A FANTASY THEME ANALYSIS OF GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH: A Rhetorical Case Study of Organizational Commitment Processes

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A Fantasy Theme Analysis of Good News Fellowship Church: A Rhetorical Case Study of Organizational Commitment Processes

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of value and belief systems in organizations has been emphasized of late through the introduction and popularity of organizational culture studies. While organizations were once thought of as "rational" systems, guided by economic and rational management principles, organizational analysts are beginning to recognize that even profit-motivated organizations and the human behavior exhibited within them are oftentimes quite "irrational" in nature. As organizational culture studies are beginning to discover, organizational members' sense-making "logics" are, at times, quite "illogical." Organizations are beginning to be viewed from a more interpretivist standpoint with the focus of analysis being on the dynamic systems of symbolization working within the organization and organizational participants' attributions of meaning to those symbols. Because of these new understandings, the importance of value and belief systems - usually thought of as emotion-laden and unpredictable human experiences - is being realized in organizational communication studies and, specifically, in this fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church in
This interpretive focus on human symbolism, values, and belief systems is both the theoretical and methodological grounding of this fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church. A church organization was chosen as the subject of the case study because religious organizing presents a unique, albeit useful, juxtaposition of belief systems, i.e. the illogical, with organizational pragmatics, i.e. the logical. Throughout this study, it is argued that by identifying the symbolic make-up of Good News Fellowship Church's social reality and placing those symbols in rhetorical context, one can discover much about the commitment process bonding individuals to the church movement. By using Bormann's fantasy theme methodology to analyze the richly dramatic rhetoric of Good News Fellowship church, one can not only better understand the human appeal of Good News Fellowship church vision, but can, at the same time, better our understanding of the elusive concept known as organizational commitment. Accomplishing such a task demonstrates fantasy theme analysis's potential both in terms of its niche as a prominent communication perspective and, more specifically, its rhetorical application to
organizational communication phenomena such as organizational commitment.

Good News Fellowship Church, Stevens Point, WI serves as the subject of the rhetorical case study. Due to the church's relative youth, extraordinary growth, and dynamic religious philosophy, it was chosen as an exemplar for religious organizational commitment in practice. The church organization, composed of approximately 150 members, is one of a dynamic fundamentalist nature. According to the Pastor (and also founder) of the church, members refer to the church as one which hails the "spoken word of God" and "life-giving word of God."

The organization originated from weekly fellowship sessions held in a rented building in the early 1980's. In 1982, Charles Crockett began and pastored Good News Fellowship Church. The newly founded church, however, soon ran into organizational problems and dissolved in less than a year. Two former members of the church and long-time committed fellowship meeting participants, Bernice Sukuski and Denise Dudah, saw a vision of Pastor Matt Mallek, once a fellowship participant himself, as leading a new Good News Fellowship Church. Upon meeting with two members in August of 1983,
Matthew Mallek, who was just finishing his education at Rhema Bible School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, agreed to return to Stevens Point to start-up a new church. Mallek, at first, had a difficult time persuading former participants in the Good News Fellowship Church movement to re-join the effort. This was due to former members' skepticisms which stemmed from their prior "bad experiences" with the former organization. As the former organization dissolved, many members became disenchanted and cynical about the intentions of church leadership and felt there was not an ambitious committed effort to keep the organization running. Despite this mood of skepticism, Mallek sold former members on his sincerity and dedication and he soon regained enough membership to hold weekly church services in a rented space at the Best Western Royale in Stevens Point, WI.

On January 22, 1984 the first service was held in an actual church building. Although the building was still rented, having a private location in which to worship, according to Pastor Mallek, was a great impetus for members to feel an attachment and commitment towards the organization. From that point onward, the organization has experienced extraordinary growth and success. In April of 1985, the
church opened a Day Care facility, demonstrating its Christian commitment to family and children. In Fall of the same year, the church also began a Christian Grade School. Both sub-organizations have enjoyed considerable success and are today serving the Stevens Point area. The struggle to become established in a church facility of its own ended for Good News Fellowship Church in June of 1986 when it was able to purchase the building it was renting on Highway 10, just west of Stevens Point.

Good News Fellowship Church remains committed to sustained organizational development and congregational growth. The organization currently administers a full time day care operation and has, in its plans, an accredited elementary school. Although Good News Fellowship Church leadership places ultimate control of organization's destiny in the hands of God, the organization remains open to self-assessment and pragmatic feedback. An example of this is the church's efforts to improve itself through the consulting efforts of Robert Schenck. Mr. Schenck performed an organizational analysis in January of 1988 in which he assessed Good News Fellowship Church's general organizational "health." Another example of this commitment is the church's
cooperation and willingness to participate in this academic-rhetorical fantasy theme analysis. Schenck's findings are especially pertinent in light of the rhetorical findings offered through this fantasy theme analysis and are discussed in relation to the rhetorical vision of the church in Chapter Four of the study.

Good News Fellowship Church was chosen as the subject of this case study because of its dynamic nature and explosive growth history. Although it is fundamentalist in nature, Good News Fellowship Church differs from traditional fundamentalism in that services and participation in the church is much more "new age" and participative with contemporary music, group sing-alongs, hand-clapping, and even dancing during services. Because the commitment process is so accelerated and visible at Good News Fellowship Church, it serves as an excellent rhetorical pool from which symbolic data can be drawn. A fantasy theme analysis focusing on the commitment process within such a religious organization allows one to study the organization as a social movement and, in doing so, can bring new insights into the process by which organizational members identify and associate with religious symbols. It will be shown through this study that such insight can extend beyond
the parameters of congregations and churches. Identifying the dynamic components of the commitment process through rhetorical analysis can highlight how the same processes may be working in for-profit organizations and, ultimately, may create a better understanding of how workers make sense of their employment experience.
Chapter One provides the theoretical and methodological background from which this fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church is derived and introduces the methodological approach undertaken in the rhetorical case study. First, Bormann's 1972 and 1982 essays in which he sets forth the basic principles of his perspective are reviewed and the symbolic convergence perspective is described. Bormann's writings and the discussion of symbolic convergence theory provide the theoretical background for this fantasy themes analysis of Good News Fellowship Church. Next, the specific theoretical concepts and definitions comprising Bormann's fantasy theme methodology are illustrated. Once this theoretical groundwork is laid, key fantasy theme analyses are reviewed and discussed in relation to the present fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church. In an effort to explain the methodological underpinnings of the Good News Fellowship Church analysis, various research applications of Bormann's method are reviewed and key rhetorical premises making the fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church possible are outlined. Before moving into the specific methodological approaches used in the Good News Fellowship
Church rhetorical analysis, the Chapter provides discussion regarding the notions of organizations, religious experience, and commitment in an effort to further put the study in theoretical and methodological context. In this portion of the introduction, a literature sampler of rhetorical analyses of religious commitment is reviewed. The review of such studies introduces many of the theoretical and methodological concepts making a rhetorical study of religious communication both possible and heuristically promising. Reviewing contemporary applications of Bormann's methodology in the context of rhetorical treatments of religious communication demonstrates the potential of Bormann's perspective and method in studying a religious movement such as Good News Fellowship Church. This potential is put into practice as the chapter concludes by raising the specific research questions driving the study and introducing the four-step methodological approach designed to address those research questions.

Chapter Two reports the results of the fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church rhetoric and describes "The Word" vision and its dramatic components. This Chapter is a response to Research Question 1. Here, "The Word" vision is described as the dominant rhetorical vision found within
GNFC RHETORICAL VISION

Good News Fellowship Church. The rhetorical vision is rhetorically identified and analyzed in terms of its appeal for congregational members and, consequently, what the vision means in terms of the notion of organizational commitment. Also, the chapter reports the findings of two specific fantasy themes; the Decentralization and Consistency themes. The themes are also discussed in terms of how they serve to help congregational members "make sense" of their church experience and how they speak to the persuasion and commitment process connecting the congregation member to Good News Fellowship Church.

Chapter Three responds to research question 2 and provides a comparison and contrast of the commitment focus groups. In this portion of the analysis, variations in the ways the commitment groups dramatized the fantasy themes of Decentralization and Consistency are discussed. Through this discussion, differences in the ways members of each commitment group talked about the dramatic components of "The Word" vision are identified. The analysis reveals that commitment groups did display variations in their adherence to the vision, thus partially addressing research question four. At the same time, ambiguities in the commitment groups'
dramatizations are acknowledged, thus critiquing the validity of the commitment level stratifications used in the study. As a whole, this chapter illustrates the potential of fantasy theme analysis to begin addressing the concept of organizational commitment from a rhetorical standpoint. Additionally, the comparison and contrast of the focus groups demonstrate that organizational members can remain committed to Good News Fellowship Church despite their differences in the ways they adhere to "The Word" vision - a reminder that organizational commitment can stem from any number of sources, many of which are simple social and person need satisfaction bonds.

Chapter Four summarizes the research findings and discusses the implications of these findings for Good News Fellowship Church, Bormann's fantasy theme analysis methodology, and the study of organizational communication. This is, in part, done by introducing the findings of Robert Schenck (1988) and integrating his organizational critique with the rhetorical findings provided in the fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church. This chapter serves to bring further utility to the fantasy theme analysis by pointing out possible rhetorical pitfalls inherent in some of
the organizational changes recommended by Schenck and, conversely, some of the potential structural and organizational obstacles in maintaining group adherence to "The Word" vision. Analyzing Schenck's findings in the context of "The Word" rhetorical vision demonstrates the study's commitment to assist Good News Fellowship Church in understanding itself and explaining to the religious participant the hidden rhetorical processes active in the movement. Furthermore, it illustrates how rhetorical methodologies can be integrated with functional approaches employed by many organizational consultants, e.g. Robert Schenck. Such integration is used in an effort to allow organizations to fully understand some of the consequences of organizational change and, in the process, better understand the interdependent balance between organizational structural change and cultural belief systems. The chapter goes on to outline the implications the findings hold for both Bormann's perspective and the study of organizational commitment (Research Question 3). By doing so, it is realized that investigating the rhetorical appeal of fundamentalism may lead to a better understanding of and appreciation for a prevailing school of thought in the United States.
Symbolic Convergence Theory

The power of Bormann's theory/method is in its ability to analyze and explain how "reality" is socially constructed on a macro and micro level. Symbolic convergence theory, on the macro level, provides an explanation of how human beings collectively form meanings. It offers explanations and interpretations of how human beings symbolize their world through communication—a issue important to this fantasy theme of Good News Fellowship Church rhetoric. At the same time, it illustrates the development of symbolic realities within specific rhetorical communities, thus enabling the rhetorical analyst to make assumptions and interpretations of communication practices within a more specific context such as that of religious organizations.

In 1972 Ernest Bormann introduced Symbolic Convergence Theory and Fantasy Theme Analysis with his article, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality." In the article he explains the critical findings of Robert Bales (1970) who, through small group research, discovered "dramatizing" as a process which creates a social
reality for small groups. Such dramatized communication provides the basis for Bormann's methodology. Most relevant to this study of religious communication is Bormann's discussion of the influence that fantasy chains have on their participants. He (1972) points out,

"The dramatizations serve to sustain the members' sense of community, to impel them strongly to action (which raises the question of motivation), and to provide them with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes." (p. 398)

Bormann continues to describe the impact of such dramatization on the individuals involved by noting that fantasy themes can serve as a coping and sense-making mechanism, a constraining force, or a source of unacceptable social views. As mentioned earlier, these influences that fantasy theme participation can have on the behavior of religious participants are of central concern to this analysis of religious organizations.

In Chapter Five of Bormann's, Small Group Communication (1975) the outline of symbolic convergence theory given in his 1972 article is completed with details and refinements. Especially pertinent to this analysis is Bormann's definitions of "symbolic cues" and "fantasy types." An important
component of his methodology, the symbolic cue is defined as a "code word, phrase, slogan, or nonverbal sign or gesture" and serves as a "trigger" to a fantasy theme already being dramatized by the group. (p. 107) In the study of religious organizations and movements, many of the fantasies and rhetorical visions of the religious subject matter will already be in place, thus making it important to recognize symbolic cues as indicators of dramatized messages. One can hypothesize that fantasy types, or stock scenarios, - fantasies which generalize rules of what participants should and should not do in all situations - are closely representative of the religious visions which organizational members use to propagate religious rules of conduct. Chapter 5 has further relevance to this study through its explanation of how members create a group culture and the impact this has on the group's communication practices.

In "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later" (1982), Bormann both defends his methodology and further refines its assumptions about communication. In regards to this analysis of religious organizations, one of the more important refinements is his clearer explanation of the effects that a fantasy theme has on the communication
practices of a group. Bormann (1982) states,

The sharing of fantasies within a group or community establishes the assumptive system portrayed in the common rhetorical vision and contributes to the special theory associated with the community's communication style. (p. 292)

Bormann maintains that a group or community's rhetorical vision can say much about how that group communicates within its specific rhetorical context. This brings relevance to a study of Good News Fellowship Church and the relationship which may exist between the religious rhetorical vision and the communication practices of religious organizational members.

Berquist and Coleman (1982), further allude to the relationship between fantasy themes and specific group communication behaviors. Within their interpretation of Bormann's methodology they state,

Much as the fantasy themes of the new consciousness gradually become fantasy types so too do the practitioners gradually develop some general scripts and rules-of-thumb as to how to communicate according to the new prescriptions. (p. 438)
One can see that attempting to draw correlations between the rhetorical visions of religion and the "general scripts" of those communicating within religious organizations is a study in line with current application of Bormann's methodology.

**Theoretical Concepts**

Bormann's fantasy theme perspective, at its basis, asserts that the social reality for any one collectivity is created and developed through a phenomena discovered by Bales (1970) - dramatic message formation. In his research on group communication, Bales discovers a phenomena he categorizes as "showing tension release" and "dramatizing" (p. 138). When one or two members of a group engage in communication which "dramatizes" some subject of conversation, other members begin to participate in the dramatization, thus creating a "chaining" of the dramatization throughout the group. Bormann discovered that within these dramatizations are fantasy themes, and elaborated on how such dramatic themes are used by groups of any size to create a social reality. When fantasy themes are accepted and shared through the chaining process, they become primary sense-making mechanisms for the group. Thus fantasy themes are a primary component of the manifest
content of a group's reality, the symbolic narrative which transcends the "reality" of the group experience. It is the "real," or observable, communication which Bormann refers to as the here-and-now. The here-and-now presents the source for fantasy theme development in that it contains some sort of observable conflict which is symbolically dealt with through the symbolic dramatization.

It is very important to emphasize that the use of the term "fantasy" is not analogous to fantasy as we typically understand the term. In symbolic convergence theory, fantasizing is a group communication concept and represents a phenomena in which group members dramatize aspects of their here-and-now situations and engage in communication behaviors which symbolize aspects of this ordinary commonplace situation. Group fantasy does not refer to that which is not true, "real," or fact-based. Instead it serves as a methodological tool by which the analyst can uncover communication processes thus allowing us to better understand how groups "make sense" out of their participation in the group. This is a critical distinction in the context of this analysis of Christian communication. The use of the term "fantasy" or "fantasy theme" is in no means a comment on the
validity, practicality, or meaningfulness of Christianity or religion. It is simply a theoretical and methodological concept which assists both the researcher and the reader in better understanding members' use of symbols in the religious organization or movement.

The process of group fantasy development and chaining may be best depicted in a personal example:

*During lunch one Friday afternoon, one of my coworkers began telling of a "humorous" situation she and her husband recently experienced. Her and her husband were in a tavern consuming alcohol and, at the same time, enjoying the company of another couple, their "best friends." As the night progressed and the drinking continued, the storyteller's husband became increasingly distracted and angered by a well-dressed gentlemen at the bar who was wearing stylish gold-rimmed darkened glasses. The source of his anger apparently stemmed from the husband's assumption that the gentleman's wearing sunglasses at a bar late at night was presumptuous and showed some form of arrogance or pomposity. The storyteller's husband became more intoxicated and, in the
process, more distracted by the sunglass-wearing person. He finally confronted the man by stating, "I suppose you think you're cool wearing those glasses in a dark bar." The man at the bar turned to the husband and informed him that he was wearing sunglasses at the bar because he was blind and he wears the same sunglasses wherever he goes. The husband, obviously backpedalling in drunken state of mind, replies, "Well, you're lucky, it is awfully bright in here." Shortly after responding in this ridiculous fashion, the story-teller persuaded her husband and the other couple to quickly exit the tavern.

While this story in itself illustrates nothing about Bormann's theoretical concepts, the joking, laughter, and conversation which ensued amongst our lunch group following the story definitely does illustrate they key aspects of fantasy theme creation and development.

As we continued laughing about the story and talking about how embarrassed the story-teller's husband and friends must have felt after the incident, there chained amongst the group a variety of running jokes surrounding the theme of "you're lucky." The "you're lucky" phrase became the "inside joke" referred to by Bales (1970) and Bormann (1972).
Bormann, Koester, and Bennett (1978) describe the inside joke as,

a cryptic allusion to an element of a dramatic situation which sparks a strong response from the other group members... Group members, when asked to explain, indicate that the response relates to something important which happened to the group and only someone who was there at the time could fully understand it. (p. 318)

Members of the lunch group began poking fun at each other stating things such as "you're lucky, you've contracted the AIDS virus" or "you're lucky, you don't have any legs" or "you're lucky, you have leprosy." As we engaged in the group synopsis and reenactment of the "blind man with the sunglasses" story, the tone of laughter increased, the conversation became increasingly focused on the story, and group members became engaged in the post-story dramatization. It is arguable that the group's reenactments of the "you're lucky" idea, constitutes fantasies emerging from the group's here and now reality. The group was recalling the past story and, most likely, had many mixed emotions and ambivalent feelings towards the main character of the "blind man with the sunglasses" story. These feelings serve as the here-and-now
conflict from which the drama arose - on the one hand, the group found the drunken behavior of the instigator in the story appalling but, on the other hand, found the story quite humorous and entertaining. Thus the here-and-now of the group presented an environment of conflict because members were uncertain how to respond to the story given their mixed feelings about the story's message. In an effort to resolve the conflict present in the group's here-and-now, group members began communicating a symbolic escape from this conflict in the form of a new drama with new fantasy themes, personae, and scenes. This new drama reconciled the conflict by allowing the group members to both continue their entertainment with the story but, at the same time, communicate their disgust with the behavior of the drunken instigator of the story. This process is predicted by Bormann (1972) when he states,

Often the drama is a mirror of the group's here-and-now situation and its relationship to the external environment. The drama played out somewhere else or in some other time often symbolizes a role collision or ambiguity, a leadership conflict, or a problem related to the task dimension of the group. (p. 397)
The dramatizations removed group members from the bar scene and placed themselves in even more ridiculous situations in which they would tell another human being the unthinkable, "you're lucky, you've contracted the AIDS virus." Many of these dramatized scenes extended into our employment situation—as Bormann suggests "in the task dimension of the group" (p. 397). As coworkers, we had a history of communication and interaction to draw from and were all familiar enough with each other's personal characteristics and unique personas to integrate that history with the "you're lucky" theme. We continued the "you're lucky" dramatization into our work environment and, to this day, use the "you're lucky" fantasy to dramatize other conflict events as they emerge in our work interactions. Since the story, group members have shared further fantasies which more directly relate to the work environment saying things such as "you're lucky, you have her for a supervisor," or "you're lucky, you have been assigned that case," or "you're lucky, you get to work 60 hours this week." By engaging in this drama, the members were able to strengthen each other's commitment to the "you're lucky" theme and apply it to strengthen their commitment to work reality as well. It expressed a group
motive to poke fun of undesirable events/activities and, the process, served as a coping mechanism. It also expressed, in a very symbolic and implicit fashion, a condemnation of the type of attitudes and barbaric behavior expressed by the drunken husband in the "blind man with the sunglasses" story and the may have represented a rhetorical vision of "we should treat the disabled with respect" and, on a broader scale "we should treat each other with respect" which the group unknowingly communicated, both before and after the story. By extending our dramatization of the story into other more salient and immediate scenes, we were able to show, with even greater fervor and in a more compelling fashion, our disapproval with this type of human treatment.

As shown in this personal example, the key concepts in Bormann's perspective specifically in terms of group interaction are here-and-now, group dramatization (including here-and-now, scene, dramatis personae, motive/action plan/plot), fantasy themes and types, fantasy chaining and sharing. As was demonstrated through example, the perspective identifies the dramatic creation of a group's reality and follows the process from the here-and-now situation to the collective formation of a collectively shared social reality.
When fantasy themes chain out through a group they often chain into a larger collectivity as well. It is this wide scale adherence to fantasy themes which Bormann terms, rhetorical visions. Rhetorical visions are composed of symbolic narratives which contain plot lines, heroes, villains, values, emotions, and, most importantly, motives. They are described by Bormann (1972) as "the composite dramas which catch up large groups of people into a symbolic reality" (p.398). The development of a large collectivity's culture, therefore, can be traced in its evolution from the here-and-now situation to a symbolic reality composed of fantasy themes and rhetorical visions. This can be accomplished through fantasy theme analysis which analyzes the processes of message dramatization and fantasy theme development while, at the same time, considering their relation to a collectivity's attitudes, communications, behaviors, and motivations.
Review of Fantasy Theme Literature

There are various research applications of Bormann's theory and method which assist in properly positioning and contextualizing this fantasy theme case study of Good News Fellowship Church. A review of these studies highlight the key rhetorical concepts of the perspective and illustrate how those concepts can conceivably be applied to a movement/organization such as Good News Fellowship Church.

Of obvious importance is the work of Hensley (1975) which is unique in that it applies fantasy theme analysis to religious communication and, specifically, a religious social movement. His work provides the connection between general rhetorical criticism and the specific application of rhetorical methodologies to a religious group or movement. Equally important is the work of Cragan and Shields (1981) which demonstrates how Bormann's approach can bring about new understandings of organizational communication phenomena and raise pertinent issues regarding the symbolic makeup of organizations. By noting the applicability of fantasy theme analysis to organizational situations (including those organizations popularly known as "social movements"), one can see the relevance and feasibility of this application of the
perspective to religious organizational behavior. Moving to the broader rhetorical applications of fantasy theme analysis will illustrate many of the general rhetorical principles and concepts important in the study of symbolic realities. Fantasy theme analyses will be reviewed with a particular emphasis on those studies that apply Bormann's thinking to social movements and organizations.

Hensley's (1975) fantasy theme analysis of the Disciples of Christ movement displays the power of Bormann's perspective in analyzing religious movements, i.e., religious organizations. By identifying specific dramatistic aspects of this evangelical Protestant movement of the late 1800's, Hensley helps us better understand why the Disciples' movement was so persuasive and attractive. Additionally, it highlights key aspects of the Disciples' vision as it was related to the cultural, economic, and political "scene" of that postmillennium era. In doing so, the analysis highlights the importance of social conflict in religious organizational communication and how it can be employed to build allegiance to the organization's rhetorical vision. Interestingly, the Disciples vision of "restoring primitive Christianity" and remaining pure to the written word of the Bible are not
uncommon today and bear many similarities to the dramas found within Good News Fellowship Church movement. Hensley shows how a relatively common vision, when uniquely dramatized within a specific rhetorical context and time period, can be extremely persuasive. Furthermore, he illustrates how the dramatic facets of rhetorical visions can be intertwined theoretically and methodologically with the notions of organizational commitment and identification.

Rhetorically analyzing the women's movement in St Paul, MN, Kroll (1983), demonstrates how rhetorical visions can be traced to the small group origins of an organization. By following the evolution of the women's movement's rhetorical vision from the early movement's "pro-woman line" of the 1960's and early 1970's to the "mainstreaming vision" which took hold in the mid-1970's, she identifies the dramatic process by which a social movement reinforces its existence and compels members towards action. More importantly, Kroll uncovers specific symbolic shifts in the fantasy themes, fantasy types, dramatis personae, and plot/action lines of each vision and how these shifts were embedded in a social context. Kroll's emphasis on the social contexts of the women's movement and how changes in that broader social
context effected the women's movement lends itself to a better understanding of the Good News Fellowship Church movement and how individuals' feelings of commitment and attachment to the church movement is effected by changes in the Christian environment in which Good News Fellowship Church operates.

While still revising and refining his original perspective, Bormann (1973) examines the rhetorical vision of the "New Politics" and the 1972 Democratic campaign of George McGovern. Specifically, the analysis demonstrates how the rhetorical strategies employed by the McGovern campaign ultimately altered the "New Politics" rhetorical vision. The key aspect of this alteration was that these rhetorical strategies and decisions, in the end, permitted the post-nomination Eagleton Affair to usurp the viability and power of the dramas which propelled the campaign to success in the primary elections. Bormann's identification and rhetorical analysis of competing fantasies within the same movement, speaks directly to the research mission of the present case study of Good News Fellowship Church - the acknowledgment that competing fantasies can undermine or weaken a seemingly coherent rhetorical vision is a basic assumption from which the present Good News Fellowship Church study of commitment is
The notion of rhetorical visions competing within a larger drama is further studied in a more functionalist fashion by Cragan and Shields (1977). In this analysis, Cragan and Shields seek to validate, through Stephenson's Q-Methodology, Cragan's 1972 unpublished criticism, "The Cold War Rhetorical Vision" and the three competing dramas of Cold War, Neo-Isolationism, and Power Politics. Employing the research method of Q-Methodology, the researchers sort the responses of two groups of Peorians to rhetorical cold war mediated messages and, through factor analysis of this sorting data, illustrate how each of the three visions "played" amongst the Peorian audience. While Cragan and Shield's emphasis on Q-Methodology and factor analysis is not directly or methodologically applied in the present study, their emphasis on validation and correlation reminds the fantasy theme analyst that the rhetorical criticism of communication needs to be more than a reflection of the critic's personal version of reality. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for the rhetorical critic to uncover how a vision "plays," thus going beyond the simple identification of the drama itself.
Illka's (1977) work focuses on the "self-image and world view" of the American Communist movement of the early 1900's (1918-1920). This notion of "self-image" as addressed through Illka's application of fantasy theme analysis, illustrates a key concept applicable to the analysis of the Good News Fellowship Church movement. As will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, this notion of self-image as defined within a movement's rhetorical vision and fantasies is key in understanding the rhetorical vision of Good News Fellowship Church. Illka demonstrates how the self-image of the early Communist movement in the United States was rhetorically grounded in the symbolism and rhetoric of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Here the author illustrates how the discourse of a social movement can serve to transcend the here-and-now and provide the participants with a social reality that motivates and calls them to action. By examining the written and oral discourse fuelling each dramatic scene, Illka explains, through fantasy theme analysis, the process by which the movement distinguished itself from the American Socialist Party and gained a following during the Industrial Revolution. Again, this "self-questing" as seen through the rhetorical lens of Bormann's methodology warrants emphasis due
to its parallels with the same self identification process playing in the dramas of Good News Fellowship Church.

Another more contemporary political communication analysis is seen in the work of Bormann, Koester, and Bennett (1978). Here the researchers extend the concept of small group dramatization to the analysis of 1976 Carter-Ford campaign rhetoric. The analysis is aimed at understanding how the mass mediated messages of the campaign were chained into the voting public and whether the identification of fantasy themes through subject response to political cartoons was indicative of voting behavior. By conceptualizing the political cartoon as analogous to the "inside joke" found by Bales (1970) in his research on small group communication, the researchers are able to apply Q-methodology to show how subject response to the sort data was illustrative of shared fantasies and rhetorical "groups." In terms of its application to the present study, Bormann, Koester, and Bennett's treatment of "saliency" as it relates to fantasy sharing is most notable. By documenting that competing political fantasies as "triggered" by political cartoons differed in the degree of saliency they had with the audience, the critics highlight the fact that the degree to which groups
share in dramatic messages can, to some degree, be measured and therefore predicted. They furthered Cragan and Shield's (1977) earlier findings that such a fantasy theme analysis "goes beyond its use as a descriptive schemata for critiquing rhetorical communication. It may provide us with a why explanation of communication phenomena that is predictive" (p. 289). This assumption is applied in the present study's analysis of the saliency of dramas shared by groups varying in their perceived commitment levels. Paralleling the efforts of Cragan and Shields (1977), and Bormann, Koester, and Bennett (1978), the present Good News Fellowship Church study tests whether there are observable differences in the shared dramatizations displayed by groups varying in their perceived commitment to Good News Fellowship Church.

Cragan and Shields (1981) offer a detailed demonstration of the many possible organizational applications of Bormann's methodology. By illustrating the capacity of fantasy theme analysis to provide insight into organizational behavior and communication, they make organizational applications directly pertinent to this fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church. Specifically, they point out that traditional quantitative research methods can be juxtaposed
with Bormann's fantasy theme methodology to further our understanding of organizational concepts. This has obvious implications for the Good News Fellowship rhetorical case study in that the present analysis uses both quantitative and interpretive methods to examine the notion of organizational commitment.

The usefulness of Bormann's symbolic convergence theory in researching organizational communication phenomena is further illustrated through two fantasy theme analyses of Fire Departments in the midwest. One such study was conducted by Cragan and Shields (1978) and focuses on the attitudes fire fighters hold toward public fire education. A second organizational study using fantasy theme analysis is offered by Shields (1974) who investigates the self-persona and projected-persona of fire fighters in St. Paul, Minnesota. The study is an attempt to compare the persona of St Paul fire fighters as it is perceived by 1) the fire fighters themselves 2) the fire departments' public relations efforts and 3) the citizens of St.Paul. The results of the Q-technique, as it was administered to the three groups, served to not only provide insight into the public's attitudes towards St. Paul fire fighters, but to confirm the utility and validity of
fantasy theme analysis and Q-technique as well.

The review of Bormannean studies demonstrates the specific relevance of utilizing fantasy theme analysis as the methodology used in the rhetorical analysis of Good News Fellowship Church. The fantasy theme analyses cited above not only confirm the perspective's utility in general rhetorical analysis, but also illustrate the unique qualities of the perspective which make it especially applicable to religious social movements and the study of religious organizations such as Good News Fellowship Church.

The works of Hensley (1975) and Kroll (1983) provide examples of the importance of rhetorical social context, i.e. rhetorical scene, in any fantasy theme analysis of a social movement. This is particularly important to the Good News Fellowship Church study which examines the effects of the Christian perception of Catholicism has on the Good News Fellowship Church vision and individuals' commitments to that vision. Kroll's work in particular demonstrates the ongoing relationship which exists between the social-political environment in which a movement operates and the persuasiveness and appeal of the movement itself.

The cited studies of Bormann's (1973), Illka (1977), and
Shields (1974) highlight the potential relationships between a vision's personae and the fantasy themes supporting the rhetorical vision. By showing that variances in the media's depictions of the McGovern and Eagleton personae affected the appeal of the respective campaigns, Bormann (1973) provides direction for the analysis of personae as it relates to the Good News Fellowship Church "The Word" vision. The analysis of the Pastor Matt and Doctrine personae and how those personae impact individual's commitments and identifications with fantasy themes of Decentralization and Consistency, borrows from the insights provided by Bormann's analysis of the 1972 political campaigns. Illka's (1977) analysis, while looking at the notion of "self-image" and "self-questing" as it relates to the Lenin persona, provides further insight into the importance of persona in fantasy theme analysis. Shield's (1974) study also gives direction to the analysis of persona in fantasy theme analysis. By examining how the persona of the St Paul Fire Fighter impacts on the perceptions of both the St Paul public and the fire fighters themselves, it expands on the notion of "self-image" as described by Illka (1977) and elaborates on the impact perceptions of persona have on the development and evolution of a rhetorical vision.
The effort to relate the development and evolution of personae to the "self-image" of a social movement is replicated in the Good News Fellowship Church analysis. A key aspect of the Good News Fellowship Church study is its examination of how individuals' identification with the church organization is shaped by their adherence to the central antagonist and protagonist of "The Word" vision.

Cheseboro's (1980) study lends itself to the present Good News Fellowship Church Study by illustrating how "rhetoric" as a subject of study does not necessarily have to be in the form of public speaking or writing. By focusing his analysis towards scientific research of homosexuality, Cheseboro implicitly demonstrates that fantasy theme analysis can be adapted to forms of human discourse other than that which is overtly rhetorical or persuasive. Furthermore Cheseboro's research illustrates that Bormann's method can be explanatory in not only its description of cohesive, easily understood rhetorical visions, but can also be employed to better our understanding of the process by which a movement's vision becomes disjointed, incohesive, or rhetorically hard to define. Both notions are entertained in the Good News Fellowship Church rhetorical analysis. The analysis of Good
News Fellowship Church rhetoric does not solely examine traditional forms of religious rhetoric, but instead relies on Foundations Class teachings and focus group discourse as primary sources of movement rhetoric as well. This feature of the Good News Fellowship Church study borrows from Cheseboro in that it uses forms of discourse not typically thought of as "rhetoric" as subject material in the fantasy theme analysis. Additionally, the analysis of Good News Fellowship Church borrows form Cheseboro's conceptualizations in that it the study forecasts future ways in which The Word vision could lose its cohesive quality through introducing paradoxical themes to the drama.

The effort to validate and demonstrate the "predictive" quality of fantasy theme analysis is undertaken in the studies of Bormann, Koester, and Bennett (1978), Cragan and Shields (1981, 1978, 1974). These studies give direction to the Good News Fellowship Church analysis in that they make attempts to demonstrate how adherence to a rhetorical vision or fantasy theme may predict identifiable behaviors of the movement participant. Such a research goal is also incorporated in the Good News Fellowship Church study. By comparing and contrasting congregational members supposed commitment levels
(defined by the behaviors of tithing, volunteering, and attending services), as they operate within the dramatic components of "The Word" vision, the Good News Fellowship church study presupposes that the relationship between human behavior and adherence to fantasy themes do exist and can be identified in a useful manner.

The potential research connections between Bormann's fantasy theme methodology and organizational concepts are evidenced in the works of Cragan and Shields (1981, 1978) and Shields (1974). These works illustrate how Bormann's methodology can be applied to specific organizational communication situations and bring new insight to organizational phenomena. The works of Cragan and Shields, while far more quantitative than the research methodology applied to Good News Fellowship Church, give impetus to the examination of organizational commitment from a rhetorical fantasy theme perspective. Just as Cragan and Shields apply quantitative methodology to organizational concepts in a rhetorical fashion, so too does the Good News Fellowship church case study attempt to incorporate multi-disciplinary research methods in a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of organizational communication and, specifically, organizational
commitment.

Bormann's perspective is used in the Good News Fellowship Church case study because it was believed that such an application can expand the utility and the applicability of fantasy theme analysis. Using Bormann's method to uncover the dramatic qualities of the Good News Fellowship Church movement and the ways such symbolism effects the commitment process, not only confirms the utility of the Bormann's methodology, but also emphasizes its adaptability and flexibility as a communication perspective. Because the study of religious organizations and movements from a communication standpoint is still relatively limited, using Bormann's methodology in the analysis of Good News Fellowship Church punctuates the ability of Bormann's method to bring new understandings of communication phenomena which have not been thoroughly addressed in the field of communication. Focusing fantasy theme analysis towards the notion of organizational commitment is also intentional and it is expected that such a research focus will highlight the fantasy theme methodology's ability to further refine, from an interpretive rhetorical standpoint, our understandings of specific organizational concepts such as commitment. By applying Bormann's concepts and methods to a
religious movement setting such as Good News Fellowship Church and to an organizational concept such as commitment, the present case study not only expands our understanding of religious organizational experience but, at the same time, broadens the research scope of fantasy theme methodology as well.

The theory and method comprising Bormann's perspective allows the researcher to bridge the definitional distinctions dividing the notions of the organization and the social movement. Such distinctions are further bridged through a cultural-systems definition of the organization. Defining organizations in this manner allows the researcher to view an organization such as Good News Fellowship Church as a source for rhetorical analysis and criticism.
The notion of organizational culture is most simply defined as the symbolically shared (or imperfectly shared) values, beliefs, or assumptions which provide organizational members with collective sense-making logics for interpreting organizational life (Kreps, 1986, p. 134). Although this approach to organizational analysis is generating much research, scholars criticize many of the studies for their lack of sophistication and scientific methodology (e.g., Meek, 1986). The concern with the values and beliefs that guide the behavior of organizational members is paralleled in this study of religious organizational activity. While not specifically directed towards cultural analysis, this study provides a sophisticated rhetorical methodology by which the researcher can uncover some of the dramas collectively shared by organizational members and, more importantly, the process by which those dramas are acted out.

Two components of Kreps' definition of organizational culture are relevant to this study and are key points in its analysis of religious organizational communication: 1) the notions of shared values, beliefs, and assumptions and 2) sense-making logics. In religious organizational activity we
have an interesting situation in which many of the shared values are not enacted out of the internal organizational communication itself, but to a large extent are symbolically created and advocated by the theological philosophy (Christianity) within which the organization operates. Typically, the goal of such organizations is not only to facilitate the sharing of values conducive to organizational productivity or efficiency, but also to maintain a collective allegiance to theological themes and religious beliefs. Organizations such as church congregations, therefore, oftentimes develop unique forms of organizational belief systems, or social realities with interesting juxtapositions between the symbols inherent in Christianity and the symbols, i.e. communication, used by congregational participants to collectively make sense of their religious reality.

One challenge to the organizational analyst and to this fantasy theme case study of Good News Fellowship Church is to uncover those belief systems and interpret how they work in religious organizational activity. Another challenge accepted in this study is to relate the findings back to the traditional "profit-motivated" organization. Interpreting the value and belief sharing processes within a church
organization and how the understanding of such belief systems shed light on the elusive notion of organizational commitment may give the organizational researcher new avenues by which to recognize and interpret similar processes within organizations of the profit-making persuasion.

It is important to note, however, that this study does not focus on values, beliefs, and assumptions as isolated variables. Instead, it employs Bormann's (1972) fantasy theme analysis perspective in an effort to uncover how those beliefs are shared amongst religious group participants and how they are symbolized through dramatic communication. In assuming, as Paconowsky and O'Trillo do (1982) that "more things are going on in organizations than getting the job done" (p. 116), interpretive organizational studies call for fresh new approaches to organizational activity which can provide insight into the hidden, symbolic processes occurring in organizations. This rhetorical study of Good News Fellowship Church is an effort to better understand the role values and belief systems play in organizational settings and to provide a solid methodological grounding for that understanding. As will be demonstrated, Bormann's fantasy theme analysis provides a useful theoretical background for such an
interpretation of religious communication and, specifically, the notion of organizational commitment. Thus, the emphasis is not so much on further defining or isolating specific beliefs or belief systems, but rather on the "whys" and "hows" of process by which those realities are developed and shared.

The basic assumption that allows the researcher to examine organizations in this fashion is the belief that organizations are dynamic symbolic systems and can, therefore, be conceptualized as social movements. This assumption, in its fundamental grounding, is largely borrowed from the thinking of Weick (1979) who defines "organizing" as a sometimes chaotic, nondescript, interweaving of symbolic symbolism and meaning enactments. Weick demonstrates how an organizational perspective which studies the system by which organizing members place meaning on their experience can ultimately be more explanatory than studying such groups as rational, boundaried, entities. From this interpretational systems lens, therefore, one can study the organization and, specifically, a church organization such as Good News Fellowship Church, as conceptually synonymous with the social movement. This is appropriate in that it allows one to examine the richly symbolic and dramatic nature of the
religious experience from a theoretical and methodical rationale which is inherently adaptable, interpretivist, and explanatory. From the fantasy theme analysis perspective, the topological nature of the subject, i.e. organization vs. social movement, becomes less important. Instead the perspective allows one to view any communication within the organization as potentially persuasive in terms of its power to create social realities, and, therefore, as a viable subject for rhetorical analysis and comment.

Especially relevant to this rhetorical analysis of a religious social movement such as Good News Fellowship Church, are Weick's (1979) concepts of retrospective sense-making (p. 92) and partial inclusion (p. 95). In applying such concepts to his analysis of "collective structures" (p. 90), Weick argues that organizing enables individuals to reconcile their needs for inclusion with their needs for independence. By being a member of a collectivity and retroactively "making sense" of that membership, individuals are able to, on the one hand share the common ground the group provides yet, on the other hand, define themselves within a patterned, unique, and identifiable system of norms and roles. Such self-definition satisfies both their need to be common and their need to be
one. As will be shown in this study, this assumption becomes a powerful tool which can be used in the process of the rhetorical criticism of religious organizing and resembles, in less rhetorical form, many of the basic tenets of Bormann's symbolic convergence theory.

Weick's notions of "collective structures," "retrospective sense-making," and "partial inclusion" provide deeper understandings of organizational processes and symbolic belief systems. One such symbolic belief system rarely examined from an academic standpoint is the practice of religion and, more specifically, Christianity. By defining organizations through cultural explanations and Weickian understandings, one can begin to see how such an interpretivist view of the organization can be applied to religious experience - a cultural belief system so widely practiced yet so seldomly researched.
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE DEFINED

Although the study of religion is currently enjoying a wave of popularity and scholarly interest, researchers in the field are calling for more complexity and sophistication in the social scientific theory and methodology used in the study of religion. As Eister (1974) states,

Social Scientists must be permitted—indeed must demand freedom to gather data in their own terms, to formulate and test hypotheses which produce verifiable propositions about the behavior of "religious" persons, religious organizations and movements.... If by 'theory' we mean explanation, and ultimately the knowledge necessary for predicting empirical regularities, then it is apparent that at present our interpretive skills in the sociology of religion lag behind our descriptive insights. (pp. 6, 296)

Heeding Eister's (1974) criticisms, this case study suggests and implements Bormann's fantasy theme analysis as a usable and adaptable methodology suited to the study of commitment in religious organizations. Straying from traditional approaches to organizational commitment, the study employs Bormann's fantasy theme analysis and symbolic convergence theory as the
rhetorical methodology for the study. It is argued that such a rhetorical, interpretive approach to the notion of organizational commitment is a means of organizational analysis more suited to the unique nature of religious organizing and one which sheds new insight into the concept of organizational commitment in general.

The concepts comprising Bormann's perspective parallel common assumptions regarding the religious experience in general and, thus, are ideally suited for this examination of religious rhetoric and organizational communication. At the origins of both religious belief formation and a fantasy theme chain are the notions of conflict and constraint. (Beit-Hallahmi, 1986, pp. 2-4; Bormann, 1972, p. 397)

Bormann (1972) illustrates the emphasis on conflict in symbolic convergence theory by stating,

Whenever occasions are so chaotic and indiscriminate that the community has no clear observational impression of the facts, people are given free reign to fantasize within the assumptions of their rhetorical vision without inhibition. On such occasions fantasy themes become the main explanatory systems for the events. (p. 405)
Experts in religious studies agree that religion in general is also an experience bred out of some type of social conflict, a feature which closely parallels symbolic convergence theory. Human beings' quest for salvation is seen as a life-long conflict between their yearning for eternal life and the worldly pleasures tempting them every day. As Firth (1981) states,

Religion is a product of tension—between the ideal and the actual, between the individual and the mass, between the urge to satisfaction and life, and recognition of the inevitability of suffering and death. (p. 584)

Another relationship exists between Bormann's methodology and the nature of religious experience which represents the usefulness of Fantasy Theme Analysis as a method of research here. Bormann (1972) provides a basis for comparison by stating,

When an actor assumes a role in a drama he gains with the part constraining forces (the dramatic action of the unfolding plot) which impel him to do and to say certain things. When a person appropriates a rhetorical vision he gains with the supporting dramas constraining forces
which impel him to adopt a life style and to take certain action. The born-again Christian is baptized and adopts a life style and behavior modeled after the heroes of the dramas that sustain that vision. (pp. 406-407)

Those studying religious experience agree with Bormann by pointing out that participation in a religious organization, while typically seen as a constructive and worthwhile endeavor, is essentially an allegiance to an organization which narrows one's view of the world and constrains his or her actions (Greil and Rudy, 1984, pp. 261-262). Berger and Luckmann (1967), point out that many religious organizations serve as "plausibility structures" — reference groups which serve to conform their members' identities and views of the world to that of the organization (pp. 154-155).

The potential of Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory to provide such deep insight into the processes by which religion shape the identity and behavior of participants is utilized in this study's examination of religious organizational communication. One can see that at the very basis of both religious experience and Bormann's symbolic convergence theory are the notions of conflict and social constraints. The similarity between Bormann's perspective and the nature of the
religious experience, indicate fantasy theme analysis' potential to effectively examine the relationship between religious rhetoric and religious organizational phenomena.

Interpreting and understanding belief systems in religious institutions is inherently problematic, however, because neither traditional approaches nor interpretive approaches have focused extensively on religious organizational communication. The make-up of religious organizations differ from our common perception of the organization and, therefore, present a need for new theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches.

Review of Rhetorical Analyses of Religious Communication

It is argued throughout this analysis that rhetorical analysis of religious communication phenomena can be an explanatory method of communication research and can further our academic understanding of religious experience in general. The feasibility and utility of rhetorical analysis of religious communication has been demonstrated by Loscalzo (1989), Wilson-Kastner (1989), Wuthnow (1988), Snelling and Whitley (1974) and Goethals (1985). While the cited work of Loscalzo (1989), Wilson-Kastner (1989), Wuthnow (1988),
Snelling and Whitley (1974), and Goethals (1985) are not specific to organizational analysis, they serve to highlight how a rhetorical perspective can be applied in a useful manner to the religious experience in general. Furthermore they highlight the role religious rhetoric plays in the creation of meaning for religious participants and ways that such meaning attribution processes impact on the religious participant's commitment to either religion or a specific religious movement. The studies provide a framework from which the religious rhetoric of Good News Fellowship Church can be analyzed especially in terms of the role symbolism plays in the development and maintenance of commitment to a religious movement.

Equally relevant to the rhetorical analysis of Good News Fellowship Church is Loscalzo's (1989) discussion of the notion of identification in the context of religious experience and rhetoric. Loscalzo provides an example of how concepts such as identification and commitment can be addressed through a rhetorical analysis of religious discourse and, in doing so, provides theoretical and methodological direction to the present Good News Fellowship Church study. Loscalzo extrapolates the main points of Burke's theory of
human motives and applies it to religious rhetoric. By using concepts such as Burke's pentad, theory of identification, and theory of logology, Loscalzo demonstrates how such notions provide insight into the rhetorical nature of religious behavior. Loscalzo suggests understanding the nature of cooperation of religious participants (i.e. identification, sharing themes and visions) requires an understanding of the rhetorical nature of religious discourse. Loscalzo furthers his analysis of the notion of religious identification by pointing out that the primary purpose of religious rhetoric is to achieve "ideal cooperation" amongst religious groups that naturally do not have such "ideal cooperation" as a part of their make-up. The need and the "motive" for rhetoric, therefore, stems from groups' attempts to achieve a collective sense cooperation and group feeling of togetherness created primarily from the rhetorical symbols (p. 7). Here Loscalzo demonstrates the importance and usefulness of rhetorical analysis in studying religious communication. With the goal of all religious communication to achieve complete identification to god and theological beliefs, analyzing the collectively shared religious themes and visions can uncover the processes by which such identification, or cooperation,
with theological themes and visions is achieved or not achieved.

The relationship between collective sense-making, i.e. meaning, and religious rhetoric is further discussed in Wilson-Kastner's (1989) analysis of sermonic images. She studies religious symbolism and how such symbols serve to create and maintain many of the cognitive and emotional dimensions of religious experience (p. 23). In doing so, Wilson-Kastner parallels much of the rhetorical bias of fantasy theme analysis. Although her study makes reference to images as opposed to fantasy themes or vision, the interpretation of sermons provided in her work closely resembles the form of rhetorical interpretation proposed in this rhetorical Good News Fellowship Church case study and offers insight into how a fantasy theme analysis of similar religious communication phenomena might be structured. Through her discussion of how theological images dramatize the bible and work to move listeners toward action, Wilson-Kastner provides a level of analysis similar that which is proposed in the present rhetorical case study. She describes how the dramatic imagery and symbolism making up religious rhetoric is not only meaningful for religious participants but, as also
shown in the Good News Fellowship Church study, can be the motivating factor inciting their commitment to the group, i.e., church as well.

Wuthnow (1988) also parallels the Good News Fellowship Church study by pointing rhetorical analysis in the direction of better understanding religious participation and commitment processes. Through his analysis he provides ample reasons why a study of religious rhetoric is applicable to the notions of identification and commitment. He examines how religious institutions communicate their sacred traditions and social goals to their members and how this communication serves to bond individuals to the religious movement. Wuthnow interprets the religious discourse within religious groups, movements, and organizations. He does so through the literary narrative methodology provided by Northrop Frye, author of *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* and Susan Rubin Suleiman, author of *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre*. Within the framework provided by Frye and Suleiman, Wunthrop analyzes the narrative processes by which religious participants create and maintain their social realities. Wuthnow's emphasis on the form and structure of religious discourse will also supplement Bormann's message
content focus as utilized in this Good News Fellowship Church case study.

Snelling and Whitley (1974) provide an interesting analysis of the problem-solving behavior in religious and para-religious groups. By doing so, they provide insights into the role group communication plays in religious movements and how such specific communication situations such as religious movements can be analyzed in the context of broader, "archetypal" dramas. The authors examine the institutionalization and socialization processes of two organizations: the Cenikor Foundation, a self-help program designed to assist the recovery of drug addicts and ex-convicts, and a Krishna consciousness group. Through participant observation, Snelling and Whitley distinguish the predominant themes evident in the language, or hermeneutics, used within both groups. In doing so they draw analogies between those themes and those of the so-called Protestant ethic. They conclude by suggesting the Protestant ethic, as a social "logic", is far from extinct (an argument proposed by many within religious studies) as it is extremely evident in the problem-solving behavior of the groups studied. Thus Snelling and Whitley offer an example of how the communication
of a religious group or organization are oftentimes influenced by some form of overarching and dominant rhetorical vision. This, of course is applicable to the study of Good News Fellowship Church as a social movement and organization. Good News Fellowship Church participants frame their collective social reality within the context of the archetypal visions and themes of Christianity. Understanding how individuals become committed to Good News Fellowship Church and use Christian symbolism to make sense of their participation, therefore, begins with an understanding of such overarching dramas and the context they provide for more specific group social realities.

A final rhetorical analysis of religious communication is offered by Gregor Goethals (1985) in "Religious Communication and Popular Piety." In this essay Goethals distinguishes between two religious perspectives: the denominational and the sociological. The study's emphasis on two specific processes by which religious participants symbolically frame and understand their church experience is relevant to the Good News Fellowship Church analysis. A denominational perspective is that which is formed in reference to a particular formal religious organization (e.g. Presbyterian, Jewish, Baptist,
Buddhist, Catholic, etc.). A sociological approach, on the other hand, occurs when religious participants see their faith as not an allegiance to a specific denomination, but rather as "human confidence in a center and conserver of value" (p. 150). A sociological perspective is any strong loyalty to a cause which can be manifested in politics, science, and other cultural activities, much in the same way that loyalty and commitment is formed in religious organizations. Throughout the article, Goethals compares and contrasts the content of religious communication found in both perspectives and discusses how each of the perspectives effect the manner in which religious participant's identify with and become committed to the church organization. In the latter chapters of the Good News Fellowship Church study, the relationship between the Good News Fellowship Church dominant drama and the members' social and personal dramas is discussed. The saliency of the Good News Fellowship Church vision is analyzed in terms of how the themes of the vision chain into other aspects of participant's social reality. The distinctions and juxtapositions Goethals provides are applicable to the Good News Fellowship Church study because his analysis shows that a church member's commitments may stem from various social and
interpersonal need satisfactions. Furthermore, it illustrates that the meaning church participation has for the participant may not simply stem from the teachings of the religious organization, but may also be born out of a larger social context.

In overall review of the rhetorical analyses of Loscalzo (1989), Wilson-Kastner (1989), Wuthnow (1988), Snelling and Whitley (1974), and Goethals (1985), one can see the many ways that rhetorical concepts are being used to discuss how religious participants are bringing meaning and understanding to their religious experiences. Specifically, the studies illustrate that the notions of identification and commitment are subtly intertwined with many rhetorical concepts and are, therefore, viable areas for rhetorical analysis and interpretation. Many of the studies examine how biblical themes or social "logic's" are working within specific religious communication situations and how that symbolic context interacts with the immediate symbolism of the religious group context to create a bond between the individual and the religious movement. These features of the reviewed studies are complemented with the emphasis on religious discourse analysis and the narrative form of
religious discourse described by Wuthnow (1988). The rhetorical studies set the tone for further refinement and discussion of the issue of religious organizational commitment and establish the need for further interpretation and analysis of religious communication from a specific communication methodology. As a whole, the rhetorical analyses provide the rhetorical background and framework from which the utility and applicability of Bormann's specific methodology to the Good News Fellowship Church study is demonstrated.

With the rhetorical analyses of religious communication discussed above, one can see the applicability of rhetorical analysis to the Good News Fellowship case study of commitment processes. The rhetorical review highlights many of the key rhetorical concepts which have been and can be employed to show how religious groups make meaning of their religious experience. Equally important, they illustrate the persuasive qualities of religious symbols, themes, images, and narratives and how such symbolism compels individuals to identify with, and become committed to religious institutions and movements.
Stark and Glock (1968), noted over twenty years ago that there is little academic understanding of religious organizing and commitment. They state,

Virtually no systematic attempts have been made to determine what factors contribute to or inhibit the efforts of religious institutions to recruit and maintain a committed membership. (p. 1)

Such a dilemma is still present and is especially evident in the field of communication. Although religious organizing and communication constitute a major facet of human communication, very little actual methodology and understanding of such communication experiences actually exists.

The emphasis on religious commitment found in this study is crucial both in terms of the theoretical background and the utility of the case study itself. There does exist a number of Christian organizational analyses of congregational communication and religious organizing. Such studies, however, much like similar studies directed towards profit-motivated organizations, are hindered by a management bias - a bias which provides a very functional approach for church leaders and employs qualitative research methods, but one
which is limited in its ability to further our academic understanding of religious organizing and communication. (e.g., VanReehen and Pfeiffer, 1990)

By taking an interpretive perspective towards the notion of religious organizational commitment, this study touches on the most intriguing aspect of religious organizing - an explanation for why individuals voluntarily and vehemently become identified with a movement that, like all religious experiences, has very little basis in pragmatic thought. As Stark and Glock (1968) point out,

Both organizationally and theologically, the heart of religion is commitment. Historically, the primary concern of all religious institutions has been to lead men to faith, and the continued existence of any religion would seem to depend upon accomplishing this task. (p.1)

The notion of commitment, therefore, encompasses the basis of religious participation and provides the potential to uncover a deep understanding of the role communication plays in one's religious participation and spiritual sense-making.

The concept of commitment has been forever troublesome for the field of organizational communication. The attempt to isolate an organizational variable labelled as "commitment"
has proved empirically confounding and heuristically restricting. Defining the concept of commitment is especially problematic for the study proposed because of the study's eclectic application of the notion. One must simultaneously consider the meaning of "commitment" as it applies to organizations, social movements, and the religious experience. The traditional definitions of commitment within these areas of academic interest, however, vary considerably and show very little theoretical cohesion. The notion of organizational commitment is most typically defined as an individual's feelings of identification with and attachment to the organization (Griffin and Moorehead, 1988, p. 698).

Commitment to organizations is oftentimes examined along three dimensions: a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values, a willingness to expend time/effort on behalf of the organization, and a desire to remain a part of the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Soulian, 1974). Within religious studies, commitment is often measured by church attendance, tithing behaviors, or various symbolic acts of conversion from a "non-committed" state to one more "committed" to the spiritual reality of the religious organization. Philosophically, religious studies scholars
have defined commitment as "the willingness of the self to submit unconditionally towards an intimate relationship with the Ultimate" (Kwilecki, 1988, 232). In terms of social movements, commitment is at times recognized in the actual participation and presence of an individual at key events and ceremonial experiences.

As was mentioned earlier, the theoretical vacillation which accompanies the notion of commitment is both recognized and addressed in this study of Good News Fellowship Church. From the rhetorical perspective of this study, commitment is seen as defined uniquely within the various rhetorical visions of any given collectivity. In other words, an individual is only committed to the degree that he/she shares in the dramatic symbolization of a rhetorical vision and the degree to which those dramas are salient in their day-to-day lives. Accompanying this definition is the assumption that more than one definition of commitment may be in operation in an organization. Such an assumption is consistent with the finding of organizational culture studies which have discovered that more than one cultural symbol system typically exists within an organization or even work group. Thus one is not committed to the organization, but to a dramatic social
reality existing within the organization. The key to understanding how individuals become committed to the organization, therefore, is to uncover the dramatic components of the social reality and provide a clear understanding of the symbols creating such a belief system. The degree to which such individual commitment to a social belief system is consistent with the pragmatic goals of the organization can be a variable in the research and, in fact, is discussed further in Chapters Four and Five of this rhetorical analysis of the Good News Fellowship Church movement.

In this case study, therefore, the objective is not to apply a predetermined definition of commitment to Good News Fellowship Church, but rather to interpret "how commitment means" to actors performing within various dramas being played out within the congregational setting. The discovery of symbolic realities inherently brings insight into any given reality's utopian vision, and, consequentially, into how a person committed to the vision will define the perceived outcomes of his/her own behavior and that of fellow actors.

While rhetoric was once considered the domain of public speaking and persuasion research, it has recently come to light that it also has abundant utility in the study of
organizations. Its consideration of the symbolic processes inherent in persuasive communication is especially applicable to the study of organizational commitment and serves to provide explanations that more traditional methods of examination cannot. Bormann's fantasy theme analysis provides the theoretical base for a useful examination of commitment in the religious organization. The methodology employed in fantasy theme analysis targets the "why's" of any communication event. By integrating a dramatistic and a symbolic convergence emphasis, the perspective can illustrate how the notion of organizational commitment, especially within a religious setting, is embedded within an individuals' dramatic and symbolic sense-making processes.

While rhetorical analyses of religious communication are widespread, few have drawn this specific connection between communication and religious organizational behavior, e.g., commitment. Utilizing the rhetorical perspective of Ernest Bormann (1972), this study offers a way to analyze the relationship between communication and religious organizational commitment and, at the same time, offers some insight to the nature of organizing in general. By applying a rhetorical approach to the religious organizational situation,
one can better discern this relationship and understand the sense-making logics of religious organizational participants.
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In an effort to effectively identify and explain these sense-making processes as related to Good News Fellowship Church and the notion of organizational commitment, traditional quantitative research means are juxtaposed with the fantasy theme methodology. The methodological approach is driven by three research questions which are reviewed first in this section. From there, the rationale behind the use of Bormann's methodology and the emphasis on small group communication methods is discussed. Understanding this rationale gives one a better understanding for the intent of the research and the four-step structure of the approach. Finally, the four-step data collection and analysis process is detailed which is intended to provide the background for the subsequent data analysis chapters (Chapters Two and Three) of the study.

Although the study employs quantitative measures as a part of the rhetorical analysis, it is important to remind the reader that this study is interpretive in nature. In this regard, the research does not purport to draw clear causal relationships between elements of the rhetorical vision and organizational commitment variables. Instead, the focus of
the research is on better explaining how the notion of organizational commitment may be subtly intertwined in organizational members' dramatic message formations and thus easily explored through rhetorical methods. The research methodology used in the study, therefore, serves to take the first step towards better interpreting commitment processes in the organization. It is realized that it would be premature at this juncture in our understanding of organizational commitment to draw causal relationships between the drama and other organizational variables.

Such a realization is evident in the research questions driving this fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church. The research questions point the study in the direction of explaining and interpreting how the rhetorical vision of Good News Fellowship Church works to persuade individuals towards participation and compel them to actions on behalf of the church.
Research Questions

Specifically, this rhetorical case study endeavors to address the following research questions:

1) What is the dominant rhetorical vision being shared by Good News Fellowship congregational members?

   a) What comprises the dramatistic components of this rhetorical vision i.e., scene, personae, action plan, fantasy themes?

   b) What specific fantasy themes are chained and shared by Good News Fellowship Church participants?

2) Do the three commitment groups demonstrate deviations from or variations to "The Word" vision and, specifically, the fantasy themes of decentralization and consistency? What do such variations mean in terms of understanding the commitment processes working within the organization?

3) Is Bormann's fantasy theme analysis effective in researching organizational communication and the notion of organizational commitment?
Comparing the competing visions and members' identification with the dramas will reveal both the successes and failures within Good News Fellowship Church's efforts to gain member allegiance. The notion parallels the methodological direction Bormann (1972) was headed in his initial work in which he questions, "How does the fantasy theme work to attract the uncontroverted?" (p. 402). Comparing the committed organizational member's symbolic reality to that of the less commitment member serves to focus attention on the dynamic and rhetorical nature of organizational commitment. At the same time, it allows Good News Fellowship Church to analyze how the rhetorical vision and themes promoted by church leadership are being symbolically processed by congregation members. As Borman predicts, it rhetorically compares the social realities of the converted to the unconverted.

The results of this rhetorical case study will, of course, be evaluatory in terms of assessing the utility of Bormann's methodology in the study of religious organizational phenomena. By applying Bormann perspective and method to religious organizing, one is able to recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of Bormann's perspective as it relates to the study of religious organizing, organizational commitment, and social movements.
Methodology Background and Rationale

Applying an academic communication approach to a spiritual experience may be construed by many to be inherently contradictory. If one sees the religious experience as purely metaphysical, then academic analysis will be of little utility. It is argued through this analysis, however, that, even in the religious/spiritual realm, academic understanding and examination can prove beneficial for both an academic discipline and a specific religious organization/movement - in this instance, Good News Fellowship Church. Such an argument has recently gained acceptance even in the religious arena. As Schaller (1984) points out,

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament contain scores of declarations that every child of God should be engaged in self-appraisal . . . it is assumed that is appropriate, productive, and good for congregational leaders periodically to engage themselves in the process of appraising the role, ministry, internal dynamics, outreach, and life of that congregation. (pp. 99-10)

The type of self-appraisal Schaller (1984) mentions here can be of assistance to religious movements/organizations
struggling for increased membership. With a better understanding of the communication processes involved in religious commitment and participation, church leaders can better initiate both organizational and spiritual growth.

An interesting aspect of Bormann's symbolic convergence theory and fantasy theme analysis is that the perspective not only provides the theoretical basis for rhetorical study, but also provides paralleling methods of research and analysis. The concept of fantasy themes is not only central to Bormann's theoretical perspective, but to any method of analysis bred out of symbolic convergence theory and fantasy theme analysis. The methodology employed in any fantasy theme analysis and appropriately in this study of religious organizational communication is, most basically, content analysis of rhetoric and group communication. Analyzing the dramatizations of participants of a group or organization and the dramatic themes and visions shared within the dramatizations is the methodological starting point for any fantasy theme analysis.

For this reason, this fantasy theme analysis of religious organizing will employ focused group interviewing in an attempt to uncover the commonly held dramatizations, themes, and visions of members of Good News Fellowship Church. Using
group discussion as the target for content analysis seems consistent with the theoretical notions underlying fantasy theme analysis and symbolic convergence theory. As Bormann, Koester, and Bennett (1978) state,

The viewers who participated in mass media fantasies may retell the story in small group conversations with friends, family, co-workers, and others. If the members of such groups participate in the dramatizations, they come to share the media fantasy second hand but within the supportive climate of the small group. (p. 319)

They further explain this notion in saying, "Sometimes a comparison of important shared fantasies of rhetorical groups provided insight into the rhetorical vision of a community" (p. 328). If the goal is to uncover the symbolic processes which members of Good News Fellowship Church use to make sense out of their organizational environment, then facilitating the communicative sharing and dramatization processes in a group situation seems most conducive to useful analysis of fantasy theme evolution and sharing.

Implicit in the study's emphasis on group communication is an understanding that rhetorical processes of persuasion and commitment, especially in an organizational setting, are
not necessarily "top-down" processes. In other words, members of organizations often persuade themselves to become committed to certain causes simply through group communication and the dramatization processes emerging from the communication. Thus "rhetoric" is not so much the persuasion of the preacher or church leaders, but is more so the communication internal to organization members which is shared not vertically, but rather horizontally in the organization. Given this, this study places the most emphasis on group interaction - consistent with the assumption that members of Good News Fellowship Church are "self-rhetors," or in other words, facilitating commitment to themes and vision within the membership itself. For this reason, this study does not place the same emphasis on the rhetoric of the Pastor or of the denomination. While connections between such sermonic rhetoric and that obtained via the commitment focus groups undoubtedly exist, the concern of this study is interpreting those dramatizations unique to individuals participating in Good News Fellowship Church. The analysis of such communication will undoubtedly uncover rhetorical relationships between the two forms of rhetoric exhibited within the church and will be, therefore, a central concern in the data analysis and interpretation phase of the study.
Four Research Steps

A four-step research process is used to address the questions posed above. This process combines traditional qualitative/quantitative research methods such as a survey questionnaire with interpretivist methodologies such as focus group interviewing, discourse rhetorical analysis, and fantasy theme analysis.

Data was collected in this study by two separate means and analyzed in a correlation data analysis process. For clarity, the research will be broken down into four distinct steps: 1) Step One: survey questionnaire and establishment of groups based on commitment level 2) Step Two: focus group interviews 3) Step Three: rhetorical fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church newsletters, focus group discourse, and Foundations Class discourse and 4) Step Four: Examination and comparison of commitment groups.

Step One: Survey Questionnaire

Candidates for the focused group interviews were those congregational members who signed a participation agreement form committing them to participation in the research project. The agreement form is shown in Appendix A. A brief
The present study begins by employing a traditional methodology, the survey questionnaire, to elicit specific data pertaining to the amount of money contributed to the church, the time spent working for the church, and the number of services attended from congregational members. The survey questionnaires were distributed to all those congregational members who volunteered for the study. Member response data was used to categorize members into three separate commitment groups each representing differing levels of commitment (as defined by the variables of money contributions, volunteer time, and service attendance). The survey questionnaire and the analysis of data obtained via the questionnaire is shown in Appendix C. As you can see, the survey questions rely on traditional sociological variables which are typically employed to study religious commitment from a sociological or religious scientific standpoint. The questionnaire seeks to primarily measure four variables: 1) church service attendance 2) percentage of income donated to the church and 3) amount of
time volunteered to the church and 4) members' self-reports on commitment level. Data received from this questionnaire was used to distinguish three separate groups of members according to commitment level.

In total, 31 questionnaire responses were received. The specific "score" of each respondent is displayed in Appendix C. Point values were assigned to each of the first five responses in the questionnaire. Questions number 5, number 6, and number 7 were not objectively factored into the score for pragmatic reasons. These questions were largely subjective and self-assessment in nature and, therefore, did not fit neatly into the point value scoring system. The responses to those specific questions, therefore, were used only as determinant responses in the event a clear distinction could not be easily deduced from the first five responses. These values are displayed in bold type after each response option as shown in Appendix B. Totalling these point values provided the overall "score" on the questionnaire used to distinguish members according to commitment level. This "score" ranged from the highest possible, 25, to the lowest registered, 10. The responses were placed on a bell curve to map out statistical grouping. Once placed on the curve, the three
separate groups could be distinguished based on "score." Members were initially grouped into three separate commitment levels based on these scores and were assigned titles: Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3. To facilitate reasonable focus group sizes, each of these three commitment groups were divided into two interviewing groups: Group A and Group B. Thus, this step in the research process placed members into six separate focus groups: Group 1A, Group 2A, Group 1B, Group 2B, Group 3A, and Group 3B.

**Step Two: Focus Group Interviews**

Once commitment focus groups were established, the researcher conducted focus group interviews with each group individually. In doing so, the researcher attempted to have the groups dramatize their experiences with Good News Fellowship Church. This was done in an effort to bring out the specific fantasies maintaining the group's social reality. The list of questions used in the facilitation of the focus group interviews is shown in Appendix B. It should be pointed out, however, that the facilitator did not apply the same questions to each group. In an effort to facilitate shared dramatizations and group fantasy behavior, the facilitator
provided little direction in the questioning and, instead, allowed the group dynamics and shared symbolic activity take over the direction of the discourse.

Each group consisted of 4-6 organizational members and the focus group interviews lasted for approximately 1 1/2 hours. Group members were encouraged to discuss issues/questions amongst themselves, thus leaving the researcher as simply a facilitator in the process.

With group members' permission, the researcher audiotaped all focus group interviewing and advised all group members of their right to have the tape turned off at their request. The focused group interviews were audiotaped and facilitated by myself. The goal of this second phase of the research project is to obtain group dramatizations for the purpose of later fantasy theme analysis. Correlating the various components of a group drama with the "perceived" levels of commitment defining each group (as defined through the three variables mentioned above) will serve as data analysis and material for deducing and confirming implications of the study.

On the surface, the application of such traditional methodologies may seem contradictory to the rhetorical nature of fantasy theme analysis and lacking utility within a
rhetorical analysis. The analysis of such variables, however, is not based on an assumption that they alone are pre-determinants or accurate measures of organizational commitment. Instead, it rests on the assumption that they are measures by which we often, in an everyday common-sense fashion, perceive religious organizational commitment. The use of the survey questionnaire assumes society perceives such factors such as money donations, volunteer time, and service attendance, as the end result of a "successful", persuasive, or attractive religious message. Integrating the questionnaire results with the symbolic data gathered through rhetorical means, demonstrates this studies effort to further our ability to study organizations interpretively and combine "what we think we know" about organizational communication with "what we have not yet known". This, it is argued, can be achieved through the type of juxtaposition of research methods employed here. By integrating a traditional method for data gathering with the rhetorical, one is allowed to comment on theses traditional societal assumptions and, at the same time, on possible flaws in studying organizational phenomena in such an isolated and traditional fashion.
**Step Three: Fantasy Theme Analysis**

In the third research step, the rhetoric of Good News Fellowship Church newsletters, commitment focus group discourse, and Foundations Class Rhetoric (a course taught by Pastor Matt that is a prerequisite for GNFC members) is analyzed through Bormann's fantasy theme methodology. "The Word" rhetorical vision of Good News Fellowship is explained and rhetorically dissected. Specifically two fantasy themes were identified: a Consistency theme and a Decentralization theme. Both fantasies are examined in the context of "The Word" drama and in relation to the significant dramatic components of that vision. The study begins with a more general effort to identify the predominant dramas being enacted by Good News Fellowship Church members. Doing so allows one to better understand the rhetorical nature of Good News Fellowship Church as both a social movement and as an organization and provides the basis for narrowing the focus towards the concept of organizational commitment. The specific scenario, dramatis personae, plot, and fantasy themes are uncovered in this research phase. More importantly, the fantasy themes of decentralization and consistency are described in terms of their persuasiveness and rhetorical
appeal. This provides the groundwork for the fourth and final research phase of the study.

**Step Four: Commitment Group Comparison and Analysis**

The final research step involves comparisons between the three commitment groups with specific analysis on how the groups varied in the way they dramatized the symbolic components of "The Word" vision. Such variations are viewed both in terms of what they say about the commitment process, and what they say about the development and growth of Good News Fellowship Church as a social movement. The research findings are summarized and are discussed in terms of their implications for Good News Fellowship Church as a movement. As will be shown, such implications can be extended beyond the boundaries of Good News Fellowship church and serve to bring insight into possible future research areas for further rhetorical organizational analyses and, specifically, religious organizations.

Chapter Two represents the primary data analysis of the study and addresses research questions one, two, and three. In terms of the above research steps, it encompasses Steps One-Three of the study and describes the analysis of the data
obtained via research steps One (commitment survey questionnaire) and Two (Focus Group Interviewing). As a whole, Chapter Two outlines "The Word" vision identified through the research along with its dramatic components, including two specific supporting fantasy themes—a Decentralization fantasy and a Consistency fantasy.
A. GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH RHETORICAL VISION—THE WORD:

1) Scene

2) Dramatis Personae

3) Plot/Action Plan

4) Fantasy Themes:
   a) Consistency
   b) Decentralization
GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH VISION

Predictably, Good News Fellowship Church members share the traditional archetypal Christian vision which is comprised of all the associated traditional Christian fantasy themes. The rhetoric of this traditional vision parallels standard Christian rhetoric in that it creates a redemption/salvation vision in which the life of man is a quest for God's redemption and ultimate salvation. This vision posits God, i.e. the holy spirit, as the ultimate protagonist who can lead true believers to heaven and protect them from the deeds of the ultimate antagonist, the devil. The plot and action plan, of course, is for man to become a believer of God's will and ultimately gain salvation for all man through this belief. As we know, there are many other antagonist-protagonist struggles incorporated within the overarching Christian vision which posit God's will vs. wickedness, good vs. evil, believers vs. nonbelievers, and Jesus vs. the Devil. Because Good News Fellowship Church rhetoric is rooted in Christianity and Biblical teaching, it inevitably creates a social reality consistent with what we have come to known as the archetypal Christian rhetorical vision.

An analysis of Good News Fellowship Church rhetoric,
however, illustrates a narrowing of this vision and a unique adaptation of the Christianity vision. While obviously borrowing heavily from the traditional Christian symbols, Good News Fellowship Church propagates a utopian rhetorical vision in which the actors are moving to align their hearts and minds specifically with "The Word." "The Word" in this vision takes on the features of a dramatis personae and is the ultimate protagonist. The Good News Fellowship Church vision serves to narrow the scope of the vision and restricts the path to God to that of the Bible and what it, in and of itself, has to offer the true believer. As will be demonstrated, "The Word" interestingly takes on the rhetorical life of a persona as congregational members symbolize the bible as a means to an end - a living, growing, moving, life-altering entity. In this unique dramatic adaptation of the Christian vision, Pastor Matt is called by God from far away to facilitate the delivery of The Word and teach The Word to believers so that it can change the lives of those who do not truly know The Word and keep those who do on the path to eternal life.

The utopian consequence of successful delivery of The word, opening to The Word, and belief in The Word, is a pure and open line of communication with God and harmonization with
God's message stripped of the "clutter" and transmission obstacles oftentimes preventing the word to act as it should. This purified "line of communication" that is achieved between God and man is one stripped of the human misinterpretation and worldly stumbling blocks which obstructs the nonbeliever from The Word's utopian potential. If this line can be achieved, it ultimately allows the words and deeds of the believer to become one with God's and therefore guarantee a life as a believer and eternal life.

As discussed earlier, a rhetorical vision is a form of message dramatization which reconciles some form of rhetorical conflict or symbolic paradox occurring in the here-and-now of the vision adherents. The Good News Fellowship Church The Word vision fits this pattern described by Bormann in that it emerges out of a Christian environment undoubtedly riddled by conflict, ambiguity, and an overall incongruity between what Christians once knew as religious fact and the new set of perceptions being chained through the media regarding the Christian social reality. Such incongruity sets the tone for the rhetorical vision of Good News Fellowship Church and itself explains much about how the vision attracts individuals and gains their commitment to the movement. By examining the
here-and-now scene of the vision, one not only better understands this appeal, but also explores the sense-making processes which Good News Fellowship Church participants are using to rationalize the Christian dilemma.
Scene

The rhetorical vision of Good News Fellowship Church as a "Word" church emerges from a complex social, political, and economic culture making up the current time period (late 1980's, early 1990's). The sociological complexities and conflicts of our current culture such as poverty, working longer hours for less pay, abortion rights, higher taxes, corporate "downsizing," the lack of morality and social responsibility, crime, and on and on, presents fertile rhetorical ground from which the vision can grow. The specific fantasies being chained within Good News Fellowship church are bred out of such a rhetorical scene and are an attempt to reconcile many of the complexities seen in modern day life. To effectively interpret the Good News Fellowship Church vision, one must first review the here-and-now from which the vision emerges.

This here-and-now reality is filled with complications, complexities, ambiguities, and conflicts, especially for the religious participant. In the era following the rise and fall of Jimmy Baker, the investigation into the alleged immorality of Jimmy Swaggart, the Supreme Court over-turning of Roe vs.
Wade, the allegations of sexual abuse directed towards Catholic Priests, and a general questioning of many of the long-standing tenets of the Catholic church itself, there exists many mixed messages for the religious. Additionally, the downfall of some of these established icons of modern day religious activity leaves the religious participant without a clear picture of how their religious leaders should be personified and how their religious experience can be put into dramatic context. With the definitions of many religious personae and symbols becoming increasingly blurred, there today exists a rhetorical conflict within the Christian community as a whole. Many religious participants are left with a continued desire to be part of Christianity and the religious experience, but their formerly clear paths to redemption and salvation have now become less rhetorically clear and, thus, less symbolically persuasive and compelling. Christians are being informed of the ill's of their own belief system while, at the same time, are being encouraged by society to do something in response to the very same ills. In this environment, the Christian sees the previous paths to religious practice being less clear with not only the personae involved in their Christian vision losing credibility, but the
very theology and principles upon which their religious beliefs rest called into question as well.

This is especially true in the Stevens Point area with the dominance of Catholicism in the area. The overall skepticism surrounding American Catholicism and the media exposes of the transgressions of Catholic leaders is especially pertinent to the Stevens Point area with its predominant Polish-Catholic population. The importance of this competing vision which depicts a Catholic church in question will be demonstrated through the fantasy theme analysis and is represented by the fantasy themes chained by Good News Fellowship Church participants. By identifying the rhetorical implications of the problems within the Catholic church and other forms of denominational religion, one can see that the public's vision of organized religion in distress and disarray is chained into the dramatizations of Good News Fellowship Church.

The symbolization of both the Catholic church and denominational religion in general are key aspects of The Word vision. Such symbols emerge from the rhetorical scene to assist in creating the dramatis personae within the rhetorical vision, and are used in members' definitions of both the antagonists and protagonists competing within the vision.
As discussed, The Word becomes the primary protagonist in the Good News Fellowship Church vision. The Word takes on all the characteristics necessary for a dramatic protagonist and is the persona that delivers the utopian goal of the vision. It has the power to directly change situations, alter future events, and propel actors participating within the vision toward the vision's plot/action plan. This personified power is described by Pastor Matt who cites the Amplified Bible version of Hebrews 4:12:

For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power—making it active, operative, energizing and effective, it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and the immortal spirit, and of joints and marrow, that is, of the deepest parts of our nature, expressing, sifting, analyzing, and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart. (Newsletter, November 1987, p. 1)

Such protagonist persona qualities are further described by Pastor Matt in Foundations Class Part 3 "Repentance" discourse (1987) in which he states,
How do we renew our minds? Through the Word of God. We take hold of God's word and it will transform, it will metamorphisize so to speak, our thinking...our minds. In order that we can begin to move in the Will of God and prove what the Will of God is—not only that which is good but acceptable in the perfect will of God. (side 2)

The persona quality of The Word is further demonstrated in this Newsletter (March, 1989) discourse which discusses The Word's role in the battle against poverty:

Faith in God's Word will destroy the strongholds of poverty...God's Word breathed into lives of spiritually impoverished men and is the power and life that destroys poverty. God's word is not a machine which produces twenty dollar bills, but living principles which motive us to act (p. 2)

As one can see from this discourse, in the Good News Fellowship Church vision The Word takes on personal characteristics and is independently given the power to be a change-agent in the drama. Such personal characteristics are justified in that The Word is a true and direct representation of God's will and is actually a physical extension of God. Explaining this relationship between God and The Word, Pastor
Matt (1987) states,

All scripture is God breathed. In other words, God brought it forth, it came from the very breath of God…the nostrils of God…Praise God. The bible comes from God through the men who wrote. God superintended these human authors so that through their individual personalities they heard and recorded God's message to man without error…Praise God. (side one)

Such personal characteristics are love, integrity, leadership, and guardianship. In fact, members often times placed their relationship to The Word in the context of friendship. When asked what keeps him at Good News Fellowship Church, a Group Three member prioritized his relationship to The Word in a manner in which his relationship to The Word takes precedence over making personal friendships within the church. In this regard he states,

We came here and committed ourselves to church before we knew anybody and we made friends after we got here, and our commitment was the word of God who told us to get here first, and the rewards of friendship are all part of that commitment...our commitment first is to god's word and then we know that we'll make friends. (p. 6)
Finding The Word means finding the perfect meaning of life and, in the process, peace and harmony in God's world. The Word offers the believer the ability to take the first step in his/her quest for eternal life and watches over the member in undertaking that journey.

Unlike human nature and human interpretation, the Bible is simple, pure, unchangeable, and accurate. Once truly understood and "known," it becomes a symbol of consistency and purity and is the foundation to anyone's relationship with the Holy Spirit. The discourse reveals that congregational members see the prominence of The Word protagonist as a key to the stability of Good News Fellowship church. One Group Two member, for example, states,

From the Word of God, our pastor teaches and bases everything including Divine order in this church. All is structured and based upon the Word of God, and there's a solidness in that. A solidness in knowing that everything you're doing is based on the word and that can really build any man's confidence. (p. 4)

The attributes of purposefullness and stability are further given to The Word persona as evidenced in the Foundations Class 1 "The Word of God" discourse (1987) in which Pastor
Matt states,

There's nothing in The Word by chance. I mean, everything is there for a specific purpose. God had exactly what he wanted in the word of God, Amen?..Praise God. (side 1)

This is further revealed in a Newsletter (July, 1985) excerpt in which Pastor Matt states,

In making God's word final authority, we must realize that there are absolutely no inconsistencies or contradictions in the Bible. Now there may be certain inconsistencies with some translations, but that's why we are told to study. (p. 1)

Here we see that any misunderstanding or apparent contradiction in the Bible's message can only be the result of lack of training or education. The public's perceptions of possible Biblical inconsistencies or contradictions is explained away with the vision's dramatization of the cause for such misinterpretation. With more studying and proper teaching, the vision dramatizes a Bible that has a consistent unchanging power and, in the process, has direct relevance in members' contemporary lives. Furthermore, The Word can be counted on by the vision's participants to be practical,
purposeful, and pertinent in their quest for God. These aspects of the rhetorical vision highlights to rhetorical importance given to the messenger of God's word, Pastor Matt.

The personae of Pastor Matt is a very strong symbolic aspect of the Good News Fellowship Church vision. The symbolization of the Pastor Matt personae can best be characterized and defined as a channel through which The Word is moved. Pastor Matt is the avenue by which The Word reaches the congregational member. An important rhetorical characteristic of the Pastor Matt personae is the integrity and consistency. Interestingly, the notions of integrity and consistency are positioned not in the context of Pastor Matt as the primary protagonist and movement leader but, instead, in the context of Pastor Matt as the deliverer and messenger of the Word. Here a Group Three member describes Pastor Matt:

I just see him as having a lot of wisdom. He's really able to give biblical counsel and direction and guidance and, of course, teaching the word, instructing and teaching use the word. (p.7)

The member discourse reveals that Pastor Matt's integrity is extremely important to congregational members but not necessarily in the context of Pastor Matt as a person or
leader of the movement. Instead, members comments reveal that Pastor Matt's integrity becomes a key symbol to participants because it signifies that Pastor Matt as "true" to The Word and has therefore "received the word." This consistency and integrity ensures the dramatic participant that The Word is being channelled to him/her in its pure unadulterated form. Thus the rhetoric places great symbolic importance on the Pastor Matt persona but not in the context one might expect—Pastor Matt's importance is symbolized in relation to the primary protagonist, The Word.

On the surface one would predict that Pastor Matt would be symbolized as the key protagonist in the Good News Fellowship Church vision. In the Good News Fellowship Church vision, however, Pastor Matt is more an agent of the protagonist and is rhetorically relegated to a role of messenger who's job involves moving biblical teachings to the people so The Word can become active within the lives of drama participants. A Group One participant discusses Pastor Matt's role:

...Pastor Matt and the way he teaches, he teaches, you know, from the scripture, and I love it when he says, you know, here's what it says, and I want you to read it, so
you don't think that I'm saying it...that's what it says right here.. and to look at the truth, and if you have a questions, study it out, to know what the truth is.(p. 8)

Pastor Matt actively participates in this dramatization as evidenced by the following Newsletter (March, 1986) excerpt:

Since it is not my church, I don't have to build it. I simply cooperate with the Holy Spirit, making myself available for His service. I also don't have to assume a lordship role over the people. I can release them to serve Christ...It is my function to equip you for ministry through the teaching of God's Word, to decentralize the operation of the local church so it will become a force in this community. (p. 3)

The vision emphasizes Pastor Matt as a teacher who simply exposes the participants to The Word and educates them to the true untainted meanings existing in the Bible. The Word, in turn, is bestowed with all the attributes of a dramatic protagonist because it is what moves individuals to God's will. Once exposed to the protagonist, participants have to pray to God to open their hearts to the word and give them the supernatural relationship which allows The Word to "act" in their lives. In essence this is a purification and activation
process which activates The Word and allows it to work the miracles it is capable of. The Bible, therefore, is not a reference source for teaching, but is the protagonist and, at the same time, the change-agent in the utopian goal within the drama.

While the devil and hell are traditionally thought to be the ultimate antagonist in the Christianity vision, in Good News Fellowship discourse the antagonist which develops is symbolized as Doctrine. Doctrine signifies man's tampering with the protagonist, the pure word of God. When such worldly tampering takes place, it leaves the potential for man to pervert The Word and misconstrue God's true biblical meanings. Doctrine is what prevents some self proclaimed Christians from becoming true believers and is the epitome of hypocrisy in the vision. As Pastor Matt states, "You cannot say you're following Jesus if you're not following his Word" (Newsletter, November, 1989, p. 3). Such so-called Christians adhere to Doctrine and, in the process, are lead astray by the central antagonist.

Similar to how Pastor Matt becomes the messenger agent for the protagonist, The Word, organized/denominational religion becomes the messenger agent for Doctrine. Religious
hierarchy and papal chain of commands become the arena in which Doctrine can likely be created and promoted. A Group One member described her experience with a previous church organization and the negative effects of Doctrine:

Like you know, a denomination like a lutheran church or let's see...Catholic of Methodist...you have a head office, and they are the ones that kind of control it to a sense, the you know, the message like for instance. You would have the same liturgy every day, you would have the same Bible verse, I mean every Sunday Lutheran churches all over the state would have, so you're teaching on the same thinking, okay, not necessarily hearing from God. That's just what you thought because you were Lutheran...they weren't listening to God. That was the conflict in the Lutheran Church, the leadership. It was like the word was there, but it's like, well if that's what the word says, then why don't we do it that way...well, you can't because of, you know you the church dictates. You were told what to do but you weren't told how to do it. (pp. 4, 5)

The member discussed the experience in contrast to Good News Fellowship Church by stating, "But in this word church, it
was, 'oh that's how', you know" (p. 5). Such doctrinal teachings can ultimately lead to eternal damnation because the interrupt what should be a direct an untainted biblical line between God and man. This interruptive and impeding nature of the antagonist is reflected in the discourse of a Group Two member who states,

We were in a denominational church, and we sensed there was something more that what we were being fed in that church. We know there was more so we just wanted to seek a bit more of God so we had to go where it was being talked and preached. (p. 2)

The notion of "more" discussed by this group member would imply that denominational religions only serves to "slow down" the believer from finding the true Word and simply gets in the way of the process of becoming one with The Word. By discussing "wanting more" than what denominational religion has to offer, the member was obviously symbolizing that less doctrine equates to more of the true, life giving Word. In fact this Group Two member goes on to state, "it just seemed that this (church) was a little bit more advanced" (p. 3).

Another extension of the Doctrine antagonist is the notion of the "natural world." The "natural world" and
"worldliness" is symbolized as the arena in which the doctrine originates and is representative of the place where The Word has difficulty penetrating and becoming active. Doctrine is borne out of "natural man's" interpretations of the scripture and is, therefore, positioned as opposite to a true believer's understandings. Such positioning is seen in Pastor Matt's discourse in which he dramatizes natural man's view of The Word:

Corinthians I 2:14 and the reason why the world looks at the bible the way it does is because they are looking at through natural man's eyes. Corinthians I 2:14 says that a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand for they are spiritually appraised. You know, a natural man..their attitude towards the bible is just foolishness. They say, well, what do you want that old book for? You bible-thumping fanatic you. You know, you're kinda weird, you know, reading that Bible taking it around with you. You mean you actually believe what it says? A bunch of old white-haired men wrote that thing..ignorant men..and you believe that? See, they are..it's because of the foolishness that they cannot
understand it...they cannot comprehend it. (Foundations Class One "The Word of God", Side One)

In The Word vision, therefore, the most perverted view of The Word comes from men who are not spiritually equipped to understand and properly interpret The Word. Because they subscribe to worldly views and sins of the flesh, such interpretations are nothing more than misinterpreted doctrine. Through the discourse, members adhering to The Word vision are rhetorically positioning Doctrine as the adversary of pure, unchanging The Word persona.

Analyzing the here-and-now scene, antagonists, and protagonists of The Word vision establishes some of the individual dramatic components of the vision. This analysis does not, in itself, describe how the components are integrated to form a cohesive and compelling drama. Thus, the analysis moves into a description of the plot and action plan of The Word rhetorical vision. This portion of the analysis illustrates how the symbols identified thus far mesh together for form a cohesive drama positioned around a central plot, or action plan.
Plot/Action Plan

The plot and action plan of the Good News Fellowship Church vision is the same as the Christianity vision in that it has, as its ultimate goal, salvation and eternal life. The parallels in the two action plans divide, however, in how the action plan is symbolized within the context of scene. With the complex and controversial here-and-now as the symbolic context, the Good News Fellowship Church vision is centered around a plot which strives to uncomplicate the religious message and respond to complexities of the scene. The plot is constructed with simplification and purification strategies which strive to put the family of Good News Fellowship Church in perfect harmony with the most simple and pure teachings of the Bible. Members obtain such harmony by opening their minds and hearts to the basic meanings of the Gospel as perfectly taught and delivered by Pastor Matt and, in the process, turning their lives completely over to God. Once a participant is saved and becomes a believer, The Word is supernaturally activated and is given its protagonist attributes. The ultimate goal of such an action plan is therefore reached when the Christian truly "knows" The Word.
Pastor Matt describes this goal by stating,

For the believer, God's prosperity plan begins by renewing the mind to His Word. Not every believer is experiencing the abundant life, because abundant life comes only as you renew your mind to the Word to prove the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God in your life. (Newsletter, March 1986, p. 1)

True intimacy with The Word becomes synonymous with salvation and The Word is therefore allowed to be the change-agent in the drama and move the participant towards eternal life.

The plot, therefore, rectifies many of the dilemmas found in the congregation's here-and-now. It allows the participant to bypass many of the insufficiencies and impurities being chained in the public's perception of Christianity and, at the same time, allows the Good News Fellowship Church participant to address those same problems through the simple adherence to The Word of God. This provides Good News Fellowship Church participants an action plan which also retroactively explains those insufficiencies and impurities. The Good News Fellowship Church The Word vision encourages participants to "get closer" to The Word of God and align themselves with the Gospel. In doing this, Good News Fellowship Church
participants can explain that not adhering to such an action plan will result in the same forms of wickedness and degradation presently being seen in certain contemporary facets of Christianity. Thus, the downfall of certain religious personas and institutions is rationalized and explained as a consequence to the lack of strict adherence to The Word as it is written and intended. This downfall is further explained by the fact that such personas and institutions allowed Doctrine to intervene, thus creating impurities and potential for evil in their interpretations of the Bible and, consequently, their religious beliefs and practices. In essence, not following the vision's plan is rhetorically advocated as the cause leading to the already evidenced unfortunate effects. By engaging in a plot which encourages belief in the Bible only in its pure, simple, and unadulterated form, the Good News Fellowship Church members give themselves and avenue by which they can be protected from gospel perversion and, at the same time, give themselves an explanation for how such perversion is taking place in their here-and-now Christian realities.

In the Good News Fellowship Church vision The Word takes on the characteristic as leader and change-agent and,
therefore, spells out the will and the plan of God. In the process, the rhetorical plan in revealed through a true knowing of and belief in The Word of God. Once the believer truly "knows" the Bible as it was intended, The Word can direct and control very specific aspects of the believer's lives. Thus the action plan is always solidified in the Bible and speaks directly to the day-to-day life activities of the believer. The Foundations Class "The Lordship of Christ" (1987) discourse reveals this:

The Word of God must become our standard for all action and conduct if we are to be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. 'Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, If you abide in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine' (Jn. 8:31). (Lesson 1, Side Two)

This aspect of the vision's action plan is further revealed in the following Newsletter (August, 1986) excerpt:

The Spirit of God reveals God's general will as well as His specific will to you. He will lead you in line with the Word of God. ... Divine guidance is to hear the voice of God. You cannot get to know God's voice without getting to know God's Word. Why? Because the general way God speaks to us is through His Word. (p. 1)
The Newsletter goes on to pinpoint those aspects of members' lives which are directed by God's will. In this regard it is stated,

God's specific will includes direction in life concerning: 1) Where you go to church. 2) Your ministry. 3) The person you marry if you're single 4) Your job, career, business decisions 5) Geographic location and 6) Day to day guidance in the affairs of life. (p. 1)

The ability of the Word to direct the plot is further evidenced in the Foundations Class One "The Word of God" discourse in which Pastor Matt states,

God deals with us through The Word. How does God chastise us? According to Timothy II 3:16 it's through the Word.. God corrects us and reproves us through the Word. (side one)

Here we see that once the believer comes into harmony with The Word, all aspects of his/her life are predetermined and planned out through identification with the central protagonist persona. The Word will keep the believer on course and will serve as a guardian over the Christian's behaviors and beliefs.
In The Word vision's plot, The Word must be delivered to man through the supernatural experience which results from becoming a true believer. This supernatural ability to become one with The Word is only granted to those who reach a certain state of belief in which their lives, minds, and hearts are completely under the will of God. Pastor Matt describes this unique ability in Foundations Class Part one "The Word of God" in which he states,

But those of us who understand the reasoning of scripture did not come to understand them by human reasoning but by divine revelation. You came to understand biblical truths by divine revelation. Don't try to figure the Bible out—Let the Spirit of God reveal it out to you. He's the revealer of truth. (Side One)

The emphasis is not therefore on bringing the masses to the church, but instead on providing the training and atmosphere which facilitates this supernatural experience and allows God to reach out to man through The Word. Pastor Matt's writing is demonstrative of this as shown in this Newsletter (May 1986) excerpt:

Religion defined is simply man's effort to please God.

Any human system designed to reach and please any God is
properly called a religion. CHRISTIANITY IS NOT A RELIGION, it stands separate from every religion, because its focus is not on man reaching God, but God reaching out to man in the person of Jesus Christ...When believers find out who they are in Christ and get released to minister, they will minister... God needs a channel to flow through, purpose in your heart to be that channel.

(p.3)

In the Good News Fellowship Church vision, therefore, the action plan is not focused on increasing congregational size and on bringing more people to God. Instead the rhetoric describes the plan as one which opens the believer to God and allows the message of God to freely, purely, and supernaturally flow to movement participants through The Word.

Music is an interesting aspect of this action plan in that it has a direct and important role in facilitating the supernatural relationship necessary for The Word to act. The manner and style of music at God News Fellowship Church is one which is active, participative, and dynamic. Participants dance, close their eyes, hold hands, and lift their heads upwards when singing or listening to music. This activity is seen as part of the plan to enter into a supernatural realm in
which The Word can become activated and sets the tone for a pure and clear intake of The Word. Such is seen in this newsletter excerpt (April 1987):

In 2 Chron. 20: 19-30, the Levites and the sons of Korahites were sent before the army of Israel to sing praises unto God. As they began to sing, the Lord set ambushes against the enemy. They became so confused they destroyed themselves. I believe music can be a powerful tool which can be used in spiritual warfare when we allow God's Holy Spirit to take charge...There are many vehicles you can use to enter into the spiritual realm, music can be as a jet, it gets you there fast. When interceding, try putting it in song or to music (King David did), and watch God move!!! (p. 3)

As is seen with this discourse, music is an important symbolic vehicle in the vision. When music puts man in the supernatural realm, it can cause The Word to activate and allows the plan to defeat the enemy and win eternal life take place.

As a whole, the plot of The Word rhetorical vision is compelling in its simplicity and practicality. The plot reduces the effort of the believer and makes knowing the path
to redemption attainable to anyone willing to open their mind to the true and pure Word of God. Furthermore, it further explains the symbolism inherent in the primary components of the rhetorical vision by demonstrating how they are dramatically positioned toward the Christian goal of salvation and eternal life. The analysis of the plot and action plan begins to explain the persuasiveness of the vision and, concurrently, how the vision interacts with the Good News Fellowship Church participant to gain human commitment to the movement and its symbolism. In order to fully analyze such persuasion and commitment processes, however, one must further explore the specify fantasy themes supporting The Word vision.
Fantasy Themes

Consistency Fantasy

Various themes surrounding the notion of consistency and integrity were chained through the congregation. It was seen in the discourse that consistency was a character trait symbolically given great emphasis not only in terms of the central protagonist, The Word, but also in similar fashion the secondary protagonist, Pastor Matt. The notions of consistency and integrity are seen as demonstrations that the "line" between God and the congregation is clean and without variation. This obviously is chained from The Word vision and assists in supporting that vision. The Word is given the persona attributes in part because it is pure and consistent with the Holy Spirit. Pastor Matt (1987) describes this attribute of the central protagonist by stating,

In the finding in 1948 when they discovered the Dead Sea scrolls, they found a copy of the writing of the book of Isaiah. And they checked that thing verbatim and it was without error and the next earliest copy they had was some 900 years older. And within a span of 900 years of being copied and copied and recopied there were no errors
Thus, the Consistency theme extends from the unchangeable, pure and "inerrant" characteristics of The Word. In The Word vision, the central protagonist is consistent in every respect and cannot even be altered—even by time. Such consistency prevents any misinterpretation and doctrinal filtration of the pure Gospel.

Interestingly, the fantasies involving consistency of The Word chain into congregation members' descriptions of Pastor Matt and leaders of the organization as well. In describing Pastor Matt and his role in the church organization, members repeated themes of integrity and consistency and stressed the importance of such traits in the Good News Fellowship Church ministry. A Group Three member exemplifies this by saying,

I would say a big part (of what keep's him here) would be the integrity of Pastor Matt. Integrity that stands for what is right, everything is right, everything that he wants to do within the church—he wants it to be done
according to scripture, according to believing in the Holy Spirit. That would be my reason. (p. 2)

As a matter of fact, many members reported that the only thing that would trigger a break from Good News Fellowship Church would be some glaring inconsistency on the part of Pastor Matt's life or inconsistency in his interpretations and teachings of The Word. One Group Three member sets the tone for this by stating,

As long as Pastor Matt remains the leadership here and stays true to the vision and continues to serve faithfully here, this church will continue and this church will be fulfilling...as long as he stays stable and true to the lord and consistent in his law of leadership...I believe that he really does hear from God but then again that's conditional. You know it's dependent on him remaining consistent in his walk. (pp. 11, 12)

The Consistency theme places more emphasis on scriptural and theological consistency than it does on personal indiscretions or faults. The theme places ultimate importance on Pastor Matt's harmony with The Word and his ability to be a unadulterated messenger of Scripture. For example, when asked
what might trigger a break-up between he and Good News Fellowship Church, one Group Two member replied,

   In my eyes, it would be a serious doctrine departure from what I could see in the Bible and the Holy Spirit confirmed in my heart was real and probably something that would maybe even go against the chance of the faith of the original doctrines of the church. Probably anything of that sort would do it, you know. But if it would be a personal sin, financial irresponsibility, none of these things I think would be something that couldn't be worked out or that would cause the relationship to break. It would have to be something on the scriptural level that we felt we couldn't overcome. (p. 11)

When asked the same question, a Group One participant replied, "Well, I suppose if Pastor Matt were teaching something that was scripturally wrong... you know, that would be obviously wrong" (p. 10). A Group Two member demonstrates the same belief by stating,

   I think the thing that would cause us to leave the church without the church's blessing would be if we feel the church's pastor starts walking in nonscriptural ways. (p. 6)
Although the Consistency theme was most dominant in the ways it expressed consistency in terms of The Word and Scripture, in some of the groups, it seemed to be expressed more in terms of personal characteristics and behaviors of Pastor Matt and other organizational leaders. Members differed in the ways they dramatized the Consistency theme and, as will be shown later in this analysis, this is seen as indicative of variations in the manner commitment group members adhered to the drama's symbolic components.

By identifying the Consistency fantasy, one can see the ways in which the fantasy interacts with the protagonists of the vision to ultimately support The Word drama. Although the Consistency fantasy seems to be dramatized most in relation to the vision's protagonists, The Word and Pastor Matt, it implicitly comments on the antagonists of the vision, Doctrine and denominational religion. The second identified fantasy theme of Decentralization is much less implicit in its dramatization of the vision's antagonists. In fact, it can be seen as a direct extension of the antagonist symbols in that the fantasy provides Good News Fellowship Church participants a way to defeat the enemy and remain true to the ultimate protagonist, The Word of God.
Decentralization Fantasy

A second fantasy theme is found in members' descriptions of Good News Fellowship Church's organizational structure and is labelled in the analysis as the Decentralization fantasy. This is an interesting fantasy theme in that it is seen chaining from the Doctrine antagonist aspects of The Word vision. Organizational members discussed the importance of a flattened organizational structure in which Pastor Matt is not dictated by committees, councils, or church boards. This symbol of organization structure places Pastor Matt in direct command independent of any of the evils of Doctrine and denominational religion. A Group Three member, for example, states,

And so there's a little bit less (structure) set down, a little bit less set down, a little bit less. It's Pastor Matt's doctrine that freewilled to him and the Holy Spirit is not any denominational doctrine, so there's a little bit less tradition and a little bit less ritualism and legalism involved in this church - Pastor Matt is given ultimate decision making authority in so far as that authority is bestowed upon him by the Holy Spirit. (p.3)
In this sense, Pastor Matt must again "stay close" to The Word not be hindered in his supernatural relationship to the Word by church hierarchy or chains of command. A Group Three member states,

...and he is in a strong communication with God. And even though he's a very soft spoken gentle person, he's very much in control here. He has a firm grip on where the fellowship is going, and he has the wisdom for it, you know, it's definitely coming through him and nobody else. (p. 7)

A Group Two member shares this sentiment and reflects adherence of such a drama by saying,

...what came out (from coming to Good News Fellowship Church) was humility and a teachable spirit is what this church had, and it still has what majority of churches seem to be in error today and particularly where we came from. Here there's an authority structure which didn't permit for fallibility in the leadership. (p. 4)

A Group One member exhibits the sharing of such a theme when she states,

There was, you know, if you needed money to build, it was there. If you needed a Pastor, they would send people
out for you to interview and then the whole congregation would make the choice. Not necessarily hearing from God, but that was the way that it was done, you know. Where in this church the government is quite different. The government is run by God, okay, the pastor is responsible only to God. We don't have a head church per say to go to. (p. 5)

Thus, the notion of a flattened organizational structure is consistently chained through the discourse and is an integral supporting aspect of the word vision.

Here too we see the protagonist-antagonist conflicts between The Word and Doctrine intertwined in this fantasy. By giving Pastor Matt ultimate authority to make decisions and flattening the organization in that manner, members rhetoric ally protect the organization from the doctrinal stumblings seen in the here-and-now. Basing a church organization's decisions on democratic principles and representative bodies versus the Word-filled command of Pastor Matt would only increase the potential for impurities and even indiscretions. The discourse stressed the ability of Pastor Matt to be an independent leader, not in need of any chain of command to make decision and address problems. In this
manner, a Group One member states,

And I think that, you know, we are under a protection here because of Pastor Matt being the pastor, and he's not afraid to confront people either because he confronts and issue when it needs to be confronted...and we were glad about that too. We were glad to see the strong leadership. (p. 4)

The member's husband agrees by stating,

You know that Pastor Matt, but I would say the scriptures are the same too, you know that the pastor is the head of the church and, from my background, a Lutheran background, the pastor was there only because there was also the church. (p. 5)

Another group member continues:

The advisory board will give advice, yet the final decision is the Pastor's, you know. The final decision still rests with the Pastor and he's responsible to God for that decision. And so he's very careful in the decision that he makes because he knows that he's going to have to answer for that. (p. 6)

Because such entities such as committees and decision-making panels are "natural world" creations they are symbols of man's
inability to accurately interpret The Word. They are far too removed from the central protagonist, The Word, and are symbols of the downfalls created in the here-and-now by the antagonist, doctrine, and the secondary antagonist, organized religion. This is demonstrated through a Group Two member's comments in which he is explaining why other religious institutions see Good News Fellowship Church as different or strange:

Because you mention this church, and it's like, you're from what church? It's like you are in a cult, you know, all by yourself. You got your own book that you read from. Everybody reads from the same book.

Q: Why do you think that is?

Because they are more organization oriented. It's like this is written in granite. You want it changed, go talk to the Pope. (p. 12)

Thus it is seen that symbolizing Good News Fellowship Church's structure as a flat organization lead by Pastor Matt becomes integral to the vision and is chained accordingly in the rhetoric. The Decentralization fantasy provides support and symbolic context for The Word vision and continues the rhetorical effort to protect the organization from doctrinal
impurities.

The Decentralization theme is also seen in members' descriptions of the leaders and heroes of the organization. When asked who the leaders or heroes of the church are, members' responses focused not on Pastor Matt, Deb or other individuals in tangible leadership roles, but instead on notions of day-to-day service and contribution. When asked who he saw as a leader or hero of the church a Group Three member states,

I would say Kurt Beversdorf, I guess, because I know when we come early on Sunday morning, he's getting fresh water, turning on the air conditioning, and I really don't even know what his official position is, but he's just here taking care of things and smiling and taking care of things and not expecting anything—he just does it. (p. 5)

Another Group Three member says,

This church never forgets the people in it...because they serve very unselfishly and very quietly and receive no recognition for it, but they just do it out of love the Lord and the church. (p.5)

When asked a similar question, a Group One participant stated,
Well, there's, you know, some people too I guess who you always see with that word of encouragement and always willing, you know, ready in a time of need or willing to help, you know, with people in church or even if they are in church, it's just the willingness to reach out if you need help....I was just thinking that it's hard to identify one group (as leaders/heroes of the organization). I think each member could be a representation of every part of the body that helps—ministry, leadership, the encourager. So if you look, just keep people you know. Without our custodians there would be some serious problems here and a cook who really loves to cook—those are all significant people. So I believe that in the scripture they are all very equally important to make this ministry function the way it does. We just can't just say, you know start at the top and cut them off or cut these people off, the danger would go out because it wouldn't work...and I think God honors each person's equal. (p. 11)

A Group Two member describes the leaders and heroes of the church in this way:

I think that (a leader/hero is) a solid person, I mean
that. Without having to mention them, you know, that fit into that category and the people that are, that you know will be there and will serve. You will want to follow them. (p. 16)

This is obviously an extension of the Decentralization, i.e. flattened structure theme, in that the discourse deemphasizes traditional organizational leadership models and views the serving committed member as an equal who can "lead" by serving in an ordinary way. One Group One member describes such a perception and compares it to his perception of other churches by stating,

You know, most other churches there is not a servant attitude there, and Pastor Matt has talked about it. But there is here and a lot of people that are here ask, what can I do? A lot of people, you know, and even in the daycare, they serve the community and the other things that are done. A servant kind of attitude. I think that's probably what we realize, it's more here to reach out the city of Stevens Point. (p. 8)

Another aspect of the Decentralization fantasy theme is seen in group members' dramatizations surrounding the notion
of freedom. Group members chained the consistency theme by speaking of the freedom that such a lack of hierarchy and control system brings to both themselves, to their pastor, and to God. In this regard, a Group Two member says,

We wanted him (Pastor Matt) to be really a strong spiritual leader and not controlled by other people...here he is not controlled by anybody...and I think, you know, we get a more direct line from the Lord. (p. 4)

Another member agrees by stating,

Another thing that I picked up on (in other churches) that's it's actually a denomination in control of the pastor. (p. 4)

This notion of freedom as related to the Decentralization themes is reflected in another Group Two members' comments:

I would be real concerned if we got into a big control thing which we have seen, and where, you know, you can't even really have your individual Christian life because of so much controlled by the organization...that is a cult. (p. 7)

Through such symbolization of freedom in Decentralization, vision participants rhetorically mobilize themselves to become aligned with The Word without any hierarchical restrictions or
limitations.

Furthermore, the Decentralization theme deemphasizes the church as an organizational entity and displays much caution and skepticism over a church structure's potential to be a source of impure doctrine. This can be seen in a Group Two member's comments:

Your commitment to God has to always be there and those priorities in your life always need to be there whether you have a church or you have no church. Those priorities always have to be there because sometimes a person, especially I think a young Christian sometimes can get caught up in, maybe an activity with the church almost to the point where it sacrifices maybe his relationship to God, you know. Your start doing the work of the Lord rather than the Lord doing the work, per se...and God did not set us in this church to be above those commitments, and the church is third or fourth or fifth depending on your particular situation in the list of priorities. (p. 14)

One can also see that the Decentralization theme instills members with an apathy toward historical stories,
personas, and conflicts which typically are employed in the creation of an organization's culture, i.e. social reality. Very little importance is placed on past events of the church of the story of the church's development. Also, little emphasis of the church's history is seen in the Foundations Class rhetoric or the Good News Fellowship Church Newsletter discourse. In fact, many group members were not even aware of any of the details surrounding the evaluation of Good News Fellowship Church from a small study group in the basement of the Best Western Motel. A Group Two member expressed such apathy towards history by stating,

The first thing I thought of when you asked the question (about the importance of the church's history) was partly that I didn't know anything about it. Also, immediately I analyzed why don't I hear any of that stuff? We are so forward and vision oriented that I don't look back, because there's enough to do...You can't look forward if you're looking back. (p. 16)

Another Group Two member responded with even more demonstration of how the apathy towards history and Decentralization theme are intertwined:

It's a good point. I think that one of the reasons is
turnover in church membership and is obviously a natural reason why a lot of people do not associate with the past. I think I'm standing on what's taken place before. Sometimes you can create a little elitism or a little group that forms and they have more prestige or something. I don't think that's something that we want. In fact, if we asked a member of our group, he probably wouldn't know which people were here from the start, because that's really never emphasized. (p. 17)

A group member agrees by stating,

And it shouldn't be either, because you don't want that time brought up, things develop and things are insinuated all the time, you know, a chance for parties to come in. We don't want that to happen. Plus, we are so orientated at looking, as Miranda said, at the future. What's happening now is to meet the needs of the people. You know, yesterday is not going to help us meet the needs of the people today and tomorrow. (p. 17)

Another elaborates by saying,

We should, if the lord wants us to, remember what he (God) has done. That's as much of the history as we need to remember. (p. 17)
Another couple of Group Two members again illustrate the symbolic relationship between the decentralization theme and the lack of concern for the church's history by stating:

A: I think winners have a tendency to just go forward without looking back. You get stuck in tradition too.

B: yeah, this the way we do it. The way we will always do it. Do you remember when we started this church and what we have done since we started. Not what God has done, but we have done since we've started the church...I think somebody coming into the church would feel very...

A: Intimidated?

B: Yeah, I'd feel like a real outsider because we were remembering when we did this and when we did that.(p. 15)

A Group One member also exhibits this aspect of the decentralization theme as it pertains to church history by stating,

The history, you know, doesn't concern so much. Yeah, we've been here and we seem to have been on track and we like that kind of history. I think history as being in a long-established church as, probably more relevant to some of the people in the community like, well who are they? Well, I guess from the Catholic background, it's
like the Catholic church has been here for thousands of years and hundreds of years, and so they got this background. (p. 13)

Through this discourse, we see that the Decentralization fantasy theme chained into the discussion of the church's history and served to support the explanations inherent in the rhetorical vision. By rhetorically downplaying history and the accomplishments of yesterday, members are once again able to protect themselves from the damaging effects of the antagonist, Doctrine, and the hierarchical features of organized religions whose beliefs are wrongly based on doctrine rather than on The Word of God.

The themes of Decentralization and Consistency serve as solid rhetorical support for the personae and action plan of The Word rhetorical vision. By adhering to the notion of decentralization, Good News Fellowship Church congregational members are better able to explain many of the conflicts in the here-and-now and also are able to enact the action plan. These fantasy themes gives the Christian the ability to explain how their Christian worlds became polluted and, at the same time, gives the Christian a more direct and accessible
avenue by which to reach out to God. By rhetorically decentralizing the symbolic structure encompassing The Word, Good News Fellowship Church members become closer to the protagonist source of salvation and, therefore, closer to the drama's action plan and eternal life. Decentralizing the vision makes the personae and action plan more available and more clear to participants. As the common Good News Fellowship Church member becomes less restricted and is given more freedom in the decentralized Christian setting, he/she is free to engage in the supernatural relationship with The Word and is, therefore, simultaneously activating the vision's action plan/plot. In The Word vision, the theme of Decentralization eliminates many of the common hierarchical barriers restricting participants within the Christian scene. Thus, by chaining such themes members can clear their way through such bureaucratic obstacles and become intimate with the protagonist, The Word.

The Consistency fantasy also serves to assure the vision's participants that The Word is being received in its most untampered form. By creating and justifying the integrity and consistency of Pastor Matt and the Word persona itself, drama participants rhetorically protect the
protagonist from the potential evils of doctrine and denominational religion.

The Consistency fantasy has explanatory power within the vision as well. Adhering to this theme allows participants to rationalize the failures of former spiritual leaders and spiritually defunct religious institutions. Through adhering to The Word vision, participants come to believe that it is the lack of integrity and consistency and the inability for leaders to "walk the way of God" that caused many of the controversies embroiled in the here-and-now. By chaining the Consistency theme, vision participants ensure themselves that they are immune from such problems and, at the same time, are able to better define what caused those problems in the first place.

Thus one can see that the two themes of Decentralization and Consistency are key symbolic support mechanisms within The Word vision. They serve to lay the rhetorical groundwork for the drama and also serve to distinguish the reality of The Word vision from those realities found within the here-and-now scene and antagonist personae. By adhering to the fantasy themes and chaining them within The Word vision, group members justify key aspects of the drama and, in the process, explain
to themselves why they are part of the drama.

The above fantasy theme analysis identifies the key dramatic components of The Word vision and explains how those components are rhetorically utilized to sustain the rhetorical vision. Upon identifying such components and discussing these rhetorical relationships, one must still ask, What makes The Word vision compelling or persuasive? or What purpose is the Word vision serving for those creating the social reality? In further addressing such questions, one can emphasize the utility of fantasy theme analysis as a methodology and perspective and, at the same time, shed further light on how the vision is working rhetorically in the lives of Good News Fellowship Church participants. The Word rhetorical vision is persuasive and purposeful in that it performs three functions: 1) it provides a simple, clear Christian action plan 2) it explains past failures/problems in organized christianity and 3) it barriers vision participants from human and worldly misinterpretation and adulteration of true Christian meaning. It is argued that these features of The Word vision drive the movement and compel participants to become committed to the symbols supporting the vision.
Researching the persuasive nature of Good News Fellowship Church's rhetorical vision and how symbolism effects member commitment is further accomplished in the next portion of the analysis. Chapter Three compares and contrasts the ways Commitment Focus Group members chain symbolic aspects of The Word vision. While this portion of the analysis does not purport to establish cause-effect relationships, it seeks to begin understanding how Good News Fellowship Church participants may display differing commitment levels through how they "talk" about their participation in the church movement. By methodologically treating such talk as rhetorical and persuasive, the comparison and contrast serves to further explain what The Word drama means to its participants.
CHAPTER THREE: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF FOCUS GROUPS

A. GROUP VARIATIONS IN PERSONAE DRAMATIZATIONS

B. GROUP VARIATIONS IN DECENTRALIZATION FANTASY DRAMATIZATIONS

C. GROUP VARIATIONS IN CONSISTENCY FANTASY DRAMATIZATIONS
Through the fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Newsletter rhetoric, Foundations Class rhetoric, and focus group interview data, The Word rhetorical vision was outlined and discussed in terms of how it brings meaning to movement participants and compels them towards identification with Good News Fellowship Church. The next portion of the rhetorical analysis examines how movement participants talk about their participation in the church. By analyzing such talk in the context of The Word vision, it is argued that the talk itself is rhetorical in that it is used to assist movement participants in making sense of their participation in the church and also creates and reinforces the social reality upon which such sense-making belief systems rest.

Specifically, the comparison and contrast of focus group rhetoric studies the commitment level stratifications obtained through subject responses to the Survey Questionnaire shown in Appendix C. As discussed in Chapter One, the responses to this Survey Questionnaire were used to establish focus interview groups on the basis of self-reported commitment behaviors - Group Three representing the highest scores and Group One representing the lowest scores. Although the use of the Survey Questionnaire and stratification of subjects
along commitment level self-report measures does not suggest any immediate behavior prediction capability, comparing and contrasting the commitment focus group discourse serves the purpose of identifying patterns of variation in the way movement participants are talking about their participation in the church, i.e. their identification with The Word vision. Studying those differences and variations in the context of the fantasy theme analysis of The Word vision enables the analyst to address the notion of commitment as conceptualized in this rhetorical methodology. Such patterns display the different ways movement participants identify with The Word drama and, therefore, further explain the processes by which participants are accepting the vision's message and identifying to the symbols found in the vision. Although it is not suggested that the survey questionnaire data can necessarily predict or empirically correlate with vision identification and commitment, it is suggested that identifying patterns of symbolism through the focus group rhetoric sheds further light on the process by which movement members are persuaded by The Word vision.

In analyzing how the commitment groups compared in their dramatizations of The Word vision, two primary variations were
noted. Such variations took place primarily when group members discussed how they see their participation and commitment to the church. The first such variation centered around group members' dramatization of the personae within The Word drama. When discussing how The Word, Pastor Matt, and Doctrine/organized religions play in their belief systems, group members differed in the strength by which they shared and chained the personae components of the rhetorical vision. Specifically, Group One and Two members spoke about the personae in different terms and oftentimes in more personal and social need contexts rather than the theological context of The Word vision. The second most distinguishable variation in the group discourse, is seen in the way group members discussed aspects of the Decentralization and Consistency fantasy themes. Commitment group members differed in the way they expressed the fantasies and, again, placed the themes of Decentralization and Consistency in differing contexts. This, it is argued, is another indicator that there are identifiable differences in the ways group members, who are stratified along commitment levels, chain and share the fantasy themes supporting the rhetorical vision.
This is not to say that group members displayed more or less commitment to the church organization through their rhetoric but, instead, the comparison/contrast points out that involvement in an organization can serve many different needs and organizational commitment can be gained through many different sources. Although it is argued that group members did display variations in the way they were identifying with The Word vision and the strength by which they adhered to that vision, the fact that the church organization serves social or interpersonal needs for certain members only is explanatory in reference to the rhetorical vision. In other words, it is understood that a Good News Fellowship Church participant may not identify with the movement's rhetorical vision in total, but may instead identify with specific components of the vision in a manner which serves social need satisfaction purposes. It is important for the movement to understand the vision, however, and the various ways the symbols comprising the vision are being used in participants' lives for sense-making purposes. For the rhetorical vision to be viable and sustainable it must in some fashion remain explanatory, compelling, and meaningful for its participants.
GROUP VARIATIONS IN PERSONAE DRAMATIZATIONS

One of the most notable variations in the group dramatizations was seen in the strength of the group members' identification with the vision's antagonists. As discussed above, The Word vision positions The Word against religious Doctrine and, secondarily, denominational religion. The strength by which members identified themselves in contrast with such a rhetorical opponent seemed to differ widely amongst the commitment groups. We know that groups oftentimes strengthen their own sense of identity through comparing themselves with other "outside" groups. In the Burkean sense this is described as identification through antithesis. Burke (1950) describes this language process as one which allows a person or group to define themselves by that which they are not. Such a notion is important in Bormann's treatment of social reality as well and is explanatory in its application to the fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church commitment groups.

Group Three members appeared more agitated with other denominational religions and, most notably, the Catholic church. Many reiterated stories and situations which highlighted their uniqueness and purity as compared to other
so-called Christians who were adhering to an adulterated version of the gospel. Such rhetoric was most evident in Group Three. When asked about significant events or milestones in the church's history one Group Three member, for example, recalled a Satan worship group which was quelled through the work of Good News Fellowship Church. She states,

The only thing that I can think of that I really know stories about is something about a certain evening or something that was a Satan worship group. During the, you know, one of the solstices or whatever, there's a group in town, one of the Satan worship groups or whatever. My roommate found out about the whole thing and contacted Pastor Matt, and they went too and, they went to the place where they were supposed to have the human sacrifice and, you know, found out it was called off because whoever was supposed to be the sacrifice found out about it (Pastor Matt's intervention). Pastor Matt and those other guys being there too messed up his plans. (pp. 8,9)

Here it appears this Group Three member identifies with Good News Fellowship Church through the symbolization of a Satanic group. Even more importantly, she dramatizes a Satanic group
which was defeated by the powers of Pastor Matt and Good News Fellowship church members. Of course, a Satanic group is a strong symbol of the antagonist — much stronger than the antagonist references typically used in Groups One and Two. Other group members typically discussed more denominational and doctrinal groups as the antagonist. Here, however, we see a much stronger opponent discussed involving the archetypal epitome of "what the Good News Fellowship Church member is not," a Satanic group.

A couple Group Three members engage in an interaction which demonstrates the symbolic strength of the antagonist in their version of the vision. This discussion centers on other church denominations in the community and, most notably, the Catholic church. Specifically, one member states,

I just think people are bonded to that religion (Catholicism) and don't have a clue about salvation or the relationship they could have with God. (p. 10)

A fellow Group Three member responds,

There is a strong religious inoculation in this town. People are inoculated from religion from their traditional churches and especially catholicism. You know, they have been told that they are going to be saved
by baptism by St. Jude and Saint so-on and so forth, and Mother Mary and all this stuff, but you try to share the real gospel with them and it's kind of like well, you're a little too intense for me, I just, you know, go to my church and do my vows and drink all week long and go back to church again next Sunday and that's good enough for me. It's just like, they just inoculate it, the religion, so that they got just enough to think that they are okay, but they are totally ignorant to The Word. (p. 11)

The other member responds,

Ignorant...There is just so much ignorance in the world. Here we are sitting, and they don't know the truth at all. They haven't been taught, and they don't believe in what kind of ground we're standing on. (p. 11)

Although this interaction does not approach the level of the other Group Three example in its references to Satanism, there was obvious strong emotional dis-identification occurring in the interaction and a strong symbolization of the Catholic church as representative of the doctrinal evils lurking in organized denominational religion. The two members both verbally and nonverbally displayed outward sarcasm and
cynicism in their discussion about the Catholic church—a rhetorical marker for a strong symbolic sense of disapproval for the antagonist, Doctrine.

Group Two members seemed to bring the antagonist down to levels of their personal experience and were less caught up in the larger theological and theological conflicts inherent in the vision. A Group Two member illustrates this by saying, I had been a, what should I call it, a door mat for eight years in the church I was in, and it spiritually backfired, destroyed a lot of things that God wanted to do, and I decided I was going to change it around and let God talk to Pastor Matt instead. (p. 4)

Another Group Two member states, I've been in quite a few churches where, you know, I don't know if they just don't know you're there or what, but you're lucky if anybody even smiles at you. The first time here, everybody starts shaking your hand and, you know, and hugging you and all kinds of stuff which is kind of neat. (p. 5)

We see in Group Two more comparisons to outside churches placed in the context of personal feelings and individual satisfactions as compared to the doctrinal distinctions
expressed by some Group Three members. One could argue that this discrepancy is indicative of variations in the strength by which the group members identify with the vision and, specifically, with the antagonists of Doctrine and denominational religion. Group Two members demonstrated less strict identification with the antagonist-protagonist grounding the drama. Group Three members obviously identify with the vision by looking at that doctrinal distinctions and theological impurities in other organized forms of Christianity. They expressed outward distaste for the religious practices and theological underpinnings of such organized religion and, specifically, the Catholic church. Group Two members, on the other hand, described such identification processes in terms of individual human feelings such as personal inattention, alienation, welcomness, and love-aspects of the vision which are rhetorically more peripheral in nature.

Group One members showed the least adherence to the theological antagonist-protagonist conflict. They were most likely to express their participation to the church in social need satisfaction terms. The Group One discourse revealed a tendency to attribute the participation in Good News
Fellowship Church more along these lines instead of the lines of hardened attachment to The Word persona. One Group One member directly distinguishes the two sources of commitment by stating,

My terminology was the camaraderie of the church and the people here and they way they relate (reason he came to Good News Fellowship Church). In my particular case, it was not primarily the basis of the teaching directly in the bible itself, it was more the people that initially caught my interest. (p. 2)

Another Group One member describes his initial attraction to the church organization by stating,

Well, I got here in June—my girlfriend goes here, well, she's not my girlfriend any more, but she goes here.

Well, it worked out for the better, I mean, that's ok—well, she helped me find the Lord. I was never a church go-er before and she sorta talked me into going to the church because she used to always try to talk me into going to church. The first time I went to church was a couple of years ago and the only real reason I came was because she came here and I did that for a couple of months and then she broke up with me and I came because I
wanted to keep seeing her. (p. 2)

Another Group One member described the reason for her becoming a part of Good News Fellowship Church by saying,

I feel Pastor Matt has a kind heart and he'll do anything for you. He's just, you know, he's our shepherd... he's just a real terrific person and pastor. And he's a friend as well as a pastor. (p. 3)

Another Group One member said,

My stepson, Reggy, is in school here. I could not be happier with the type of education he's receiving. I went to public schools my entire life and I think I didn't turn out that bad but I think to myself that for the type of education he's receiving, I'll make whatever sacrifices I have to bar none, to make sure he stays here-so that keeps me here. (p. 3)

By discussing their participation in Good News Fellowship Church in terms of "camaraderie," girlfriend relationships, the personality of Pastor Matt, and the attributes of the daycare operation, these Group One members talk about their experience with the movement more in terms of how that participation serves social, interpersonal, or family purposes. While not indicative of a lesser commitment to the
church organization, such talk may indicate that the rhetorical vision driving the movement may be less persuasive for these group members as compared to others.

With these examples, one can see the groups did vary in the way members talked about the antagonists and protagonists in The Word vision. Such variations as revealed in the focus group discourse are indicative of different meanings being attached to the personae making up The Word vision. If, for example, The Word is the primary protagonist in the vision and is directly opposed to Doctrine as the fantasy theme analysis suggests, group members who identify with the vision and this antagonist-protagonist conflict would seemingly reveal this adherence in their discourse and their discussions about their participation in the organization. As was demonstrated, Group One and Group Two members seemed to define their participation and thus their commitment to the symbols of the drama with a tendency to stray from the central protagonist/antagonist personae as defined in the rhetorical vision. Instead, they discussed their participation and the personae more in terms of personal and social need satisfaction versus the theological debate inherent in The Word vision.

The comparison and contrast of the ways group members
differed in their dramatizations of the personae within The Word vision further explain how the movement serves to explain Christian issues to movement participants. The explanatory power of the Decentralization fantasy theme is next explored in similar fashion. The comparison and contrast of the ways group members discuss the symbols of decentralization both illuminates the processes of persuasion and commitment driving the movement and explains how those processes may differ between the commitment groups.
GROUP VARIATIONS IN DECENTRALIZATION FANTASY DRAMATIZATION

Group One and Two members also seemed to apply the Decentralization theme to their satisfaction needs more so than along the theological or Biblical themes grounding The Word vision. Here, too, it can be argued that Group One and Two members identified with symbols closer to their personal day-to-day lives and those which may be more concrete such as organizational structure. A Group Two member displays this when she engages in comparisons between Good News Fellowship Church and former churches by stating,

See that's what happened too in the denominational church we came from and they just recently completely dissolved on a national level (group laughter). Um, and like Nancy was saying, some of the people got used to that authority. They got used to that power, and because we were 18, 19 and 20 year olds at the time we let them do it because we loved God. Um, something happened to them and they destroyed it. They major ruined and it all fell apart because they were calling the shots. They were not teachable. (p. 7)

Another Group Two member displays commitment to the Decentralization theme and a similar identification process by
stating,

That direct line to God is answered. That direct line to God's praises becomes interesting. He (Pastor Matt) doesn't preach that he's got more in line with God than anybody else, but he understands it's a positional thing to be a pastor and not a, whatever it is in the other term, a hierarchical position. (p. 9)

Another Group Two member displays an interesting combination of the group's tendency to identify in terms of personal needs and the Decentralization fantasy. She states,

He (Pastor Matt) always smiles and says "Hi." He doesn't have a handshake like a dead fish (group laughter). (p. 8)

A fellow Group Two member responds,

You know, as you go by, you know.. he's not like a politician, it's not like when you meet the Pope where you take and bow and kiss his ring and you proceed along. (p. 8)

Here we see these two Group Two members chaining themes which allow them to identify with the Word vision on both planes of personal need satisfaction and the Decentralization fantasy. The two members discussed Pastor Matt as a caring genuine
secondary protagonist who is not bound by the hypocritical rituals and pomposity of more hierarchical religious figures, such as the Pope.

While the Decentralization fantasy symbolizes an organizational structure flattened allowing movement participants nearer proximity and more access to the protagonist, The Word, the Consistency fantasy ensures integrity and purity in the deliverance of The Word. The ways focus group members discuss the notions of integrity and purity differ in focus group rhetoric in a manner similar to how the groups differed in the dramatization of the Decentralization fantasy. Such patterns point out that Good News Fellowship Church participants are chaining the dramatic components of The Word vision into their personal lives in unique, yet meaningful ways.
GROUP VARIATIONS IN CONSISTENCY FANTASY DRAMATIZATIONS

The focus groups demonstrated similar patterns of variation found in the way they chained the Consistency theme. While Group Three members stressed consistency in terms of scriptural and doctrinal integrity, the other two groups seemed to symbolize the notion of integrity in more personal and behavioral terms. They positioned their discussions of Consistency in relationship to desirable personal characteristics, most often as exhibited by Pastor Matt. For example, a Group Two member discussed the importance of Pastor Matt's "walk" by stating,

> What we were really looking for, too, was a solid personal life of the pastor"...mine (reason for leaving the Good News Fellowship Church) would be our pastor being involved, not walking, even though in the big ministries in the same order, you have to forgive these... mend, but his walk is what really is one of, something very important to me in this church, because I know what he speaks he lives..integrity, his integrity, his walk you know.... (pp. 3, 4)
Overall, Group Two showed an interesting combination of variation in ways members dramatized and chained the Consistency and Decentralization themes. At times, Group Two members exhibited adherence to the consistency theme by discussing it in scriptural terms yet, at other times, group Two Members expressed the same theme in more personal and behavioral contexts. Such ambivalence in the members' identification with the main themes of the Word vision may be reflective of moderation in the commitment level and possibly moderation in the members' adherence to some of the central components of the Word vision. The same moderation may have been shown in the way Group Two members seemed to express their participation in Good News Fellowship Church in ways which stressed the satisfaction of social and personal needs. Oftentimes, Group Two members discussed their commitment and involvement to the church in more emotional terms as opposed to Group One members who seemed to define their commitment more along the strict lines of the vision and dramatic components involving "The Word". One Group Two member, for example, states,

I definitely look forward to every person here in the church as my friend, but there's more than that. They are
my brother, sister, and the Lord. (p. 8)

Another Group Two member says,

I know if I am out shopping or something and I see someone from the paper mill, you know, I say hi and that's it. If I see someone from this church, something leaps inside of me. You know, you're like, oh gee, you want to go over there and just, you know, shake their hand. There's something there that brings this to be almost like a family. (p. 9)

When asked what would trigger a break-up between them and the church, many Group Three members mentioned things that would directly impact the rhetorical cohesion of The Word vision. Such things such as the Pastor's theological inconsistency with the Bible, disagreements over meaning of the word, church members who were not "walking" with the word, etc. When asked this same question, however, a Group Two member replied in more emotional, optimistic and personal need satisfaction manner:

I don't think there's really anything that would happen here because, I don't know, we are not going to leave the body. I would want to stay in the body and not leave it because of some situation that could be changed. Because
God could work it out, you know, he answers to anything.

(p. 8)

This differentiating characteristic can be seen on the one hand as demonstrative of some lack of rhetorical cohesion yet, on the other hand, as rhetorically promising for Good News Fellowship Church. It would appear that some group members seem to be chaining the vision into more personal and behavior aspects of their day-to-day realities while others are defining their participation strictly along the rhetorical action plan in the word vision—namely their rhetorical struggle to get more in line with The Word and, in the process, remain consistent with the central protagonist in the vision. For example, a Group Two member begins to show signs of his chaining the vision into public rhetorical communities in his discussions about home Bible study groups and social problems down on the Stevens Point "square." He states,

I know, too, he (God) believes in what I'm doing over on John's Drive...And, right now, I'm just getting started. I haven't set it up yet and Pastor Matt is going to help me with some of the materials that I need like tapes, and stuff like this, videos and stuff like this that help me. I am going to study it first so I know what I'm saying
and then later on I may be calling on someone to help me with it, to help me with my hard spots... God is over my life and he's working every direction to see if things are going to work for me. I'm to work through him on John's Drive. (p. 17)

Later in the interview the same group member states,

I guess a big concern of mine is the downtown square. That's my concern. I know we had Pastor Matt preach on the square that day in the summer. I heard slamming doors on the taverns and on a couple of apartments. If this weather would straighten out, I'll take my tape recorder and my big speaker of the tape recording and play those tapes all over at the square. (p. 18)

This is likely indicative of the vision's evolution and adaptation to realities outside the church organization. Furthermore, it may be representative of congregational members' efforts to make the vision relevant to their social and political realities. The group member discourse which expresses The Word vision in terms of its ability to satisfy social needs and address public concerns/issues varies along commitment group lines and is likely reflective of differences in the ways members are rhetorically defining their own
participation in the organization and, ultimately, the organization/movement itself.

Through comparison and contrast of some of the focus group discourse, i.e. rhetoric, variances in the ways the personae and they key fantasy themes of Decentralization and Consistency were dramatized are analyzed. Such analysis again focuses attention on the notion or organizational commitment as it is rhetorically addressed in the study. By illustrating some of the variances and identifying the symbolic importance of such variances in the context of The Word rhetorical vision, this portion of the analysis both further explains and further complicates the conceptualization of organizational commitment. On the one hand, it further illustrates the power of the rhetorical vision and highlights the various ways the movement is bringing meaning to the lives of its participants. On the other hand, it highlights the difficulty in studying the notion of organizational commitment in that the comparison and contrast of focus groups demonstrated that group members may remain committed to the organization while, at the same time, not completely adhering the movement's rhetorical vision. This complication represents a methodological
obstacle to the rhetorical analyst which will need to be addressed in future rhetorical analyses of organizational commitment issues.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

B. APPLYING THE RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

D. IMPLICATIONS FOR SYMBOLIC CONVERGENCE THEORY

E. IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT
A common criticism of the type of fantasy theme analysis and rhetorical methodology used in this case study of Good News Fellowship Church is that the research findings are neither heuristic for the field of communication, nor do they hold any practical use for organizational participants or leaders. These challenges are addressed in this, the final chapter of the study. By revisiting the Research Questions and evaluating the research findings in reference to those questions, both the limitations and the strengths of the research are appreciated. A further test of the practicality of the research is performed by making a sort of "trial application" of the findings to practical organizational issues such as those raised by Rob Schenck's (1988) organizational evaluation. Such an application of the research also offers Good News Fellowship Church a better understanding how organizational development and change may impact the symbolic belief system described in this study as The Word rhetorical vision. Reviewing the research findings and testing their application to Good News Fellowship Church, naturally lends itself to comment on the implications of the research for Good News Fellowship Church, the field of organizational communication, and Bormann's fantasy theme perspective and method.
RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

To adequately summarize the findings of this fantasy theme analysis of Good News Fellowship Church, one must return to the research mission of the analysis as set forth in the Research Questions noted in Chapter One. These questions were stated as follows:

1) What is the dominant rhetorical vision being shared by Good News Fellowship congregational members?

   a) What comprises the dramatistic components of the rhetorical vision, i.e. scene, personae, and plot/action plan?

   b) What specific fantasy themes are chained and shared by Good News Fellowship Church participants?

2) Do the three commitment groups demonstrate deviations from or variations to The Word vision and the fantasy themes of decentralization and consistency? If so, what do such variations mean in terms of understanding the commitment processes within Good News Fellowship Church?

3) Is Bormann's fantasy theme analysis effective in researching organizational communication and the notion of organizational commitment?
The findings of this study will be discussed in the order stated above and, similarly, in the order they were presented in the analysis.

A response to Research Question #1 was offered in Chapter Two of the analysis. The investigation of Foundations Class rhetoric, focus group interview discourse, and Good News Fellowship Newsletters revealed a common shared rhetorical vision labelled throughout the analysis as "The Word" rhetorical vision. This rhetorical vision offers participants a clear path to redemption and salvation - one much clearer and more defined than the Christian here-and-now reality. It is argued that by adhering to The Word vision, Good News Fellowship Church members both protect themselves from the complexities and contradictions of this scene and, at the same time, provide themselves a direct, clear, and simple path to God.

In describing The Word rhetorical vision, Chapter Two also constitutes a positive response to Research Question #1a. Through the analysis, it was found that an identifiable scene, personae structure, and plot/action plan are demonstrated in the rhetoric. These features of The Word rhetorical vision constitute the key dramatistic components constructing and
maintaining the dominant social reality of Good News Fellowship Church. The Word vision is analyzed as a drama which church members employ to address the complexities and ambiguities in the Christian scene. As was discussed, this scene includes much role ambiguity and a blurring of once-defined personae and action plans. Emerging from this scene is The Word as the central protagonist. In the rhetorical vision, The Word is symbolized as change-agent and is bestowed the power to independently chart the path to righteousness and guide Christians to eternal life. Pastor Matt serves as the deliverer of The Word and, interestingly, takes on a secondary persona role in the vision. The issues of integrity and consistency which are symbolized in reference to Pastor Matt, however, illustrate the rhetorical importance of the Pastor Matt persona as it relates to The Word. The antithesis of The Word is Doctrine, a symbol of Biblical meaning and God's message gone awry. Doctrine is exemplified in the rhetoric as a persona which, much like The Word, has human-like attributes and change-agent powers. This dramatization of Doctrine defines a persona that has the power to pollute and misconstrue God's Word and, therefore, the persona represents Christian misinterpretation in its most hypocritical form.
Because The Word independently holds life-altering power, the plot/action plan simplifies the path to God and eternal life and empowers common Christians to achieve supernatural harmony with the protagonist. It does so by affording vision adherents nearer proximity and easier access to the Christian ideal. Furthermore, the action plan strips away the environmental clutter and hierarchical resistance which potentially prevent the Christian from harmony and alignment with God's Word.

Chapter Two further explains the persuasiveness and attractiveness of The Word rhetorical vision through an analysis of two central fantasy themes: 1) Consistency and 2) Decentralization. In doing so, it affirmatively answers Research Question #1b and sheds further light on the explanatory power of the fantasies for those sharing and chaining them. The theme of Consistency was a strong component of the rhetoric and symbolized protagonist personae that were immune from the hazards of the "natural world." The Decentralization fantasy positioned vision participants nearer to the protagonist and, at the same time, barriered them against the evil effects of Doctrine and denominational religion. The fantasies assist drama participants by helping
them cope with many of the unresolved issues in the here-and-now scene and, more importantly, provide them a belief system which propels them forwards towards their Christian goal of eternal life. The analysis of the fantasies supporting The Word vision demonstrates how the processes of commitment are embedded within the social reality structure of Good News Fellowship Church, and can be understood through a fantasy theme examination of that symbolic belief system.

Research Question #2 requires further investigation of such commitment processes and is equivocally answered in Chapter Three. While the focus groups did display some interesting deviations and variations of dramatization of The Word vision, admittedly, the methodology employed did not provide for predictive or cause-effect conclusions regarding organizational commitment. Although it was the original intent of the research to, in some fashion, "test" fantasy theme analysis with an objective correlative measure of commitment, the survey questionnaire did not have the methodological sophistication required to draw such research conclusions. It is arguable, however, that the comparison and contrast of focus groups do display interesting features of the persuasion process and, therefore, further explains the
appeal and sense-making potential Good News Fellowship Church holds for its members. In that sense, the study does further our understanding of how the notion of organizational commitment can be addressed through rhetorical analysis and how commitment can be analyzed in reference to a rhetorical vision such as The Word vision.

The final Research Question, Research Question #3, is largely addressed in the research conclusions and implications of the analysis and a direct response to the question is presented in this Chapter of the study (Chapter Four). As a whole, this study attempted to methodologically position the concepts of organizations and commitment in a fashion conducive to rhetorical analysis and, ultimately, useful for both the researchers and practitioners of organizational communication. Although the study had some difficulty arriving at an objectified verification or validation of fantasy theme analysis as a methodology (as referenced above), it was not the primary intent of the research to quantify the notion of commitment nor was it the primary research mission to predict commitment variables in relation to Bormann's method. It is argued that the standard that must be applied in the ultimate evaluation of the use of Bormann's method is:
a) Did fantasy theme analysis academically explain why some Good News Fellowship Church members become committed to the organization? and, most importantly, b) Is the fantasy theme analysis findings useful for Good News Fellowship Church participants - did it tell them something they might not have already known? While the case study make-up of the analysis does have its limitations in terms of the generalizability of the findings, the analysis did provide one explanation of how group dramatization of here-and-now issues serve to attract, maintain, and compel human participation in the Good News Fellowship Church movement. In this regard, the analysis furthers our understanding of how commitment processes may be working in religious institutions and, most specifically, those Christian organizations with fundamentalist groundings. Most importantly, the use of fantasy theme analysis in this study does bring useful understandings to those most interested, Good News Fellowship Church participants. Church leadership will likely have a better sense for how the rhetoric of the church brings meaning to church members and, in the process, can better anticipate the effects of organizational development and change on the belief system upon which that sense-making appeal rests.
In an effort to validate the practicality of the findings and, at the same time, further investigate Research Question #3, the next portion of this Chapter "tests" the utility of the fantasy theme analysis findings by integrating the rhetorical analysis with the organizational development critique provided by Rob Schenck (1988). This application analyzes Mr. Schenck's recommendations in the context of The Word rhetorical vision and contemplates the organizational interplay between the sustenance of The Word vision and the need for organizational development and change. At the same time, this portion provides an example of how Bormann's methodology can be used in conjunction with other methodologies to assist the organization in better understanding itself and better anticipating the consequences of its actions.
APPLYING THE RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In 1988, Rob Schenck World Outreach Ministries performed an organizational analysis of Good News Fellowship Church (Jan 25, 1988). In an effort to make this rhetorical analysis useful for Good News Fellowship Church and assist congregation members in better understanding the nature of their participation in the organization, Schenck's organizational development comments will be examined in light of the rhetorical findings. This is done with the assumption that many of Schenck's comments and suggestions are representative of common organizational needs in a church organization as youthful and, in some ways, developmentally immature as Good News Fellowship Church. Schenck's pragmatic findings and practical criticisms can be better understood and implemented if Good News Fellowship Church assesses them in terms of how they will effect the development and success of The Word rhetorical vision. Furthermore, the integration of the methods and findings highlights the possible interplay between pragmatic organizational needs and the group maintenance of The Word vision. By juxtaposing two of Mr. Schenck's findings with the rhetorical analysis presented here, the rhetorical findings can be examined in the context of these developmental
needs and will be insightful for Good News Fellowship Church as a developing, maturing organization.

First, in his report, Mr. Schenck suggests the following:

To begin with you need to consolidate your flow chart. You have at least 10 leaders in horizontal positions. This means you must spend quality time with each one on a regular basis praying, guiding, directing, reporting, trouble shooting, etc. That's quite a job! My guess is that you are not able to spend the time which you should, and that it appears overwhelming to you to consider doing so. (p. 2)

Schenck goes on to recommend that Good News Fellowship Church setup new ministry posts, hold regular Department Head meetings, train leaders to deal with problems or challenges in an efficient manner, and appoint an "Office Manager."

Additionally, Schenck urges Pastor Matt to cut down on the time spent on administrative duties.

Given the chaining of the Decentralization theme through the congregation, it is no surprise that there is a predominant "horizontal" structure to the administration of
Good News Fellowship Church. As was evidenced above, this is a central rhetorical feature of The Word vision and is a persuasive aspect of the Good News Fellowship Church drama. A possible rhetorical conflict is seen, however, in the implementation of Schenck's suggestions as outlined above. Such conflict will need to be rhetorically addressed for the changes to be made successfully. Schenck appears to be suggesting more delegation of decision making and administrative responsibility, less "horizontal" communication, and more meetings and group communication. Upon reviewing the fantasy theme analysis and the dramatic dynamics of The Word vision, one can see some potential rhetorical conflict between members' dramatization of Doctrine as the antagonist and Schenck's suggestions for more democratic structure in the organization. This is not to say the Schenck's suggestions are in error, but Good News Fellowship Church will have to examine the rhetorical consequences of such change and investigate ways to incorporate the recommendations into The Word social reality without restricting the vision's sense-making appeal.

Schenck's comments are also demonstrative of a potential conflict between congregational growth and development and the
Doctrine persona. In dramatizing the battle between The Word and Doctrine, Good News Fellowship Church members rhetorically identify define their self-image by comparing themselves to "organized" forms of religions. Schenck's recommendations reminds us that, in the process, such features of the drama may be inadvertently placing barriers to congregational growth. As was evidenced by the fantasy theme analysis, Doctrine is the central antagonist and, in symbolizing that antagonist, group members showed great distaste and, is some ways, fear for organized religion and religious hierarchy.

For example, one Group Two member states,

I don't think we will be able to grow a lot bigger than we are without having some division...I don't even know what to call them, just creating a group of subpastoral, you know, home group kind of arrangement. I don't know, but churches, they do not get big based without dividing down into very specific individual groups. They just don't keep that personal touch—it's not a church anymore. (p. 22)

Here we see that the distaste for church layers, groups, and hierarchy is seen as a potential consequence for church growth and, therefore, as mutually exclusive relationship between
growth and Doctrine. This rhetorical conflict between growth and centralization will need to be symbolically addressed through the maturation of the Good News Fellowship Church vision. A better understanding of the dramatic components of the pervasive rhetorical vision shared by Good News Fellowship Church participants will, hopefully, enable the church to effectively implement Schenck's growth/development suggestions without disrupting the saliency of the drama.

A second suggestion offered by Schenck pertains to "Increasing Visitor Retention" (p. 9) and has relevance to the rhetorical findings of this study. Here one of Schenck's suggestions is to "Create a 'whole person' Church" (p. 10). He suggests that the church must not only meet "spiritual" needs but social and physical needs as well (p. 10). He goes on to point out many practical ways that Good News Fellowship Church can better reach out to the community and become relevant in the lives of nonbelievers. Through the rhetorical analysis similar symbolic needs and areas for possible further rhetorical exploration were identified (e.g. Chapter Three). The need for the types of changes that Schenck is suggesting was borne out in some of the discourse obtained from congregation members in which some dissatisfaction was
expressed over lack of social and personal needs satisfaction. A Group Two member, for example states,

I think there's too much of a superficial relationship that is, you know, well maybe we'll visit on Sundays a little bit. Maybe we'll have lunch together on Sundays or something like that, but that's about as far as it goes, you know...we've tried to reach out. We've tried, you know, a relationship to us is a little more than just a casual thing, so I think that's something we have not, at least we personally, in my vision, the church has not developed yet. Than needs to come to the point where we can go through persecution together...we're used to deeper relationships. (p. 10)

Another member states,

We invited many, many, many people over for dinner on Sunday. we had not been invited back once. I mean, I, we really just had to fight through that. (p. 11)

Such discourse is a sign that The Word vision may not be encompassing members' lives outside the church as much as some participants would desire. Other members' comments displayed adherence to The Word vision to the extent that such personal and social needs concerns were totally discounted or
downplayed. One Group Two member, for example, states,
And...but to leave the church, you know, I don't have any
emotional attachment to the church. I mean if God calls
me, I'll go to the church he sends us. you know, that's
exciting. That's great. That's great. (p. 7)
Here this Group Two member seems to express excitement with
the vision and The Word's ability to speak to him about a
possible change in church organization. In the process,
however, he may be expresses a lack of social and personal
needs satisfaction. In fact, he expresses a complete
discounting of the church's role in addressing such issues.
In the process, the member may be identifying with the
fantasies and The Word vision to the extent that other
potential areas of commitment development are being ignored
and, therefore, not developed in the rhetoric.

Applying fantasy theme analysis findings to Good News
Fellowship Church in combination with Schenck's suggestions,
demonstrates that the research findings of this study, while
rhetorical and laden with fantasy theme terminology, can serve
a very practical purpose for the organization. Such
practicality is further assessed by examining the
implications the research holds for Good News Fellowship
Church as an organization and social movement.
IMPLICATIONS FOR GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

As was illustrated in the fantasy theme analysis case study of Good News Fellowship Church, the rhetorical vision of Good News Fellowship Church is introspective in nature. Through the analysis, it was shown that the dramas comprising the church's rhetorical vision appear to be chaining inward as opposed to chaining outward into a larger public. Congregational members' discourse revealed dramatic reenactments of the Decentralization and Consistency themes but only to the extent they further the vision's action plan which is designed to move the participant rhetorically closer to The Word. While such dramas are certainly desirable to the church, they may not, at this point in time, be moving movement participants towards action. Furthermore the rhetorical vision of "The Word" and the supporting fantasy themes do more to persuade members to congregate and look inward than it does to compels them to action. This lack of clear plot and action plan is not surprising given the relative youth and immaturity of the vision of Good News Fellowship Church. For the church movement to reach the greater public, however, the vision will need to instill dramas which are more generic and persuasive to the general
public so that they may effectively chain into the public arena. In this fashion, the vision would move participants to "act" as much as it is currently moving them to congregate.

This is not to say, however, that Good News Fellowship Church is not addressing pertinent social issues. This attention to here-and-now conflicts is evident in the development of its day care, elementary school, and its active role in the abortion drama. The rhetoric of the movement, however, does not appear to be chaining in the same direction. The discourse examined in this study exemplified a movement which was rhetorically addressing these issues by dramatizing them in a manner which served to define the movement's self-image and develop the theology in the vision, rather than clearly laying out a dramatic plot designed around action for the future. Setting such a self-image apart from "the world" is at times making it difficult for Good News Fellowship Church to rhetorically reach community members participating in the dramas of crime prevention, drug and alcohol issues, or local politics. The Word vision is dramatized with themes focusing on simplicity, clarity, and in some rhetorical sense, accessibility. It serves to focus the drama on personae, scenes, and action plans which are compelling in their ability
to let actors protect themselves from the here-and-now complexity and complications. This protectionist nature of the rhetoric serves to, in the present here-and-now, foster growth in terms of congregation size. As these here-and-now social conflicts that are being addressed by the vision resolve themselves and fade from the mediated scene, however, this vision may be insufficient to sustain the type of rhetorical coherence Good News Fellowship Church's message has accomplished thus far.

Thus, it is hoped that the fantasy theme analysis results serve a practical purpose for the Good News Fellowship Church organization. Furthermore, the application "trial" of the research results and integration with Schenck's suggestions hopefully demonstrates how interpretive-rhetorical findings can ultimately serve a practical purpose for organizations. Another test of the research, however, is suggested in Research Question #5 and requires a final assessment of the methodological and theoretical originations of the study.
IMPLICATIONS FOR SYMBOLIC CONVERGENCE THEORY

In the present fantasy theme of Good News Fellowship Church, both the heuristic power and the heuristic limitations of Bormann's fantasy theme methodology are brought to the surface. In terms of the heuristic power of the method, the case study demonstrates the perspective's dynamic and processual characteristics which allow the analyst to trace the "movement" of a drama from context to context. Like narrative methodologies which view a symbolic reality as analogous to a story or narrative, Bormann's perspective is inherently dramatistic in nature and borrows heavily from the narrative paradigm. The difference between Bormann's perspective and the narrative interpretivist approaches lie, however, in fantasy theme analysis' unique ability to trace the evolution and, in fact, the creation of such narratives from their inception in small group situations, to the larger vision of the collective, i.e. a rhetorical vision. With the notions of fantasy sharing and chaining, the analyst is not only identifying the drama, but is also able to move beyond the simple identification process and show what the drama means to participants in a processual dynamic manner. It allows the analyst to put those meanings into context and
show, as was illustrated in the analysis of The Word vision, the symbolic purposes the drama is serving for the group and, similarly, the conflicts which are being resolved by the group's communication/rhetoric. Doing so identifies the drama in an evolutionary manner, enabling the analyst to "move" conceptually within the social movement. The concepts of fantasy theme chaining and sharing, integrates our understandings of social systems with our knowledge of narrative communication phenomena, bringing a new ability to show the inception, development, evolution, and sense-making characteristics of symbolic realities and social movements.

The difficulty lies, however, in showing how Borman's perspective can be adapted to other communication research perspectives and how it can do more than simply explain or interpret communication phenomena. As was discussed through the literature review portion of the analysis in Chapter One, a few research attempts have been made to bring some predictive quality to fantasy theme methodology. Such attempts, while successful in demonstrating the flexibility of the methodology, have not established how fantasy theme analysis can be used to predict organizational behavior. This shortcoming was evidenced in this fantasy theme analysis of
Good News Fellowship Church as well. Although the use of the survey questionnaire and establishment of commitment group levels served an interpretive purpose in the study, they did not, as the author hoped, illustrate how individuals' dramatic identifications to symbols in the organization can be correlated with measured commitment levels. The attempt to correlate the rhetorical analysis with objective measures of commitment as presented in this study, suffered from a potential researcher bias. The research is susceptible to the criticism that the self-report measures of commitment as represented in survey questionnaire results were anticipated by the focus group interviewer, thus calling into question the reliability and validity of the data correlation. This may have been, in part, rectified through "double-blind" methods which would ensure less interviewer bias and validate the correlation further. The ultimate resolution of such issues is likely a prerequisite for Bormann's perspective if it is going to gain prominence as a dominant communication perspective and methodology. Such resolution, therefore, remains the challenge for future applications of fantasy theme methodology to organizational communication phenomena.
IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Understanding the unique abilities and inabilities of Bormann's method and theory is critical in addressing the notion of organizational commitment. Simply identifying narratives, rhetorical stories, or dramas, in and of itself, says little about how group members identify with and bond to the group or organization. By tracing the development of the drama, placing it into a rhetorical context, showing the evolutionary process by which the drama is enacted via communication, and showing how dramatistic components of that drama chain into and interact with other dramas in participant's lives, the researcher is able to more deeply conceptualize the notion of commitment and, more importantly, discuss commitment in terms of meaning that group members are applying to different symbolic contexts. In Bormann's methodology, commitment is not a static variable which can be independently identified and manipulated in communication research. Instead it is a notion which is borne out of the notions of fantasy theme development and sharing, and is integrated into the social systems aspect of the perspective.

This is important in that addressing the notion of commitment in this manner speaks to much of the conceptual
confusion and controversy surrounding the notion of organizations commitment. It serves to rehabilitate previous functionalist-objective efforts to bring measured understandings to the concept. This fantasy theme of Good News Fellowship Church asks to reader to see the notion of sense-making as inherently persuasive. Because The Word vision assists its participants in "making sense" of the ambiguous Christian scene, the sense-making characteristics alone serve a rhetorical, i.e. persuasive, purpose. From this perspective, one can view organizational communication that serves to explain, rationalize, or interpret aspects of the organizational culture's here-and-now as inherently persuasive and, therefore, right for rhetorical critique. Thus a powerful component of our understanding of organizational commitment may be as simple as understanding how individuals use symbols to make-sense of their participation in the organization and why such symbols become attractive to organizational members in the first place.

By partial accomplishment of the research standards established for this study, there was demonstrated a conceptual link between rhetoric and the notion of organizational commitment. The analysis of persuasion and
rhetorical sense-making phenomena in organizations surely harbors the potential for useful explanations of organizational commitment processes. It was also demonstrated through the research, however, that examining this empirical link is not an easy task and requires unique and sophisticated methods of both rhetorical and quantitative analysis. The analysis implies, therefore, that there is promise for such rhetorical research as it relates to commitment processes. At the same time, however, the research conclusions illustrate that researchers will need to abandon unilateral application of traditional methodologies and attempt unique integrations of various established methodologies if they are to ultimately accomplish the task of further understanding organizational commitment.

Presently in America, we are seeing a collective interest and belief in that which is simple and fundamental. Many social movements gaining the attention of media and the public are driven by a rhetorical "homecoming" to the basic principles upon which our sometimes confusing day-to-day reality rests. From David Koresch to Newt Gingrich, Americans are identifying with and becoming committed to symbols of
fundamentalism - symbols that clarify issues which, in reality, may be too complex for humans to adequately grapple with. Even in organizational settings, themes of "getting back to the customer" and "returning to the basics" are prevalent in corporate communications. Thus, fundamentalist movements and organizations, such as that represented by Good News Fellowship Church, represent a way of thinking that has become more than simply a point of public interest or a matter of cursory concern. The fundamentalist point of view and way of thinking is impacting our social and political systems in ways that go far beyond entertainment value.

This case study of Good News Fellowship Church is a first step towards a better understanding of the persuasiveness of the themes and symbols forming perceptions of fundamentalism. By identifying The Word rhetorical vision, analyzing how the dramatic components of the vision are integrated into a compelling and explanatory belief system, and investigating how that belief system speaks to issues of organizational commitment, the analysis describes one movement's effort to use that which is simple to explain that which is not.


Dear Member of Good News Fellowship Church:

I apologize for not getting this information to you in the earlier June mailing. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. This cover sheet is outdated - you can ignore any requests for your participation and phone numbers since we have already been through that step of the project. I kept the mailing as it appeared in June so you could get a feel for what the rest of the congregation received at that time.

This letter is in regards to the communication study I am undergoing for your church, GNFC. The project is going to involve meeting with discussion groups composed of GNFC congregation members.

Due to the lapse in time since the last time we discussed the project, I have enclosed a brief overview of the project and some of its goals for Good News Fellowship Church.

In order to get started with the first step in the study, I am seeking your help and involvement. Please consider participating in a discussion group meeting. The length of the discussions will be approximately 45 minutes and would be required of you only once.

If you would be willing to participate in a discussion group, please sign the space below, list a home and/or work phone number, and return this letter to the Church Office at Good News Fellowship Church.

*** please note that the group discussions will be facilitated by me and will be audiotaped. Any audiotaping will be used strictly for purposes of this study.

SIGNATURE ___________________________________________

HOME PHONE ________________________________________

WORK PHONE ________________________________________

THANK YOU!

Alan Edwards
Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Questions

1) Why did you choose Good News Fellowship Church as your church?
   
   (opt) Why do you belong to GNFC?
   
   a) What aspects of Good News Fellowship Church attract you the most?
   
   b) Please explain 2 critical events (history) that either strengthened or weakened your allegiance to GNFC.
   
   c) What might be events that could trigger a "break-up" between you and GNFC?
   
   d) How did you come into contact with GNFC?
   
   e) What role, if any, does the church's history play in your commitment to GNFC?
   
   f) Have you recruited others to GNFC? How did you do so?

2) Do you have many close friends who also are members of Good News?
   
   - please describe your relationship with these individuals.
   
   a) describe any friends you have outside of GNFC for me. (what are they like) - Christians?
   
   b) To what extent does GNFC serve a "social" function for you?

3) How would you characterize a truly "committed" member of GNFC?

4) What specific role(s) does GNFC play in your life?

5) What role (beyond the pastoral role) does Pastor Matt play in your life?
   
   - counselor?
   - leader?
   - teacher?
   - healer?
   - friend?
   - combination?

   a) What are the main "messages" you get from Pastor Matt?
6) What makes Good News Fellowship church unique/different from other churches in the area?
   a) What are differences between the "Christians" of other churches and Christians of this church?

7) Who are the leaders or role models in the church? - those that members look up to most?

8) Why do you think Good News Fellowship has grown so much in the last 5 years?

9) What role do you think Good News Fellowship Church plays in the surrounding local community?

10) What do you think is ahead for the church's future?
    a) What is your ideal vision for GNFC in 5-10 years
    b) What aspects of Good News Fellowship Church would you like to see change in the future?
    c) What are your greatest concerns about the future of Good news Fellowship Church?

11) Who or what are the enemies of the church?
    a) Who or what do you consider your personal enemies?
    b) What obstacles/problems do you confront in you day-day Christian life?
    c) what do you see as the greatest obstacles the church must overcome in the community?
    d) What do you believe are non-truths/myths in the community regarding GNFC?

12) Can you think of any stories concerning GNFC or its members that are repeated often within the church?

13) What does "non-denominational" mean to you?

14) To what extent is the Canaland Day Care and Elementary School a part of your vision for GNFC?

15) What historical events/occurrences were the most critical in terms of the church's survival?
    - How did the congregation respond to these crises?
16) When I say "Good News Fellowship Church", what immediately comes to mind?

17) What makes Good News Fellowship Church unique from other churches of its kind?
   - What would like others to see as its distinguishing characteristics?

18) What are the main (specific) messages you try to get across to congregational members?

19) How do you account for the success of Good News Fellowship Church?
   - What attracts members to this specific church?

20) What things would you like to see change about Good News Fellowship church?

21) How would you characterize the typical congregational member?
   - socioeconomic status
   - family size, structure
   - psychological profile
   - demographics

22) What historical developments do you think were most critical in the growth of Good News Church?

23) What are your greatest concerns about the future of Good News Fellowship church?

24) What are some specific goals for the future?

25) If you had everything to do over again (in facilitating the development of the church) what would you do differently?

26) What do you see as your primary role in the church?
   - teacher?
   - counselor?
   - learner?
   - role model?
   - other?

27) Who are the leaders of the church? (those who congregational members model after the most, respect the most)

28) Who or what do congregational members see as the enemy of the church? - institutions, local organizations, etc.

29) What do you see as the role the church plays in the local community.
Appendix C: GNFC Survey

GNFC Membership Survey

This survey is designed as a follow-up to the information you received in the mail and as a starting point for the communication study I am undergoing for Good News Fellowship Church.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** If you are already a part of the communication study or would still like to participate, please complete the survey and list your name and a phone number on the space provided.

If you do not want to be a part of the study, simply complete the survey and do not list your name or phone number.

*** All responses are confidential—they will be seen only by myself and will be used only for purposes of the study.

Please answer as honestly and accurately as possible to the following questions:

1) How many church services, on average, do you attend at Good News Fellowship Church in a month?
   a) ___ 4-8 services  5 points
   b) ___ 2-4 services  4 points
   c) ___ 0-2 services  3 points
   d) ___ rarely any services  2 points

2) How many hours, on average, do you spend at Good News Fellowship Church for activities other than church services and volunteering? (example: bible study, prayer meetings, etc.)
   a) ___ 5-10 hours  5 points
   b) ___ 3-5 hours  4 points
   c) ___ 1-3 hours  3 points
   d) ___ rarely any hours  2 points
3) What percentage of your monthly income do you contribute to Good News Fellowship Church?

a) ___ 15% (or greater) 5 points
b) ___ 10% 4 points
C) ___ 5% 3 points
D) ___ less than 5% 2 points

4) How many hours per week do you volunteer at Good News Fellowship Church?

a) ___ 15-20 hours 5 points
b) ___ 10-15 hours 4 points
c) ___ 5-10 hours 3 points
d) ___ 1-5 hours 2 points
e) ___ rarely any 1 point

5) If you were to rate your feelings of commitment and attachment to Good News Fellowship Church, would you say you are:

a) ___ very committed to the church 5 points
b) ___ somewhat committed to the church 4 points
C) ___ not very committed to the church 3 points
d) ___ other: ______________________ 2 points

6) If you were to rate your personal/spiritual relationship to God, would you say you are:

a) ___ very committed to Him
b) ___ somewhat committed to Him
c) ___ not very committed to Him
d) ___ other ____________________
7) If you were to compare your level of commitment to God and your level of commitment to Good News Fellowship Church, would you say the commitment levels:

a) ___ are one in the same

b) ___ are similar, but not one in the same

c) ___ are very different

*Please Explain__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

NAME: ____________________________

PHONE: ____________________________

THANK YOU!!!! - Al Edwards

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Group 3 = 25-21 (9 people)—most committed
Group 2 = 20-18 (12 people)—moderately committed
Group 1 = 17-13 (10 people)—least committed

Focus Groups

Group 3A = 4 interviewees
Group 3B = 5 interviewees

Group 2A = 7 interviewees
Group 2B = 5 interviewees

Group 1A = 5 interviewees
Group 2A = 5 interviewees