other parallels align the two men's stories. There are some notable contrasts, however, that this section will ultimately uncover.

Throughout Young's post-accident speeches he makes frequent allusions to and identifies himself with Biblical characters. In a 1981 address on a Christian college campus, Young spoke about how Christians should deal with stress. In his talk he presented a theology of stress. He mentioned three Old Testament characters who were examples of the stress brought on by conflict (Abraham's offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice), by fear (Jonah who refused to

preach in Ninevah) and by sin (Isaiah who was humbled in the temple). Revealing is the identification Young makes with a particular New Testament character. Young mentions the Apostle Peter's denial of Jesus of Nazareth and says, "and I've had an appreciation for Peter in recent years that I never had before." Then Young tells why he identifies with Peter, "Because he turned his back on the Lord. He failed" (Young, 1981). Young's feelings of guilt and wronging God are quite apparent from his analogy.

Admission of failure allowed Young to openly confess his sins. In his first published response to the accident Young wrote,

> On September 16, 1975 I was involved in a tragic traffic accident in which two women lost their lives and the other driver and I were injured. I was responsible. I have admitted my guilt to the church and to the court. I would give my very life to undo this tragedy. (Young, March 1976, p. 18b)

Young describes the moment of his appealing to God for forgiveness.

> In the midst of my despair in the hospital, I prayed for forgiveness. I praise God for the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. For 44 years I have preached the forgiveness of God to others. Now I have experienced in a deeper way the healing power of his grace. (Young, March 1976, p. 18b)

While one does not find the "cleansing power of the blood of Christ" in Psalm 51, Young's language nevertheless sounds like David's: "Against thee and thee only have I sinned" (Psalm 51:3).

Confession of his sins to others did not come easily for Young. His first post-accident address, written in the Twentieth Century Christian, completely omitted any reference to alcoholic consumption. Young reflected,

> It was hard to confess. I had to confess to my friends, those that I loved, the ones that talked to me on the phone. "Norvel, how did this happen?" "Is it true?" Oh, there were lots of people who would have sworn that it wasn't true. I said, "Yes." God gave me the courage to confess. You gave me the courage to carry on when I did confess. God ministered to me through you. God ministers to us through people. (Young, September 1976b)

The connection of Young's sorrow for sin and the "contrite heart" of David in Psalm 51 was made by John Stevens. Introducing Young to his student body, the Abilene Christian University president said,

> Brother Young has spent countless hours in prayer and has shed many tears because of this. It would be hard for me to name a better example of one who has been a great leader and can be a great leader in the Lord's work. (Stevens, 1976)

In his talks Young makes several direct references to King David. In the Twentieth Century Christian he wrote,

> This tragic experience has brought me to my knees and closer to God. I share David's feelings as he wrote, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119). (Young, March 1976, p. 18c)

This statement is strategically located in the article. It comes after his description of the accident and his apology. It immediately follows a long list of Young's associates in college and church work who represent "immortals in the faith" (Fleer, 1989). It immediately precedes his

confession of faith which mixes a standard Christian creedal statement with unique identifying elements of his denomination. The location of his comment on David enables Young to be identified with David beyond that of "penitent sinner." He, like David, has been a faithful leader in God's kingdom and should be restored.

Young's use of this Biblical narrative is provocative. Young identifies himself with the character of David, his sins and the subsequent remorse and forgiveness. However, the consequences of sin, clearly an essential element of the Biblical narrative, are neatly avoided in Young's appropriation. Young will ask his audience to be a part of his story, his adaptation of the David narrative. What makes Young's treatment of the text suggestive involves his audience's freedom to forgive him. They will certainly not be hindered by dealing with the consequences of the man's sins.

But, there is more. Young will even call the accident "good" for bringing him closer to God. Now "more than ever" he holds to the teachings of Christianity and the Church of Christ (Young, March 1976). The terrible accident is transformed into something useful, a vehicle that transports him into the most desirable position of "deeper healing" (Young, March 1976).

Elsewhere Young mentions King David with Peter and Paul as sinners who have been transformed into great Psalmists,

preachers and scripture writers (Young, September 1976b). Of one of the Biblical characters he says,

> I realized my faith was in a God . . . who could let Peter deny his own son and yet choose him to preach on Pentecost. You know, that isn't the human way of doing things. We human beings would have put Peter on probation for a few years anyway. But, God didn't.

Only God can transform, Young maintains, there is no other way. Norvel Young believes that God has transformed him. Young moves beyond simply denying the consequences of his sins. Now it seems, God uses this man's human weakness to bring about good.

JIMMY SWAGGART

On February 21, 1988, Pentecostal preacher and televangelist Jimmy Swaggart stood before more than 7,000 members of his World Faith Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, "begging" their forgiveness. Swaggart had been seen entering and leaving a motel room with a prostitute. While he did not specify his offenses before the congregation, he confessed, "I do not plan in any way to whitewash my sin. I do not call it a mistake, a mendacity. I call it a sin" (King, February 22, 1988, p. 1).

Forrest H. Hall, secretary-treasurer of the Louisiana District of the Assemblies of God, spoke to the congregation as well. He noted that Swaggart had confessed "to specific incidents of moral failure" during a ten-hour meeting with church officials (King, February 22, 1988, p. 1). Other

church administrators later told the media that Swaggart did not engage in sexual intercourse with the prostitute but had paid her to "perform pornographic acts" (King, February 23, 1988, p. L20). Glen Cole, a member of the executive presbytery of the Assemblies of God, revealed that Swaggart had committed sexual indiscretions since his youth (King, February 24, 1988, p. A21).

Swaggart was born during the depression era in America. Poverty oppressed the family so severely that Swaggart's mother "had to chop cotton when she was nine months pregnant with me" (Jenkins, 1988, p. A31). His start in ministry followed these humble beginnings. Preaching and singing Gospel songs, Swaggart "roamed around the back roads of Louisiana in a broken down Chevrolet, earning about $40 a week" (Jackson, 1988, p. 1).

Over the years, Swaggart prospered. In addition to founding his own Bible College and World Faith Center in Baton Rouge, Swaggart's television ministry was at one time broadcast on 200 stations in the United States and in 145 foreign countries (Jackson, 1988, p. 16). In 1987 his ministries and Bible College received revenues of $150 million. In 1986, Swaggart sent $12 million of his earnings to the Assemblies of God.

Despite potential financial losses, the executive members of the denomination handed down a punishment which Swaggart was unwilling to accept. Juleen Turnage, a

denominational official, announced that a minister seeking restoration usually enters a two year rehabilitation program, is prohibited from preaching the first year and is limited in his ministry the second year. Initially, Swaggart's Louisiana overseers recommended a three month probation. The denomination's executive council, however, overruled and imposed the two-year order.

Swaggart responded to the punishment by resigning from the denomination. He told the media he had no choice. He sent a "gracious letter" to the denomination's leaders, they said, refusing to accept the church ordered rehabilitation and preaching hiatus.

G. Raymond Carlson, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, stated,

> It is on this basis of precedent and our own bylaws, and upon his decision not to accept a rehabilitation program that he himself has agreed is right and proper, that the Executive Presbytery has, with regret and deep sorrow, taken formal action to dismiss Jimmy Swaggart as an ordained minister of the General Counsel of the Assemblies of God. With that dismissal comes the assurance of our sincere prayers. ("Church Defrocks," 1988, p. 1)

Swaggart justified his refusal by claiming that being absent from public preaching for a year "would totally destroy the television ministry and greatly adversely impact the college" ("Church Defrocks," 1988, pp. 1, 11). A similar penalty, when applied to Jim Bakker a few months earlier, had been endorsed by Swaggart (Blumhofer, 1988, p. 334).

On May 22, 1988, Swaggart returned to his church with morning and evening sermons. Both sermons used euphemisms, cloaking his sins with words like "this trying time" and "burden" and "this leviathan" and "Satan" (Swaggart, May 22, 1988). In his morning sermon, "The Prize of the High Calling," Swaggart said, "Guilt is not of God. When Jesus took the sin away, he took the guilt away as well. . . . I lay the guilt at the foot of the cross. I will never again look at it. I will never again pick it up" (Swaggart, May 22, 1988a).

At the conclusion of his return sermon one observer noted, "The congregation and Swaggart both did not seem anxious to leave" (King, 1988, p. 3). Swaggart and his wife Frances stood at the front of the church's auditorium greeting members.

One woman asked, "Do you want some money?"

"I sure do," Swaggart said with a wide grin, and several check-bearing hands shot at him at once (King, 1988, p. 3). People seemed to desire to re-engage the Swaggart ministry.

The service also concluded with a legal confrontation. While worshippers gathered around Swaggart, the minister was served a subpoena for a defamation suit of $90 million. Marvin Gorman was responsible for the lawsuit. Gorman claimed that Swaggart had conspired to ruin his ministry by accusing him of adultery (King, 1988, p. 3). It was Gorman

who had sent photographs to Assemblies-of-God leaders showing Swaggart with a New Orleans prostitute. Prior to that, Swaggart was supposedly instrumental in the downfall of Marvin Gorman's ministry. Gorman had once had a successful ministry with a substantial membership, large facilities and a school. Gorman's defamation suit was dismissed in January, 1988, by a judge who said it was a religious concern, outside the jurisdiction of the court (Marcus, 1988, p. A14). Swaggart had been tenacious in bringing Gorman "to justice." He warned that he would "take whatever steps are necessary" to make sure "Gorman's case wasn't covered up" (Martz and Shapiro, 1987, p. 17).

Swaggart had been ruthless in his treatment of other televangelists as well. Of Oral Roberts and Jim Bakker he told a television audience,

> [one is] a dear brother perched up in a tower, telling people that if they don't send him money, God's going to kill him. Then we get this [Bakker] soap opera . . . . I'm ashamed, I'm embarrassed. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has never sunk to such a level as it has today. (Martz and Shapiro, 1987, p. 17)

Jim Bakker was Swaggart's favorite target. In May, 1987, the Assemblies of God stripped Bakker of his credentials for his sexual tryst with Jessica Hahn, his attempted cover-up, and alleged misconduct involving bisexual activities. Swaggart called the scandal a "cancer on the body of Christ" that had to be removed.

In March, 1987, Swaggart was in California to hold a three-day revival at the Los Angeles Sports Arena. In a

press conference Swaggart spoke openly of the Bakker scandal, repentance and punishment. He said,

> When someone repents, and I cite a Biblical example, David never blamed it on Bathsheba. He never blamed it on a hot sultry night. He just said, "Lord it is my fault. I have sinned . . . I alone have done this thing." No excuses. No cop-out. Jim Bakker, as I see it, has not done that yet. (Chandler & Pinsky, 1987, p. 28)

During the three day meeting at the Sports Arena Swaggart lashed out at hypocrites and false prophets. He asked to be saved "from pompadoured pretty boys with their hair done and their nails done who call themselves preachers" (Chandler & Pinsky, 1987, p. 28). He claimed that millions were being deceived by such evangelists.

Newsweek magazine, in a 1987 feature article entitled "Holy Wars: Money, Sex and Power," foreshadowed the possible irony that would eventually enmesh Swaggart. The article revealed, "Bakker's lawyer warned that there was 'smellier laundry' in Swaggart's hamper than in Bakker's; Swaggart invited him to prove it. Both sides hinted at further sex stories, but money and power were perhaps more important" (Martz and Shapiro, 1987, p. 18). Bakker was eventually convicted on 24 counts of using his television show to defraud followers of $3.7 million and sentenced to a severe prison term (Nowell, 1989, p. 1).

Swaggart's attacks on his colleagues in ministry set him up for charges of hypocrisy when his own sexual exploits became public knowledge. His own public condemnation of the

evils of pornography also made him vulnerable to criticism. In one televised sermon Swaggart had said, "Pornography titillates and captivates the sickest of the sick and makes them slaves of their own consuming lusts . . . it ensnares its victims in a living hell" (Goodman, 1988, p. A19).

Swaggart, under scrutiny from the American public, was critiqued from several perspectives. Two days after his confession the Los Angeles Times published an editorial on Swaggart entitled, "The Human Comedy." The editor noted the familiar irony of Swaggart's story and concluded, "The guy who scared the hell out of a lot of people crusading against sin got caught Doing It. The human comedy goes on, with the fallibility of others providing endless opportunity for moral instruction" ("Human Comedy," 1988, II, 6). Seizing upon the hypocrisy, the paper ran an editorial cartoon on the opposite page. A frilly clad woman of easy virtue stands at the bottom of a staircase. In the lobby is a grand piano. On the wall hangs a picture of a nude. Up the stairwell the woman calls, "Rev. Swaggart, you were hired here to play the piano."

Art Buchwald was also unable to ignore the ironic humor of Swaggart's hypocrisy. He admits to watching and "being convicted" by Swaggart's preaching. He writes, "Swaggart called me a thief, a liar, a scurvy non-believer and words to that effect. I, in turn, wept as I sent him checks so he would forgive me" (Buchwald, 1988, p. B1). Buchwald

eventually delivers the punch line amid his humorous critique. He judges, "the thing that bothered me was that all these months while Swaggart was accusing me of being a sinner, it turns out he was the meanest transgressor on the tube" (Buchwald, 1988, p. B1).

Ellen Goodman, with great seriousness, focuses her critique through a psychological perspective. In contrast to the religious view that maintains Swaggart lost a battle with the devil, she contends he waged a battle between his id and superego. She concludes,

> The Swaggart story is the essence of a larger melodrama played before two cultures, one that thinks the preacher has been led astray and another that thinks he's a neurotic mess. One thinks he can be saved, and the other thinks he could use a good shrink. (Goodman, 1988, p. A19)

Ray Jenkins considers Swaggart from a sociological viewpoint. He contends that Swaggart, like George Wallace three decades before, appealed to the Southern inferiority complex. He writes, "Mr. Swaggart speaks powerfully for all the put-down people of the South and their kindred souls everywhere, who know all too well the meaning of the old Negro spiritual, 'I Been 'Buked, I Been Scorned'" (Jenkins, 1988, p. A31).

Others considered Swaggart's sin and repentance from the perspective of a religious organization. James Davison Hunter, a sociologist at the University of Virginia, points to the "perfectionism" of the Pentecostal tradition. Especially in their placing emphasis on sexual sins, the

religious movement stresses behavioral evidences of the Holy Spirit's transformation. This "perfectionist" code has made any sexual sin an explosive issue (Steinfels, February 23, 1988, p. A20).

When the Bakker-Swaggart controversy was in its early stage, it was seen by some as an illumination of internal controversies that threatened to polarize the Pentecostal community. Swaggart's stern preaching captured the essence of the fundamentalist, old line, Pentecostalism. In contrast, Jim Bakker was seen as one who had "made peace with the world." His amiable religion was contrasted with Swaggart's call for a "separation from the world" (Blumhofer, 1987, pp. 430-431).

But, Swaggart did not fully embrace the tradition he represented in the pulpit. Robert L. Jackson describes the opulence of his lifestyle:

> His two-story-high, columned "parsonage," as it is called by ministry officials, sits behind a tall fence to assure privacy and is situated on 20 landscaped acres, including a swimming pool. The highly polished parquet living room is partly covered with an Oriental carpet, and off the master bedroom is a step-up jacuzzi with faucets in the shape of golden swans. (Jackson, 1988, p. 1)

Jackson goes on to describe expensive cars, private jets and gifts of a gold studded Rolex watch, fine clothes and a mink coat. Baton Rouge public records estimated the value of Jimmy Swaggart's home at $1.5 million (Jackson, 1988).

Edith Blumhofer notes the disparity between Swaggart's rhetoric and his lifestyle. Swaggart, in his call for the

renewal of themes like holiness and separation, "struck a responsive chord in thousands of Pentecostals who have felt bewildered by the growing acculturation of their movement" (Blumhofer, 1988, p. 333). Blumhofer maintained that the punishment phase of Swaggart's story, which when Blumhofer wrote in April, 1988, was still unknown, would indicate if the denomination would allow for the shifting of moral boundaries. When the executive counsel ruled for a two-year suspension they appeared to draw a clear line.

The response of Swaggart's Christian and religious audience has been amiable. Pat Robertson, a fellow televangelist and charismatic, was, in early 1988, a candidate for the Republican party's nomination for President. Robertson, in Baton Rouge for a brief airport stopover in his campaign, held a press conference and spoke of Swaggart. He said, "A person is forgiven when he asks for it. . . . In my estimation, God has forgiven him. I just wanted to symbolically put my arm around him and say, 'Brother, I love you and I am here to tell the world'" ("Swaggart, after 'darkest week,'" 1988, p. A16).

James Wall, editor of the liberal Protestant weekly Christian Century provided a sensitive reflection on Swaggart's deeds. He wrote,

> But surely Swaggart has been preaching to himself, too, all these years. And if so, maybe there is room to mourn. For the man has had to perform before audiences of millions knowing that, as he would probably describe it, he was living a life far short of the sanctification he sought. (1988)

Wall, generally critical of evangelicals and Swaggart in particular, ended his discussion of the scandal on this positive note: "Within the larger vision of the Bible, Swaggart's burden is not all that different from the ones everyone carries" (Wall, 1988, p. 236).

A similar sympathetic chord was struck in a Los Angeles Times editorial by Rabbi Sanford Ragins. He admits that the Hebrew Bible is full of Elmer Gantrys, a name that has come to epitomize the abuse of trust in religion. But Swaggart's fall is more than another Elmer Gantry getting his "just desserts." Ragins refers to the "human condition" and claims that clerics are no more immune from moral failure than medical doctors are spared from physical ailments. He argues,

> Ultimately we are all cut from the same cloth —leaders and followers, preachers and congregations. The trouble begins with the illusion that those who deal in holiness and spirituality are somehow exempt from the temptations and pleasures, and the tortures, of the flesh. (Ragins, 1988, II, 8)

Even some whom Swaggart had harshly judged were kind toward their accuser. Marvin Gorman cried and offered sympathy and prayers for Swaggart. Gorman told his congregation, "My heart has been deeply saddened by the news of the past few days." He added, "We are praying for the Swaggart family. . . . And I would encourage all Christians to pray for them. No one knows the pain they are encountering more than the Gorman family" (Marcus, 1988, p. A14).

One week after his confession Swaggart commented on the emotional and spiritual support he received from people. He said, "If it hadn't been for you, we would not have made it. It's just that plain and simple" ("Swaggart, after 'darkest week,'" 1988, p. A16). In one of the sermons he preached on the Sunday he returned, Swaggart said he had been encouraged from the most "unlikely sources," Baptists, Catholics, Jews and a Muslim.

That Swaggart would use the Biblical narrative of David and his sins against Bathsheba, Uriah and God is not surprising. When Swaggart was passing judgment on Jim Bakker in 1987 this narrative was used as a standard for action. At his 1987 Los Angeles press conference, Swaggart explained that when David sinned, "He just said, 'Lord, it is my fault. I have sinned. . . . I alone have done this thing.' No excuses. No cop-out" (Chandler & Pinsky, 1987, p. 27).

When Forrest H. Hall, secretary-treasurer of the Louisiana District of the Assemblies of God, told the overflow crowd at World Faith Center of Swaggart's confession to them he alluded to the Biblical narrative. Hall spoke of Swaggart's "true humility and repentance and [that he] has not tried to blame anyone else for his failure" (King, May 23, 1988, p. 1). This echoes David's straight-forward confession before Nathan in II Samuel 12:13 and especially the words attributed to him in Psalm 51.

The congregation who witnessed Swaggart's apology were visibly moved. To the church at large he said there was no one to blame for his fall, "no one but myself, no one but Jimmy Swaggart." Then he publicly apologized to his wife Frances and said, "Oh, I have sinned against you, and I beg your forgiveness." He then launched into a litany of people against whom he had sinned. He listed his son Donnie, the Assemblies of God denomination, other pastors, missionaries, fellow televangelists, his college and ministry. He concluded by saying he had sinned against God and the Holy Spirit. To each, he admitted, he had brought "disgrace and humiliation and embarrassment" (King, February 22, 1988, p. A14). One visitor at the World Faith Center observed, "As he spoke . . . hundreds in the congregation got to their feet and went to the altar to gather around him at the end of the Sunday morning service that had become a sobbing pastoral confession" (King, February 22, 1988, p. A14). He begged their forgiveness and it appeared they granted his wish.

Others, however, brought up the consequences of his sins. One editorial claimed, "Repentance, no matter how lachrymose, cannot easily wash away the dark stain of hypocrisy" ("Human Comedy," 1988, p. 6). During his abbreviated absence from the pulpit, Edith Blumhofer noted the family's efforts to keep the ministry afloat by appealing to audiences' religious affections. In doing so,

she argued, "They ignored a theme that has virtually disappeared from popular Pentecostal rhetoric –the immediate consequences of moral failure" (Blumhofer, 1988, p. 334).

SWAGGART'S SELF DEFENSE: THE TALE OF THREE KINGS

The text of a Jimmy Swaggart sermon does not always capture the sermon itself. Missing are the verbal emphases, dramatic pauses and emotion. Swaggart cries and laughs in his sermon. At times he will shout or whisper, speak with a staccato voice or simply breath heavily into the microphone. To just hear Swaggart is to miss so much of his presentation. Swaggart will jump and crawl, kneel, wipe his brow, wave his Bible, strut, dance and raise his hands all in the same presentation.

Yet, analysis of the transcript of Swaggart's sermon, "The Tale of Three Kings," is revealing in itself. Swaggart admits early in his talk that the title of the sermon is taken from Gene Edwards' (1980) book. The sermon revolves around three men in Israel who were or wished to be king, Saul, David and Absalom. Two men were anointed by God, meaning they had God's approval. One was not.

Swaggart depicts Saul as a man with "insane rage," and "hideous jealousy." Although Saul was king, a man with God's authority, he was "mad and unbroken. . . . insane, spiritually speaking." Saul is described as being gifted by God to be powerful, of tremendous charm, with a great

personality, who had "prowess unexcelled that would leave a mark upon all who came under his sway" (Swaggart, 1988b). In the sermon, Saul, the first king of Israel and David's immediate predecessor, is criticized for "throwing spears" at his future counterpart.

Absalom, David's son, is described by Swaggart as a rebel. Swaggart notes that rebellion is never of God. Absalom is a threat to David's kingdom and his throne.

The Tale of Three Kings is clearly an autobiographical sermon. Swaggart calls his text a "mirror" and adds, "I see myself so much in this."

The sermon's purpose is found in Swaggart's identification with King David and the persecution he received from Saul and Absalom. When he speaks of kings, Swaggart explains that he means "pastors, teachers, evangelists." Throughout the presentation he describes his persecutions as "spears" being hurled at him.

David is presented as a hero in Swaggart's sermon. He begins, "David, I guess, has always been one of my favorites in Scripture. His is the first human name of the New Testament. . . . It is the last name of the New Testament." Swaggart reveals as well, "Countless nights I have gone to bed and lulled myself to sleep by recounting the life of David. . . ." Swaggart then rehearses some of David's "exploits" including his anointing as king.

The hero David has his problems, however. Three times in the sermon Swaggart describes some of David's accomplishments only to reveal the disappointment of rejection he faced. Despite his being king, defeating the giant, writing so much of the Bible, "he experienced more sorrow than maybe anyone else ever experienced. . . . He rose higher, he fell lower." Later he finishes a short exposition of David's accomplishments with the statement, "Victories do not always bring you accolades. Many times if they do they are short lived. . . . David's reward for saving Israel. . . was he became one of the greatest spear dodgers in Israel."

Finally, in a climactic moment, Swaggart recounts David's deeds one last time. He then adds, "The praises died. And when the mothers wanted to scare their youngin's they said, 'If you want to be like that giant killer I'm gonna whip you,' because David was hunted like an animal." Then, as he had done each time he discussed David, Swaggart mentions his own personal struggles. On this occasion Swaggart states in hushed tones while choking back tears, "There were hundreds of thousands being saved under this ministry just a short time ago. And now the religions of the world are saying, 'You don't want to be like him.' Maybe it's good for me. Maybe it's good for me. Maybe it's good for me."

Swaggart's attempt to identify with David is clearly stated and frequently implied. It is David as the anointed king, rightfully enthroned, and as the victim of Saul's abusive spears and Absalom's attempted coup that Swaggart emphasizes. As David's kingdom was destroyed by "spear-throwers," so is Swaggart's kingdom threatened. David "watched the mightiest kingdom on the face of the earth come to pieces before his eyes and he did nothing. I have watched this [long pause] shaken."

Swaggart's kingdom, he reminds the congregation, was built by him. He rebukes the audience, "If this church right here has a weakness . . . it is this . . . that too much has been given you without a price." Unlike other congregations that have "sacrificed everything" to construct a building, Swaggart's Family Worship Center was a gift from their leader. He explains, "And you've gotten yours because God gave this poor old preacher a little talent to sing a little bit and he would take a cracked voice and anoint it at times that sold millions and millions of records." Swaggart tells the audience that that is not healthy. The church's dependency is a liability.

The church hearing Swaggart has had little struggle financially or spiritually. Distributing his problem to the congregation he says, "We've only faced a crisis in this church one time and that's been in the last recent days." Swaggart's discussion of these "kingdom" difficulties is

sandwiched between the remarks of David's greatness and persecution.

While Swaggart's discourse intends to align him with the forgiven and God-chosen King David, he actually reveals a clear distinction. Psalm 51, David's plea for mercy, is noted for its total acceptance of responsibility for all crimes committed. With reflective intimacy David confesses his personal guilt. Swaggart, in contrast, wishes to share the burden with the congregation. Thus, the crisis is "ours."

Not once does Swaggart mention his sin or even use the word sin. References to punishment and consequences are avoided. Swaggart does speak of deacon boards, church hierarchies, and people leaving the church, and his "amusement" at the news media. He mentions the "recent past," when "this thing happened." He talks of facing Hell and demons and destruction in the face. He cites the date of February 18 (1988) but only as the time he decided to cease throwing spears. That was the day he met with denominational leaders to confess sin (King, February 22, 1988, p. 1), but he does not reveal that in the sermon.

What Swaggart does is portray himself as victim. Like David, his accomplishments are quickly forgotten. He says that "something happened to me." Even God is implicated. It is God's hand that brings sorrow and "God uses these

terrible scenarios to test the heart." Swaggart assumes no responsibility for the spears that are being hurled at him.

The image of spear throwing dominates the sermon. Swaggart prides himself in his spear throwing proficiency. He claims to have thrown them at ones who needed it.

> You see, I threw them at the news media (that bunch deserves it). There was no one that ever threw a spear at the news media like I threw it at them. I threw it at them with 302 television stations and 6,000 television cables. And they felt the point. (Swaggart, 1988b)

The audience enjoys Swaggart's boasting, responding with laughter and applause. Swaggart even maintains that some in the audience were saved as a result of his spear throwing, "I mean I nailed your hide to the wall. I scared you outta Hell and scared the [pause] out of you." Again, applause and laughter reward Swaggart's remarks.

Nevertheless, Swaggart pledges to throw no more spears. Once he says, "it's not right" but on another occasion hedges and says, "it may be right but I'm not taking any chances." If he does, he claims, "I've had it."

Of the spears hurled at him, Swaggart suggests, none have hit. "I'm running half the time, I will admit. I'm dodging from here to there and I know some expert spear throwers are after me. I mean they are pro-fesh-e-nal." He can tell he has not been hit because when a spear strikes, "you get bitter, bitter, bitter, bitter." Then, Swaggart shouts, "Not a spear has hit yet, not one has even nicked yet. I ain't mad at nobody. I'm not mad at anyone. I love

everybody. Glory to God. Hallelujah. I'm dodging spears. But praise God none have connected."

In The Tale of Three Kings, Swaggart's use of the Biblical narrative is creative and self-serving. First, Swaggart identifies with King David in strong heroic and even tragic terms. Then, he ignores the narrative section's discussion of the consequences of sins. He is the victim. Moreover, he suggests that his enemies and persecutors are the "Absaloms" of his story. These are usurper kings who are throwing spears at the real king.

This chapter has given significant attention to Young's and Swaggart's use of the David story. Throughout, it has noted points of comparison and variance from the original narrative. The schematic that follows will give the matter even greater elaboration.

The chapter has also started to answer the thesis' other primary questions: how the rhetors use the Biblical narrative to seek forgiveness and what their usage says about their relationships with their audiences. Young terms the accident "good" because it has brought him into a"deeper" relationship with God. The Christian audience is encouraged to participate in the story by forgiving him. Young assumes that this is an audience that wishes to forgive.

The discussion of Swaggart's ruthless treatment of fellow evangelists and sinners coupled with his preaching

against pornography set the stage for charges of hypocrisy. These will naturally come from several quarters. This will be an important consideration in understanding Swaggart's relationship with his audience and will be developed in Chapter V.

A schematic comparing Swaggart and Young with the David story is provided in Table I. This outline makes a comparison of the three characters on ten different levels. While this figure receives a full description throughout the thesis, some elaboration is due here.

The schematic accents the similarity of Young and Swaggart to David, to varying degrees, in their sins. Like David, Young was responsible for terminating human life. Like David, Swaggart was involved in illicit sexual activity. In contrast to David, Young's murders were not premeditated. In contrast to David, Swaggart's sexual activities did not produce a pregnancy. All three men initially kept their activities secret.

Swaggart and David both were confronted by another human. Young's accident became visible evidence for all to witness. He was immediately jailed. Following these disclosures all three men confessed their sins.

A later rhetorical response credited to David was the production of Psalm 51. David does not directly go to the people. However, part of the Psalm's title ("for the choir director") indicates a public utilization of the text.

Through sermons, speeches and classes, Young speaks of his alcoholism. Periodic references to David, as a forgiven sinner, highlight his message to the Christian audiences. While Swaggart's confession to his church was eventually broadcast over cable television, his sermon is directed to his Christian audience. This thesis' imbalance in the quantity of description of Young's and Swaggart's rhetoric represents the number of references they make to David. Swaggart devotes an entire sermon, the Tale of Three Kings, to the subject. Young's references, in contrast, are peppered throughout different talks.

The consequences for all three men are set forth by their authorities. David's punishment is by far the harshest. David lives with the deaths and violence. Young faces a much lighter punishment. Legally, he is required to do research and speak publicly of his sinful activity. The church-related school requires a one-year suspension without pay. Young, like David, lives with his punishment. Swaggart is ordered to be absent from his pulpit for two years. Unlike the other two he returns after a three-month hiatus. Swaggart's sermon "The Tale of Three Kings" is justification for refusing to submit to denominational authority.

As far as the victims of these men's crimes, interesting epilogues occur. David added Bathsheba to his harem and with her parented another son, Solomon. This

child succeeded David to the throne. But marriage and producing the next king do not redeem the story. The clear moral of the David narrative is this: You reap what you sow, evil produces evil.

For Young, little mention is made of his victims. The force of his speeches are concerned with alcohol abuse. Young does say in one speech that "even the victims' families have supported" him in his time of sorrow. (Young, September 1976b). That ironic twist is Young's only mention of those he directly affected by his murderous wreck.

Swaggart fails to mention Debra Murphee by name and does not describe the woman as a victim. When church officials demand retribution for his deeds Swaggart aligns himself with the David story. Here he turns what for David was part of his punishment into unjust persecution. He terms church officials "Absaloms" who threaten his pulpit.

Table I

SCHEMATIC COMPARING YOUNG AND SWAGGART WITH DAVID STORY

Young	David	Swaggart
	I. Wrong Doing	
1. Drunk Driving	1. Affair	1. Sexual relations with a prostitute
2. Manslaughter	2. Murder	
	II. Response to Sin Prior to Public Disclosure	
Secrecy	Attempted Cover-up	Secrecy
	III. Disclosure	
Accident, death, jailing & secular coverage	Messenger of God confronts the sinner.	Fellow minister provides evidence, sends to church leaders, secular coverage
	IV. Initial Response	
Pleads guilty before judge	Confesses sin before Nathan	Speaks with church leaders, confesses to congregation

Table I

SCHEMATIC COMPARING YOUNG AND SWAGGART WITH DAVID STORY
(Continued)

V. Later Response: Rhetorical Artifact		
Sermons, speeches and classes. Periodic references to David	Psalm 51. Personal lament accepting full responsibility	Tale of Three Kings sermon. Distribution of the crisis ("I" to "we")
VI. Audience(s) for Later Response		
Church, college and civic groups	Nation of Israel (theocracy)	church
VII. Consequences expected		
1. One year paid suspension from work (church, school officials)	1. Child dies	1. Two year probation from preaching
2. Research	2. Evil in family	2. Counseling (from church authorities)
3. Speeches (from civil government)	3. Perpetual violence (from God through Nathan)	

Table I

SCHEMATIC COMPARING YOUNG AND SWAGGART WITH DAVID STORY
(Continued)

VIII. Response to Consequences		
Publishes research, delivers speeches and fulfills suspension	David lives with death, evil and violence. Has his kingship and life threatened.	Returns to pulpit after three months and delivers Tale of Three Kings sermon
IX. Victims		
Young claims family of victims has been supportive.	David marries Bathsheba and another child born to them (Solomon) becomes next king.	Concept of Debra Murphee (the prostitute) as "victim" is not mentioned.
X. Moral to the Story		
"Deeper healing," "closeness to God." (Young)	Evil spawns evil; you reap what you sow. (Biblical narrative)	Church officials are the "Absaloms" of Swaggart's life (Swaggart)

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE THEORY: GROUNDWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Alasdair MacIntyre in his work of moral philosophy argues that the language of morality is in a state of grave disorder. What we possess, he maintains, "are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 2). We have lost our comprehension of morality.

MacIntyre considers the moral thinking of the Greek, Medieval and Renaissance eras, and concludes, "the chief means of moral education is the telling of stories" (1981, p. 114). Since narrative has brought unity to the lives of those whose cultures are the predecessors of our own, "it would not be surprising if it turned out to be still an unacknowledged presence in many of our ways of thinking and acting" (1981, p. 191).

It is narrative, MacIntyre maintains, that makes our actions and conversations intelligible. Citing Barbara Hardy, he states, "We dream, . . .remember, anticipate, hope, . . .learn, hate and love by narrative" (1981, p. 197). Thus, MacIntyre states his oft-quoted thesis, "Man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal" (1981, p. 201). Citing

the great stories of several societies including those of Aesop, the Bible and American folklore, he concludes, "Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources" (1981, p. 201). For MacIntyre, the virtues necessary for the good life require participation in communities and traditions with their own unique narratives.

Walter Fisher builds on the work of MacIntyre and several others, proposing a conception of rationality based on narration. Fisher defines narration as "symbolic actions —words and/or deeds —that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them" (Fisher, 1984, p. 2). Fisher proposes what he terms the "narrative paradigm" as a method of developing theory and criticism in communication. He finds the narrative paradigm to be "a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands that recur in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme" (Fisher, 1984, p. 2). Fisher wishes not to disregard the roles of reason and rationality but rather expand their meanings to include all forms of human communication and especially narrative.

Fisher terms the prevailing paradigm used in theory and criticism of communication the "rational-world paradigm." Its five presuppositions are that: (1) humans are essentially rational beings, (2) the paradigmatic mode of

human decision making and communication is argument, (3) the conduct of argument is ruled by the dictates of situation, (4) rationality is determined by subject-matter knowledge and argumentative ability and (5) the world is a set of logical puzzles that can be solved through appropriate analysis and application of reason conceived as an argumentative construct. In short, Fisher summarizes, "argument as product and process is the means of being human" (1984, p. 4). Fisher continues, "There must exist something that can be called public or social knowledge and there must be a 'public' for argument to have the kind of force envisioned for it" (1984, p. 4).

Naturalism and existentialism, lines of thought of "modernism," have subverted the rational-world paradigm. Fisher applauds efforts to "repair" the old paradigm by (1) reconstructing the conception of knowledge, (2) reconceptualizing the public, (3) formulating a logic appropriate for practical reasoning and (4) reconceiving the conceptions of validity, reason and rationality (1984, p. 5). Fisher believes, however, that there exists a more beneficial way to articulate the structures of everyday argument. He writes, "I believe that the narrative paradigm may offer a better solution, one that will provide substance not only for public moral argument, but . . . for human communication in general" (1984, p. 6).

Fisher coins the term "Homo narrans" as a "root metaphor to represent the essential nature of human beings" (1984, p. 6). Human beings are in essence story-telling beings. The Homo narrans metaphor is meant to be a master metaphor that subsumes the other "subplots" of human experience, including art, history, biography or autobiography. Autobiography is one means of recounting human choice and action. The Homo narrans metaphor, Fisher suggests, "holds that symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them in order to establish ways of living in common, in intellectual and spiritual communities in which there is confirmation for the story that constitutes one's life" (1989, p. 476).

In contrast to the rational-world model, the narrative paradigm presupposes that (1) Humans are essentially story tellers, (2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision making and communication is "good reasons," which vary in form among situation, genres, and media of communication, (3) the production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture and character, (4) rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings, that is, their inherent awareness of narrative probability (the coherence or holding together of a story) and narrative fidelity (if the story "rings true" to what one knows to be true in one's life), (5) good

reasons are the "stuff of stories," the means by which humans realize their nature as reasoning-valuing animals (1984, pp. 7-8). Fisher defines "good reasons" as "elements that provide warrants for accepting or adhering to advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical." Fisher maintains that good reasons can be discovered in all sorts of symbolic actions —nondiscursive as well as discursive (1984, p. 1).

Fisher points out the universality of narration. Unlike rationality which one must learn, "the narrative impulse is part of our very being because we acquire narrativity in the natural process of socialization" (1984, p. 8). Thus, the operative principle of narrative rationality is identification rather than deliberation.

With Aristotle, Fisher believes that people inherently "prefer what they perceive as the true and the just." Narrative rationality assigns "basic rationality to <u>all</u> persons not mentally disabled" (Fisher, 1989, p. 479). Unlike the rational-world paradigm, there is no hierarchy based on the assumption that some are qualified to be rational while others are not. "Under the narrative paradigm all are seen as possessing equally the logic of narration —a sense of coherence and fidelity" (Fisher, 1989, p. 480). This is implied in the concept of "common sense" which over time has allowed juries to function and people to vote.

Among other features of the narrative paradigm that Fisher suggests, two are germane to the interests of this thesis. First, Fisher proposes that narratives are "moral constructs." Citing Hayden White, he writes, "Where in any account of reality, narrativity is present, we can be sure that morality or a moral impulse is present too" (Fisher, 1984, p. 10). Second, Fisher attempts to demonstrate that the narrative paradigm offers ways of resolving problems of public moral argument. As a case study, Fisher considers Jonathan Schell's The Fate of the Earth as an example of a contemporary moral argument intended to persuade a general audience. Fisher concerns himself with the reception of Schell's argument which he says, "reveals the limits, perhaps the impossibility, of persuasive moral argument in our time, given the rational-world paradigm" (1984, p. 11).

Fisher divides reviewers of Schell's book into two categories, "celebratory" who are in sympathy with the work and "purveyors of ideological, bureaucratic or technical arguments" whose strategy is the subversion of Schell's reasoning. The latter argue from a privileged position, making the argument one for "experts" alone to decide.

Fisher defines public moral argument in part by its being publicized and aimed at "untrained thinkers." Given the rational world paradigm, "experts" tend to dominate by their rational superiority, arguing with other "experts." The general public has no compelling reason to believe one

over another. In contrast, in the narrative paradigm, the "experts'" stories are not beyond the analysis of anyone. Fisher points to the passing of freeze referenda in several states as evidence of "good reasons" for voters to respond with fear and distrust to the potential of nuclear disaster. This is "rational," given the narrative paradigm.

What Fisher terms a "most important point" is that the good reasons expressed in public moral argument are absent in the rational-world paradigm. Fisher concludes, "When the full range of good reasons for responses is taken into consideration, experts and laypersons meet on the common ground of their shared, human interests" (1989, p. 485).

The "expert," in the narrative paradigm, becomes a "counselor." Subject to the demands of narrative rationality, the counselor's role is to impart knowledge and wisdom through the story. Fisher writes, "The most compelling, persuasive stories are mythic in form, stories reflective of 'public dreams' that give meaning and significance to life" (1989, p. 487). However, while the most engaging stories are mythic, the most helpful and uplifting stories are moral.

Fisher's work has certainly demonstrated its heuristic value (cf. Rushing, 1986; Carpenter, 1986; Rowland, 1987). His thesis, however, has not gone unchallenged. Barbara Warnick (1987), for example, argues that the narrative paradigm lacks what Fisher calls narrative probability. In

Fisher's presentation of the paradigm Warnick finds internal coherence absent. She points to contradictory claims and equivocal statements.

The "most serious problem" Warnick has is with Fisher's claim that narrativity is more accessible and comprehensible to the public than is rationality. Fisher does argue that narrative probability and fidelity are not taught, but acquired "through a universal faculty and experience" (1989, p. 486) and, therefore, "people have a natural tendency to prefer the true and the just" (p. 480). Warnick points out, however, that "the people do not always prefer the 'true and just' view" (1987, p. 176). She cites the success of Nazi propaganda in persuading people that the Jewish people were the source of the world's evil. She writes, "A narrative such as Hitler's is invidiously persuasive precisely because of its narrative fidelity" (1987, p. 176). Warnick proceeds to argue that narrative probability, taken alone, is inadequate for the criticism of rhetorical discourse and that the locus for critical assessment in the logic of good reasons is unclear. She claims, "As long as the critical results of the narrative paradigm rely only on the immanent narrative of the text and the critic's personal judgment, the claims made for the paradigm's usefulness and applicability will continue to exceed its range and capability" (1987, p. 182).

This is insightful critique which points out one important limitation of narrative theory. Warnick rightly observes, "Fisher fails to deal with the question of how we can assure that the public will not choose bad stories based on self delusion or rationalization" (1987, p. 181).

Thomas Farrell (1985) adds to the literature of narrativity by distinguishing between "conversation" and "rhetoric." The latter "appears to be monologic, partisan, and directed outward —toward the attention of others, who then judge its quality; this is the performative dimension of rhetoric" (1985, p. 116). With some insight, Farrell calls for the resurrection of "cultural memory" and "narrative accountability." Without these, he warns, "it would be impossible to take any public rhetoric seriously" (1985, p. 123). Farrell elaborates,

> Each rhetorical advocate seeks to link claims to authority to the narrative of cultural themes preceding his or her utterances. And most rhetorical catastrophes over the past twenty years (in the United States, at least) have been due to the violation of this accountability postulate. (1985, p. 123)

As examples, Farrell cites George McGovern's "1000% backing" of Thomas Eagleton before removing his support, the Vietnam Tet offensive as dimming the presidential rhetoric of "light at the end of the tunnel," among other "rhetorical catastrophes."

Farrell is critical of the use of narrative in communication theory and practice. "The aesthetic of narrative," he writes, "currently tempts us toward 'happy

talk': the predisposition that, no matter what the situation, all is bound to turn out all right" (1985, p. 124). Instead, Farrell suggests, "memory, the lost canon of rhetoric, has now moved over to the status of a trait to be cultivated in audiences as well as speakers, if obligations are to acquire force over time" (1985, p. 124). Specifically, Farrell argues that "the ethic of narrative must attend to the moral of the 'story'" (1985, p. 125). He maintains that one should raise several questions of the narrative that might help focus moral responsibility. These questions include: "What legacy of experience do we wish our story to yield to future generations? Which episodes in our unfinished and unbounded narrative of collective action are irretrievable or lost? Which need to be ended altogether, which prolonged, which begun anew? What public character is implied by the course we have taken?" These questions imply the reflection and probing that are necessary if an audience will use its memory and critically listen to a story.

Robert Rowland (1987) has claimed that "Fisher's work has undeniable value" yet finds some limitations to the narrative paradigm. First, he believes Fisher's definition of narrative is too broad, including all discourse. Second, he rejects Fisher's distinction between narrative rationality and the rational-world paradigm. Finally, Rowland rejects Fisher's concept that the role of the expert in public matters is better understood as a story teller.

Rowland, while not denying the importance of narrative to understanding society, argues for placing limitations on the scope of the paradigm. He maintains, "the study of narrative should focus upon rhetoric that either explicitly tells a story or that clearly implies a story" (1987, p. 273). If plot and characters are not present, the material is something other than narrative. Another limitation would be that tests of evidence and reasoning be applied to the arguments found in narrative. For example, Rowland writes, "A presidential story could be completely coherent and plausible, but lead to bad policy because it was not accurate" (1987, p. 273). Thus, Rowland concludes, "Narrative theory should be studied as one among many modes of argumentative proof, all of which are subject to standards of informal logic, and one among many rhetorical devices for persuading an audience" (1987, p. 274).

Rowland provides his best critique when discussing narrative fidelity and probability. He thinks that if narrative fidelity and probability are to be useful tests of public argument, they must test not merely the story, but the story in relation to the world" (1987, p. 270). Rowland's critique is clearest when he calls into question Fisher's discussion of values. He notes that Fisher builds on the work of MacIntyre and calls for "idealistic stories" that help all in the "quest for the good life." The stories of Christ and Mohammed and several others fit into this

category. Rowland responds, "It is certainly worth noting in this regard that the interaction of the idealistic stories of Christ and Mohammed has led to considerable conflict over the last thousand years" (1987, p. 271). This is insightful, as is his conclusion, "Without the establishment of a privileged standard for objectively evaluating moral questions, there is no means of escaping from relativism. The narrative paradigm establishes no such standard" (1987, p. 271).

Stanley Hauerwas has written a pivotal book in the field of Christian ethics. In A Community of Character, the theological ethicist applies the theory of narrative formation of Christian character to the field of social ethics. Hauerwas notes that using the Bible in ethics is problematic. Often, he maintains, the Bible is appealed to in order to support ethical positions held prior to consultation with Scripture (Hauerwas, 1981, pp. 57-60).

Hauerwas believes that Scripture is not meant to be a problem-solver. Instead, he writes, "How we use Scripture is finally an affair of the imagination. . . . Our imagination depends on our ability to remember and interpret our traditions as they are mediated through the moral reality of our community" (1981, p. 65). The moral use of Scripture is to remember the "stories of God" for the guidance of the Christian community and individual lives (1981, p. 66).

For Hauerwas, "Scripture has authority for Christians because they have learned as a forgiven people they must be able to forgive" (1981, pp. 68-69). Hauerwas even argues that being capable of accepting forgiveness separates Christians from the world. The world, he thinks, assumes it has no need to be forgiven. Hauerwas argues, "Being a community of the forgiven is directly connected with being a community sustained by the narratives we find in Scripture, as those narratives do nothing less than manifest the God whose very nature is to forgive" (1981, p. 69). Learning to forgive allows the Christian community to be "worthy of continuing to carry the story of God we find authorized by Scripture" (1981, p. 70).

Like Fisher, Hauerwas seems to believe that "Homo narrans" should be considered as an explanatory term for human nature. Although Hauerwas does not use Fisher's term, he writes, "If we are to understand how Christian convictions help us to form our lives truthfully the narrative nature of our lives must be recognized" (1981), p. 90. For the Christian community ("the storied people"), Hauerwas states, "The moral task consists in acquiring the skills, ie., the character, which enable us to negotiate these many kinds and levels of narrative in a truthful manner" (1981, p. 96).

Nicholas Lash discusses narrative in the sense of autobiography, claiming that this form of Christian

discourse is self-involving. It locates the speaker in a particular cultural and historical tradition. Writes Lash, "the Christian is the teller of a tale, the narrator of a story which he tells as his story, as a story in which he acknowledges himself to be a participant" (1989, p. 120).

Lash makes three "elementary" observations about Christian discourse which, as autobiography, are especially relevant to this thesis. First, Christian religious discourse will always be shaped by the circumstances of its production. Thus, no matter how "truthfully" we attempt to tell our own story, "the narrative we produce is always subject to ideological distortion" (1989, p. 120). Thus, the way of thinking in the culture of Israel more than two millennium ago no doubt shaped the telling of David's story. The same would be true of the cultural ideologies of Norvel Young and Jimmy Swaggart.

Second, Lash notes that the construction of an autobiography is not merely remembering. It is, in addition, an effort to make sense of one's life and history. Lash writes, "the very fact that the sense has to be 'made,' the narrative constructed, threatens the veracity of the tale" (1989, p. 120).

Third, each narrative has a beginning, a middle and an end. "End" signifies both conclusion and goal. The autobiographer stands in the middle "of the history to which he seeks to give narrative expression." The temptation,

therefore, for the sake of the coherence of the story, is for the autobiographer "to claim a clearer apprehension of the 'plot' than the evidence warrants" (Lash, 1989, pp. 120-121).

In view of Fisher's work, his critics and others, I find narrative theory of great value, within certain limits. Narrative strikes deep into the soul and heart of the audience. It can bring clarity and relevance to the situation. It can live well beyond the event. Given the cautions outlined below I believe MacIntyre correctly observes, "Man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal."

Warnick's argument that human beings do not always prefer the true and the just is an excellent observation. Her illustration from Nazi Germany is obvious. Warnick's critique has heuristic value, I think. I wonder how well Christians are able to judge the narratives they hear, narratives told in Christian settings with Biblical stories. I believe, with Farrell, that "the lost canon of rhetoric," memory, must be enlisted if one is able to judge rightly the truth of a story.

A force that can work against critical judgment is Hauerwas' theory of forgiveness. Hauerwas' theory that forgiveness makes the Christian community worthy of carrying the story of God places a tremendous emphasis on the importance of forgiveness.

I believe that Hauerwas describes not so much what should be but what is. My experience and observation is that Christians attempt to live as Hauerwas suggests. They desire to forgive. But critical judgment of the Christian audience breaks down when the community shows itself not to be the "storied people" of God but Christians who have lost their memory. These are matters that are foundational to answering this thesis' question of the rhetors' relationships with their audiences.

One would think that both Swaggart's and Young's audiences would be trained thinkers. They are, after all, people who pride themselves in being people of the Book. In the Church of Christ, at least, this has been a traditional mark of identity. Church historian David Edwin Harrell, Jr. notes that in its early life the denomination was comprised of "Biblical primitivists" and their "preoccupation" with scriptural authority even directed the church's social thought (Harrell, 1966, p. 29).

In recent years an evolution of thought has taken place in the Church of Christ. Leonard Allen and others have chronicled the church's move away from their image and practice of being Biblical literalists. Allen and his co-authors write, "When 'meeting contemporary needs' is divorced from Biblical theology in the life of the church, the church has given up one of its most precious possessions: its identity" (Allen, Hughes and Weed, 1988,

p. 29). They believe the denomination is in the throes of an identity crisis.

To recover the way, the church's task must be "to let God, through Scripture, confront us anew. . . ." The primary response to the "secularization" of the church must be therefore "serious and prolonged engagement with the theology of the Bible" (Allen, Hughes, & Weed, 1988, p. 70). In a subsequent work, Allen outlines more specifically the means of recovering this Biblical theology (1990). Here, Allen notes that members of the Church of Christ have been trained to think in rationalistic terms, often seeing the Bible as a blueprint or rigid "pattern" for doctrine to believe and a lifestyle to live (1990, pp. 19-41). Often this has led to an ignorance of the variety of narrative forms in the Bible (1990, pp. 57-75). "Biblical narratives," writes Allen, "are not substitute explanations we can some day hope to supplant with more straightforward accounts" (1990, p. 62).

The point here is that Allen and his co-authors raise doubts whether the Church of Christ audience is informed, or in Hauerwas' terms, "storied." Surely they are informed by the story presented. But is this enough? I think not. How then can the audience judge the narrative's fidelity and probability? One might suggest a "higher authority," like the Bible. But, even if that be true, there is some question whether these people know their own Bible.

The next chapter will further develop this analysis using as its basis the theory discussed in this section.

CHAPTER V

UNDERSTANDING YOUNG AND SWAGGART THROUGH NARRATIVE THEORY

Lash sketches how autobiographical religious discourse can be threatened by "self-indulgence and even dishonesty." This would certainly begin to summarize much of the critique of Swaggart, especially from his non-religious audience. Art Buchwald (1988) and the Los Angeles Times ("Human Comedy," 1988, p. 6) brand him a hypocrite. Ellen Goodman (1988), emphasizing self-indulgence, labels Swaggart "a neurotic mess." Ray Jenkins (1988) is kinder, thinking Swaggart to be the voice of the Southern oppressed. Blumhofer (1988) and Jackson (1988) underscore the reality that Swaggart did not fully embrace the separation from the world he represented in the pulpit.

When Swaggart constructs his autobiography he attempts to "make sense" of his circumstances. The plot of his story parallels King David's. Swaggart calls David's narrative "a mirror" claiming, "I see myself so much in this" (Swaggart, 1988b.). So, when Swaggart elevates David to the hero status, he lifts up himself as well. David is the first and last human name mentioned in the New Testament. No wonder Swaggart often "lulls" himself to sleep reviewing David's exploits.

The plot develops further when Swaggart describes David's and his own spear-dodging efforts. David's reward for "saving Israel" was to be made the greatest spear dodger "in Israel." Swaggart's analogy is clearly made. First, David did great deeds for God and the kingdom. He defeated the giant, became king and wrote much of the Bible. Second, David was persecuted despite his wonderful deeds. "When mothers wanted to scare their youngin's they said, 'If you want to be like that giant killer I'm gonna whip you.'" Immediately, Swaggart draws the parallel. He begins by rehearsing his own great deeds, "There were hundreds of thousands being saved under this ministry just a short time ago." Later in the same sermon, Swaggart will note his own kingdom-building skills of financing the building with the sale of "millions and millions" of his records and by saving "many of you" through "nailing your hides to the wall," evidently by heroic preaching. Next, Swaggart discusses his own persecution. Like mothers warning their youngins,' "The religions of the world are saying, 'You don't want to be like him.'" To complete the analogy, Swaggart screams, "Not a spear has hit yet, not one has even nicked yet. . . . I'm dodging spears, but praise God, none have connected" (Swaggart, 1988b). His association with David is confirmed.

What is missing in Swaggart's analogy is any discussion of the cause of David's troubles. Swaggart omits any mention of sin. Moreover, with the silence of the subject

of the sexual transgression (David's or Swaggart's) any causal relationship between sin and punishment cannot be made. That the "spears" aimed at Swaggart might be caused by his association with New Orleans prostitute Debra Murphee goes unsaid.

But, there is more. Swaggart turns the Biblical narrative's discussion of sin's consequences into persecution. When David's kingdom fell, Swaggart finds clear connections to outside evil forces. Swaggart implies that the same forces are working destruction as his kingdom is threatened.

Swaggart finds obvious parallel between his life and the David story. The Biblical narrative reads much like Swaggart's: Sexual sin, attempted cover-up, confrontation from another representative of God and punishment. But, does Swaggart's audience follow the nuances of the Succession Narrative, let alone its major theme? I think not. The audience's inability to remember or their simple ignorance of the moral of the Biblical story, is a clue as to how Swaggart successfully distorts the analogy.

Swaggart, as many Christian preachers, selects his own theme and text for the Sunday sermon. Mainline church ministers generally preach from a lectionary which recommends texts and subjects for each Sunday of the year. The evangelical tradition, of which Swaggart is a member, allows their ministers "free reign" in sermon selection.

For the latter, the understanding is that God, through the preacher's selection of text and theme, will speak to the church. But, this makes for what Lash calls "ideological distortion," especially when the sermon is autobiographical.

Which text will be selected? Which theme developed? Given the conditions of Swaggart and his church and the relationship to their denomination in the Spring of 1988, several possibilities present themselves. One crucial issue concerns Christian submission and obedience. The New Testament is filled with exhortations to "obey" your superiors. A text like I Thessalonians 5:12-13, "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord. . . ." might be used to initiate a discussion of Swaggart's break with his authorities. One would think pragmatic questions which involve money and power issues alone would not persuade listeners trained in the Christian virtues. These however, are the resources for Swaggart's justification of his refusal to obey the denominational hierarchy.

Second, this would be a great opportunity to discuss one's struggles with sexual temptations. Honest self-disclosure might aid others in the audience who wrestle with lust and its effects. An appropriate passage might be one where the Apostle Paul confesses his own weaknesses, "The good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil

that I do not wish. . . . I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good" (Romans 7:19, 21). An honest investigation into the difficulties the Christian faces in attaining the virtuous life would be opportune for Swaggart.

Third, Swaggart could have addressed the effect sin (specifically a sexual transgression) has on those one loves. Swaggart, in his February 21 sermon, publicly asked his wife Frances and son Donnie to forgive him. That demonstrated his sorrow which one would hope would have been privately communicated long before the sermon. But, for the audience's life, a more helpful theme would have included a discussion of the feelings of pain, abandonment, distrust, or bitterness that a spouse or child has when one cavorts with a prostitute or is involved in a sexual indiscretion. Scripture presents some examples of unfaithful spouses who place their own interests ahead of the well-being of their beloved. Abraham's abandonment of Sarah to save his life on two separate occasions would provide an excellent text for discussion (Genesis 12:10-21; 20:1-18).

Finally, Swaggart's account of his escapades was publicly challenged by the prostitute with whom he engaged for sexual favors. Would it be appropriate to speak to her accusations? Again, the Bible provides fine resources for enriching discussion and understanding. When the Apostle

Paul's word was publicly challenged he openly responded (Galatians 1; 2).

These, however, are not the sermon themes Swaggart selected for his first Sunday to stand against his denomination's orders to stay out of the pulpit. The question here is not which sermon would best speak to the needs of the day but who should select the subject and text for the sermon. What is at stake is the validity of Fisher's narrative fidelity. Before the audience asks, "Does this ring true?" they should ask, "Is this story appropriate for this occasion?"

What enables Swaggart to successfully distort the moral and theme of the succession narrative? First, he selects the text and theme for the occasion. There is no lectionary or governing authority to help him find an appropriate sermon subject for the Sunday. Second, the audience is not well versed in the Biblical story's development and theme. Thus, the moral "sin causes consequences which are painful and will be extracted from the sinner" can be ignored for the theme of The Tale of Three Kings: "even in the midst of ungodly persecution the man of God must not throw spears." A third reason,that the Christian audience perceives itself as a forgiving people, has been suggested by Hauerwas. This will receive further elaboration below. [p. 92]

Warnick (1987) and Rowland (1987) warn that people do not always prefer the true and just. One might reject

Swaggart's "well-told tale" because it abandons its premise, the consequences of sin, in David's story. Or, one might reject Swaggart's story as inferior to other sermons, given the exigency of the preacher and his church. But, above all, Swaggart's narrative should be judged by a standard outside itself and its audience's feel for a true story. For the Christian audience the Biblical virtues must be used to gauge the veracity and acceptability of a narrative. For this to happen the church must recover its memory.

Swaggart's selective memory is not just related to his past. His autobiography is being written by the events in which he chooses to participate. Swaggart resists denominational authorities by refusing to step down from his pulpit. He sidesteps the two year prohibition and the required counseling for rehabilitation. Swaggart's cited reasons for his obstinance are pragmatic: both his college and ministry would be harmed by his absence. The television ministry would be "totally destroyed" ("Church Defrocks," 1988, pp. 1, 11).

Swaggart's struggle to make sense of his life raises at least one important question. Blumhofer (1988) and Assemblies-of-God general superintendent G. Raymond Carlson ("Church defrocks," 1988, pp. 1, 11) pointed out that Swaggart had once thought the rehabilitation program "right and proper." He had endorsed a similar penalty for Jim Bakker a few months earlier. Thus, the question: What

governs Swaggart's choice: faith, the Biblical narrative, pragmatics or self-indulgence? Some critics (Jackson, 1988, for instance) would suggest that ultimately finances and self-indulgence drive Swaggart's decisions. On the surface Swaggart's words reveal purely pragmatic motives. The school must remain open. His ministry must not be financially harmed. Obedience submits to institutional stability. One would certainly omit the Biblical narrative as a driving force if accurate representation is considered important. But, Swaggart's emphasis on the "prize" of being God's man (as demonstrated in the accolades he pays David) seems to reveal a strong Biblical concern. It appears instead that the narrative of Scripture is used for his personal gain.

Lash's discussion of the Christian autobiography is helpful in understanding Norvel Young as well. As Young makes sense of his life, the veracity of his tale is called into question. This is especially apparent when Young recounts his story of the traffic accident. Young told his audiences that the victims were two women, one 81 and the other 78 years old (Young, September 1976a). These details varied from the accounts consistently reported in the Los Angeles Times. There, reporters noted that the victims were two women, Christine Dahlquist, 81, of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Beulah Harrison, 55, of Claremont, California. Another

woman, Alice Fritsche, 55, of Claremont, California, was "seriously injured" (Farr, 1975, p. 1).

What is noteworthy is not that Young omits details like naming and giving his victims' home towns or information concerning their injuries or deaths. While these are significant omissions, one might expect that from an autobiographer. What Young does that draws the truthfulness of his version of the story into question is apparently alter the age of one of his unnamed victims. Young claims that one woman was 78 years old, not 55. This is important information. The 59 year old chancellor moves the woman from being younger than him to being a generation older. Could it be that an older life, one that joins the other victim in being past the nation's average life expectancy, makes the deaths appear less tragic? Young is not simply remembering, he is "making sense" in his narrative and dispensing of facts accordingly.

Alter and other Biblical scholars have labeled the Succession Narrative a "study of the interiority of David" (Alter, 1981, p. 119) and a "paradigm for humanness" (Bruegemann, 1985, p. 46). In the same way, the appropriations of David's story by Norvel Young and Jimmy Swaggart are studies of the human struggle to "make" and communicate sense to an audience.

One might well argue that these twentieth century narrators do not rival the Biblical narrator as "fine

tellers of tales" (Gunn, 1978, p. 111). One might even contend that Young and Swaggart could learn something of themselves if they paid closer attention to the Biblical narrative.

David's sins of adultery and murder became the keynote for the succession of sordid events that unfold in II Samuel 11-20. David's sins were cause for the effects of death, rape, political uprisings and other miserable events. As Nathan outlined, the sword would never depart from David's house, evil would come out of David's family and the child born to his adulterous relationship would die. These are the events that Young omits from his utilization of the narrative and Swaggart turns into works of his enemies.

In assessing Norvel Young's and Jimmy Swaggart's use of the Biblical narrative the former does not appear to be as creative as the latter. But Young, like Swaggart, uses the story for his purposes. Focusing on the passion of remorse, Young and Swaggart elude facing the strong implications of punishment found in the original story. Perhaps their respective audiences are thus enabled to ignore issues of sin's consequences and the price of repentance.

Coker (1981) and Stevens (1976) have elevated Young to the restored hero's status. They nowhere indicate possible continued suffering or punishment for the sins of manslaughter or alcoholic irresponsibility.

Within a year of Young's accident, John Stevens, President of Abilene Christian University, would introduce Norvel Young to his faculty and students as a "dear friend" and "brother," one who deserved "prayerful and thoughtful attention" (Stevens, 1976).

In his introduction of Young to a large gathering of church leaders and members, Abilene Christian University Bible professor Dan Coker ignored the traditional introductory remarks. Deciding to forego elaboration of degrees, publications and positions Coker instead mentioned "the greatest thing" that can be said. For Dan Coker, and "many of you," Norvel Young has become a "hero." Coker explained that Young was a "real hero," a "true hero" because he had put his faith in God. Then, Coker paid Young the highest acclamation, suggesting the speaker would be one of the subjects in a discussion of the "most faithful," if the Bible were written today (Coker, 1981).

While "tragedy" is frequently used in Young's speeches to describe the accident (Young, March, 1976; Young, September, 1976; Young, 1987) he does not portray himself as an agent of fate. Young makes too many direct claims of fault for this to be a conscious strategy. He does not represent himself as a hero in a Greek tragedy. Instead, Young is a reformed sinner. For the most part he accepts the blame, "how bad it was that . . . I had done this" (Young, September, 1976a). It is this response, I believe,

that has impressed Dan Coker and others in his audience. Norvel Young has "bounced back" (Coker, 1981) with faith and trust in God. It calls to the minds of those familiar with David and Psalms the phrase, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3).

There is a similarity in the way Young and Swaggart have used the David story. Both have identified themselves with David in sin and repentance. The consequences of sin found in the Succession Narrative have been either eliminated or changed in their appropriation of the story. But more is involved.

For Young, the story is cut off just after David's expressed sorrow for his sins (II Samuel 12:13) and before the punishment section begins. [See Table I.] Young encourages his audience to join with God in forgiving the sinner. Young's drama is past. Only the audience's response remains. Young has done his work. He has sinned and repented. Now the audience is left with the activity. Will they choose to forgive this prominent figure in the fields of religion and education?

For Swaggart the drama is still unfolding. His pulpit is being threatened by denominational authorities. Swaggart implies his problems began, like David, with the sin of sexual misconduct. But moving further into the succession narrative than Young, Swaggart sees himself like David when he was threatened by Absalom in an attempted coup. Those in

the denominational hierarchy who wish for Swaggart to withdraw from ministry to pursue counseling are labeled the "Absaloms" of his life. They are threatening "Swaggart's throne."

Near the beginning and in the conclusion of "The Tale of Three Kings" Swaggart asks the question, "Do I have the anointing?" (Anointing is God's approval and blessings for ministry). It is not a question for the audience to debate and struggle to answer. There is no guess work to this query. The bulk of Swaggart's sermon produces evidence that he, like David, was blessed by God but persecuted by others. Yes, Swaggart has "the anointing." With the answer to the question so obvious, the audience is left to face a more difficult challenge: Whom will they follow?

Just as Israel was divided when Absalom tried to claim his father's throne, so Swaggart's congregation has loyalties to their minister and church as well as to the Pentecostal denomination. The congregation is forced to choose whom they will follow.

For Young and Swaggart the sin and sorrow are admitted. Both confess their guilt and repentance. The question for Young's audience is this: Will they forgive and accept M. Norvel Young? The question for Swaggart's audience is this: Whom will they follow?

As Norvel Young and Jimmy Swaggart use the David story, what does their usage say about their relationship with

their audiences? Both men are representatives of the Christian faith. But beyond that their relationships differ. Swaggart is a preacher for a congregation and televangelist for a larger public audience. While Young was once a minister of some fame in Lubbock, Texas, his primary duties are concerned with Christian college administration. His involvement in civic activities is impressive. The style of their speaking differs as well. As I described when introducing The Tale of Three Kings, Swaggart's preaching can be categorized as emotional, visual (even sensual) and loud. As Blumhofer (1987) suggested, Swaggart represents an old style of Pentecostal preaching. Young, in contrast, presents his messages in a rational, story-telling fashion. Time magazine commended him for his "reasoned" approach. Young's speeches have an obvious rational appeal to them. The audiences to whom these men speak differ as well. For Swaggart, a high level of emotion is expected. The visual proofs (tears and the presence and reference to family) outweigh the logical proofs (accurate representation of the Biblical story) for Swaggart's audience. Young's audience, as Allen (1990) noted, is known for their strong emphasis on rationality.

Twice this writer had opportunity to present some of the material of this thesis before Church of Christ audiences. On both occasions I played portions from an audio-cassette of Swaggart's Tale of Three Kings. The

recorded segments included Swaggart's shouting and crying. On both occasions I solicited responses from the audience. Both times individuals were hesitant to accept Swaggart's tears as signs of remorse. They wanted further proof of his sincerity. Some asked for detailed confession while others wanted explanations, other facts and punishment. All of this was tempered with the Biblical maxim, "'he who is without sin cast the first stone,' but. . . ."

As the audiences differ, one can see that a persuasive appeal will differ as well. Narrative rationality for the Church of Christ congregation will differ from the Assemblies of God congregation. The former will emphasize a more reasoned approach. The latter will look for visible and emotional signs of repentance. Here, Walter Fisher's theory of narrativity again comes into question. For Fisher, "all are seen as possessing equally the logic of narration —a sense of coherence and fidelity" (1989, p. 480). Narrative rationality, he contends, is distributed to all. What this thesis demonstrates, however, is that "narrative rationality" differs from audience to audience. While the Pentecostal denominational leaders used their "common sense" to find in Swaggart's confession the necessary sorrow and contrition to merit forgiveness, other audiences would not have heard in that same story the same compelling evidence.

This helps to explain that, despite the discrepancies in following the Biblical story line, the rhetors were successful in persuading their audiences. Each appealed to the type of "narrative rationality" each audience expected. When Young and Swaggart speak to their Christian audiences they have a compelling theme that underlies their subject: forgiveness. Fisher is certainly correct when he proposes that "public dreams" reflected in stories become the most compelling and persuasive narratives. Moreover, I believe that Hauerwas accurately describes what is true when he maintains this public dream for Christians involves the concept of forgiveness.

To build on Hauerwas' theory, what is it about forgiveness that the Christian audience wishes to hear? Surely the words credited to Jesus Christ, delivered in the Sermon on the Mount, are on the minds of many. In instructions on prayer given to his disciples, Jesus is quoted as saying, "Pray then in this way. . . . forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" (Matthew 6:12). This is a segment of the "Lord's Prayer" that Christians have prayed privately and in many churches on Sundays for centuries.

Perhaps another popular teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, the parable of the unmerciful servant, frames their thinking. In this story, Jesus tells of a man who owed his king a sum of money impossible to repay. The man falls to

his knees and begs time to make amends. The king feels compassion and forgives the debt. But, the servant immediately locates a fellow who owes him a relatively small sum of money. He seizes this man and chokes him, demanding, "pay back all you owe me." This fellow's plea for patience goes unheeded and he is thrown into debtor's prison. When the king hears what his servant has done he is disturbed and angered. The king shows no mercy to the one who has been unmerciful. Jesus concludes the story with this moral, "So shall my heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart" (Matthew 18:35). It may be that Young's and Swaggart's Christian audiences are thinking, "I have been forgiven and so I should forgive this man." "Who am I to throw stones (spears)?" or "If I do not forgive what will become of me?"

On the other hand, these men may be speaking to people who are looking for forgiveness. It is not that they have experienced forgiveness and are hoping to extend the same grace to others. Rather, they long to be forgiven. Psalm 51, in light of this personal need, becomes a powerful text. It speaks for many who wish to be released from the feelings of guilt and shame that have come upon them as a result of some personal transgression.

Forgiveness is a critical theme to the Christian and Jewish audience. Whether one is desiring to be forgiven (as a reader of Psalm 51) or is already a recipient of God's

grace (as in the Lord's Prayer and the parable of the unmerciful servant), autobiographical sermons on forgiveness command an attentive and sensitive audience. This, then, is a third reason for Swaggart's distortion of the Biblical narrative.

Therefore, it should be no surprise that Christian fundamentalist Pat Robertson, even in the midst of serious campaigning for the American presidency, aligned himself with the controversial Swaggart declaring, "In my estimation, God has forgiven him. . . . Brother, I love you and I am here to tell the world" ("Swaggart, after 'darkest week,' 1988, p. A16). Nor should one be astonished to hear Rabbi Sanford Raging cross major religious barriers when he writes in the Los Angeles Times, "Ultimately we are all cut from the same cloth." No one is exempt from the temptations and tortures of the flesh (Ragins, 1988, Sec. II, p. 8).

Forgiveness is the "public dream" of the religious audience. It is precisely what Swaggart's and Young's religious audiences wish to hear. Swaggart's denominational superiors listened to his February 18 confession for the language of Psalm 51: "humility: and "sincere sorrow for sin" (King, February 22, 1988, p. 1). When they heard the words representing contrition for sin, they announced their forgiveness of the man.

This discussion of the Christian audience and forgiveness allows for some creative reflection on narrative

theory. I would not dispute Hauerwas' theme that forgiveness is central to the Christian community. But, this "theology" makes for an uncritical audience.

Barbara Warnick questions Fisher's theory asking, "Do people prefer the true and just?" Her example of Nazi propaganda is an obvious illustration that people, indeed, do not always rightly judge a narrative's fidelity. But, even when one considers literature as "noble" as the Bible and as "holy" as the Christian sermon, Warnick's critique is valid. Do people always prefer the true and just? Of course not. From the case of Jimmy Swaggart, it appears that the desire for forgiveness supersedes the desire for the "true and just."

Swaggart's narrative is full of good reasons for believing that it "rings true." His association with David is well constructed and provides powerful evidence for his church audience to believe. But this fails to distinguish the truth or the justice of Swaggart's tale. I concur with both Rowland and Warnick who maintain that a narrative must be tested in relation to the world, to a reality beyond the story and story-teller.

For the Christian audience, Farrell's call for the resurrection of a cultural memory is crucial. The Christian community makes claim to be the "storied people" of God (Hauerwas, 1981, p. 66). But that means nothing if the

Christian audience fails to hold the rhetor responsible for his or her use of the Biblical narrative.

Swaggart's association with David elevates him to a standard of acceptance. There are a host of questions of a hermeneutical nature that arise from this. But for the concern of this thesis, the audience should at least ask, "How far can a rhetor use a text beyond the scope of its direction found in the Bible?" Not to discount imagination or homiletic liberty with a Biblical passage, it seems that omitting a significant element of the Biblical passage (the consequences of sin) and reversing another (turning persecution as punishment into enemy harassment) goes beyond the limits of propriety. It suggests that audiences, even those who are "storied" and with material from their own book, are not always able to discern narrative fidelity.

Norvel Young's audiences responded in some ways similar to Swaggart's. Coker (1981) and Stevens (1976) were mindful of his sin and sorrow and were happy to extend to him forgiveness. Young had openly confessed his guilt. In the first published comment concerning his traffic accident Young wrote, "I was responsible. I have admitted my guilt to the church and to the court. I would give my very life to undo this tragedy but my remorse cannot bring back a single life or erase the harm done" (Young, September 1976b, p. 18).

Evidence that the Church of Christ has forgiven Young is widespread. The Broadway church in Lubbock, Texas, welcomed him back to preach and teach one Sunday in 1990. The current minister celebrated the event with these words:

> M. Norvel and Helen Young will be here this Sunday. I can hardly wait! These two good people have meant so much, not only to Broadway, but to our fellowship as a whole. Having Norvel as our pulpit guest will be a great opportunity for you to invite your friends to come and visit with us. Let's not let an opportunity like that pass us by. ("Norvel and Helen," 1990, p. 1)

Elsewhere the same bulletin featured the couple's picture with an article that rehearsed the accomplishments of their work with the church, "During the Youngs' ministry, Broadway saw one of its greatest periods of growth. . . ." (Bell, 1990, p. 1).

Helen Young has been quite verbal about her response to her husband's sins. She states, "I learned during the time of the accident how much our family means —the children supported me so staunchly." She continues, "I really learned about the peace that passes understanding —I found an unusual calm as if I knew it would be all right; it wasn't all right, but I knew that it would be" (Silvey, 1990, p. 26). Most important are Helen Young's words on forgiveness. Perhaps reflecting the church's sentiments she claims, "In a marriage, forgiveness is all important —it may be a process that takes a long time —but through prayer, we can give up the old hurts instead of collecting them" (Silvey, 1990, p. 26).

Further evidence of Norvel Young receiving forgiveness from his church includes honorary doctorates from Lubbock Christian University (1982) and Pepperdine (1986). Since 1976 he has maintained senior editor status for Power For Today and Twentieth Century Christian. In 1988 he was named alumnus of the decade at David Lipscomb University (Nashville, Tennessee). Since 1979 he has served on the board of directors for the National Conference of Christians and Jews and since 1982 has been a member of the board of governors of that organization (Young, 1989 vita, pp. 1-3). Speeches and sermons delivered at Abilene Christian University (1976, 1981) and Columbia Christian College, Portland, Oregon (1990), further demonstrate Young's nationwide acceptance in the Church of Christ.

Just one year after the accident Young spoke to the students of Abilene Christian University. Near the end of his sermon he spoke of the forgiveness he had received from his fellow Christians. He said,

> In confessing my sins I've found great relief and I've found great and wonderful support from my brethren. There were those who said, "The church will never forgive you. The business people will say, 'There, but for the grace of God go I,' but not the church." But this hasn't been true. I've had over 2000 letters. I think only three of them have been negative. The others, not condoning, but loving, supportive, understanding. (Young, September 1976b)

Apparently, Helen Young's thoughts on "giving up the old hurts" were true for Norvel's fellow churchmen and women as well as for his wife.

The world at large was not sympathetic with Jimmy Swaggart. Forgiveness it would appear, was not the "public dream" of the general American, disconnected from the synagogue or church. For weeks Johnny Carson and other comedians made Swaggart the butt of their jokes. Penthouse magazine featured Swaggart on the cover of one issue and ran an article interviewing Debra Murphee, the victim of Swaggart's pornographic exploits.

Art Buchwald's mockery of repentance and financial contributions seemed to capture the heart of the "larger public's" sentiments. If forgiveness is central to the belief system of the religious audience, it would seem integrity is crucial to the larger public. When Swaggart did not live up to his ethical standards, his public found him guilty of hypocrisy and sentenced him to ridicule.

When Young was involved in his 1975 accident, he did not have the national recognition that Jimmy Swaggart received in 1987-1988. Nevertheless, his involvement in civic affairs in Southern California was impressive. At the time of his accident, Young was director of a local Rotary Club, was on the Board of Governors for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, was Vice-President of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, was a member of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce (and had been director from 1970-1972), was on the Orthopedic Hospital Advisory Council, was co-chairman of Awards Jury of Freedom's Foundation at Valley Forge and was a

member of the Board of Directors for Forest Lawn Memorial Parks. Young was a member of the Coordinating Council for Higher Education for California and had served as the President of the Independent Colleges of Southern California from 1968-1970 (Young, 1989 vita).

When the Los Angeles Times covered Young's car crash they placed the article with a photograph on the front page of the newspaper (Jones, 1975, p. 1). Subsequent articles would sometimes be found on the paper's front page ("College Official," 1975; Farr, 1975).

But other local and national news soon pushed Norvel Young to the back pages. Two days after Young's accident Patty Hearst and her Symbionese Liberation Army captors were arrested and jailed in Redwood City, California. The Hearst trial, to be held in Los Angeles, dominated the attention of the Times. To top matters, President Gerald Ford spent three days visiting California during the week of Young's accident and arrest. On Sunday morning, September 21, 1975, the Los Angeles Times' front page featured articles and photographs of Ford's visit to Pepperdine University. Political and film dignitaries (including Mayor Tom Bradley, John Wayne and William French Smith) were part of a crowd of 18,000 who watched Ford dedicate the President's home, receive an honorary doctor of laws degree, and speak on the theme of private colleges (Reich, 1975, pp. 1, 3). The next day of his California tour Ford escaped an assassination attempt by

Sara Jane Moore outside the St. Francis hotel in San Francisco. Again, state and national news overshadowed the three felony charges being brought against Norvel Young.

But early in 1976 the Los Angeles Times had two feature articles that included Norvel Young. The first, entitled "Pepperdine University Torn By Tragedy, Internal Dissension," contained information on the "stormy year" at Pepperdine University. An underpaid and discontent faculty, arguments over the rapidly increasing size of the University, questions of the nature of the school's relationship with the Churches of Christ, charges of racism over the closing of the Los Angeles campus and Young's accident were the problems described (Trombley, April 1976, pp. 1-4).

The second article followed up on Norvel Young. Young was interviewed after a 20-minute talk to the Century City Rotary Club. Before the Rotarians Young confessed his responsibility for the accident that killed two people, "due to my being under the influence of alcohol" (Trombley, May 1976, II, 1).

The Rotary talk, as well as his speeches to church, college and civic groups around the country, was part of Young's punishment. After Young had pleaded guilty to the charge of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence he was sentenced, on January 27, 1976, to one year in the county jail. The sentence, however, was stayed for six months on the condition that Young engage in a research project at the

University of Southern California. The project concerned the relationship between automobile accidents and alcohol consumption. He was also required to speak to various audiences about his research and accident. In 1978 Pepperdine University Press published his findings, a work entitled, Poison Stress is a Killer: A Monograph on Physical and Behavioral Stress and Some of its Effects on Modern Man (Young, 1978).

Young's 1976 speech to the Rotarians included the encouragement, "Now is the time to live. Smell the flowers . . . Spend more time with your family . . . Relax, don't think you can do it all. Seek significance in the small experiences of life" (Trombley, May 1976, II, 1). This did not set well with all of Young's listeners. At the Century City meeting fellow Rotarian James Bushong asked Young how a leader of a "small religious school" could have gotten himself into such a predicament (Trombley, May 1976, II, 1). Bushong later explained why he raised the question, "I have six kids and we talk about this at home and they don't believe U.S. justice is fair. This was Young's second drunk-driving arrest, and they think he should have served jail time" (Trombley, May 1976, II, 1).

Young's prosecutor felt the same way. After the sentence was imposed in January 1976, Deputy District Attorney Robert Altman said, "I personally feel that when a

person has a previous conviction, when a person drives while highly intoxicated, and as a result of that driving, causes the death of two people, I think such a person should go to jail" (Trombley, May 1976, II, 1). The idea of Young's work on a research project was conceived by Dr. Donald Bibbero, a member of U.S.C.'s Institute of Safety and Systems Management, and a former Pepperdine faculty member.

This of course raises questions of privileged sentencing. What would have happened if Young did not have the status and connections to work out his punishment? Likely, he would have spent significant time in jail. The comment to be made is that Young's easy sentencing drew criticism from his secular audience. Yet, it met with the approval of some in the larger community including U.S.C. president John Hubbard (who approved the project) and the judge who sentenced Young.

Young received punishment from his school as well. He was forced to take a one year leave of absence without salary. William Trombley reported that "Pepperdine officials go out of their way to make it clear that Young plays no part in setting current university policy, that he never appears on campus and that his personal staff has been reduced to one secretary" (May 1976, p. 6). Young complied with these restrictions explaining, "We are living on savings. We were saving for a rainy day and, as I told my wife, this is a rainy day" (Trombley, May 1976, p. 6).

Young distinguishes himself from Swaggart at this point. He accepted the punishment demanded by his religious authorities. One might argue that a man beset by a heart attack and two strokes (Trombley, May 1976, p. 6) and entering the seventh decade of his life would welcome mandatory retirement and could easily finance a year of research. Young's 1975 salary of $57,500 was more than triple the income of any of the school's professors (Trombley, 1976, April and May). In response to the charge of desiring inactivity, for the past fifteen years Young has been quite active in foreign travel and support efforts for the school (Silvey, 1990). This demonstrates a connection with Pepperdine that would have made a year's ban difficult for both parties.

While Young did not have the large public of Swaggart, he shared similar charges of hypocrisy and ridicule. Young's acceptance of the punishment (both civil and institutional) not only sets him apart from Swaggart but also aligns him more closely with the David story.

There is present, too, in Trombley's article a sympathetic note for Young. The article featuring Young's "work of penance" concludes with strong emotional information. Trombley first mentions that Young has been dismissed without pay, barred from the university, has a future with the school described as "uncertain" and is

currently in ill health (May 1976, p. 6). After a somewhat descriptive investigation this article concludes with a sympathetic feel for a defeated man. Young is obviously "on the canvass" and Trombley will certainly not be the one to kick the poor man.

But most apparent in Trombley's article are direct statements made in Young's defense. Before Trombley quotes Young ("Coming to terms with myself, admitting my guilt"), he makes this observation, "Public discussions of the accident and his drinking problem have been difficult for Young, a proud, sensitive man who built a substantial reputation as a church leader and an educator during a 40-year career" (Trombley, May 1976, II, 1).

If Trombley detects that there is hypocrisy in a character it is with Young's audience, the Rotarians. As Young speaks "tall vessels of white wine on each table seemed to be grim reminders" and the Rotarians with drinks in hand "looked uncomfortable." After the speech Trombley and Young discussed the fact that some of the Rotarians had before- during- and after-lunch drinks and then drove back to work. Trombley says that Young shook his head at the thought and commented, "People know intellectually, that they shouldn't drink and drive . . . but it's very hard to change human behavior" (Trombley, May 1976, II, 1).

If anything, the Los Angeles Times correspondent implies that Young should be forgiven. He has confessed his guilt,

is paying his (albeit light) deserts and is living a humbled existence.

This observation calls into question Hauerwas' clear distinction between the Christian and secular audience. Forgiveness is certainly a clear part of the Christian audience's agenda. But it is found, under certain circumstances, in a secular public as well.

The distinction between a religious and non-religious audience should therefore not be overdrawn. Gary Wills has recently written of two groups in America who are talking past each other. One, categorized in Arthur Schlesinger's inaugural address at Brown University, "fails to see legitimacy in religious values not comprehended by the American Mind" (Wills, 1990, p. 972). The other, demonstrated by the modern evangelical claim that "secular humanism" is a religion, "fails to see legitimacy in irreligion: If secularity is really religious, then it is diabolical —a plot against God, not mere indifference to God" (Wills, 1990, p. 972).

Wills argues that there exists, in the United States today, a vestige of religious values. He maintains that Michael Dukakis "the first truly modernist candidate in our politics" was trustful of secular values and isolated from his fellow citizens. In contrast, "George Bush was accepted by ordinary Americans as their spokesman, despite his elite

(verging on effete) background" (1990, p. 973). Wills concludes,

> The secularist prejudice may be useful to those wanting to get ahead in certain fields; but in politics one does better to cultivate, as have all our recent presidents, the religious prejudice. No one did that more than George Bush in 1988. (1990, p. 973)

If Wills' supposition is correct, there is a value system the general public relies upon when voting for a president and making other decisions that reflect an ethical perspective. It may be that this moral base allows the public to forgive a sinner, given a certain criteria.

James Wall (1990), however, believes this moral base has worn quite thin. As MacIntyre wrote a decade earlier, "the language of morality is in a state of grave disorder."

In 1990 Michael Miliken pleaded guilty to six felony charges. The "junk bond king" paid $600 million in fines and was sentenced to ten years in prison for illegally manipulating the nation's financial system. After reviewing Miliken's case, Christian Century editor James Wall comments, "He was a kind of secular saint —saints being people so committed to their personal beliefs that they forget to be prudent. Next thing you know they have irritated the authorities, or pushed themselves out of society's mainstream" (Wall, 1990, p. 1123). Wall notes the general public's disgust with Miliken. He cites Variety's Peter Bart, who wrote of Miliken, "[He knew] no boundaries of civility, no demarcations as to what could or could not be

done" (Wall, 1990, p. 1123). Wall concurs but points out the absence of a moral basis and language in the United States today.

Wall also mentions recent charges that Martin Luther King used references which he did not cite in writing his doctoral dissertation. Wall responds, "King's plagiarism must not be condoned. But if we had a coherent moral language we would be able to put his youthful sinfulness in context, accepting it even as we continue to celebrate his courage and leadership in the civil rights revolution" (1990, p. 1124). Without a moral base or vocabulary, maintains Wall, critics are left to make inane accusations of "lack of judgment" regarding the situations presented by Miliken, 1988 Presidential candidate Gary Hart, Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and others.

Wall boldly calls for society to give serious consideration to religious wisdom. He suggests, "Without input from our religious traditions we have no common moral language to refute St. Miliken's secular religion of greed" (1990, p. 1123).

I would not call for the universal acceptance of biblical texts as a standard of judgment in public moral argument. But I do believe that some Biblical narratives, specifically the David story, would be useful stories for providing insight into our lives. There are, for example, consequences one must pay for certain kinds of behavior.

That Young and Swaggart omit or downplay this element of the story does not detract from the reality that it remains part of the narrative. Nor does the grave disorder of the language of morality discount the reality that our moral judgments have sources. It would do us well to identify the stories that inform us and attend carefully to their moral.

As Wills (1990) suggests, the virtues that have been traditionally Christian are certainly not exclusively so. There still exists a residual acceptance of the virtues. As the Century City Rotarians return to work, obviously as intoxicated as Young the day he killed two women, what is to prevent their failing to brake for a red light and bringing disaster to innocents? There but for the grace of God goes Young's audience, Trombley seems to say. Who should throw spears?

Perhaps there is for the Christian audience a compelling motive to forgive. Finding signs of humility and repentance, forgiveness is granted. The secular audience, while underscoring integrity, is just as capable of extending forgiveness. When evidence of humility and some payment of punishment is presented, the secular audience is also willing to pronounce forgiveness.

Ironically, the secular audience finds itself more in line with the David story as presented in the Bible. They, like Nathan, wish to hear confession of sin and guilt. Then,

they, like any reader, watch as the consequences of sinful behavior unfold. Yet, with compassion like God, they are able to pronounce forgiveness. Swaggart, unwilling to submit to the punishment demanded by his religious authorities, is mocked and ridiculed by the media. Harsh judgments of Young are leveled at the "soft punishment" following his convictions. Yet, his willingness to endure his fate leaves at least one reporter quite happy to join the Christian audience and pronounce forgiveness (Trombley, May 1976).

It seems that a Christian who has preached against a particular sin and even profited in his preaching, and then engages in the very evil he publicly condemns, can be labeled a hypocrite and accused of lacking integrity. After all, these values that are held to be proper for one's lifestyle are being violated. The larger the person's standing in the Christian community, the more obvious the hypocrisy.

Jimmy Swaggart had preached vehemently against pornography on hundreds of television and cable stations. Even while he raged against the sin he engaged in it. While Glen Cole told the media that Swaggart's problem with pornography was lifelong (King, February 24, 1988, p. A21), his behavior was essentially private knowledge.

Similarly, Norvel Young had preached against the very sin that eventually enveloped him. His sermons against the evils of drinking, delivered in Texas during the 1940's and 1950's, had placed him in the same category with the

bootleggers who "wanted to keep Lubbock dry" (Young, September 1976a). Over time, Young's preaching on temperance faded into history.

Unlike Swaggart, Young's involvement in his sin was gradual and public. While he kept his "problem" from his children and secretary (Young, 1989), he openly imbibed on airplanes and with his civic and political friends (Young, September 1976a).

Both men were quite straight-forward in calling their activities sin. Swaggart emphasizes the word "sin," saying his action should not be called an innocuous synonym. Young says he takes "responsibility for his sin" (Young, March 1976), and tells others that what he did was wrong (Young, September 1976a).

But what Young succeeds in doing, that Swaggart fails to attempt, is explore the very concept of hypocrisy. That Young mentions his preaching against drinking in the very sermon he discusses his own drunkenness is significant. This self-reflection is disarming. What does his detractor say in response? Does the accuser say, "Amen!" or "Exactly!"? No, by giving the details of the charge of hypocrisy Young succeeds in quieting the critic and even laying claim to his own integrity. He knows that drunkenness is wrong. He confesses that. He knows his old sermons indict him of hypocrisy. He reveals and confesses that. Herein Young again distinguishes himself from Swaggart whose silence

continues to make him vulnerable to claims against his integrity.

This chapter has addressed and answered some of the questions germane to this thesis. Concerning the primary question of how Young and Swaggart use the David story to seek forgiveness, several answers have been offered. First, Swaggart draws an analogy between his life and King David's. David did heroic deeds yet he was persecuted. The missing conclusion to this syllogism, which the audience must supply, is this: Nevertheless he was still God's man and deserves forgiveness. In comparison, Swaggart helps the audience make the same conclusion about him. Second, be omitting any discussion of sin's consequences and presenting himself as forgiven by God, Young encourages the audience to join the Biblical narrative and forgive him as well.

A second primary question given consideration in this chapter is, what does Young and Swaggart's usage of the Biblical story say about their relationship with their audiences? The differences in the audiences' expectations for narrative relationality was noted. Swaggart's success, for example, depended upon a presentation of his narrative filled with appropriate emotion and visible representation of sorrow. The same level of "rationality," it was argued, would not work in the standard Church of Christ audience.

Finally, three reasons were offered to explain Swaggart's successful distortion of the Biblical narrative.

First, he is allowed to select text and theme for his Sunday sermons. Second, his audience is unable to detect departures from the moral and theme of the Biblical narrative because of a lack of knowledge. They, despite Hauerwas' contention, are not well-storied people. Third, the audience, as Hauerwas suggests, has a predisposition to forgive. Forgiveness is the "public dream" of the Christian audience.

This chapter brought into question several aspects of the narrative theory as presented by Walter Fisher. First, the findings of the thesis suggest that narrative rationality differs from audience to audience. The narrative fidelity for a Church of Christ audience might fail miserably for a group of Pentecostals. Second, "narrative fidelity" desperately needs a standard outside the story. For example, Swaggart's story which rings true for its audience calls for examination from an outside source. I would suggest the Bible and specifically the succession narrative. Third, with James Wall, Thomas Farrell and Leonard Allen I see the great need for Christian audiences to engage the "lost canon" of rhetoric, their memory. Specifically, it was suggested that Christian audiences hold rhetors accountable for the distortion they bring to a Biblical passage. Finally, it was argued that Hauerwas' theory of Christians being the storied and forgiven people makes for an uncritical audience. The desire for forgiveness certainly supersedes Fisher's foundational motive of truth and justice.

The next chapter will give further summary to the work of this thesis and note some heuristic value of the study.

CHAPTER VI

A SUMMARY, SPECULATION AND THE HEURISTIC VALUE OF THIS WORK

The story of David's affair with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah is a narrative that has impressed readers and interpreters over the centuries. Norvel Young and Jimmy Swaggart have recently interpreted the narrative for their lives and the lives of their audiences. Paralleling accounts of sin, attempted cover-up, public disclosure and an admission of guilt, Young and Swaggart have found the David story useful in making sense of their sins and status in the Christian community.

Essential differences in Young and Swaggart's appropriations of the Biblical narrative have been noted throughout this thesis. The most crucial distinction between the current men and their ancient counterpart lies in their handling the consequences of their sins. Through Nathan, God deals David a heavy blow: deaths in his family, rebellion and violence. David goes to his grave paying for his fulfilled lust with Bathsheba and the elimination of Uriah. Young is dealt a light sentence, perhaps cushy for an academician and well-salaried administrator. He lectures, does research, writes and lives off excess from previous years' high

earnings. Swaggart is obstinate, refusing the denomination's required counseling and two-year absence from the pulpit.

These men's stories, and use of the David narrative in their development, has brought to light some insight for narrative theory. Brought into question is Fisher's thesis that stories are judged by audiences who know what is true and just. Instead, it was argued, that the Christian communities to whom Young and Swaggart spoke (the "storied communities") are not well acquainted with the narratives of their heritage. Perhaps motivated, as Hauerwas suggests, by a unique desire to forgive, the audiences of Young and Swaggart demonstrate a collective forgetfulness as they fail to expect their leaders to pay an appropriate price for the sins committed.

This thesis has revealed that Young's audience granted him forgiveness. It has also noted that Swaggart provided "good reasons" from a Biblical narrative for his audience to choose to follow him instead of their denominational leaders. The thesis has implied that "good reasons" and a sense for the "true and just" are, by themselves, not substantial tools for critical judgment of a narrative.

Consider what might have happened had Young and Swaggart faithfully followed the David story. For Swaggart the answer appears simple. He would have accepted his church's rebuke and punishment. He would have "taken his lumps" and sat out

the two year probation and accepted the counseling. To follow David would not have meant refraining from protest. Before the child died David begged God to reverse his fortunes. But David lived with God's quiet response and, in fact, startled his associates with his calm acceptance (II Samuel 12:15-23). To follow David's actions, as he had so closely in other respects, Swaggart would have accepted his punishment and witnessed the potential threat to his Bible college and ministry. He would have submitted his pragmatic needs to his spiritual authorities.

If Norvel Young had followed the narrative of David more faithfully differences would not be so obvious. David did not take the initiative in creating consequences for his sins. He attempted a cover-up and then was passive as Nathan related the details of his payment for sin. Perhaps Young should have requested "fair sentencing." Later he applauded the judge's "wisdom" in staying the jail sentence and agreeing to the research requirement. Perhaps his post-accident talks would more closely parallel David's with more discussion of the deaths of human beings and less with arguments for total abstinence. The consequences for David are weighted toward his destruction of Uriah rather than his sexual exploitation of Bathsheba.

Frankly, the Biblical story does not present itself as the model for behavior. Even after his initial sins, David

does not take the right path at every turn. Most disappointing is his lack of initiative in confessing sin. Like his modern-day counterparts, he waits for another to confront him. To critique the narrative, if David had turned first to God and prayed the words of Psalm 51 before Nathan ever arrived, the sincerity and credibility of his story would have been enhanced.

Likewise, if Norvel Young had, before two lives were destroyed, stood before students and churches and said, "My name is Norvel and I have a problem with alcohol," his story would have gained credibility. Gone would have been the questions of his motive and charges of an easy sentencing.

If Jimmy Swaggart had confessed his lustful experiences with Debra Murphee before Marvin Gorman produced photographs as evidence against him, his tears of sorrow would have appeared more sincere.

Throughout the thesis the heuristic value of the research has been noted. One element suggesting further exploration is "privileged sentencing." Would a Black truck driver, in similar circumstances, for example, been afforded the same luxuries as Young? What empowers Young to negotiate his light punishment?

Another area of heuristic value would concern the existing literature on apologia. In a previous work (Fleer, 1989) I have used Ware and Linkugel's (1973) research as a

basis for understanding Young's apology. Using the factors Ware and Linkugel suggest, I found that Young employed in his Twentieth Century Christian article bolstering and transcendence. Bolstering is a technique used to identify the speaker with something viewed favorably by the audience. Young uses a litany of names, doctrines and events to win the favor of his audience (Fleer, 1989, pp. 15-19). Transcendence "psychologically move[s] the audience away from the particulars of the charge at hand in a direction toward some more abstract, general view of his character" (Ware and Linkugel, 1973, p. 280). Young, in his Twentieth Century Christian address moves his sin (the "particular of the charge at hand") into the broader context of forgiveness and reception of grace (the "more abstract" view of his character). Young finds something good in the tragedy.

Apologia would be greatly enhanced, I think, if narrative theory were allowed to inform the critique. How does the story move the audience? What elements of the narrative make the speaker's transcendence or bolstering convincing? These and other questions suggest the possibility of fruitful research.

When Jimmy Swaggart's sins were first publicly disclosed one song writer penned his or her sentiments. The lyrics, directed to Swaggart, read,

"God may forgive you, but I won't;

Yes, Jesus loves you, but I don't.

You say you're born again, well so am I;
They don't have to live with you, neither do I.
God may forgive you, but I won't,
I won't even try."

This thesis suggests that a public figure's audience is willing to forgive when signs of sorrow, and the fulfillment of punishment have been met. When either are absent, they reserve the grace and sing instead the refrain of Nathan, "there are consequences for what you do."

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