# Through the Eyes of the Accused:
# Applying William L. Benoit's Image Restoration Theory to Saint Patrick's *Confession*

By Brad Jackson

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the handful of people who have aided me in this academic pursuit. First I would like to thank Mark Jones for his friendship and spiritual guidance as I grew from a teen to an adult. He gave to me a passion for the Irish people and more importantly for Jesus Christ.

I would also like to thank the readers on my thesis committee, Drs. Cecil Kramer and Karen Prior. Thank you both for your constructive feedback as well as the important sacrifice of time that you have given to this thesis. A special thanks goes to Dr. Michael Graves. A man who has taught me so much about the discipline of rhetorical criticism and who has given me a new set of "glasses" in which I now view the world around me.

Dr. Philip Freeman graciously emailed me a copy of his translation of Patrick's *Confession* to include as an appendix. His contribution is much appreciated.

To my friends, colleagues, and my parents: thank you for your support and prayers.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my beautiful wife Joy. You are truly a gift from our God to me. I could not image my life without you. I love you.

Brad Jackson
April 12, 2008

Abstract

Since 1995, William L Benoit's "Image Restoration Theory" has been applied in various different contexts. While most applications of this theory have been used to analyze modern day apologia, little work has filtered ancient artifacts through Benoit's theory. This thesis aims to analyze St. Patrick's defense rhetoric as seen in his autobiographical letter *Confession*. Emphasis is first placed on the historical account of the life of Saint Patrick in order to establish a foundation for analysis of *Confession*. An extensive literature review of "Image Restoration Theory" follows before the application of Benoit's theory to *Confession*. The author concludes by describing Patrick's defense strategies. Special attention is given to Patrick's main two strategies, mortification and transcendence. Using these two strategies, Patrick defends his ministry and work among the Irish by focusing on his humility and appealing to a higher authority. Future scholars will find this thesis useful in designing approaches to specific ancient and modern apologia

# Table of Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| Preface: Discovery | 1 |
| Chapter One: Not All Saints Have Holidays | 2 |
| Chapter Two: Image Restoration Theory | 11 |
| Chapter Three: Of Saints and Shamrocks | 49 |
| Chapter Four: Conclusion | 74 |
| Works Cited | 82 |
| Appendix: *Confession* | 84 |

# Preface

## Discovery

My interest in Saint Patrick was sparked more than three years ago on a missionary survey trip to Dublin, Ireland, where I found a country so identified with a particular sect that to be Irish was to be Catholic, and subsequently, to be Catholic was to be Irish, or so it seemed. I had known the lore and myth that surrounded Saint Patrick, Ireland's first native saint, but I did not know a single verifiable fact about him. After encountering the only two surviving documents written by Patrick, I was astonished by his main work, *Confession*, which revealed so much about Patrick's true nature. Apparently, it was Patrick who brought the Catholic faith to the forefront of a pagan Celtic nation. *Confession* was a short autobiography that Patrick felt compelled to write in response to accusations by the Catholic Church. In this document Patrick defended himself and his ministry.

Shortly after reading Patrick's *Confession,* I studied William L. Benoit's Image Restoration Theory. I began to see Patrick's work as an apt expression of some of Benoit's principles. I then combined my interest in Patrick with Benoit's theory and decided to analyze Patrick's *Confession* using Benoit's theory. In this thesis I will apply this modern theory of image restoration to an ancient document. My aim is to help the reader understand Patrick's defense on a deeper level and in new ways by using this communication theory.

Chapter 1

# Not All Saints Have Holidays

At the sound of the words "Saint Patrick" one is filled with thoughts of green shamrocks, Celtic crosses and a beautiful country. Patrick's name will forever be associated with the island nation of Ireland along with all the myths and fairy tales told by Dubliners, Catholics, and children's books around the globe. Ironically, few of those stories tell anything accurate about the man, except that he existed. Patrick is much more than a storybook character or the holiday that bears his name. He is a man who lived to fulfill a calling, a Christian who was sent to begin a mission and a disciple devoted to ignite a revival.

## Preview

In this chapter I will outline a brief introduction to Patrick's life in which I will discuss major events that led Patrick to Ireland, the growth of his faith, and reasons why he became Ireland's patron saint. It is my goal that by the end of the chapter the reader will have a more accurate perception of Patrick and his life.

## Saint Patrick

It was A.D. 410. Rome had just fallen, and the once great Empire was breaking apart. Britain, for many years subject to the control of Rome, was victim to countless raids of Saxons, Picts, and Irish war tribes.[1] These raids probably only intensified after word reached the raiders of the fall of Rome. One raid in particular would change not only the course of one man's life, but also the course of history.

---

[1] Phillip Freeman, *St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004). xi.

Patrick, born in 387 A.D.[2] to a wealthy British family, had much that others might desire. His father, Calpornius, was an aristocrat of the day both as a tax collector and a deacon of the local state church. As Roman influence and power declined in Britain, often times towns and villages were left to protect themselves from the pagan invaders of Ireland. In one particular instance, at least, the defense was ineffective, and Patrick on that occasion was captured by the Irish invaders. Patrick, now age 16, was taken to Ireland as a slave. He served six years there as a shepherd for a local landowner, named Meliuc. While a shepherd, he lived alone with his sheep on Slemish Mountain, and it was there that he resurrected his faith in the God of his people. [3]

He prayed to the Christian God who had brought him comfort during his time of loneliness and labor. During the night Patrick had a vision telling him, "See, your boat is ready." Patrick obeyed the voice in his dream, traveling some 200 miles to the south in search of this boat. He finally arrived at Wexford where he found a boat, persuaded the sailors, and made his way back to Britain.

As the legend goes, Patrick traveled through Europe over the next seven years, searching out his place in life. Eventually, he decided that he was called to take the message of Christ all over the world. He studied at Lerin Monastery, on the island of Cote d' Azur off the coast of France, before heading back to Britain. Again a vision appeared to Patrick. The voice, however, was not that of God, or an angel, but rather it was the voice of the very people that enslaved him for six years. "We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and walk once more amongst us." [4]

---

[2] Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, "St. Patrick," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. IX, 1911, (New York: Robert Appleton Company) On-line. Available from Internet, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11554a.htm accessed September 30, 2007.

[3] According to http://www.saint-patrick.com/history, material on Patrick's life is at least a little suspect because few primary sources are available.

[4] Ibid.

Before heading to Ireland as a missionary, Patrick went back to France for further study. It was at the Monastery of Axuerre that Patrick continued his education until the monks decided it was time to send a mission to Ireland. However, much to Patrick's disappointment, the monk Palladius was chosen for the mission. Patrick returned to his study only to be surprised when, according to legend, in 432, Pope Celestine named him Bishop and sent him to Ireland after the death of Palladius.

Patrick and 25 followers arrived in Ireland. Seeking the attention and later the blessing of the High King of Tara, Patrick made a bold and courageous move. He challenged the pagan practice of the day by lighting the first fire of spring, an act reserved for the High King himself. This drew the attention of the king, whose first intention was to squelch the challenger. Through plain appearance and confident words, Patrick spoke to the High King about his mission and intentions. The king gave Patrick his blessing, and while never converting to Christianity himself, allowed Patrick to spread the gospel to his people.

Patrick is known for evangelizing Ireland and converting it to the Christian nation that it has become. According to legend, he is credited with driving snakes from Ireland as well as using the shamrock to illustrate the Trinity.[5] These stories and legends are just the beginning of many other miraculous claims and far fetched tales of a man who is celebrated around the world on the day of his death, March 17th.

According to R.P.C. Hanson, an authority on the history of the Celtic Church and a Professor of Theology at the University of Manchester, the story of St. Patrick has been a subject of debate among scholars, but Patrick is widely accepted as the "patron Saint of Ireland…being everywhere a symbol of Ireland itself and of Irish Christianity."[6] In Hanson's book, *The Life and*

---

[5] Ibid.
[6] R.P.C. Hanson, *The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983) 1.

*Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick*, he lists a handful of the colorful claims and perversions that are contrary to the true story behind Saint Patrick.

> The conventional picture of St. Patrick presents him as a modern bishop with a miter and a pastoral staff, banishing snakes from Ireland, teaching the doctrine of the Trinity by the example of the shamrock, overcoming opposition of the High-King of Ireland, holding familiar concourse with a guardian angel, climbing Croagh Patrick in Co. Mayo to commune with God on the top, revisiting Mount Slemish in Co. Antrim where he is supposed to have spent an earlier period of captivity. It has represented him as the product of a Gallic education…the legate of a papal mission…not a single one of these details is historical.[7]

Tom Corfe, a medieval scholar and author, also challenges the storytelling that has come to shape the mystery surrounding the true Saint Patrick. He writes that St. Patrick was commissioned as a bishop not by the Pope, but rather by the British bishops. Upon Patrick's arrival in Ireland the king accepted him and even gave him a barn, known as a "Saul" in Irish, to begin his work.[8] Corfe's account of the historical Saint Patrick is much different from any that you would hear on the street corner in Dublin.

This is but a glimpse of the popular lore concerning a true historical figure. Most "facts" are mere assumptions or fairy tales told from generation to generation. We have very few primary sources from which to gather facts. Actually, we only have two: *Letters to the Soldiers of Coroticus* and *Confession*.

During my trip to Ireland in 2005 I was standing in the same room with the oldest copy of these manuscripts. I had wandered onto the campus of Trinity College, a magnificent place, full

---

[7] Ibid.
[8] Tom Corfe, *St. Patrick and Irish Christianity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 20-21.

of history and grandeur. I located the main library, known quite fittingly as the Old Library, where the library kept the document for which I was searching, *The Book of Kells*. This book occupies the center of the lower exhibition room, just below the Long Hall of the Old Library. As I sat and stared at the glory and mystique of *The Book of Kells* I did not know that the *Book of Armagh* sat silently in the corner. In this book, the oldest copy of Patrick's *Confession*, dated 807 A.D., resides.[9] It was copied by the scribe Ferdomnach more than three centuries after the death of Patrick.

The story of the book is remarkable.[10] Phillip Freeman, author of *St. Patrick of Ireland* and professor at Washington University, records the history of the *Book of Armagh*. According to Freeman the *Book of Armagh* omits the entire *Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus* and parts of the *Confession*. These missing sections are the parts in which Patrick admits his flaws and appears more human than saint. The letter to Coroticus' men, however, was probably omitted because those who compiled the book never had a copy of it to begin with.

The *Book of Armagh* sat undiscovered by the outside world until the year 937 when, according to Freeman, an Irish King recognized its value and had it placed in a leather casing. A century later an Armagh clergyman angrily ran away with the book after being replaced in the monastery. At that time it was decided that a protector keep watch over the manuscript. The man first chosen was known as the *Maor na Canoine* or Keeper of the Book. Since the position was hereditary, the keeper's children thereafter had the job of protecting the book. Today these descendents still bear the last name MacMaoir or MacMoyre, which means son of the Keeper. The book was later pawned in 1680 by the last of the Keepers for five pounds after financial struggles plagued the island. It changed hands several times until it eventually ended up in the

---

[9] Phillip Freeman. *St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 165.
[10] All reference to the history of Patrick's letters and the *Book of Armagh* can be found in the epilogue of Freeman's book, 165-169.

Royal Irish Academy in 1846. Seven years later, it was purchased by the archbishop of Armagh and given to Trinity College and placed exactly where I walked past it.

There are six other copies of Patrick's writings, all located in Western Europe. Freeman writes that they were probably all copied from a main copy of the letters that arrived on the continent in the seventh century. After their reproduction they were scattered about in monasteries in northern France. Napoleon's minister of interior confiscated what is known today as the best surviving copy of both letters and had them sent to Paris. The other copies have considerable parts missing from them, some retaining only the first few pages. Today, copies can be readily found all over the Internet as modern reproduction consists of cut and paste rather than copying the letters by hand under candlelight.[11]

These two manuscripts are the earliest surviving documents written in Ireland. While not intended to record or tell history, they do give us a small glimpse of what an uncivilized Ireland may have looked like. Outside of a piece of history, they also reveal the life, times, and rhetoric of a patron saint whose life has been alive with myth and controversy.

**Why is Patrick Significant?**

Good question. There are very few reasons why a man who has become a storybook character would have an international holiday, unless he truly did have an impact on his culture. The true Patrick was a man of unwavering faith and impeccable morals. His life's work was to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a land of pagan warlords and tribes, who captured him and sold him into slavery as a teenager. His story, one of the Christian faith's best kept secrets, is both as moving as it is heartbreaking.

I believe Patrick is important for five reasons. He was a national icon, he is a patron saint, he enacted change that prevailed for centuries, he is a historical figure and he is celebrated

[11] The record of The Book of Armagh and other manuscripts was derived from Freeman, 166-167.

worldwide. These five attributes of Patrick's life and legacy set him apart from the ordinary preacher or bishop. I will develop all five reasons to further illustrate his importance.

To begin, Patrick is a national icon. The name "Saint Patrick" will always bring to mind images of Ireland, shamrocks, and Celtic crosses. His tie with the Irish nation is seen and felt worldwide. Ireland's faith remains strong as a collective identity for a nation and people group that is scattered abroad. This faith began and appears to be eternally rooted in who Patrick was and what he did by introducing and establishing Christianity in a once pagan nation.

Second, Patrick became the patron saint of Ireland. To be placed on the list of saints in the Roman Catholic Church is not an easy task.[12] To top it off, Patrick is no ordinary saint. He has his own holiday when the majority of the western world stops to remember his death. It may be accurate to argue that the majority of Irish people claim Catholicism out of their tie to Patrick more so than their doctrinal commitment to their faith!

Third, Patrick is one of only three saints to have a major, worldwide celebration in their name, an honor he shares with Saint Nicholas and Saint Valentine. Unfortunately, all three holidays have been secularized. In spite of its secularization, Saint Patrick's Day remains a day for the most pious of the faith to renew their spiritual commitments and to remember a man who in the face of adversity changed a nation through faith.

Fourth, the myth around Saint Patrick does have groundings in his historical authenticity. Patrick was a real man who gave his life for the Irish people. His canonization as a saint, celebration in his name, and iconic figure support his authenticity and impact on Ireland and the world. Why is this important? Precisely because it makes obsolete the argument that Saint Patrick is merely fictional and mythic. If I am going to ask for one to identify and learn from a

---

[12] "Canonization Process," http://www.catholic-pages.com/saints/process.asp (accessed September 18, 2007).

man who was only a legend, then I do not have much of an argument for a historically based study. That he was a historical figure provides solid historical ground.

Lastly, Patrick is important, and the study of Patrick is important, because of the changes that he enacted. He popularized faith in God to a people group steeped in mysticism, polytheism, and druidism. He shook the very foundations of fifth century Ireland in such a way that it would never fully recover its old ways. This change was not insignificant. Thomas Cahill boldly asserts that the Irish would go on to save civilization.[13] In his book he argues that the faith of the Irish that can be traced directly to Patrick, a faith that helped shape and ultimately saved civilization. If there is a modicum of credence to this view, then Patrick is of utmost significance.

**What makes *Confession* Remarkable?**

This document, along with *Letters to the Soldiers of Coroticus*, Patrick's only other surviving document, gives us significant insight into the historical Ireland as well as into Patrick's remarkable life. *Confession*, intended primarily for his own defense, serves as a short autobiography from Patrick's birth until the day he writes the letter. Phillip Freeman, author of *Saint Patrick of Ireland: A Biography*, writes:

> The two letters…provide us with glimpses of a world full of petty kings, pagan gods, quarreling bishops, brutal slavery, beautiful virgins, and ever-threatening violence. But more than anything else, they allow us to look inside the mind and soul of a remarkable man living in a world that was both falling apart and at the dawn of a new age. There are simply no other documents from ancient times that give us such a clear and heartfelt view

[13] Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* **:** *The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

of a person's thoughts and feelings. These are, above all else, letters of hope in a trying and uncertain time.[14]

I will look at Patrick's *Confession* from the perspective of an important historical document as well as an ancient written attempt at image restoration. As stated above, I believe that this will be the most effective way of interpreting his efforts at restoring his image.

**Justification**

Patrick and his letter, *Confession*, have yet to be analyzed as an example of image restoration. The existence of his letter as an ancient attempt to restore one's image presents an opportunity that a rhetorician cannot overlook. By filtering his rhetoric through Benoit's modern theory we can glean not only a perspective on history, but also make better sense of the document. I trust that this study will further the theory of image restoration as well as the understanding of how it applies to different situations. I also believe it will raise some questions for future study. I believe that it is a study for the Irishman, Christian, and rhetorician alike and will prove worthwhile for all.

**Problem**

For the purpose of this thesis, I will look at Patrick's longer letter, *Confession*, written primarily as a "defense of his work against accusations of fellow churchmen."[15] It constitutes Patrick's attempt to restore credibility and integrity to his ministry. I will apply William L. Benoit's theory of Image Restoration to the text in its context in order to determine how and why Patrick defended himself after having such a fruitful ministry to the Irish culture.

---

[14] Phillip Freeman, *Saint Patrick of Ireland: A Biography*, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2004), xviii.
[15] Ibid, xvii.

Chapter 2

# Image Restoration Theory

There comes a time in every person's life in which he or she finds themselves on the defensive. In some cases, this situation may arise out of a wrong doing, whether intentional or unintentional. Yet, there are also those times when people find themselves backed into a corner over an accusation that has fallen on them erroneously. Whatever the case, the individual develops a strategy to clear his or her name in the record. William L. Benoit decided that this communicative process was worthy of exploration. His study gave flesh and bones to a rhetorical theory he named "Image Restoration Theory."

## Preview

In this chapter I seek to explain Benoit's theory. I will begin by outlining the basics of his work before moving into the ancient and contemporary foundations for Image Restoration Theory. From there I will turn my attention back to Benoit in order to break apart his theory in detail. Once I have completed those tasks I will examine current and future studies of Image Restoration Theory. I will conclude this chapter with a brief explanation of my methodology and preview of the remainder of this thesis.

## The Basics

What exactly is "Image Restoration Theory?" In a nutshell, it is a filter into which defensive rhetoric can be poured to produce an understanding of how the accused forms a defense and whether or not it is effective. Benoit develops several key strategies that speakers can employ, each with its own variation.

In the preface of *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies*, Benoit states, "The central theme in this book is that human beings engage in recurrent patterns of communicative behavior designed

to reduce, redress, or avoid damage to their reputation (or face or image) from perceived wrongdoing."[16] We all face accusations of varying degrees. It could be something as simple as "you stole the cookie from the cookie jar" to "you pulled the trigger." The validity of the theory and this paper is wrapped up in the simple fact that at some time we all are called to defend and restore our image. It affects every human being.

Furthermore, this theory helps us analyze the rhetoric of politicians, companies, organizations, and celebrities who are caught in the public spotlight for misbehavior or wrongdoing. These entities capture our attention and affection day in and day out. They are the people we vote for and glamorize, the companies we work for and buy from, and the role models we aspire to be like.

In an age in which image is of utmost importance, we find ourselves constantly bombarded by new products to improve our appearance. From clothes, to cars, to makeup, to makeovers, we see consumers buying into the idea that who we are is not enough. Our image must be constantly improved through that which covers us, surrounds us, and defines us. However, the pursuit of our acceptance in the eyes of others does not merely stop with the shallow attempt to become physically attractive. It also delves into our workplaces, governments, and marketability to consumers. Image is everything.

What happens when that image is marred or shattered? Maybe the CEO slips up in a public speech. Maybe a tainted or flawed product costs a handful of lives. Maybe the President lives a moment in weakness and now it is his responsibility to repair that which is broken, namely his public image.

---

[16] William L. Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies* (Albany: SUNY, 1995), vii.

In 1995, William L. Benoit developed Image Restoration Theory and expanded it in his book *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*.[17] It was here, for the first time, that the idea of image restoration was named and studied in an academic setting. The theory has two basic assumptions. First, Benoit states, "communication is best conceptualized as a goal-directed activity" (63). The second assumption is that "maintaining a positive reputation is one of the central goals of communication." The problem occurs when the second assumption is unmet. A reputation may be damaged intentionally or unintentionally through word or deed. When this happens the communicator is faced with the problem of negative public image. Benoit creates his theory on the assumption that due to this negative image the communicator will be motivated to attempt to restore his image as one of the central goals of his communication to the population.

We can see Image Restoration theory in practice nearly every day. If I were to turn on the news it would be common to see a company or a politician defending an action or attempting to rephrase a comment. I can see image restoration through commercials when an organization attempts to raise money for a charity as a public relations move or in the newspaper when a retraction is printed or even when someone simply apologizes to another human being.

In an article by Anne Carroll O'Leary and Mohammed El-Nawaway about image restoration in Northern Ireland political parties, they discuss Image Restoration Theory by stating,

> Maintaining a reputation necessarily implies re-establishing a sullied reputation, something that happens frequently because human behavior falls into the following four type of categories: (1) there are limited resources in the world, so everyone is competing; (2) circumstances beyond people's control influence their actions, which in return may

[17] William L. Benoit, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995)

cause trouble for others; (3) humans make mistakes because we are imperfect; and (4) humans have different sets of priorities.[18]

For these reasons we can conclude that negative public image will be reoccurring, whether perceived or actual wrong-doing has taken place.

The bend towards repairing an image is rhetorical in every way. How one is perceived in the eyes of others affects one's ethos, or simply put, it affects one's ability to persuade. What is more important than credibility to a company who wants your money, a politician who seeks your vote, or your best friend who desperately needs you to watch his dog while he is away on a fishing trip?

So not only do we find ourselves bombarded by messages to improve our self image, but we are also being continuously served new images of those whom we already know, love, and trust. Do their best efforts at image restoration work? Who in the past has succeeded or failed? What is the result of these successful and unsuccessful attempts? In this section I will define the theory and support its importance by comparing and contrasting ancient and contemporary rhetoricians on the topic of image and human attempts to restore broken images. Here, I will offer significant precursors to Benoit's theory.

By the end of the essay we will have accumulated a brief, yet comprehensive, list of those who have theorized, written, and taught about image restoration.

**Ancient Ideas of Ethos and Apologia**

When we trace the steps of image restoration back to the ancient rhetoricians we do not find any particular teaching or writings concerning the technique of restoring one's image. However, we do find writings on the importance of establishing a speaker's image.

---

[18] Anne Carroll O'Leary and Mohammed El-Nawaway, "A Content Analysis of Image Restoration in Northern Ireland: Public Communication Strategies of Political Parties," *Simile* 2.3, (August 2002).

In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*[19] he outlines three factors in persuasion: logos, ethos, and pathos. Logos refers to the importance of the logical argument, pathos the emotional argument, and ethos refers to the significance of the character of the speaker. Here we see the importance of how the audience views the character of the speaker in relation to possible success in persuasion. Aristotle writes,

> Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. This kind of persuasion, like the others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.[20]

Isocrates, Aristotle's contemporary, comes to the same conclusion in his work, *Antidosis*.[21] Isocrates goes farther than Aristotle, discussing reputation prior to the speech. He states:

> The man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish the most honourable name among his fellow-citizens; for who does not know that words carry a greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who

---

[19] Aristotle, *The Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House, Modern Library, 1954).
[20] Book 1, Chapter 2, http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honeyl/Rhetoric/rhet1-2.html#1356a (accessed 11/27/206).
[21] Isocrates, *Antidosis,* Trans. George Norlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Leob Classical Library 1 1976).

live under a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words? (278)

Isocrates also argues that a man's character is the most important factor in persuasion. He says that "an honourable reputation not only lends greater persuasiveness to the words of the man who possesses it, but adds greater luster to his deeds, and is, therefore, more zealously to be sought after by men of intelligence than anything else in the world" (280).

So we see that the ancient Greek rhetoricians laid the groundwork for future rhetoricians to build upon. While they did not teach or theorize about how to restore one's image, there were cases of restoration attempts. For example, Plato records Socrates' attempts to restore his image after being accused of wrongdoing[22] even though it was unsuccessful and eventually led to Socrates'death.

**Contemporary Thoughts on Accounts and Apologia**

Beginning in the late 1950's and continuing through the late 1970's considerable groundwork was laid for Image Restoration Theory. Scholars from various fields of study began to formulate and write about "accounts, excuses, and justifications," as well as how humans responded to them. It was from this work that Benoit drew much of his foundation for his new theory. I will now look at a few of the major works and give brief explanations and brief literature reviews of their research and implications on Image Restoration Theory. I will use Benoit's framing terms "accounts, excuses and justifications" for this section.

[22] Plato, "Apology," *The Dialogues of Plato* 2, trans. Benjamin Jowett 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892), pages 109-135.

**Accounts**

In 1968 two sociologists, Marvin B. Scott and Stanford M. Lyman, confessed a shortcoming in sociology.[23] They say that up until this point the study of "talk" had been underdeveloped by sociologists as it relates to their field of study. They set out to discuss one form of talk, namely "accounts." Accounts, according to Scott and Lyman are "statements made to explain untoward behavior and bridge the gap between actions and expectations" (46). They further their explanation and give preview to their essay by clarifying that "accounts may be classified by content as excuses and justifications, each with its own subtypes." Benoit claims that their essay is a "classic work on accounts."[24]

Scott and Lyman state: "an account is a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry."[25] In this basic definition of accounts we can already formulate in our minds what sorts of accounts we have encountered, or even the ones we have been asked to give. Our first experience with accounts came as a child when we were asked a simple, but easily answered question from a parent: "Why did you disobey me?" At that point we gave an answer, or directed blame to a sibling, or just broke into tears. In whatever case, no human being has escaped the need to give an account for his actions at some point in his life.

Accounts, however, are more than just explanations. Scott and Lyman note that an explanation "refers to statements about events where untoward action is not an issue and does not have critical implications for a relationship" (47). This is a major qualifier of their study and must be kept in mind. Accounts deal strictly with undesired actions and events that have potential to damage a relationship. Scott and Lyman break accounts into two subcategories: excuses and justifications (47). Justifications are "accounts in which one accepts responsibility

---

[23]Marvin B Scott, Stanford M. Lyman, "Accounts," *American Sociological Review* 33 (1968): 46-62.
[24] Benoit, 6.
[25] Scott & Lyman, 46.

for the act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it." They give an example of a soldier who kills an enemy, thus taking a life of another human being. He does not deny the fact that he killed the man, but justifies it by believing, and thus giving an account, that since he was an enemy and threat, he deserved it. An excuse, on the other hand, is an "account in which one admits the act in question is bad, wrong, or inappropriate but denies full responsibility." As in the aforementioned example, the soldier can claim that he admits that taking a life is wrong but can deny full responsibility by saying that he was ordered to do so (47).

After laying the initial definitions of excuses and justifications, Scott and Lyman break down the two types of accounts into further subcategories. Excuses are broken down into "four modal forms:" appeal to accidents, appeal to defeasibility, appeal to biological drives, and scapegoating (47). Appeals to accidents are excuses in which the speaker claims the action or event was "an accident," thus shifting the blame to a rare instance that usually does not happen. The appeal to defeasibility is an excuse whereby the speaker claims that he or she was not fully informed of the situation or was not completely free to make the correct decision, thus resulting in the negative outcome for which the account is called upon. It is also under this appeal that intent plays a role in the account. Scott and Lyman give the example of a man who makes a woman cry unintentionally (48). He may very well claim that it was without intention that he made a remark that brought her to tears, thus appealing to defeasibility. The third appeal is that of biological drives. This includes mental illness or personality disorders as well as financial and racial barriers. An inner city adolescent may claim that he robbed a convenience store because he grew up without a father to buy him necessities, thus forcing him to make a choice about survival. Last, scapegoating is when the individual in question claims his or her actions were in

a response to the actions of another. A good example of this is if a man shoots and kills another man in what he calls self defense. He believes this excuse exempts him from a murder trial.

Justification is also broken down into four subcategories: denial of injuries, denial of victim, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to loyalties (51). Denial of injuries is when the accused admits to the action in question but claims that no one was injured, no one important was hurt, or that the consequence of the action was trivial. Denial of victim is justification that is given when the victim of the action was deserving of it. This can include those who injured the speaker; those whom society frowns upon, such as criminals or drug addicts; racial or ethnic minorities; and lastly, those that Scott and Lyman call "distant foes," such as "politicians" and "terrorists" (51). When a person is accused of a crime such as vandalism he may give this justification as a reason for his actions. The third type of justification is called condemnation of condemners. In this justification the speaker justifies his or her action by claiming that others do the same and worse actions and do not get caught, nor are punished, condemned, are unnoticed, or even praised. Last, appeal to loyalties is a justification attempt in which the accused speaker claims that his actions were permissible due to an allegiance or affection to another individual. Even with these four types of justification, Scott and Lyman leave open the possibility to include other justifications such as "sad tales" and "self-fulfillment" as plausible reasons for actions. Sad tales are stories in which the speaker gives a usually exaggerated story about what happened to bring them to the point of committing the actions in question. Self-fulfillment, on the other hand, is a justification attempt in which the accused claims no other reason than self-fulfillment for the actions.

Accounts tie into image restoration in the next section discussed by Scott and Lyman where they conclude:

> A related situation in which an individual senses that some incident or event has cast doubt on that ***image*** of himself which he seeks to present…the individual is likely to try to integrate the incongruous events by means of apologies, little excuses for self, and disclaimers; through the same acts, incidentally, he also tries to save his face[26] (52).

In the next section of their essay Scott and Lyman discuss honoring and not honoring accounts. They raise the possibility of background expectations, which can work positively and negatively. They give an example of the accused claiming "family problems" as an excuse for actions. While friends and family members may accept this as a justifiable reason, those who may not care for the speaker may discredit his or her excuse and hold them accountable still. Another key factor in the acceptance of an account is the appearance of the speaker. A kid who is dirty cannot claim to have not played in the mud when his appearance is obviously contrary to his claim (54). Scott and Lyman give several other examples of why accounts are either honored or not honored, but what I have mentioned here captures their essential argument.

Now I will briefly deal with linguistic style. Scott and Lyman have distinguished five distinct linguistic styles that influence accounts: intimate, casual, consultative, formal, and frozen. In terms of our interest in these styles we will understand them on a scale of intimacy. In an intimate linguistic style there is more room for understanding, since the accuser and the accused have a close relationship. The margin for acceptance gets smaller as we move down the scale to frozen, in which the accused has little to no relationship to his or her accuser. In the types of apologia and image restoration attempts that this project is concerned with, the formal style is the most common among the styles employed by our speakers. Formal style is defined as being "employed when the group is too large for informal co-participation to be a continuous part of the interaction" (56). Public discourse is a stereotypical example of formal style.

---

[26] Emphasis added.

Scott and Lyman also deal with factors that prevent a speaker from giving an account. Oftentimes reluctance is tied in to a person's position and status such as a coach to a player, a manager to a subordinate, and so on. When position and authority do not factor into the account asked for, the speaker can use three accounts, called "meta-accounts:" mystification, referral, and identity switching. Mystification is a meta-account in which the accused admits to the action in question but claims that there are reasons why he or she committed the action, but for what reasons the accused cannot tell. They may use a line such as, "it's a long story," or in situations where there is classified or secret information that the accused is not permitted to tell, if the accuser knew the secret, then it would explain the undesirable action. These types of meta-accounts may be permissible in less serious situations, but not in regard to grave issues (57).

The second type of meta-account is that of referral, where the individual refers the accuser to another person, claiming that they will explain why there was a failure to meet the expectation for which the account was called. This is typically employed by a subordinate referring to a supervisor for the reason of their actions. It is also employed by the sick and mentally ill, in which case they cannot speak on their behalf, so they refer to a doctor or psychiatrist (58).

The last strategy that Scott and Lyman discuss is that of identity switching. This is a case where the accused claims that he or she is not playing the role that the accuser thinks that they are playing. A good example of this may be when a manager has a friend who is also a subordinate in his workplace. The manager may ask him to obey a certain command or commit a particular action that the subordinate finds undesirable. The subordinate may say, "Come on, we're friends, I don't want to do that." To which the manager can reply, "I am also your boss,"

indicating that in that context he is the superior, thus switching identities from friend to superior (58).

In most types of formal apologia these strategies have been bypassed or been unsuccessful, thus giving rise to the struggle for image restoration strategies. However, it is important to note that even when the above strategies are employed and the accused fails to give a proper account, it may do more harm to his image than to help to restore it. The accuser may not care that the accused has circumstances for which he is unable to give an account. It may be better off for the accused, given a particular context, to forego meta-accounts and give a full account of the action called into question.

Scott and Lyman wrap up their work on accounts by stating that all accounts occur between persons in roles (58), whether it is friends, lovers, co-workers, or strangers. Role identity and negotiating that role become of great importance to the speaker defending his or her image. The negation of identities plays a role through image restoration as the accused is constantly defining and redefining his role in relation to the accuser. This can work to an advantage or disadvantage depending on how the accuser (audience) perceives the identity. For example: if the President of the United States defends his position based on authority and gets a negative response from the nation, he may chose to renegotiate his identity to them as a fellow countryman. This may work as the nation finds identification with his new role, or it may backfire as they see it as a lesser role than that of the President. In any case, negation of identity plays a key role in nearly all forms of apologia.

**Apologia**

In 1959 a psychologist, Robert P. Abelson, developed four different ways that people deal with conflict resolution: denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence.[27] While he was not concerned with how this played a part in image restoration, he did give birth to an idea that carried itself from 1959 all the way to Benoit in 1995.

Abelson asserted that these four strategies were employed by a person in order to resolve belief dilemmas. In his essay he discusses belief dilemmas as "inconsistencies in anyone's belief system which may lie dormant or unthought about" (344). Once a person begins to think about these inconsistencies, he or she must resolve them by using one of his strategies. He first talks about denial and its implementation in intrapersonal conflicts. According to Abelson, "denial refers to a direct attack upon one or both of the cognitive elements or the relation between them" (344). For example, if I believed that I should not swear and yet I did swear after hitting my thumb with a hammer, I could deny that the word was actually a swear word in the context in which I used it, since it was not directed toward a person but an inanimate object. Abelson lists a few examples that illustrate how denial would work, but notes: "denial attempts may run into various difficulties…when the denial is too great a distortion of reality or conflicts with a larger belief system" (345). He uses the example of the Boston colonists' objection to the taxation of tea. The colonists voted that it was improper to desire tea, which went against their natural inclination to like tea. According to Abelson, the denial was ineffective in changing their desire for tea.

The next strategy that Abelson outlines is bolstering. "The mechanism called bolstering consists of relating one or the other of the two cognitive objects in a balanced way to other valued objects, thereby minimizing the relative imbalance in the structure" (345). Again, we

[27]Robert P. Abelson, "Modes of Resolution of Belief Dilemmas." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3 (1959): 343-52.

must note that this is in reference to the conflict resolution of belief dilemmas, but has since been adjusted to be used in the rhetorical arena of image restoration. Abelson goes on to note: "this is a mechanism not for eliminating imbalance entirely but only for drowning it out, so to speak" (345). This can be clearly seen as a strategy for image restoration. The speaker can use bolstering as a way of minimizing the issue that led to a damaged image. He in turn can bolster another issue to take the place of the action in question. To bolster simply means to elevate a positive issue over the negative issue. Example: smoking is more "cool" to me than it is damaging to my health. Therefore, I will smoke to be "cool," thus accomplishing my main goal, while understanding that I am damaging my health, which is less of a consideration. In image restoration an example may be President George W. Bush declaring war on Iraq, which costs billions of dollars, but protects freedom, which is a much greater good. President Bush would proceed to bolster freedom while downplaying the monetary costs of war.

The third strategy Abelson outlines is differentiation. Differentiation occurs when "an element may be split into two parts with a strong dissociative relation between the parts" (345). Take a current issue like stem cell research. There are two types of stem cell research, embryonic and non-embryonic. One may say that they oppose embryonic stem cell research and decide to withhold their vote from a politician who supports stem cell research, but then discover that they support non-embryonic stem cell research and come to a conclusion that it is morally acceptable to do so. Therefore, the issue of stem cell research is resolved in the voter's mind. Another example given in the Abelson essay is the conflict of evolution and the Bible. If one believes in the literal interpretation of the Scripture, then he or she would reject the teachings of evolution. However, if one believes in a figurative interpretation of Scripture, then he or she may very well accept the assertions of evolution (346).

Last, Abelson deals with transcendence. Transcendence is resolving a dilemma by "imbedding the conflicting parts in a new concept instrumental to some higher purpose" (346). This strategy is often employed by those operating in a religious context. They may see an action, such as bombing an abortion clinic, as righteous because it saves the life of the unborn in spite of killing those who practice abortion. This too can be seen through Operation Iraqi Freedom. In order for American forces to secure the future freedom of a foreign country, a large number of innocent lives will be lost. The loss is justified by the transcendent goal of democracy and freedom.

Abelson notes that denial and bolstering are much more widely used because they are easy strategies to execute. He states, "Differentiation is difficult because it requires intellectual ability, flexibility, and because, when there is strong affect toward a cognitive object, it is not easily split apart. Transcendence is presumably more difficult, for it requires the existence of a compelling super ordinate structure in which a given imbalance may be imbedded" (348).

Abelson was uncovered ideas that endured and became a major foundation for contemporary understanding and interpretation of image restoration. After Abelson came Ware and Linkugel's important essay on apologia, in which they employed these ideas from Abelson to demonstrate how they were used in self defense.

Ware and Linkugel seek to apply Abelson's ideas to the public address genre of apologia, or speech of self defense. They state two main goals at the outset of their essay: "First, we attempt to discover those factors which characterize the apologetic form."[28] They go on to state: "second, we hope to discover the subgenres, the "types of discourses within the genre" (274). Outside of applying Abelson's theory to interpersonal affairs rather than intrapersonal belief

---

[28]B. Lee Ware, Wil A. Linkugel, "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59 (1973): 273-83.

dilemmas, they make a few changes to the four "modes of resolution," which they label as "factors."

When dealing with denial they conclude, similarly to Abelson, that "strategies of denial are useful to the speaker only to the extent that such negations do not constitute a known distortion of reality or to the point that they conflict with other beliefs held by the audience" (275). However, they add a dimension to the denial strategy by stating that it is "reformative" in nature because it does not seek to change the meaning for the issue in question, but rather "consists of the simple disavowal by the speaker of any participation in, relationship to, or positive sentiment toward whatever it is that repels the audience" (275-76). This idea of "reformative" and another of "transformative" is foundational to the genre of apologia in Ware and Linkugel's framework. Lastly, they note that often times in public discourse apologia the speaker uses denial of intent as a way to avoid becoming stigmatized if denial of the event fails.

Outside of application to public discourse and being labeled as a reformative method of apologia, Ware and Linkugel made little to no changes in how Abelson defined bolstering. They too, like Abelson, see that bolstering and denial often work hand in hand as a complete method of apologia (277). One important clarification worth noting is that when a speaker employs bolstering in a public discourse, he is limited to what he or she can "bolster" based on the reality the audience already perceives. In other words, the speaker can not "bolster" an idea that the audience does not value higher than what has been accused.

While denial and bolstering are seen as reformative strategies of apologia, differentiation and transcendence are labeled as transformative. The difference between the two strategies is fairly simple. Reformative strategies do not seek to "alter the audience's meaning for the cognitive elements involved," whereas the transformative method does. (278) While Abelson

touches on this briefly,[29] he does not explicitly come out and name them as Ware and Linkugel have in their essay on apologia.

Differentiation, like bolstering, changes little from Abelson's conception of it. However, it is important to note that in apologia, the conclusion of Ware and Linkugel must be kept in mind when employing differentiation. They conclude that the speaker cannot quibble with new meanings, about which he or she has differentiated, but rather must "place whatever it is about him that repels the audience into a new perspective [that] can often benefit him in his self defense."[30] In other words, the speaker cannot fight over what "this" means, compared to what "that" means. He must choose an idea that is somewhat familiar to the audience in order to be successful.

The fourth strategy, transcendence, involves change in meaning and identification (280). Ware and Linkugel note that in public discourse, "transcendental strategies…move the audience away from the particulars of the charge at hand in a direction toward some more abstract, general view of his character" (280). Outside of these clarifications and examples of apologia that used this strategy, Ware and Linkugel did not significantly add to Abelson's initial definition of transcendence.

Ware and Linkugel's second goal becomes much more of a turning point in the development of image restoration. They advocate that these strategies are all that is available to the rhetorical critic and, once hearing a public discourse of apologia, the critic must evaluate it using one of these four terms. Ware and Linkugel go on to define subgenres, or better put, ways that apologia is commonly employed.

---

[29] Abelson, 345
[30] Ware & Linkugel, 278

Ware and Linkugel use the term "rhetorical posture" to define four different possibilities that speakers use in the four factors discussed above in apologia: absolution, vindication, explanation, and justification (282). These postures incorporate combinations of two of the four "modes of conflict resolution" outlined by Abelson into a subgenre of apologia and are noted to include one from the reformative side and the other from the transformative methods of self-defense.

Absolution is when the speaker seeks acquittal and uses forms of differentiation and denial. Ware and Linkugel note that this is not confined to legal proceedings and is best understood when a "speaker is primarily concerned with clearing his name through focusing audience attention upon the particulars or specifics of the charge" (282-83).

The vindictive speech is less specific than absolution and relies more heavily upon transcendence as its transformative method and denial as the reformative method. Not only does it aim to preserve the speaker's reputation, "but also [aims] at the recognition of his greater worth as a human being relative to the worth of his accusers" (283). Hence it is vindictive in nature.

The last two subgenres, explanative and justification are closely related as well. They both employ bolstering as their reformative methods, but differ on their use of the reformative. Explanative posture uses bolstering and differentiation with hopes to convince the audience of the speaker's beliefs and intentions as a way to give account for whatever it is that has scarred his or her image. Justification, on the other hand, seeks an approval for actions by bolstering and transcendence (283).

This essay was instrumental in the forming of Image Restoration Theory and its applications. The importance of these subgenres can be seen in the way that Benoit and other

later scholars have interpreted efforts at apologia in the past and will continue to be used in future studies.

**Image**

Shortly after Scott and Lyman wrote their essay concerning accounts, a professor at the University of Southern California wrote an essay concerning motives and communication. Walter Fisher's 1970 article[31] published in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* is one of the most important essays on how communication negotiates image. He begins with outlining four major assumptions by which his essay operates. First, he assumes that human communication functions as a way to influence ethical choices (131). To say that human communication aims to influence ethical choices does not imply that all communication aims at moral choices such as to kill or not to kill, but simply it aims to display a choice between one option and another. The communicator attempts to persuade the hearer to see one choice as preferable over the others and to make that choice. "Second, rhetorical discourse creates an 'image,' a value-oriented interpretation, of some part of the world" (131). In other words, communicators not only attempt to influence our choices about a particular subject matter, but also how we should behave toward that subject matter. They paint a picture, give us an image, and influence our attitude towards it. Importantly, Fisher asserts:

> One may hypothesize that rhetorical discourse will be persuasive to the extent that the image it creates regarding a subject corresponds with the image already held by the audience, the degree to which the image it implies of the audience corresponds with the self-images held by members of the audience, and the degree to which image assumed in the message and its presentation by the communicator is attractive to the audience. (131)

[31] Walter Fisher, "A Motive View of Communication," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, 2 (1970): 131-139.

Fisher is describing the importance of images in the art of persuasion. This by no means ignores image restoration, but rather does quite the opposite. In order for a communicator to correctly create, defend, or attack another image, he or she must manage the image along the aforementioned guidelines in order to be successful in persuading the audience. I can not expect to communicate an image so foreign to my audience and have them move from an image they identify with to an image that they find quite unfamiliar. In that case, my attempt at creating or defending my image will likely fail.

Third, Fisher assumes that communication creates a "real-fiction" (132). While rhetorical communication relates to reality in the sense that it deals with our everyday experience, it also creates a fiction in the sense that it aims to persuade my thoughts and actions toward a subject, and the truth of the value judgment cannot be empirically verified (132).

Last, communication "functions to affect the life of an image which may be expressed as a proposition, proposal, or cause" (132). Fisher makes two remarks in this section that are crucial to the foundation of image restoration. He says that this "image may be of a man, a set of ideas, a circumstance, a time, or a place" and "that it is difficult to separate the identity of a spokesman from the identity of his ideas" (132).

Fisher believes that rhetorical communication is grounded in motives. However, his essay is not about that topic, but rather it seeks to "illustrate the appropriateness and usefulness of characterizing rhetorical situations in terms of motives" (132). He names four rhetorical situations, which he refers to as "motives": affirmation, reaffirmation, purification, and subversion. We will deal with these four motives in detail as they pertain to the topic of image management.

Affirmation is a rhetorical situation in which the communicator creates an image in the minds of his or her audience. The communicator is moved by the motive to have the audience welcome a new concept or image. Fisher breaks down three types of situations in which affirmation can be seen. The first is an autocratic situation in which a dictator or monarch makes political decisions and no rhetorical communication is necessary. The leader decides the policy and disperses the information to his or her subordinates. In the second situation, the democratic situation, the opposite is true, policy making is up to the participants, who are influenced by rhetorical communication. The emphasis in an autocratic government is placed squarely on the shoulders of the leader, whereas in a democratic situation it is decided in the minds of the participants. The last type of affirmative situation is found in the academic setting. Here the audience makes value judgments on the speaker's ideas or philosophies. The issue here is not over policy but over philosophy and the truth of the ideas. Fisher says that there are three inherent metaphysical assumptions associated with each of these three affirmative situations: "Either the leader knows, the participants know, or knowledge must be gained through philosophic analysis." He goes on to make another statement of note: "it would appear that affirmative rhetoric, concerned as it is with generating life into an idea or identity, is crucially dependent upon the metaphysical assumption implicit in the sort of situation in which it is presented" (133). In other words, in creating an image, a speaker must be fully aware of the metaphysical assumptions surrounding their message. Their motive may be to create an image in the mind of the audience, but by which venue; autocratic, democratic, or philosophical analysis? Does he or she want the audience to trust their decision making, their own decision making, or rely on the philosophical truth of the message itself?

The second rhetorical situation or motive is reaffirmation, a situation in which the speaker attempts to strengthen or revitalize a belief already held by his audience (134). Fisher uses the example of Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" in which Lincoln reinforced the seriousness of the civil war and the necessity to complete it for the welfare of the nation. President George W. Bush employs the same motive when he speaks of the fight for freedom in today's current war on terrorism. Many speeches are in the category of reaffirmation. Every time one hears a message about the evil of racism, the dangers of alcohol, safe-sex, gay rights, or spiritual rebirth, you hear a message reaffirming a belief.

Fisher writes, "Where a rhetoric of affirmation seeks to initiate an ideology and a rhetoric of reaffirmation endeavors to revitalize one, a rhetoric of purification is found in situations in which the communicator attempts to refine one" (136). Fisher uses two examples to help us understand the motive of purification: Richard Nixon's "Checkers Speech" and John F. Kennedy's "Houston Ministerial Address." In both situations, Fisher notes, the identity of the men was in question. Nixon sought to purify his image by relating his character to integrity, intelligence, and goodwill, whereas Kennedy sought to identify himself as an American and as a Catholic. Both of these speeches fall under apologia, as do most purification speeches and messages. In each speech, the men successfully "purified" their images.

Last, the motive of subversion occurs when the communicator seeks to weaken or destroy an ideology (137). Fisher claims that subversive rhetoric is an "anti-ethos rhetoric" (138). In other words it occurs when a communicator attempts to damage the character of a person, institution, or idea. A great example is the modern political commercial. The aim of these commercials is to question or even destroy the character of another politician. Affirmation and subversion work hand in hand in the sense that as affirmation seeks to create a new image, it also

destroys an old one, and as subversion destroys an old image, it creates a new one. Thus they are truly related whether intentionally or unintentionally by the communicator.

Fisher's article was a huge step towards the better understanding of image management. If we take his assumptions as accurate and move forward in our understanding of image restoration, we see four motives that operate behind the scene of every image restoration attempt. This framework helps us better understand the reasons as well as some of the methods that speakers employ in discourses of apologia and image restoration.

**The Theory**

Let us begin by defining the theory that preceded his own contribution and discussing its foundations. Benoit studied some of the popular defense speeches and strategies that have occurred over the last 30 years. For example, he analyzed Nixon's Watergate defense[32] as well as Tylenol's public relation nightmare in 1987.[33] He states, "As I reflected on this topic, I began to realize that discourse that apologizes, makes excuses, or otherwise attempts to restore a favorable image is pervasive. My reading of rhetorical literature led me to conclude that…no one had developed a comprehensive theory of excuses and apologies in public discourse."[34]

This led Benoit to develop the formal theory in 1995 with the release of *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies.* During the writing of this book Benoit recalls being more aware of his own excuse-making and that of his students, colleagues and friends. He says, "These episodes only served to strengthen my conviction that I was studying an important and pervasive social phenomenon" (ix).

---

[32] William L. Benoit, "Richard Nixon's Rhetorical Strategies in his Public Statements on Watergate," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 47 (1982): 192-211.
[33] William L. Benoit & J.J. Lindsey, "Argument Stratigies: Antidote to Tylenol's Poisoned Image, *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 23 (1987) 136-46.
[34] Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Stratiges.* viii.

In the first three chapters of his book, he lays the historical foundation for his theory. He cites previous studies from various academic fields such as communication and psychology and explains how these previous works fell short of a rhetorical theory of image restoration. It is not until chapter four that Benoit begins to define the formal theory on which we will focus our attention.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, Benoit outlines two assumptions on which the theory is built. First, he says that communication is best seen as a goal-directed activity. Secondly, the desire to maintain a positive image is one of the central goals (63). If we are to look at these two assumptions we can determine the validity of the theory's foundation. Let's begin by looking at the first assumption.

Communication is best seen as a goal-directed activity. Whether it is written, spoken, or nonverbal communication, it all has intent. It may be as simple as to inform, such as "I picked up the ball," or as complicated as a criminal defense in a courtroom. Whatever the case may be, we all communicate with a goal in mind.

Benoit is not the only one who shares the idea that communication is a goal-oriented idea. He quotes Kenneth Burke who states that communication "can be called an act in the full sense of the term only if it involves purpose."[35] Not only does Benoit back up his assumption with Burke, but also with many others in the field such as Robert T. Craig, a professor of communication at the University of Colorado at Boulder and author of more than 70 academic publications.[36] Craig states,

> A practical discipline of communication in which the concept of goal would not be central is difficult to imagine; and the pragmatic language of goal, decision, and

---

[35] Kenneth Burke, "Dramatism," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 7, ed. D.L. Sills, (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), 446.
[36] Robert T. Craig, "Curriculum Vitae," http://spot.colorado.edu/~craigr/Vitae.doc, (accessed September 12, 2007).

consequence is in fact the common coin of the discipline of speech communication that has emerged in the United States in this century.[37]

Secondly, the desire to maintain a positive image is second nature to all human beings. Image management, like most other forms of communication, can take place in the verbal and nonverbal realms of communication. Public relation firms are hired for the single purpose of making or re-making the image of companies. I would argue, based on Benoit's assumption, that each one of us has our own "public relations firm" inside of us. We are constantly trying to display an image of who we are to family, friends, coworkers, colleagues, and even strangers. Naturally, we do so with more effort after we have been accused of a wrongdoing or shortcoming.

Benoit builds on this assumption by stating that "the need for discourse designed to restore our reputation arises because, as human beings, we inevitably engage in behavior that makes us vulnerable for attack."[38] He says this for four reasons. He explains that the world offers limited resources and as a result, people are rarely satisfied because they cannot get what they want. There is only so much time, money, gasoline, etc. When the supply of these resources fails to meet a person's expectation or desires, dissatisfaction occurs. This dissatisfaction leads to complaints of those who are in power. Image restoration strategies are needed to help defend those in power. Second, he points out that events outside of ourselves prevent us from meeting our obligations. He gives examples of a faulty clock, late mail, or even a computer crash. These events will lead us to unfavorable outcomes that will require an excuse. Third, he says that people simply make mistakes due to our human nature. The last reason he gives, and probably the most interesting of all four, is that we often have different goals that conflict. These four

---

[37] Robert T. Craig, "Goals in Discourse," in *Contemporary Issues in language and Discourse Processes,* eds. D.G. Ellis & W.A Donohue, (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986), 257.
[38] Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies*, 67.

elements combine to assure us that image management is a reoccurring theme in rhetorical communication (67-68).

Again, Benoit reinforces his second assumption with additional scholarly research. He again uses Burke along with the addition of Anthony Manstead and Gun Semin. Manstead and Semin wrote an influential 1983 book outlining the feelings of guilt over "breaches of conduct." They find that, "actors assume that they have projected a negative image of themselves, even if the breach is an unintentional one."[39] They go on to note that the threat of potential damage to one's reputation increases as their responsibility increases (38). Benoit notes that "human beings worry that others will think less of them when apparent misdeeds occur."[40] This in turn leads to the conclusion that a positive image is one of the goals of communication.

**Two Components of the Attack**

Benoit states, "Fundamentally, an attack on one's image, face, or reputation is comprised of two components: 1) An act occurred which is undesirable, 2) You are responsible for that action." He continues by clarifying that "only if both of these conditions are believed to be true by the relevant audience is the actor's reputation at risk" (71). If the audience does not believe the accusations to be true, then the actor is at no risk of a damaged image. I will now look at each of the two conditions that make up an attack on an image.

The first component, "the act," must be one that is seen as undesirable. Benoit qualifies this even further. He points out that image restoration attempts happen when the actor believes that the audience disapproves of his or her actions. It is then the actor's perception of the audience's acceptance of his behavior, not their actual acceptance, which drives him to defend his image. This is important to note as the actor's image may be damaged due to the fact that he

---

[39]Gun Semin & Anthony Manstead, *The Accountability of Conduct: A Social Psychological Analysis* (London: Academic Press, 1983), 38.
[40] Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies,* 68.

fails to perceive the audience's true belief. This action may include words, deeds, or the failure to perform actions that the audience expects him to perform. Finally, Benoit concludes that the more people affected and the greater the importance of the action, the more the actor's reputation, or image, is damaged (72).

The second component, "the responsibility," must be ascribed to the actor. He must be responsible somehow for the undesirable action, even if he did not commit it. A good example is a police chief that is over a city in which police committed racial crimes. While he did not commit the act, he will be held responsible and be called to defend his image. Failure to do so may cost him his job. Benoit describes this by saying that "the key point here, of course, is not whether in fact the actor caused the damage, but whether the relevant audience believes the actor to be the source of the reprehensible act" (72)

It is important to keep in mind that in Benoit's framework everything boils down to perception by the relevant audience. The actor will not enter into defensive rhetoric until he believes that his relevant audience sees his actions as reprehensible. This raises the question as to what happens when the audience does see the action as undesirable, but the actor does not know. Is his image damaged without him knowing it? Does someone tell him and he not believe them? Does the audience not hold him accountable? Do they expect him to defend himself?

If we go back to the example of the police chief and develop the fallout a little further we will see Benoit's next note the explanation of his theory. He states, "just as the undesirability of the act exists on a continuum, responsibility is often not a simple true or false proposition." The police chief may be called to defend himself, but so will the officers involved in the crime. Not all parties will carry the same amount of blame. The officers will surely carry the most and will likely lose their jobs depending on the image restoration case they present. The chief will

probably share a smaller portion of the blame, but will be asked to give an account as well. Benoit continues, "It seems reasonable to assume that a person's reputation will suffer in proportion to the extent to which they are personally or individually held responsible for the undesirable act (including the extent to which they are believed to have intended the act and its consequences)." A good modern day example of how this plays out is in the case of the Iraq war. President Bush is not the man who gained intelligence on the assumed "weapons of mass destruction." However, he is perceived by some of his audience as looking for a reason to invade Iraq, and he is the man who gave the order to begin the war. Therefore, he is held responsible for the war and his reputation suffers to the extent that his relevant audience sees the war as undesirable. His image is damaged more than his advisors' images even though they share in the act (72-73).

This framework of the origin and function of attacks on one's image is helpful, as it will aid in explaining the strategies next outlined by Benoit. Denial, for example, is one such method that is better seen by laying this framework. If defensive rhetoric is entered into only after an accusation has been made by the relevant audience, then denial would be a natural reaction to the accusation. We can conclude that denial would be a logical choice of a defense given the background that Benoit covers in the beginning of his theory (73).

**Five Strategies of Image Restoration**

The focus now turns to the five strategies that Benoit appropriated from previous writers or developed to explain the different methods that actors chose to employ when attempting to restore their image. It is here that the "meat and potatoes" of the theory begin to show.

Benoit's theory is not entirely new as he pulls from a handful of other scholars in various fields of study. However, his theory is the only general theory to date that stands as a rhetorical

tool by which to analyze image restoration attempts. Benoit does state in the preface of *Accounts, Excuses and Apologies* that his theory is not a comprehensive theory. He writes, "The complexity of human behavior, the pervasiveness of this activity, and the diversity of scholarly interests prevent me from making the claim that this theory is complete." He continues that thought by stating, "I label it a general theory of image restoration (as opposed to a comprehensive theory) because it has a broader scope than existing treatments (especially in rhetorical literature)" (ix).

Image Restoration Theory is made up of five categories of restoration strategies. Three of them have subcategories. They are: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. I will cover all five in detail and explain how each one works (74).

**Denial**

Denial, as stated above, is a natural reaction to an accusation. Often, denial is appropriate as the actor is wrongly accused of an action. Denial can take various forms. For example, the actor can outright deny that the accused act happened, he could deny that he was involved, or even claim mistaken identity (75).

Denial can also be reinforced, according to Benoit. He cites two examples. The first is the example of Yasser Arafat, who was accused of making a derogatory comment about the Jews. Not only did he deny the statement, but went on to explain that the incriminating evidence, a recording, had been doctored to include the statement. The second example is that of William Aramony who was accused of financial misconduct while employed by the United Way. In this case, Aramony denied the misconduct and stated that he was kept from the evidence that

would clear his name. Here Benoit gives two examples of how denial can be strengthened and be effective (75).

If an actor chooses to use denial as his main strategy to restore his image, then his audience may wonder who was responsible for the wrong doing if he denies it. Benoit cites Kenneth Burke[41] and Peter Schonbach[42] as two scholars who have studied this phenomenon. Burke discusses shifting the blame to another actor while Schonbach believes that refusal of guilt is in essence applying it to someone else. Benoit claims that this can be seen as a variant of denial, but remains in this category of restoration strategies. He goes on to show that it is usually more effective than just denying the accusation outright for two reasons: 1) it provides a target for any negative feelings the audience has as well as taking the negative feelings away from the actor and 2) it answers the question of "Who did it?"[43]

**Evading Responsibility**

What if the actor cannot outright deny his involvement in the act in question? Benoit's next strategy deals with evading the responsibility of the act. The goal here is to reduce the responsibility for the act in question. He breaks it into four variants.

The first variant of evading responsibility is labeled provocation. Simply put, Benoit explains that the accused admits to the wrongdoing but claims that it was in response to another wrongful act, which "provoked" the act in question. The goal here is to have the audience place the responsibility of the act on the provocateur. A good example may be that of a man standing trial for murder. He may claim that he killed the robber in self-defense and not out of malicious intent. If successful the jury will see the act as a result of a previous crime, which in this case would be robbery.

---

[41] *The Rhetoric of Religion*. (Berkley: University of California Press), 1970.
[42] "A Category System for Account Phases," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 10 (1980): 195-200.
[43] Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies,* 75-76.

The second variable Benoit discusses is defeasibility. Defeasibility is best described as claiming lack of information or control over the situation. It is here that the actor admits to the action, but claims that he did not know all the information surrounding the act or that he did not have the resources to control the situation any differently. In this case the politician may claim that he could not have known the money was an illegal donation to his campaign because his accountant did not give him all the information.

A third variable of this communication strategy is claiming the act was due to an accident. The old "dog ate my homework" excuse would fall under this category. The student is not denying that he does not have his homework, but rather he is evading responsibility by claiming an accident had occurred which prevented the desirable act. Another good example would be the daughter who arrives late for curfew. She does not deny that it is ten minutes after midnight, but rather she cites the fact that the movie projector was broken, which in turn delayed the beginning of the film.

Lastly, the actor evades responsibility by citing motive as his excuse. Again, he does not deny that he committed the act; rather he states that his intensions were good, not evil as perceived. A husband may ruin his wife's favorite blouse in the washing machine. When confronted by his wife he will claim that his intentions were good, as he attempted to do the laundry while she was out of town, and did not realize that it was a dry clean only garment. If his wife accepted his excuse, his image would then be restored (76-77).

**Reducing Offensiveness**

In this restoration strategy the actor attempts to reduce the level of ill feeling the audience feels toward the action in question. Benoit gives six variants that fall under this strategy:

bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking one's accusers, and compensation.

"Bolstering," Benoit writes, "may be used to mitigate the negative effects of the act on the actor by strengthening the audience's positive affect for the rhetor" (77). The actor will try to reduce offensiveness by citing actions he has done in the past that were positive and were accepted by his audience. It is his hope that the good outweighs the bad. Benoit claims that this strategy is more effective if the past actions are in some way related to the present wrongdoing. Politicians are known for this strategy. They may be accused of a bad vote on a particular issue such as raising taxes and in response cite all the times when they voted against raising taxes (77).

Minimization is a strategy in which the actor attempts to minimize the negative feelings toward the act in question. It is his goal to convince the audience that the act is not as bad as it first appeared to be, thus minimizing their ill feelings towards it. A simple example might be a mother who reassures her son that the haircut she just gave him is not as bad as he thinks. She claims that due to the summer heat it is better to have shorter hair. If successful the boy would return to his summer fun with no further thoughts about his mother's mishap with the clippers (77).

Differentiation is when the actor attempts to make a distinction between the accused act and other similar acts that are less pleasing. The hope is that the audience compares the act to these less desirable acts and has a reduction of ill feeling towards it and the actor. An example of this may be seen when a child claims that he only pinched his classmate out of anger rather than punching or slapping him, which would have been worse. The teacher may still punish the child but not as severely after considering the other options the child may have chosen (77).

Fourth, the actor may choose to employ transcendence as a method of image restoration. Transcendence is when the act is placed in a different context. Benoit cites the example of Robin Hood. Stealing may be wrong in a normal context, but in his context it is justified due to Robin Hood valuing the poor and downtrodden of society over the rich and well off. The concept of utilitarianism would fall under this category as it seeks the greater amount of good for the greater amount of people (77-78).

There are other times where the actor chooses to accuse his attackers as a method of image restoration. In this strategy the actor hopes the credibility of his accusers can be damaged so that their accusations will be questioned. The second goal of this method is that while the actor is attacking his accuser the audience's attention may be drawn away from the act in question. A good example of this is seen in political commercials (78).

Compensation is the final variation of this strategy. Here the accused offers compensation to the victim in hopes that it will make up for the wrongdoing. Benoit notes that compensation is seen as a bribe. The hope here is that the accuser is paid off, the act forgiven, and the image restored (78).

**Corrective Action**

Corrective action is an image restoration strategy where the accused seeks to restore his image by promising that the action in question will be corrected. According to Benoit, "This may take two forms: restoring the situation to the state of affairs before the objectionable action and/or promising to "mend one's ways" and make changes to prevent the recurrence of the undesirable act" (79). Benoit also notes that if the undesirable action has the possibility of happening again, then the actor situation may be improved by the plan he puts into place to reassure his audience that it will not happen again (79).

A simple example of this would be a student who is consistently late for his college class. His defense is not to deny his tardiness, but rather state corrective action by promising to set his alarm earlier than normal to avoid being late again. When he begins to consistently arrive on time for his class his image is restored in the eyes of the professor.

Benoit clarifies that corrective action is different from compensation in the sense that compensation seeks to offset the wrongdoing by trying to balance the good with the bad, whereas corrective action seeks to change the bad behavior from this point forward. Bribery for example, is a form of compensation, but makes no promises that the undesirable action will not happen again (79).

**Mortification**

Last, Benoit mentions the strategy of mortification, which is a theme prominent in Burke's writing. The actor may choose to admit the wrongdoing and ask for forgiveness. If he is persuasive and appears sincere then the audience may choose to forgive the actor and move on (79). The Judeo-Christian idea of repentance would fall under this category, although Benoit makes no direct correlation to the idea of repentance

**What about Silence?**

In a lengthy footnote, Benoit defends his reasoning behind leaving out a common reaction to an accusation: silence. The strategy of not saying anything at all is one that is used when the actor feels as if the accusation is not worth responding to. Benoit states that he omitted this strategy because he was writing a theory based on what could be *said* to defend an image.

The passive aggressive approach of silence does not fall under Benoit's framework of verbal image restoration strategies and is therefore not covered under his theory[44] (79).

**Validity of Image Restoration Theory**

I decided to develop and present a brief outline of Benoit's theory in order to give the reader a snapshot of the theory's validity and utility. It is clearly seen from Benoit's research that a handful of academic fields have studied image restoration and face management. Rhetoricians, social scientists, psychologists, and others have realized the importance of studying and writing on this communication phenomenon. Benoit pulls from these previous studies to garner support and show the history of his formal theory. We can trace image restoration rhetoric as far back as Aristotle and as recent as the Monica Lewinsky/Bill Clinton scandal in the 1990s and even the Enron collapse of this century.

**Why is Image Restoration Theory Applicable?**

It is important to make a case for the significance of Benoit's theory in the context of ancient history. His theory has been applied to contemporary celebrities, politicians, and corporations. Through his studies he has helped us gain understanding as to why the people and companies responded the way that they did and it helps us determine whether or not their attempts were successful. I believe that using Benoit's theory can help interpret Patrick's method of image restoration as well as its effectiveness.

A simple Google search of Benoit's name will leave a researcher swimming in a sea of image restoration studies. The theory may only be slightly more than a decade old, but its potential utility reaches beyond modern times into an ancient world that is steeped in material waiting to be analyzed. As Benoit maintains, the principle of image restoration theory

---

[44] Both the idea of repentance and silence (which may include more nonverbal strategies) are two venues in which I could expand Benoit's theory. Whereas there may be little, if any room to handle the idea of repentance outside of Benoit's mortification strategy, there would be a great deal to be said about nonverbal methods of image restoration.

transcends culture and history because the desire to protect one's image is universal. Patrick's defense is one of many that can be better understood by sifting it through the image restoration "gold pan" and discovering what nuggets of knowledge we can gather from its remains.

**Future Application of Image Restoration**

While the aforementioned articles, books, and ideas do not constitute an exhaustive list of works on image restoration, the list is intended to give us a good snapshot of where Benoit began to formulate his ideas that turned into the theory we now have and employ. I want to end this section with a recent work on image restoration that is relevant to this thesis' topic.

Image restoration has been largely applied to political and commercial failures and the majority of scholarly essays have come from everyday apologies of one person to another. However, few studies have applied the theory in religious contexts. I am aware of one major work dealing with this topic and expect more to follow in the upcoming years.

One rhetorician who has written about image restoration within the realm of Christianity is Brett Miller, author of *Divine Apology*. Miller writes "With the possible exception of modern science and scientific enterprises, no subject or endeavor has influenced the shaping of culture or the content of human discourse more significantly than religion."[45] Miller starts his book with this assertion as a foundation of the importance of religion as an academic study. His work is among some of the first studies done on Image Restoration and its application to the religious arena.

Miller furthers the credibility of a focus on religion by stating, "It would be appropriate to suggest that a Christian *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, is at work strongly influencing morality, politics, education, rhetoric, and many other facets of public and private life" (1). In his opening

---

[45] Brett A. Miller, *Divine Apology: The Discourse of Religious Image Restoration*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002) 1.

chapter he further establishes this credibility by showing how religion, especially Christianity, has influenced much of what we have come to know and experience in the Western world. His opening paragraph concludes: "The consequence is that a tremendous amount of our communicative behavior is influenced by the culture-structuring impact of this religious ethos" (1).

Apologia is a topic well infused into the history of the Christian faith. From the times recorded in the Old Testament to today's public discourse on morality and religion, Christians have not only been involved in public apologia, but have also used it to further their influence on society.

Again, it is important to note that the majority of research and focus have been given to the secular realm of apologia and mainly focused on politics and corporate image restoration. Whether the focus is President Ronald Reagan's discourse from the Iran-Contra affair, the 1989 Exxon *Valdez* oil spill, or celebrities including Tanya Harding, Hugh Grant, and Queen Elizabeth, the study of apologia has largely stayed in the realm of public discourse and popular culture and thus warrants further study within religious arenas.

Last, it is worthy to note Miller's conclusion about the theory of image restoration. He states,

> There appear to be no other defensive strategies available to rhetors, other than those outlined by Benoit. Thus, the typology of image restoration theory seems to be complete…therefore, image restoration theory provides a standard of analysis that provides for thorough, consistent evaluation, and the compiling of cumulative rhetorical artifacts. (12)

If Miller is correct, then not only do we have a credible theory for interpreting image restoration, but we also have a filter by which every attempt of image restoration must pass. This seemingly young theory (with a heritage stretching back to ancient Greece) will provide for a future of rhetorical studies within all realms and walks of life.

**Conclusion & Justification**

We can see from this chapter the usefulness of Benoit's theory in interpreting and analyzing rhetoric dealing with the defense of public image. This chapter has presented a necessary and sufficient introduction to this complex theory. The goal is that the reader can see that Benoit has raised key themes and presented specific terminology that will be potentially useful in the analysis of Patrick's self-defense, the subject of the following chapter.

**Methodology & Preview**

In my last two chapters I will first analyze Patrick's *Confession* rhetorically. My goal here will be to look at *Confession* sequentially as a piece of persuasion. I will reveal how Patrick used different strategies of rhetorical persuasion to build his case. Second, I will apply William L. Benoit's theory of Image Restoration as a tool to analyze Patrick's letter in light of its essential rhetorical purpose—maintaining or reinforcing Patrick's apparently questioned reputation—placing his persuasive discourse in the line of other scholarly works on apologia. As the study unfolds, I will test Benoit's theory and Miller's extension of the theory as applicable to the special situation of historical religious rhetoric suggesting possible modifications for the context of historical religious apologia.

# Chapter 3

## Of Saints and Shamrocks

Saint Patrick is an interesting and significant person for two reasons. First, he was an actual historical, living, breathing person. He is not a myth or legend. He had a birthday, he lost his baby teeth, he got sick, he laughed, he got tired, and he was mortal. Secondly, most of what we hear about him is myth or legend. As noted in chapter one, legend says that Patrick drove snakes out of Ireland and he used the shamrock to explain the Trinity, neither of which can be verified. I suppose that it is the same situation we find with other "commercial saints." Saint Nicholas and Saint Valentine have plenty of myth surrounding their true stories. However, neither of them "belongs" to a country. Neither of them helped convert a pagan nation to Christianity in such a way that the people are defined by their faith. Patrick is indeed an interesting character.

Also noted in chapter one, Patrick's *Confession* was a letter written in defense of himself and his ministry. It was addressed to the Catholic Church after Patrick was accused of wrongdoing. In this short confessional autobiography we can catch a sizeable glimpse of who the real Patrick may have been. He writes of his upbringing, kidnapping, slavery, conversion, escape, calling, and mission. He defends his ministry and attempts to clear his name. Was his attempt well organized, adequate, or honest? Was it successful? What alternative strategies did he reject? These are all appropriate questions that I will seek to answer in this chapter.

### Preview

I will begin this chapter by walking through Patrick's letter sequentially, pointing out his rhetorical strategies. This will allow the reader to become familiar with the letter before I apply Benoit's theory to explain Patrick's image restoration attempt. I will then analyze Patrick's letter,

*Confession*, using William L. Benoit's image restoration theory. My goal is to determine how effective Patrick's defense was, given Benoit's theory, and the context in which Patrick operated.

I will also deal with my choice of translation of *Confession* I used for analysis before moving to the rhetorical overview and application of Benoit's theory. In the application portion of this chapter I will analyze Patrick's letter by noting the key methods of image restoration from Benoit's theory by employing sub-heading. Under each sub-heading I will develop Patrick's use of that particular strategy. I will only discuss the strategies that Patrick actually employed, omitting the strategies of image restoration not used by Patrick in his letter. I will conclude this chapter by presenting lessons learned from Patrick's defense as seen through the theory of Image Restoration before moving on to my final chapter that will deal with an overall conclusion and suggestions for future study.

**Textual Considerations**

Freeman is quick to point out that Patrick's letters have been widely unnoticed. He explains that they were rediscovered in the seventeenth century and attributes the first scholarly edition of Patrick's letters to James Ware, a Protestant minister, in 1656. The first English translations appeared in the nineteenth century and more than a dozen editions have been published in the last hundred years (168).

The copy that I have chosen to use is the translation by Phillip Freeman. While I have searched for the most commonly used English translation of *Confession*, I have yet to find a consensus as to which is the most accurate. The main reason for this discrepancy is the difficulty of translating Patrick's Latin. Patrick was not formally educated in Latin as the other bishops due to his enslavement in his younger years. This led to a letter in which Patrick is apparently embarrassed by his poor communication skills. Freeman's scholarly translation purports to stay

true to the original text as other translations have, but also modernizes some of the phrases to affect a contemporary style.[46]

**Rhetorical Walkthrough**[47]

Patrick begins his letter by "bearing his soul" in a sense. His formal introduction is one that is different from what we might hear or read today. He states, "I am Patrick—a sinner…" (176). Those five words will be key in his rhetorical attempt at persuasion as well as foundational to his image restoration attempt, which will be discussed in the next session.

Since Patrick is writing to Christians, his use of religious jargon stands a good chance of achieving identification with his audience. Christians, in Patrick's time, and to a great extent throughout the years since the New Testament was penned, finds identity with such words as "sinner," "God," "grace," "faith," etc. Patrick, speaking in such a frame uses these theologically rich words (and others) throughout his letter. After his opening paragraph, in which he makes the statement noted above, he immediately begins work on reconstructing his character; or in rhetoric terms, his ethos.

Here is where Patrick begins relating a short autobiography. Here is where Patrick follows the path of an ancient oration, with *narratio* following his *peroration.* He tells his readers about his father and grandfather, a deacon and priest, respectively, as well as his hometown of Bannaventa Berniae. It is clear that Patrick came from a certain pedigree of people. He was not a peasant or a beggar, but rather the son and grandson of clergy and had a well-to-do upbringing. Not only does his family call Bannaventa Berniae home, but they also own a country estate. This, Patrick says, is where he was kidnapped just before he turned 16 (176).

---

[46] Freeman's translation can be found in the appendix.
[47] All citations of Patrick's *Confession* will be from Freeman's translation found in the epilogue of his text. All page numbers will correspond to the pages in Freeman's book.

From here his letter turns to a pathos laden appeal. He begins to describe his years of slavery. Patrick claims that he and the others, "deserved slavery—for we have abandoned God and did not follow his ways. We ignored the warnings of our priests…so God poured out his anger on us and scattered us among the hordes of barbarians…" (176).

He continues without losing touch with his religious audience by explaining that it was there, in Ireland, where God first opened his heart in order for him to become aware of his failings and turn to God with his whole being. He writes that God "looked down on my miserable condition and had compassion for me, young and foolish as I was…he protected me and loved me even as a father his own child" (176). All human beings can relate in some way to that comment. It may recall a positive relationship that one has with a parent, or may conjure up feelings of longing for the love of a parent. Within Christianity, the idea of God loving his followers as "sons" and "daughters" is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. This line allowed Patrick to lay a foundational image for his conversion and subsequent ministry. Nearly all Christians, and human beings for that matter, can find identity with this father-son metaphor

Patrick sets up his letter in a way that appeals to his upbringing and heritage (ethos) and moves on to explain his conversion (pathos). Lest he leave out the logical appeal, Patrick states boldly, "Because of this I cannot—I will not—be silent" (176). Here Patrick has painted a picture for his accusers, one with which they will be familiar. Due to God's love for him, Patrick cannot be silent. Surely the Church leaders should come to the same conclusion and respect another man who carries such conviction. Had Patrick remained silent in light of his accusations, one may conclude that he was in fact guilty. Rather, his boldness is his way of staking claim on his innocence. Patrick was determined to declare what God has done in him and through him.

Before analyzing the points of contention that spurred this letter of defense, Patrick spells out his theology to his accusers. I speculate he does this in order to clear his name from preaching heresy, although he does not state that explicitly as an issue. He makes clear declarations regarding God's eternality and omnipotence as well as Christ's eternality. He states his belief in the virgin birth as well as Christ's death, burial, resurrection and future glory. Last, he speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit and the need to worship God in three parts (177). In Chapter Two, I outlined Walter Fisher's work on "image." I want to make a connection between what Fisher discusses and what Patrick says in the previous quote. Fisher outlines what he calls "reaffirmation." That is, a situation in which the speaker attempts to strengthen or revitalize a belief already held by his audience.[48] Here Patrick is employing Fisher's reaffirmation principle. This may reassure some of his accusers. They may have had bad information on which they made their accusations. This reaffirmation of orthodox theology may suffice in persuading some of his accusers that he is theologically sound. Whatever the outcome of Patrick's statement, his accusers now have a concrete idea of his theology.

At this point, Patrick concludes his introduction. He has covered his character and desire, his enslavement and conversion, and finally restated his core theology and reason for existence. The introduction is bold and direct. Patrick cleverly crafts his opening paragraphs in such a way as to frame himself in light of his past, present and future: a past full of hope, shattered by slavery, and changed for the good of the Gospel of God, about which he has preached and will continue to preach.

I could continue dealing with his letter paragraph by paragraph using the traditional tools of rhetoric, however, for purposes of this project, I will limit my discussion to the major themes and strategies found in the body and conclusion of his letter.

---

[48] Fisher, 134.

Patrick moves into the body of his letter and attempts to explain his poor writing skills (178-79). He tells his readers that he was not educated like them and that he feared that they would laugh at his poor use of Latin. This is interesting for a two reasons. First, it tells the reader that he is different from his more learned audience. He may be of the same nationality or be able to speak the same language, but fundamentally, his upbringing and experience vary widely from his accusers. Patrick and his accusers have shared identity in the faith, but they lose identity in other perhaps crucial arenas. Because of this, misunderstanding is perhaps inevitable.

Second, Patrick experienced a secluded conversion whereas many, if not all of his contemporaries, experienced a "church" conversion. Patrick's faith came out of personal desperation and unexpected, direct enlightenment, whereas his readers may have experienced conversion out of logical or cultural influences under more "normal" developmental processes in the routine life of the church. Arguably, this difference would affect their ministries widely and might have led to false accusations.

Patrick now turns to a metaphor to describe his wilderness conversion. He writes, "Before God humbled me I was like a stone stuck deep in a mud puddle. But then God came along and with his power and compassion reached down and pulled me out, raised me up, and placed me on top of a wall. Because of this I must proclaim the good news, I must pay God back in some way…" (179). He lays out this powerful metaphor of a stone or rock in order to make his point in the next paragraph when he says, "God chose foolish little me from among all of you who seem so wise and so expert in the law and so powerful in your eloquence. He picked ignorant Patrick ahead of all of you…to serve the Irish faithfully" (179). Patrick may be playing upon the metaphor of a rock due to Christ's use of it in Scripture. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus tells Peter, "On this rock I will build my church." Whether or not this was intentional, it is interesting

to note that the "rock" which the Irish church was built upon was no other than Patrick himself. Was this use of metaphor a coincidence or self fulfilling prophecy?

Through his boldness, Patrick makes no excuse for his offensive comments. He explains that he cannot worry about the consequence of his letter because of his faith in the Trinity and cites his legacy among the Irish as motivation to persevere (179-180). While this seems perhaps arrogant, or at least risky or possibly counterproductive in terms of "winning over" his accusers, it may be argued that Patrick may have considered his real audience to be God alone, as Patrick continues to make bold and risky statements throughout the remainder of his letter. His appeal to a higher mandate ultimately and fundamentally gives him his boldness and also his lack of concern for his accusers' opinions. In the story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, the same principle can be seen (Acts 7). Stephen's tone was more offensive than Patrick's, however, Patrick does give his accusers plenty of cause for ill feelings toward him. To his benefit, it did not lead to death, as Stephen's ultimately did.

The letter then moves to a section that seeks to explain his journey from his conversion, to his escape, to his visions (180-83). While his letter can be seen as a narrative in its entirety, it is in this section that he breaks off from his explanations and defense to tell his readers his testimony of what happened to him. Some of his experiences are normal and others are supernatural. A portion of his story, specifically the visions, takes a bit of faith to believe, because miraculous events probably did not characterize the lives of his readers. It is important to note, however, that Patrick is not portraying himself as an average Christian person.

Once Patrick has completed his narrative he brings his readers back to the topic at hand. In this section of his letter he reveals his emotional response to his accusers' attacks in a formulation arguably calculated to raise sympathy (pathos): "I felt beaten down with such force

that I thought I would never rise again, here in this life or in the next" (183). Then in a passage strategically connected with the words of Christ on the cross and the words of Stephen the first Christian martyr, Patrick writes, "I pray that God doesn't hold those accusations against them" (184).

This is a brilliant tactic and also a consistent theme found in the Bible. In this theme the persecuted believer has compassion in his heart for his persecutors and in turn calls out to God for their forgiveness. Jesus Christ did this while on the cross (Luke 23:34) as did Stephen (Acts 7:60) during his death while being stoned. Patrick would have known these passages and undoubtedly chose that he line rhetorically as way to tell his audience that he is becoming a martyr, if only figuratively.

Patrick now tells his readers about a sin that he committed as a young boy. It is the same sin that his accusers are attacking him for in the previous section. While he strategically chooses not to spell out the specifics of the sin, the fact that he chooses to mention it displays a certain guarded openness to all who read this letter. His appeal is not that he is a sinner like every one; so much as it is an attempt to paint a powerful picture of forgiveness and regeneration. He even states here that God has made him into something "very different from what I once was" (184). Forgiveness and new life are two things on which the Christian faith is to be built. To accept those two pillars of faith would be to accept Patrick's defense.

In the next few paragraphs, Patrick makes multiple appeals to a higher authority than that of his accusers. In fact this is his main strategy in the letter; a theme that should ring loudly in the ears of the Church. Not only was this choice wise on Patrick's part, but it was the way that he saw truth should be told. God was the reason for his conversion and protection thus far, and God was the reason he was to continue. His letter reveals that he neither feared nor gave into his

attackers. Despite their accusations and condemnations of his ministry, and we have only sketchy information as to their nature, only God could ultimately judge his work. This is evidenced throughout Patrick's writing.

In the letter Patrick discusses his willingness to become a physical martyr for God. He states, "If I am worthy, I am even ready to lay down my life willingly and without hesitation for his name" (186). This goes to show his audience of his commitment to his mission, which he believes to be the mission of God. Not only will he face criticism of his ministry, but he is willing to go to death doing so. This helps bolster his character (ethos). A man willing to die for others is a man who is committed to an idea and to others. This can be illustrated through the honoring of fallen soldiers, Christian martyrs and fanatic suicide bombers. Those who give their lives in sacrifice for a people or for a cause have always been honored. Here Patrick connects himself with that group.

In a subsequent paragraph, Patrick invites his readers to join in the mission with him. I assume that he makes this move because he believes that his prior narratives, assertive statements, and use of Scripture have cleared his name and convinced his accusers that they should follow in his footsteps. Even if he has not won over his opponents, the following statements will position Patrick as a true child of God. He invites his readers saying, "Because of this *we* ought to be very hardworking fishermen of souls" (187). [49] He uses the word "we" to identify with and include his audience in his conviction and mission. He does not stop with his opinion or interpretation. He quotes seven passages throughout the Bible, found in both the Old and New Testaments, to support his claim. Patrick had a masterful command of Scripture. The evidence from *Confession* reveals a man who must have spent ample time studying the Bible.

[49] Emphasis added.

This display of biblical knowledge tells of his commitment, convictions, and priorities which are all admirable qualities.

He turns from these qualities high moral character to consideration of his human earnings and temptations. He displays a selection of them to his readers. For example: "Oh, how I would love to go home to Britain and see my family...but…I am bound by the spirit of God…Christ my master has commanded me to stay here in Ireland for the rest of my life" (189). He also pens these words, "I certainly don't plan on sinning, but I don't trust myself as long as I am a mere human being. The tempter who every day tries to turn me from faith in God and the true religion is very strong—but I have dedicated myself to serve Christ my master to the bitter end" (189). Here Patrick again displays his vulnerability while keeping with his original theme. His open and honest approach to his failings and successes is evident and disarmingly powerful. This strategy may have aided some readers to find common ground with him. All persons who are honest know their own struggle between sin and righteousness. The apostle Paul writes about his struggles in Romans chapter seven. Paul states: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18 NIV) Patrick, whether intentionally or unintentionally mimics Paul in the way he mimicked Christ and Stephen earlier in his letter. Deeply Christian themes continue to be powerfully evident and numerous in Patrick's letter.

In his closing remarks, Patrick states that he is writing this letter to his brothers and fellow Christians in order to strengthen their faith (190). He makes claim to his mission and integrity therein (190-91). He then ironically discusses his status as, what today would be called "a celebrity," claiming, "I'm not the sort of person who should attract much attention" (192).

Little did Patrick know that his celebrity would endure hundreds and now more than a thousand years.

At the end of his letter Patrick makes some directed, poignant remarks. Here Patrick makes his last appeals to God's power working in and through him. He discusses and boldly states how worship of anything other than Christ will lead to destruction, while service to God's Son will lead to life everlasting. He makes a poetic and yet picture perfect connection between the sun of God and the Son of God. He writes, "For the sun that we see with our eyes rises every day by the will of God, but it is not divine nor will its light remain. Everyone who worships that sun will face serious punishment someday, but we who believe in and follow Christ the true son will never really die" (193).[50]

What a beautiful and powerful metaphoric picture that sums up the faith by which Patrick has been preaching throughout his entire letter. It is for that Son that he lives, breathes, moves, and orchestrates his ministry. I believe that this statement is an exclamation point to his entire letter. Almost as if it were his last sermon, Patrick crafts the truth for his readers in a way that hearkens back to his early days in pagan Ireland. It was this nation that formerly worshiped the sun god. Here Patrick makes a subtle reference to that historical fact. This reference can be seen visually in the Celtic cross as a circle, which at one time represented the sun, intertwines itself with the cross of the true Son. The light of the sun will fade, but the light of Christ, which shone brightly on the cross of his death, will shine eternally for those who believe. What beauty and power is communicated through his words.

He leaves his audience with two last remarks. First, he states his intentions claiming that he "never had any motive…except preaching the good news and its promises" (193). Second, he

---

[50] Michael Osborn has an apt essay entitled "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light and Dark Family" that speaks to archetypal metaphors, especially "light."

pleads to the genuine believer: "My final prayer is that all of you who believe in God and respect him—whoever you may be who read this letter that Patrick the unlearned sinner wrote from Ireland—that none of you will ever say that I in my ignorance did anything for God. You must understand—because it is the truth—that it was all the gift of God" (193).

So ends Patrick's letter. He begins with his unworthiness and ends with his "ignorance" and God's goodness. His reference to his "ignorance" is now seen as highly ironic, given the skill with which Patrick has made his case in the letter. These two common themes ring throughout his letter as the foundation on which not only his defense is built, but more importantly, on which he built his life. While his introduction includes an appeal to character, emotion and logic, his conclusion plays upon the faith of the Church of Christ. His letter is a powerful narrative of a man who in his humility and unworthiness was chosen for great things. His use of Scripture and employment of Christian themes throughout his defense strengthens the integrity of his ministry. These attributes will work hand in hand with Benoit's theory to give the readers of this thesis a better grasp on Patrick and Image Restoration Theory.

**Applications of Image Restoration Theory**

In order to analyze Patrick's *Confession* I read through the text, marking sections in which Patrick makes direct and indirect excuses, apologies, and attempted justifications. The results are very interesting and enlightening. Patrick uses a wide variety of image restoration strategies outlined by Benoit. However, transcendence and mortification are the two most common strategies employed by Patrick. I will touch on each strategy used by Patrick and cite examples from Freeman's translation that lead to my conclusion. Last, I will deal more extensively with mortification and transcendence. Please note that this application does not follow the order in which Patrick wrote his letter as dealt with in the previous rhetorical

walkthrough, but rather this analysis takes the order in which Benoit outlines his theory, extracting parts from *Confession* that deals with those particular image restoration strategies.

**Denial**

As noted in chapter two, the idea of denying an accusation is common to all humans when faced with the need for image restoration. Patrick does not avoid this strategy for his defense. While he does not say the words "I did not," or "I never," he does imply that what may have been construed as wrongdoing never took place. He states:

> Even though I'm not ignorant, I've tried very hard to preserve integrity of myself, my Christian brothers, the virgins of Christ, and my faithful women followers. Some of this last group have been known to offer me small gifts and to place their jewelry on the altar as an offering, but I always returned it to them. They were shocked that I wouldn't accept these gifts, but I have to take the long term view on this…I cannot afford to give anyone even the smallest excuse to accuse me or defame my work. (190-91)

Here he obviously denies taking gifts from his converts (especially women), even citing that he knows the long-term consequences of those actions. It appears that he was being accused of taking gifts from his converts. Patrick directly used the strategy of denial in this instance to defend himself.

Benoit states that denial can be reinforced. In Patrick's statement he claims that the women who were offering him gifts were "shocked" that he did not receive them. This provides the reader of his letter further evidence that he did not take these gifts. He could have simply stated that he did not take them, but he chose to go a step further and "reinforce," as Benoit says, and provide his accusers with the women's reactions to his refusal.

A potential problem with Patrick's reinforcement is that unless his accusers could interview one of the women, they could not be sure that this reinforcement aided in any way more than an ordinary denial. However, it is significant to point out that Benoit's observation of denial reinforcement rings true in ancient rhetoric as it does in contemporary rhetoric. To a less critical accuser, the addition of the women's reaction may sway them in Patrick's favor as they might see his inclusion of their behavior as proof for his statement. This becomes a subtle way that Patrick's defense is strengthened.

**Defeasibility**

If we were to rank Patrick's methods of defense, defeasibility would be a close third to Patrick's two favorite strategies, mortification and transcendence. Defeasibility in Patrick's case deals mainly with his lack of education and inability to do what is right due to indwelling sin. Consider his words:

> I write Latin as if it were a foreign language—any reader can easily see what education I had…But what good will it do to make excuses, even if I am telling the truth?...My sins came and snatched me away before I could finish my education. But who will believe me even if I say what I said before? I was just a boy, almost a child, when I was captured, before I knew what I should seek and what to avoid. (178)

Here Patrick defends his lack of education. It may also be inferred from his last sentence that because of his early enslavement, his development in faith was slowed. After all, he says that it was because of his capture that he did not know "what to seek and what to avoid." Therefore, it can be concluded that in reference to the period up until his conversion Patrick used defeasibility, that is to say, in this case, he referenced his lack of education to explain his actions. Defeasibility can be a powerful tool when used correctly. I believe that in this instance Patrick

used it to his advantage. What man or woman would hold a child to a standard of an adult? Parishioners expect their pastor or "Father" to act as an adult through deciphering between right and wrong, but they do not expect the same mature behavior from a mere uneducated child. As noted in Chapter Two, Benoit describes defeasibility as a lack of information or control over the situation. Patrick's touches on both definitions of defeasibility. He claims lack of information (education) and lack of control (slavery) as reasons for his writing deficiency. My assumption is that his accusers attacked him for being uneducated. This may have led to the conclusion that he was teaching heresy, due to his lack of formal education. Whatever the reason, in the letter Patrick felt it necessary to defend his lack of education.

The next example of this image restoration strategy is seen later in his letter. Patrick explains how the "superiors in the Church" attacked him. He claims that he felt so beaten down by their accusations, that he thought he would never rise again. What were the accusations? Patrick clarifies:

> The pretense of their attack on me was that, after thirty years, they found out about a confession I had made in the days before I was even a deacon. At that time, because I was so troubled in my spirit, I let slip to my best friend something that I had done one day in my youth—not even a day but in an hour—because I was not yet strong in my faith. I was, maybe, fifteen years old and didn't believe in the living God (I hadn't since childhood). I remained in death and unbelief until God punished me severely and truly made me humble by hunger and nakedness day after day. (184)

We see here that Patrick is admitting to a seemingly large, yet unspecified sin that he committed as a boy. He claims that sinful act was done before he knew the living God. This is a clear claim to defeasibility, a lack of information. It might also be ascertained using Benoit's list

of strategies, that he is using minimization. Clearly, he is reducing the offensiveness of the act by claiming lack of knowledge of right and wrong rather than defeasibility, but I would argue that within Christianity the claim of acting on his sin nature is a claim of defeasibility, not minimization. In this situation, Patrick does not claim that the sin, whatever it may have been, is not as serious as it once was; rather, he is saying that his lack of faith was the root of the problem.

Within the frame of Christianity, sin can be understood and acknowledged. While most Christians would agree that sin can be reduced, few would believe that it could be eradicated once and for all. Patrick's acknowledgement of his sin in this situation is one in which all converted Christians must come to at some point in their lives. His inclusion of this sin, and the fact that he does not deny the accusation, serves Patrick's defense in a significant way by establishing identity with the common reader. As stated above, most converted Christians upon reading Patrick's defense will find common ground with him. This common ground will be for some the condition on which they identify and empathize with Patrick. I am convinced that Patrick uses the sin nature to his favor considering the audience to which he writes.

**Good Intentions**

With respect to Benoit's strategy of good intentions, Patrick writes:

> I would write these words of my defense again and again if I could. I declare in truth and with joy in my heart—before God and his holy angels—that I have never had any motive in my work except preaching the good news and its promises. That is the only reason I returned here to Ireland—a place I barely escaped from alive. (193)

This statement is one of the last that Patrick penned in *Confession*. Arguably, it is an overall "safety net" statement that was intended to catch all other accusations that might be made

concerning him. It is his last defense of himself in the letter and appeals to his worthy motives. Clearly, what he is hoping for is that anything that may be used against him must be channeled through the larger idea that it was not for personal gain or power that he returned to Ireland, but only because he sought, through the power of God, to bring the good news to the pagan island. With all the appeal to transcendence in his letter, this use of the image restoration strategy of claiming good intentions falls in line with his overall defense.

Good intentions will rarely clear an actor of wrongdoing; rather, it the appeal will help to reduce the amount of punishment for the wrongdoing. As in the example stated in the Chapter Two, the husband destroyed his wife's blouse in the washing machine with the intention of doing good. He is not exempt from punishment, which may include his wife's disappointment, but rather it is more easily forgiven due to his motive. His image will not have been damaged in the eyes of his wife if love is more important that a blouse. This is the overall goal of the "good intentions" strategy.

Patrick claims that all he has done has been for the sole purpose of spreading the Gospel. The priest, Pope, and parishioner can all respect his motive, even if he committed wrongdoing along his way. This should reduce the amount of damage done to his image despite the accusation. Preaching the Gospel and making disciples has been the goal of the Church since Jesus gave the command to his disciples. Here Patrick is continuing that tradition. In the light of history his motive has obviously enhanced his image as Patrick is seen as the patron saint of Ireland and is celebrated year after year.

**Bolstering**

Bolstering, according to Benoit, occurs when the accused attempts to "mitigate the negative effects of the act on the actor by strengthening the audience's positive affect for the rhetor."[51] Patrick uses this strategy on two occasions. In the first, he states:

> Believe me, I didn't go to Ireland willingly the first time—I almost died here. But it turned out to be good for me in the end, because God used the time to shape and mold me into something better. He made me into what I am now—someone very different from what I once was, someone who can care about others and work to help them. Before I was a slave, I didn't even care about myself.[52]

Here Patrick attempts to gain credibility through reference to his conversion from an unbeliever to a believer. He doesn't deny that he was in a sad state of affairs prior to his enslavement; rather he embraces it and uses bolstering as a mechanism to show what he has become. By claiming that his change was a result of God's work in his life, his overall theme of transcendence remains true, as will be discussed later.

I would argue that in modern Christianity a radically changed life carries with it a stronger testimony and more significant impact than a life that was converted at a young age, before any "large sin" was committed. People are quicker to be engrossed by a "rags to riches" success story than a less dramatic rise to riches narrative. Due to that belief, I conclude that Patrick's use of his conversion story to bolster his image would be found successful, specifically by modern standards. If he were in many a contemporary church giving his "testimony," the congregation would predictably be in awe of his devotion and ministry.

---

[51] Benoit, 77.
[52] Freeman, 184.

While this image restoration strategy alone may not serve to clear his name of wrongdoing, it will serve to bolster his image, which is the goal of this particular strategy. Patrick employs this image restoration strategy to near perfection. Patrick is in fact different now than he once was. This is the goal and the glory of the salvation narrative. Again, identity should be fostered between Patrick and his audience through this appeal.

The second instance of the use of bolstering occurs a few pages later. Patrick defends his denial of taking gifts from his converts:

> In fact, it was just the opposite. I spent money to bribe the local kings to receive me. For your sake, my Irish Christians, I traveled everywhere among great dangers. I even went to the most remote parts of the island—places at the very edge of the world, places no one had ever been before—to baptize and ordain clergy and confirm people in the faith. I did it all, with the help of God, gladly and joyfully for your sake. (191)

Patrick first denies that he has taken monetary gifts and bolsters his image by claiming that he did the exact opposite. Rather than take money and gifts, he gave them away in order to be received by local kings. Here my focus is on the bolstering of his reputation through reference to the hardship and difficulty he went through in order to spread the Gospel to the whole of Ireland. Those accusing him of taking money may be more willing to forget their accusations in light of his defense.

Paradoxically, Patrick's sacrifice may make him even more worthy to receive such gifts in the future. One might even encourage him to do so as payment for his efforts. However, Patrick never asked for payment. This is a noble gesture if nothing else. Thus again, his image is bolstered. It is interesting to note that in this observation Patrick does not applaud himself. The

reader must dissect his statement to gain this insight. Patrick shows his character by not expecting payment for his ministry, strengthening his role as a missionary.

**Minimization**

At this point, we can conclude that Patrick has employed a wide array of strategies to make his defense. However, he is not done. There is a small section of *Confession* that relates to the idea of minimization as laid out by Benoit. In this strategy, the accused attempts to minimize the offensiveness of the action in question. Patrick's use of this strategy here may not be as clearly seen, but it is present nonetheless. Patrick writes:

> More than anything, I feel sorry for my best friend that we all had to hear what he said. I had entrusted to him the deepest secret of my heart. I even heard from some of my brothers that he had stood up for me back when they were deciding whether or not to make me a bishop…so why, out of the blue, did he later publicly disgrace me in front of everyone, good and bad alike? And over a matter that years earlier he had freely forgiven—as had God, who is greater than anyone. (185)

Here is an interesting example of the use of minimization. Patrick obviously has no problem admitting to the accusation that his friend made public. His use of minimization can be seen as he claims forgiveness through God as the reason for which this act ought to be dropped from his record. As another Christian might look at it, he or she might say: "I have sin that has been forgiven me. If I were to hold Patrick accountable for his sin, then he and others in turn should hold me accountable for my past sins." In this frame, it is clear that Patrick attempts to minimize his wrongdoing. This is different from when he employed defeasibility for the same sin, noted above. In that case he was showing how his lack of faith and sin nature brought about

the sin. In this instance he is using forgiveness as the reason it should be overlooked. After all, it took place before he embraced Christianity and it has been forgiven.

**Attack on Accusers**

The first image that may come to mind with this strategy is that of a man verbally attacking those who are accusing him. However, in Patrick's case, it is much the opposite. In his letter, he makes two statements that are directed towards his accusers. The first is quoted above. When his friend openly reveals to everyone what Patrick had done as a child, Patrick responds by saying that he feels sorry for his friend because God, who is greater than anyone, has forgiven the sin in question. This is a mildly stated attack. By bringing God into the equation when working with people of faith, Patrick is pitting his accuser's word against the word of God. If God had truly forgiven Patrick, as he asserts, then his friend would look like the one in the wrong, because God is greater than his friend and forgiveness is a Christian virtue.

The second instance where Patrick uses "attack" appears later in his letter, where he pens these words:

> Many people have tried to stop my mission in Ireland. I know they've talked to one another behind my back and said: "Why does this man want to work among these barbarians who don't know God?" I know they didn't say these things out of hatred but because it genuinely seemed foolish to them…I didn't understand then as I do now the grace that God had granted to me. (190)

Here again, Patrick does not sling mud or call his accusers names. In fact, in this case he attacks their questions through transcendence, discussed later, which is Patrick's overall strategy in his defense. He again appeals to God's grace as a reason for his actions, thus justifying himself in the eyes of his audience.

Arguably, attacking one's accusers is typically a good strategy for two reasons. First, if the credibility of the accusers is drawn into question, then the accusations are drawn into question. If the accusations have no credibility, then Patrick's image is saved. Second, it also can redirect the audience away from the accused and to the accusers. This is helpful to give more time to the accused to formulate a better defense as well as put the accusers on the defensive.

**Corrective Action**

It appears that the accusation of Patrick's taking gifts and money from his converts was a strong point of debate. Here again, as seen in the earlier stated cases of denial and bolstering, Patrick employs yet another image restoration strategy to clear his name of any wrongdoing. In the case of corrective action, the accused vows to correct the problem.[53] In Patrick's case he couples this strategy with the aforementioned denial. He says,

> I have baptized countless converts—did I ever ask any of them for even a small coin in return? Tell me and I will repay it. When God ordained so many clergy through my unworthy hands and I started them off in the ministry, did I ever ask even one of them to buy me a pair of shoes? Tell me and I'll give back the money. (191)

Here Patrick is offering to correct any misconduct that someone wishes to prove. The obvious conclusion is that Patrick stands so strongly by his word of denial that he is prepared to pay back any gift that may have occurred during his ministry. He says it with an almost strident and even sarcastic tone, inviting his accusers to provide examples for his audience. The statement is extremely confident and comes close to a dare.

It is difficult to find fault with anything that Patrick has said thus far. Here again we see him use a defensive strategy that works in his favor. As if these accusations were being brought out onto a stage where Patrick sat opposite of his accusers, Patrick looks to his audience and says

[53] Benoit, 79.

"if they could prove these accusations, or even the smallest hint of them, I would pay it back, but they cannot." I have discovered no evidence of a response to Patrick with any specific examples. Subsequent history appears to argue in Patrick's favor and I must conclude that there was no substantial evidence for this accusation or any others in the first place.

**Transcendence**

Transcendence, although not directly addressed or defined, has been implicit in several of the strategies already discussed in his defense. Nearly in every case mentioned above an appeal to a higher power as the motive and driving force behind his actions is evident or implied. However, there are numerous examples of Patrick's use of transcendence alone, apart from other strategies. For example, Patrick states boldly,

> So listen to me well, all of you, great and small, everyone who has any fear of God—especially you wealthy land owners so proud of your education—listen and consider this carefully: God chose foolish little me from among all of you who seem so wise and so expert in the law and so powerful in your eloquence. He picked ignorant Patrick ahead of all of you—even though I am not worthy—he picked me to go forth with fear and reverence—and without any of you complaining at the time—to serve the Irish faithfully. The love of Christ has carried me here to be a help to those people for the rest of my life, if I may be worthy, and to work for them with humility and sincerity...because of my faith in the Trinity, I must not worry about the consequences of this letter… (179)

Patrick does not repress his strong belief or conviction that God directs, chooses, ordains, and strengthens him. God is his motive and only authority. Given the context of his audience, this was more than likely an appropriate strategy for Patrick to use. There are dozens of quotes that can be addressed in the letter where Patrick claims God's leading and guidance in decision-

making, safety, and strength to continue in his ministry. His accusers would have to wrestle with these claims in order to place their accusations above the call of God in Patrick's life.

Of all things in the life of a believer, the leading of God should take precedence. Patrick is no stranger to this higher call. His judge sits above his accusers, looking down upon their lives as he does upon Patrick's. Scripture constantly uses this theme throughout both Old and New Testaments. It is seen in the Exodus when God shows the Israelites that they belong to him rather than Egypt (Exodus 6:6). It is seen in the life of King Saul when Samuel informs him that to obey God is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22) It is evidenced in the life of Paul the apostle when he stands before Festus and King Agrippa and recounts his obedience to God despite the beatings and accusations from the Jews (Acts 26:21-23) Last, and most important, it was seen in the death of Jesus Christ as he willingly laid his life down due to the plan of God (Matt. 27: 32-55; Mark 15:21-40; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:16-37).

Here we have a man that follows the same path of so many Christians before him. In spite of accusations and hardships he obeys God rather than man. Patrick continually points to God's leading and God's grace as reasons for the things that he does. While his audience should still examine the accusation set before him, they must also consider whose authority ranks higher: the church leaders, or God himself.

**Mortification**

Mortification, according to Benoit, occurs when the accused admits guilt and asks for forgiveness.[54] I am using mortification here in reference to Patrick's acceptance of guilt due to his sin nature and his repentance thereafter. For example, Patrick often uses terms of admittance and humiliation, such as his opening line, "I am Patrick—a sinner—the most unsophisticated and unworthy among all the faithful of God. Indeed, to many I am the most despised." Later he

[54] Benoit, 79.

states, "I became aware of my failings and began to turn with my whole heart to the Lord my God" (176).

Patrick's sense of his own vulnerability to temptation is evidenced in the following crucial quotation:

> I certainly don't plan on sinning, but I don't trust myself as long as I am a mere human being. The tempter who every day tries to turn me from faith in God and the true religion is very strong—but I have dedicated myself to serve Christ my master to the bitter end. Human desires, however, are always dragging us toward death—to act on our sinful wishes. Heaven knows that I have not led a perfect life…but I have made my peace with God. (191)

Mortification, like transcendence, is one of the overall and most important themes of *Confession* as Patrick is frequently admitting his sinful nature and God's great work in his life. These two themes are the umbrella under which all of the other strategies fall.

A Christian view of mortification is two-fold. First, it is seen as dying to oneself. This death is not a physical death, but rather a spiritual death. To die to oneself is to deny the flesh: that is, the sin nature. That death cannot be accomplished without the second part of mortification, which is the acceptance of the life of Christ. This action results in the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The physical sign of baptism is seen as the outward expression of this inward change.[55]

Patrick uses mortification throughout his letter. First, it can be seen in the denial of himself. He uses words and phrases such as: "sinner," "unworthy," "most despised," "we deserved slavery," "I don't trust myself," and "I have not led a perfect life." These are examples

---

[55] *Mortification*, The Catholic Encyclopedia 10th ed, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10578b.htm, accessed April 19, 2208.

of the first part of mortification: the death of himself and the humility displayed in his soul. The second part of mortification is referenced by other words and phrases such as: "Grace he has shown me," "There is no other God," "feelings of thankfulness to God," "God humbled me," and "He made me into what I am now." Even a cursory read of *Confession* reveals how Patrick renounces himself and his worthiness as a servant of God and pushes all claims of victories on the strength and power of God. Transcendence is used as the reason for his actions and mortification follows as the result of his actions. Patrick no longer exists in an accusable form. Only God's power and leading remains.

**Conclusion**

Patrick's defense is as multifaceted as it is strong. He employs a wide range of Benoit's image restoration strategies that helped silence his critics and firmly planted himself as the eventual patron saint of Ireland.

We do not have historical records beyond what Patrick reveals in *Confession* about what he was accused of by his attackers. We can only gather from his defense an inkling of the things that were being said about him. It is clear, however, in light of these unknown accusations, he felt the need to address them, but never did he admit to specific wrongdoing outside of the example of his unnamed childhood sin.

As noted above, Patrick's main defense of his ministry was the fact that he was an uneducated sinner, called by God to do great and mighty things, of which he was not ashamed. Another interesting note is that many of the strategies that Benoit outlines are often employed by those who admit to the act in question. This was not always the case in *Confession*. For example, a politician may seek to reduce the offensiveness of his or her moral failings by image bolstering through reference to political victories. In this case the politician is not denying moral

failure, but rather turning the attention of the audience to good deeds done. Patrick, however, almost never admits to the damaging accusations. Rather he denies them by using Benoit's strategies, yet he readily admits that he is truly human and subject to temptations like all Christians. As in the example of the politician, Patrick uses bolstering, but in a much different fashion. While I noted above that Patrick does not deny that he is a sinner, he does not admit to any specific wrongdoing within his ministry among the Irish in any of the examples reference in this thesis.[56]

From the evidence of *Confession*, we can see that Patrick, while uneducated, had a powerful command of who he was in relation to the powers in the church, the people of Ireland, and most importantly, in front of the living God.

[56] I am asserting that most actors use denial when they are sure of their innocence whereas Patrick used all sorts of strategies to defend himself outside of denial without admitting to the wrongdoing.

# Chapter 4

# Conclusion

Patrick still speaks in his defense in an age where we have confused him with celebrity status. He stakes his claim in the history books as a lowly servant of God. Through his defense we have learned how a Christian man should carry himself in front of his accusers. Upon reading this account, one may achieve a new understanding of Patrick's true story, recognize William Benoit's contribution to the understanding of Patrick's key text, and realize how Patrick successfully defended himself. Patrick was a man more amazing than any far-fetched tale subsequently told about him. In his humanness I have found my own struggles, my journey, and my defense. Readers of whatever persuasion, but especially Christians, can find identity with a man who has been accused unfairly by his own brothers. Although we may be able to find identity with him, we come to realize through his *Confession* how "otherworldly" he really was. Arguably, however, in his narrative and the narrative of this thesis, Patrick still emerges as a saint.

## Preview

In this concluding chapter I will review major themes that emerge from the application of Image Restoration Theory to Patrick's *Confession*. From there I will look at three paths of future research suggested by this thesis. Last, I will make some concluding remarks.

## Review

I have attempted four things in this thesis. First, I have attempted to position a more accurate account of Patrick's true history apart from myth and fairytales. Second, I have taken a rhetorical walkthrough of *Confession* in hopes to learn more about the overall rhetorical

strategies that Patrick employed. Third, I have applied Benoit's Image Restoration Theory to an ancient rhetorical text. Last, I have proposed the idea of Patrick's two-headed self-defense.

Patrick's history is mixed with epic stories and fictitious tales while being trimmed with saintly shears. He appears great in power and perfect in deed. While these are romantic ideals proposed by those who want to enshrine him in the history of sainthood, this "expanded" narrative is paradoxically applied to a man who would have rejected all such notions of his glory. My aim here has been to reconstruct a more accurate story of Patrick from a new framework that would open the eyes of rhetorical scholars to an historical figure, a person from whom we can not only learn effective rhetoric from, but also a man from whom we might possibly also develop new values.

It was my goal in the rhetorical overview of Patrick's Confession to arm the reader with a beginning to end analysis of the text before applying Benoit's theory. This allows the reader to see how Patrick's argument was set up sequentially as well as dissect his use of ethos, pathos, logos, metaphor and narrative rhetorical methods. By the end of this section of the thesis, the reader should be able to readily identify Patrick's persuasive arguments before analyzing them in light of Image Restoration Theory.

Image Restoration Theory has been applied to a myriad of current and historical artifacts. Through this application rhetoricians have discovered why particular rhetorical attempts have been successful or unsuccessful in relation to the defense of public image. However, very few studies have dealt with image restoration and ancient rhetorical documents and speeches. Rhetoricians such as Brett Miller have made this bridge between an ancient artifact and a modern theory. This thesis aimed, in part, to continue the application of modern theories, such as Image Restoration Theory, to ancient rhetorical artifacts.

Last, and most important, this thesis makes clear Patrick's two-headed self-defense. He chose to give his accusers a one-two punch response of mortification and transcendence to quiet their accusations. By using this defense, this man of faith defended his actions in light of his calling. He is nothing and Christ is everything, he asserted. What church or Christian can make a case against a man who clearly employs a biblical response to charges brought against him? In this case we see that Patrick clears his name of guilt and re-establishes himself as a man of God.

**Paths of Future Research**

I see three paths of future research that are suggested by this thesis. First, as illustrated here, Benoit's theory can be expanded by studying the Christian motifs of mortification and transcendence as features of religious instances of image repairs. As we have seen in the case of Patrick, this involved self-denial and glorification of God. Second, further analysis needs to be done in relation to Patrick's *Confession*. Last, Patrick's self-defense should be compared to other famous examples of religious defense to see what, if anything, can be added to Benoit's theory. I will briefly expound on all three.

Mortification and transcendence can be seen as constant motifs throughout the Bible. From Moses to Christ to Paul, these two themes of self-denial and God glorification are two pillars by which "saints" build their lives. However, little has been written about these in relation to Benoit's idea of mortification (accepting guilt) and transcendence (greater good). This thesis suggests that future research along these lines can helpfully expand our understanding of image restoration. The goal would also expand our current understandings of the uses and applications of Benoit's theory, specifically in the realm of religious rhetoric.

The second path of research that is suggested by this thesis is the need to further analyze Patrick's *Confession* as a piece of rhetoric as it contributes to Patrick's overall fame. For

example, one may raise the questions: How did his skillful defense lead to his eventual fame? Did his rhetoric clear his name amongst his accusers? What was their response to his defense? These questions were not answered in this thesis, but might be dealt with in future studies in order to determine the success of Patrick's rhetoric. Realistically, the paucity of sources from Patrick's era may limit this important investigation.

Last, Patrick's self defense might be usefully compared to other instances of religious defense seen throughout history. For example, a researcher could compare *Confession* with Paul's defense in the book of Acts found in the Bible, or with Martin Luther's defense at the Diet of Worms. The defense of Jesus Christ is different in the sense that he employed the use of silence before his accusers, something that these other men did not. However, because it falls under the genre of religious defense it too should be analyzed through Benoit's theory. Although silence was not dealt with specifically in Benoit's theory, the study of the defense of Jesus Christ could open up a new strategy in Benoit's framework. The aim of this branch of research would be not only to further religious rhetorical defense, but also to suggest the inclusion of religious rhetoric into Benoit's theory.

**Conclusion**

Here at the river of Patrick's *Confession* I have dipped my gold pan and sifted his words carefully. What has been revealed has been of significant value to the study of image restoration. While some of my findings have yet to be dealt with in great detail by Benoit and others, much of it has tested the utility of his theory in a specific historical instance. Through the strategies of mortification and transcendence we learn two very important values held by Patrick. First, we understand that Patrick presents himself as no higher than a servant of God. He is owed nothing

and has no value outside of his relation to God. Mortification is his plea. He cannot help but be of little worth apart from his Creator. It is here where he builds his first case.

It is my assumption that Benoit did not think of this type of mortification when he penned his theory. His mortification is seen as taking blame upon oneself, accepting the guilt of the specific action. Patrick, on the other hand, uses mortification in the more general and deeper context of Christian theology. Christians can find identity with this revelation. Those who take Scripture at its word understand that their significance is found in Christ alone. Any and all mistakes and shortcomings can and will be found in their "flesh." It is an expression of what Christians call their "sin nature." Patrick admits this condition, not as an excuse to do wrong, but rather an explanation of who he is, namely a "sinner."

This may seem to be an easy way out. It may appear as a "safety net" response to all the wrongdoing in a man's life. This is why we must examine Patrick's and other Christians' use of mortification. Patrick is not saying "I did it" or "I take the blame." Rather he is saying, "I am nothing. Do not lift me up. I know that I am imperfect. I am a sinner. I am despised. What I do is not for me or for any man. We are mere creations. What I do is for the Creator. The living God."

Here is the apex of his defense. He invites the accusers to take issue with him in one sense, but on the other hand he dares them to challenge God. He appeals his case to a higher authority by claiming that his actions are to serve God rather than man. Transcendence is his key to freedom. It is his plea of "not guilty." As "Christians," this plea should have resonated with his accusers, and probably did. Arguably, the fruit of his plea is evidenced by his legacy. Here is one of the three most celebrated saints in Christian history.

Great irony is found in the fact that the world celebrates a man with a label like "Saint" when he refers to himself in the opening lines of his autobiography as a sinner. He states: "I am

Patrick -- a sinner – the most unsophisticated and unworthy among all the faithful of God. Indeed, to many I am the most despised."[57] Here at the conclusion of this project I find myself having increased respect for a man I once knew only as a myth. The story of Patrick is much more inspiring when we come to realize that he did not carry himself as one to be adored or even worshipped, but rather as a worshipper. He is more compelling to me when I listen to his confession and take into account that this man considered himself of the humblest of the humble. This humility was not self-righteous pity, but rather God-fearing reality. This man was neither a fake nor a showman. He was, in all of his true unknown glory, a man of God glorifying self-denial.

[57] Freeman, 176.

Works Cited

Abelson, Robert P. "Modes of Resolution of Belief Dilemmas." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3 (1959): 343-52.

Aristotle. *The Rhetoric*. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. New York: Random House, Modern Library. 1954.

Benoit, William L. *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Benoit, William L. & J.J. Lindsey, "Argument Strategies: Antidote to Tylenol's Poisoned Image." *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 23 (1987): 136-46.

Benoit, William L. "Richard Nixon's Rhetorical Strategies in his Public Statements on Watergate." *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 47 (1982): 192-211.

Burke, Kenneth. "Dramatism." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 7, ed. D.L. Sills, 445-52. New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968.

Burke, Kenneth. *The Rhetoric of Religion*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1970.

Cahill, Thomas. *How the Irish Saved Civilization* **:** *The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe.* New York: Doubleday, 1995.

"Canonization Process," http://www.catholic-pages.com/saints/process.asp (accessed September 18, 2007).

Catholic Encyclopedia 10th ed. *Mortification.* http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10578b.htm (accessed April 19, 2008).

Corfe, Tom. *St. Patrick and Irish Christianity*. Cambridge: University Press, 1973.

Craig, Robert T. "Curriculum Vitae." http://spot.colorado.edu/~craigr/Vitae.doc. (accessed September 12, 2007).

Craig, Robert T. "Goals in Discourse." In *Contemporary Issues in Language and Discourse Processes,* eds. D.G. Ellis & W.A Donohue, 257-73. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986.

Fisher, Walter. "A Motive View of Communication." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, 2 (1970): 131-139

Freeman, Phillip. *St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

Hanson, R.P.C. *The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1983.

Isocrates. *Antidosis*. Translated by George Norlin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Leob Classical Library 1. 1976.

Miller, Brett A. *Divine Apology: The Discourse of Religious Image Restoration*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002.

Moran, Patrick Francis Cardinal. "St. Patrick." In *The Catholic Encyclopedia vol. IX,* 1911, (New York: Robert Appleton Company). http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11554a.htm (accessed September 30, 2007).

O'Leary, Anne Carroll and El-Nawaway, Mohammed. "A Content Analysis of Image Restoration in Northern Ireland: Public Communication Strategies of Political Parties," *Simile* 2.3. (August 2002).

Osborn, Michael. "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light and Dark Family." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53, 2 (April 1967): 115-126.

Plato. "Apology." *The Dialogues of Plato* 2. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892. 109-135.

Schonbach, Peter. "A Category System for Account Phases." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 10 (1980): 195-200.

Scotland Online Production. "The History." http://www.saint-patrick.com (accessed 7 May 2006).

Scott, Marvin B. and Lyman, Stanford M. "Accounts." *American Sociological Review* 33 (1968): 46-62.

Semin, Gun and Manstead, Anthony. *The Accountability of Conduct: A Social Psychological Analysis.* London: Academic Press, 1983.

Ware, B. Lee and Linkugel, Wil A. "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59 (1973): 273-83.

## Appendix

***The Confession***
Translated by Philip Freeman

I am Patrick—a sinner—the most unsophisticated and unworthy among all the faithful of God. Indeed, to many I am the most despised.

My father was Calpornius, a deacon of the Church, and my grandfather was Potitus, a priest. His home was the village of Bannaventa Berniae, but he also had a country estate nearby. There I was captured when I was just short of my sixteenth birthday, at a time when I had no real knowledge of God. I was led away as a slave to Ireland as were so many thousands of others. We deserved slavery—for we had abandoned God and did not follow his ways. We ignored the warnings of our priests who pleaded with us again and again to be mindful of our eternal souls. So God poured out his anger on us and scattered us among the hordes of barbarians who live at the edge of the world. And indeed, here today, they can see how unimportant I am.

But it was here in Ireland that God first opened my heart, so that—even though it was a late start—I became aware of my failings and began to turn with my whole heart to the Lord my God. For he looked down on my miserable condition and had compassion for me, young and foolish as I was. He cared for me before I even knew who he was, before I could tell the difference between right and wrong. He protected me and loved me even as a father does his own child.

Because of this I cannot—I will not—be silent. I will tell of the great blessings God has granted to me and the grace he has shown to me in this land of slavery. Because this is the way we should behave towards God—when he has shown us why we were wrong and we have admitted our sins, we should praise him and proclaim his kindness to everyone in the world.

There is no other God—there never was and there never will be. God our father was not born nor did he have any beginning. God himself is the beginning of all things, the very one who holds all things together, as we have been taught.

And we proclaim that Jesus Christ is his son, who has been with God in spirit always, from the beginning of time and before the creation of the world—though in a way we cannot put into words. Through him everything in the universe was created, both what we can see and what is invisible. He was born as a human being and he conquered death, rising into the heavens to be with God. And God gave to him power greater than any creature of the heavens or earth or under the earth, so that someday everyone will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord and God. We believe in him and we wait for him to return very soon. He will be the judge of the living and the dead, rewarding every person according to their actions.

And God has generously poured out on us his Holy Spirit as a gift and a token of immortality. This Spirit makes all faithful believers into children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ.

This we proclaim. We worship one God in three parts, by the sacred name of the Trinity.

God has said through his prophet: *Call on me when you are in trouble and I will rescue you and you will praise me*. And again he says: *It is right to declare and make known the deeds of God*. So, even though I am far from perfect, I want my brothers and my family to know what kind of person I am—I want them to truly understand the longing of my soul.

I know very well the warning found in the Psalms: *God will destroy those who speak lies*. And again in scripture: *A mouth which lies kills the spirit*. God also speaks in the gospel when he says: *On the day of judgment, each person will have to defend every careless word spoken*.

Because of this I have been terrified of my judgment on that day when not one of us will be able to hide ourselves away, but each of us will have to answer for even the smallest of our sins before the tribunal of the Lord Christ.

I have thought about writing this letter for a long time, but I kept putting it off until now. I have been afraid that people would laugh at the way I write. You see, I don't have much education compared to other people. I was not able to study both literature and theology year after year as they did. They never had to learn to speak any new language, but could steadily improve their own Latin until it was practically perfect. But I write Latin as if it were a foreign language—any reader can easily see what kind of education I had. As it is written: *You can always tell a wise man by his speech, and his understanding and knowledge and teaching of the truth by what kind of language he uses*.

But what good will it do to make excuses, even when I'm telling the truth? Especially since it seems foolish for an old man, like I am now, to yearn for the eloquence I missed out on when I was young. My sins came and snatched me away before I could finish my education. But who will believe me even if I say what I said before? I was just a boy, almost a child, when I was captured, before I knew what I should seek and what I should avoid. Even so, today I am very ashamed and afraid to show just how awkward my writing is. I am not able to explain things in just a few words like those who can write briefly. My mind and my spirit can't even work together so that my words say what I really feel inside.

If I had been given the same education as others, I could not keep silent because of my feelings of thankfulness to God. So perhaps it may seem to some people that I'm very presumptuous to write such a letter in my ignorant and sputtering style. Still, the scripture does say: *A stammering tongue will quickly learn to speak peace*. How much more ought I to make such an effort—I who am myself a letter of Christ for the work of salvation to the end of the earth. Even if I'm not written well, I'm still a solid and faithful letter, written in your hearts not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God. As the Holy Spirit says: *Even unsophisticated people were created by God.*

Once I was a crude and ignorant exile who didn't even know how I would take care of myself in the future. This much I know for certain—before God humbled me I was like a stone stuck deep in a mud puddle. But then God came along and with his power and compassion reached down and pulled me out, raised me up, and placed me on top of a wall. Because of this I must proclaim my good news, I must pay God back in some way for all that he has done for me here on earth and what he will do in eternity—blessings no one can even imagine.

So listen to me well, all of you, great and small, everyone who has any fear of God—especially you wealthy landowners so proud of your education—listen and consider this carefully: God chose foolish little me from among all of you who seem so wise and so expert in the law and so powerful in your eloquence. He picked ignorant Patrick ahead of all of you—even though I am not worthy—he picked me to go forth with fear and reverence—and without any of you complaining at the time—to faithfully serve the Irish. The love of Christ carried me here to be a help to these people for the rest of my life, if I may be worthy, and to work for them with humility and in sincerity.

Because of my faith in the Trinity, I must not worry about the consequences of this letter—I must choose to proclaim the gift of God and his everlasting help confidently and without fear, to make known his name everywhere, so that even after I die it might be a kind of spiritual legacy left behind for my brothers and sons, so many thousands I baptized for God.

I wasn't worthy nor was I really the sort of person for God to choose as his servant. God granted me this mission among the Irish after such hardship and so many troubles, after slavery, after many years—a future I certainly never hoped for nor planned on when I was young.

After I came to Ireland I watched over sheep. Day by day I began to pray more frequently—and more and more my love of God and my faith in him and reverence for him began to increase. My spirit was growing, so that each day I would say a hundred prayers and almost as many each night, even during those times when I had to stay overnight in the woods or mountains. I would get up each morning before sunrise to pray, through snow and frost and rain. No harm came to me because of it and I was certainly not lazy. I see now looking back that my spirit was bursting inside me.

One night while I was sleeping, I heard a voice saying to me: *You have fasted well—soon you will be going home*. A short time after that I heard the voice again: *Behold, your ship is ready*. The port wasn't nearby at all, maybe two hundred miles away, and I didn't know anyone who lived there. But I soon ran away and fled the master I had served for six years. I left trusting in God who took care of me on my journey and I wasn't afraid—at least until I came to the ship.

I arrived at the ship just as it was being launched and said that I would like to sail with them. The captain of the ship rejected the idea immediately and said angrily: *Forget about it—there's no way you're going with us!* When I heard this I began to walk away and go back to the hut where I had been staying. As I went along I began to pray. But before I had even finished my

prayer, I heard one of the sailors coming up behind me and shouting: *Come back quickly, we want to talk with you*. So I turned around and went back. The sailors then said to me: *Come on, we'll be glad to have you aboard—make a pact of friendship with us however you'd like*. But I refused the pagan custom of sucking on their breasts because I feared God. Still, I hoped that they might eventually become Christians (they were all unbelievers). And so I climbed up on the ship and immediately we set out to sea.

After three days we reached land and for twenty-eight days after that we wandered through empty country. We didn't have any food and hunger was making everyone weak. The next day the captain said to me: *Well, Christian, what are you going to do? You say this God of yours is so great and powerful—why don't you pray to him for us? We're dying of starvation here! I don't think we'll ever see another living soul again.* But I answered him with great confidence: *Just turn with your whole heart to the Lord my God, because nothing is impossible for him. Today he's going to send food right into your path—plenty to fill your bellies—because his abundance is everywhere.* And by the help of God that's exactly what happened. A large herd of pigs soon stumbled across the road in front of our very eyes. The sailors killed many of them and had a great pork feast for two nights—and their dogs also ate their fill (many of them had become very weak on the journey and were half-dead). After this they offered great thanks to God and they looked at me in a whole new way—with respect. From then on we had plenty of food. They even found some wild honey at one point and offered me a share. But then one of them said: *We've dedicated this as a sacrifice to the gods*. Thank God I found out because then of course I ate none of it.

That same night as I lay sleeping, I was attacked by Satan—an event I will remember for the rest of my days. He fell on me just like a huge rock so that I couldn't even move my arms or legs. Somehow it came to me at that moment, even in my ignorance, to call on the prophet Elijah

for help. So as the sun began to rise, I shouted out with all my might: *Elijah! Elijah!* And as the rays of the sun touched my body immediately all the weight and pain were lifted away. I believe that it was Christ the Lord who rescued me that night and that it was his spirit which cried out for my sake. Indeed, I hope that the same thing happens for me on the day of my judgment. For thus the gospel says: *On that day, the Lord says, it won't be you who is speaking, but the spirit of your Father will speak for you.*

You know, there was another time many years later when I was also made a slave. On that first night when I was with my captors then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: *You will be with them for only two months*. And that's just what happened—after sixty days God liberated me from their hands.

Anyway, God provided for the sailors and myself on our journey. We had food and fire and good dry weather for traveling every day until we finally came to a settlement ten days later. As I said earlier, we had traveled through an empty land for twenty-eight days and on the night we finally came across people we had run out of food again.

So after many years I finally returned home to my family in Britain. They took me in—their long-lost son—and begged me earnestly that after all I had been through I would never leave them again.

But one night while I was at home I saw a vision while sleeping—it was a man named Victoricus coming to me as if he were arriving from Ireland. With him he brought a huge number of letters. He gave me one of them and I saw that the first words were: *The Voice of the Irish*. When I began to read this letter, all of a sudden I heard the voices of those Irish who live near the

woods of Foclut near the Western Sea. They called out to me with a single voice: *We beg you, holy boy, come here and walk among us!* I felt my heart breaking and was not able to read any more—and so I woke up. But thanks be to God, because after many years the Lord made their prayer come true.

There was another night when I heard the most beautiful words, a prayer—but I couldn't understand what was being said. Only God knows if the words were coming from inside me or were somewhere beyond me. But I did understand the very end of the prayer which said: *The one who gave you your spirit, it is he who speaks in you*. Then I woke up full of joy.

And there was another time I had a vision that I saw someone praying in me—it was as if I were actually inside my own body. I heard him above me—that is, in the internal me—and there he was praying forcefully with great sighs. While this was happening, I was stunned and baffled and kept asking myself who was this who is praying inside me? But at the end of the prayer he spoke to me and said he was the Spirit. Then I woke up and remembered what the apostle said: *The Spirit helps us when we don't know how to pray or what we ought to pray for. The Spirit prays with a language which goes beyond mere words*. And again: *The Lord is our spokesman who prays for us*.

When I was attacked by my superiors in the Church—those who accused me of sins contrary to my thankless role as a bishop—on that day I felt beaten down with such force that I thought I would never rise again, here in this life or the next. But God spared me, a stranger and a foreigner, for the sake of his own name. With kindness and strength he rescued me from those who trampled on me. And I tell you, with those charges I was in some serious trouble! But I pray that God doesn't hold those accusations against them.

The pretense of their attack on me was that, after thirty years, they found out about a confession I had made in the days before I was even a deacon. At that time, because I was so troubled in my spirit, I let slip to my best friend something which I had done one day in my youth—not even a day, but in an hour—because I was not yet then strong in my faith. I was, maybe, fifteen years old and didn't believe in the living God (I hadn't since my childhood). I remained in death and unbelief until God punished me severely and truly made me humble by hunger and nakedness day after day.

Believe me, I didn't go to Ireland willingly that first time—I almost died here. But it turned out to be good for me in the end, because God used the time to shape and mold me into something better. He made me into what I am now—someone very different from what I once was, someone who can care about others and work to help them. Before I was a slave, I didn't even care about myself.

When I was rejected by my superiors (as I mentioned above), I had another vision that very night—I saw my own face with shameful words of accusation written around it. But then I heard a divine voice saying to me: *We are very angry that my chosen one has been criticized*. Notice that the voice didn't say, *YOU are angry*, but *WE are angry*, as if God were speaking for both of us. For God says: *If someone harms you, it is as if he has poked me in the eye*.

So I give thanks to the one who cared for me in all my difficulties, because he allowed me to continue in my chosen mission and the work which Christ my master taught me. More and more I have felt inside myself a great strength because my faith was proven right before both God and the whole world.

And so I boldly declare that my conscience does not trouble me now nor will it in the future—with God as my witness, I have not lied in the words I have written to you.

More than anything, I feel sorry for my best friend that we all had to hear what he said. I had trusted to him the deepest secret of my heart. I even heard from some of my brothers that he had stood up for me back when they were deciding whether or not to make me a bishop (I wasn't in Britain at the time nor was it my idea). My friend was even the one who told me later: *You've made it! You're going to be a bishop!*—though I wasn't worthy of this. So why, out of the blue, did he later publicly disgrace me in front of everyone, good and bad alike? And over a matter which years earlier he had freely and gladly forgiven—as had God, who is greater than anyone.

Enough about this. But one thing I cannot be silent about is the gift of God which he gave to me here in this land of my slavery. I earnestly looked for him then and found him. He rescued me from all evil, I believe, because his spirit was alive in me and works through me even now. I know that is a bold thing to say, but God knows it's true. If some mere person had declared this to me, I would probably keep quiet about it because of Christ's love.

I must give thanks to my God continuously. He has helped me to keep my faith through difficult times, so that I can fearlessly offer myself as a kind of living sacrifice to Christ. The Lord has rescued me from so many dangers that sometimes I just have to ask: *God, who am I? What is it you want me to do?* You have worked beside me, helping me with your divine power, so that now I can praise and glorify your name constantly among non-believers—wherever I might be—in bad times and in good. Whatever happens to me, good or evil, I must accept it and give thanks to God. He has taught me to trust in him without any limits. God heard my prayers so that I, foolish though I am, might dare to undertake such a holy and wonderful mission in these last days—that I, in my own way, might be like those who God said would come to preach and be witness to the good news to all non-believers before the end of the world. I have seen it

happen—it has been done. I can testify that the good news has been preached to the very edge of the inhabited world.

It would take too long to tell you all about my work or even parts of it. But I will say that God in his great kindness often protected me from being enslaved and he rescued me at least a dozen times from the threat of death. And the many other times I was in danger are just too numerous too mention—I don't want to bore my readers. God knows everything before it happens, so—with him as my witness—I can tell you he used to frequently warn me of trouble in advance, though I didn't deserve such special treatment.

From where did I get such wisdom? It certainly wasn't from inside myself. I didn't know my future and I had no great knowledge of God. And later on, who was it who gave me such a wonderful and life-giving gift, the gift to know and love God? But to receive such things, I had to leave behind my home and family.

I have been offered many gifts here by those sorry for their sins—but I turned them all down. This angered some of my superiors, but with the help of God I fought back and did not give in to them (no thanks to my own will, but by the power of God who lives in me and resists them). I came to Ireland to preach the good news and to suffer abuse from unbelievers—and, it seems, to have my mission shamefully criticized. I have had many hard times, even to the point of being enslaved again, but I traded in my free birth for the good of others. If I am worthy, I am even ready to lay down my life willingly and without hesitation for his name. Here, in Ireland, is where I wish to live out my final days, if God will permit me.

I owe so much to God who allowed so many people to find a new life in him through me. I confirmed them in our faith and ordained clergy for them everywhere, for a people just now

coming to a belief in God. The master chose them from the ends of the earth, just like he said he would through the prophets: *The Gentiles will come to you from the ends of the earth and will say "Our ancestors worshipped false gods who cannot help us."* And scripture also says: *I will place you like a lamp among the non-believers so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth*.

And so I wish to remain here in Ireland and wait for the day he promised. For the gospel says: *They will come from the east and west, and from the north and south, to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. As it says, so we believe—the faithful will come together from every part of the earth.

Because of this we ought to be very hard-working fishermen of souls. After all, the master urges us and teaches us when he says: *Follow after me and I will make you fish for people*. The prophets also say: *Look, I send out many to fish and hunt, says God*. And so on. It was necessary for me to spread out my nets so that I could bring in a big catch for God and so that there could be clergy to baptize and preach to these hungry, needy people.

Thus the Lord proclaims and urges and instructs us in the gospel saying: *As you go, teach everyone and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—teaching them to do as I have told you. Behold, I will be with you even to the end of this age.*

And again he says: *When you go into the whole world, preach the good news to every person. Whoever believes you and is baptized will be saved—whoever doesn't believe will be condemned.*

He also says: *This good news of the kingdom will be declared in the whole world as a testimony to every land—and then the end will come.*

The master also announces and declares through the prophet: *In the final days (he says) I will pour out my spirit on every person. Your sons will be prophets, your daughters and children will*

*have visions, and your fathers will dream dreams. Indeed, into my servants, male and female, I will pour forth my spirit in those days and they will prophesy*.

Finally, in the book of Hosea, God says: *I will call those not my people "my people" and will show mercy to those who have known no mercy. In the place where it was once said, "You are not my people"—those will be called the children of the living God.*

How wonderful it is that here in Ireland a people who never had any knowledge of God—who until now have worshipped idols and impure things—have recently become a people of the Lord and are now called children of God. You can see that the sons and daughters of Irish kings have become brothers and virgins for Christ.

One of these Irish women was of noble birth—full grown and quite beautiful really—who I had baptized. A few days after this, she came to me with something important on her mind. She said that an angel from God had appeared to her and told her she should become a virgin of Christ if she wanted to be closer to God. Thanks be to God—six days later she joyfully and whole-heartedly chose that path which all virgins of God take. But many of them do this against the wishes of their parents. Indeed, their families sometimes punish them cruelly and make all sorts of horrible accusations against them. Still, the number of such virgins who have chosen this new life continues to grow so that I can't keep track of them all. This doesn't even include widows and married women who abstain from sex. Sadly, of such women, the ones who suffer the most are the slaves. They face rape and constant threats, but suffer this abuse bravely. God gives these women the grace to courageously follow in his path even though they are forbidden to do so.

Oh, how I would love to go home to Britain and see my family—and to Gaul to visit with the Christians there and see the holy people of God in person! But even if I wanted to leave behind these poor Irish women without any support, I am bound by the spirit of God, who would object and condemn me. I can't leave unfinished the work I've begun. Christ my master has commanded me to stay here in Ireland for the rest of my life—if God continues to want me here and if he will watch over me so that I follow his ways and keep away from any sinful action.

I certainly don't plan on sinning, but I don't trust myself as long as I am a mere human being. The tempter who every day tries to turn me from faith in God and the true religion is very strong—but I have dedicated myself to serve Christ my master to the bitter end. Human desires, however, are always dragging us towards death—to act out our sinful wishes. Heaven knows I have not lead a perfect life (as some of you undoubtedly have), but I have made my peace with God and am not ashamed to stand before him. This I declare—from the time I was a young man, the love of God and respect for him has grown in me. Now I can say, as an old man, that with the help of God I have been faithful.

Laugh and make fun of me if you want to—I will not keep quiet nor will I hide the signs and wonderful things which God revealed to me many years before they actually happened. For God knew everything which would occur even before the beginning of time.

I certainly do have to give thanks to God without ceasing, because he so often put up with my stupidity and carelessness. More than once he spared me from his much-deserved anger. He chose me to be his assistant, but I was slow to do as his spirit suggested. But my master had mercy on me so many times because he saw that I was ready—I just didn't know what to do under the circumstances.

Many people have tried to stop my mission in Ireland. I know they've talked to each other behind my back and said: *Why does this man want to work among these barbarians who don't know God?* I know they didn't say these things out of hatred, but because it genuinely seemed foolish to them. I know—and they were right—that I seemed like an uneducated bumpkin. I didn't understand then as I do now the grace that God had granted to me.

So I have written this letter in my simple style to my brothers and fellow Christians. I hope you have believed me because everything I have said and will keep on saying is to strengthen your faith. My wish is that you will do even better than me—for it always pleases a father to be surpassed by his children.

You know, as does God, how I have lived my life among you even when I was a young man—with a true faith and sincere heart. Also among the pagans of Ireland I have lived and will continue to live in honestly and truth. God knows I have cheated none of them—nor would I ever think of doing so—for the sake of God and his people. If I did wrong them, I might bring about the persecution of us all and they might curse the name of God. For it is written: *Woe to the person who causes God's name to be blasphemed*.

Even though I'm not ignorant, I've tried very hard to preserve the integrity of myself, my Christian brothers, the virgins of Christ, and my faithful women followers. Some of this last group have been known to offer me small gifts and to place their jewelry on the altar as an offering, but I always returned it to them. They were shocked that I wouldn't accept these gifts, but I have to take the long-term view on this. I have to be very careful in these matters or some non-Christian might see it as an opportunity to criticize me and my ministry here. I cannot afford to give anyone even the smallest excuse to accuse me or defame my work.

I have baptized countless converts—did I ever ask any of them for even a small coin in return? Tell me and I will repay it. When God ordained so many clergy through my unworthy hands and I started them off in the ministry, did I ever ask even one of them to buy me a pair of shoes? Tell me and I'll give back the money.

In fact, it was just the opposite. I spent money to bribe the local kings to receive me. For your sake, my Irish Christians, I traveled everywhere among great danger. I even went to the most remote parts of the island—places at the very edge of the world, places no one had ever been before—to baptize and ordain clergy and confirm people in the faith. I did it all, with the help of God, gladly and joyfully for your sake.

As I said, in my travels around the island, I used to make payments to the local kings. In addition, I also gave money to their sons who accompanied me on my journeys. But that didn't stop them from seizing me one time along with my companions. They were anxious to kill me, but my time hadn't come yet—though they did steal everything we had and put me in chains. But after two weeks, God in his power set me free and they returned all of our property. This was done by the grace of God and by the timely arrival of some old friends.

You all know very well how I paid out this money to those in power in those regions I have visited frequently. I've probably paid out enough to buy fifteen slaves, so that you could benefit from my teaching and so that I could enjoy being with you in God. I'm not sorry that I paid out bribes—in fact, I'm not finished yet. I spend money now and will spend even more. By the power of God, I may even spend my own life for your souls.

Please believe me—and I call on the power of God as my witness—I am not writing this letter looking for your admiration or money or even your thanks. I have enough honor of the quiet kind, hidden in my heart. God has promised me this and he never lies.

It seems that I've become something of a celebrity in recent years, by God's will, even though I'm not the sort of person who should attract much attention. It's much better in this world to have poverty and troubles than riches and good times. After all, Christ our master became poor for all of us.

So I struggle on in my difficult life. Money? Even if I wanted to be rich, there's not much chance of that, believe me. On the contrary, every day I keep expecting to be murdered, assaulted, sold back into slavery, or some such thing. But I'm not afraid because I know heaven waits for me. I throw myself on the mercy of God who is in charge of everything. As the prophet says: *Turn your thoughts to God and he will take care of you.*

So I will trust my spirit to my most faithful God. I serve here as his ambassador in spite of my shortcomings—but God doesn't use the world's standards in such matters. He chose me for this job—me, one of the least of his servants—to be his assistant.

I will try to pay God back for everything he has done for me. But how can I? What can I say or do for God? Everything I can do comes from him. But at least he can look inside me and judge my intent. He can see that I have been very willing to lay down my life in his service, as have others who loved him.

So may God never permit me to be separated from his people—who he worked so hard for—here at the end of the earth. I pray that God will give me perseverance and allow me to be a faithful witness for him until I die.

If I have ever done anything worthwhile for the God I love, I ask that I might be allowed to die here for his name with these converts and slaves—even if it means I won't have a marked grave or that my body is torn apart piece by piece by dogs or wild animals or that I serve as a meal for the birds of the air. I know if that were to happen, I would gain my soul along with a new body on that day we will undoubtedly rise again like the sun in the morning—like the son Jesus Christ our redeemer. We will become like children of the living God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, so that by him, through him, and in him, we will be like kings.

For the sun which we see with our eyes rises every day by the will of God, but it is not divine nor will its light remain. Everyone who worships that sun will face serious punishment someday, but we who believe in and follow Christ the true son will never really die. We will become forever as Christ has been always—ruling with God the all-powerful father and the Holy Spirit now and forever—Amen.

I would write these words of my defense again and again if I could. I declare in truth and with joy in my heart—before God and his holy angels—that I have never had any motive in my work except preaching the good news and its promises. That is the only reason I returned here to Ireland—a place I barely escaped from alive.

My final prayer is that all of you who believe in God and respect him—whoever you may be who reads this letter which Patrick the unlearned sinner wrote from Ireland—that none of you will ever say that I in my ignorance did anything for God. You must understand—because it is the truth—that it was all the gift of God.

And this is my confession before I die.