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2D ANIMATE CREATION 'PRODIGAL SON' GESTALT MOVS

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The creation of the 'Prodigal Son' animation stems from the author's realization of the need for fresh and engaging church teaching media for youth aged 12-17. Current media often lack appeal, as they focus only on storylines without offering deeper engagement. This gap highlights the urgency to develop new media that effectively delivers story essence using the Gestalt MoVS (Movement on Voice and Spirit) visual style. The study addresses how to create animation that fills this gap, applies Gestalt MoVS concepts, and visualizes the 'Prodigal Son' story through this approach. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative method and practice-based research, the process includes literature studies on Gestalt MoVS theory, theological philosophy, hermeneutics, semiotics, VCD (Visual Communication Design) principles, and expert interviews with theologians, animators, media experts, and adolescent psychologists. Media trials with targeted audiences also contribute to the visual analysis. The result is an aesthetically pleasing animation that conveys the story's three main essences—repentance, forgiveness, and gratitude—in a paradoxical configuration, addressing both repentant audiences and those who judge others. The animation offers an innovative solution to engage teens and simplify Bible story delivery, emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach to inspire spiritual understanding and real-life application.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The parable was delivered by Jesus Christ in his teaching to cover the vision of the crucifixion which became the redemption of Christians, the selection of the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) from 30 other parables based on the content of essential repentance in accepting Jesus' redemption, the context of the dichotomy of sinners and judge mentalists which is still relevant to the present day (Green, 1997), and the form that allows for the exploration of animation based on the Gestalt MoVS principle (Movement on Voice and Spirit) to simplify and strengthen the delivery of spiritual messages; so that these three things become a paradox that contains 3 essences of the story: repentance, forgiveness, and gratitude.
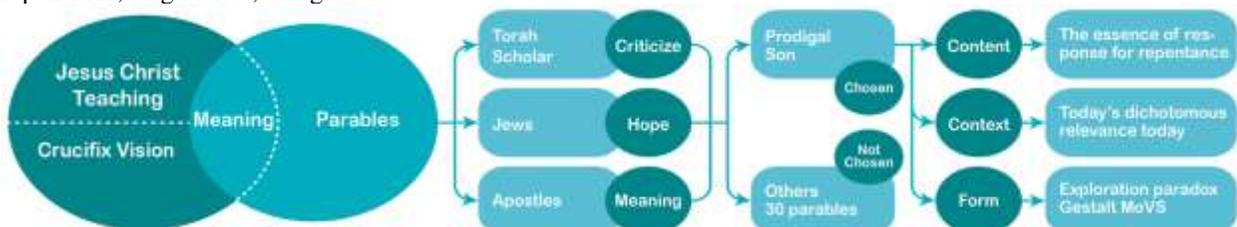

Figure 1. Parables and Story Selection. Source: Author Team's Works

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The problems that arise in a story of the parable of the Prodigal Son are (1) the parable is difficult to understand because it is conveyed in a parable, there is a complexity of meaning that is conveyed in symbolic form, so it is often difficult for the audience to understand, especially teenagers (Darmawan, 2023). This parable contains a deep message about repentance, forgiveness, and gratitude for God's love, but because it uses an indirect storytelling style, its meaning can feel abstract and requires further interpretation. (2) The church's teaching method often repeats the same story with a conventional approach so that teenagers lose interest and feel bored. The lack of media innovation in delivery causes spiritual messages to be conveyed less effectively, so media is needed that is more relevant to the learning style and visual preferences of the younger generation.
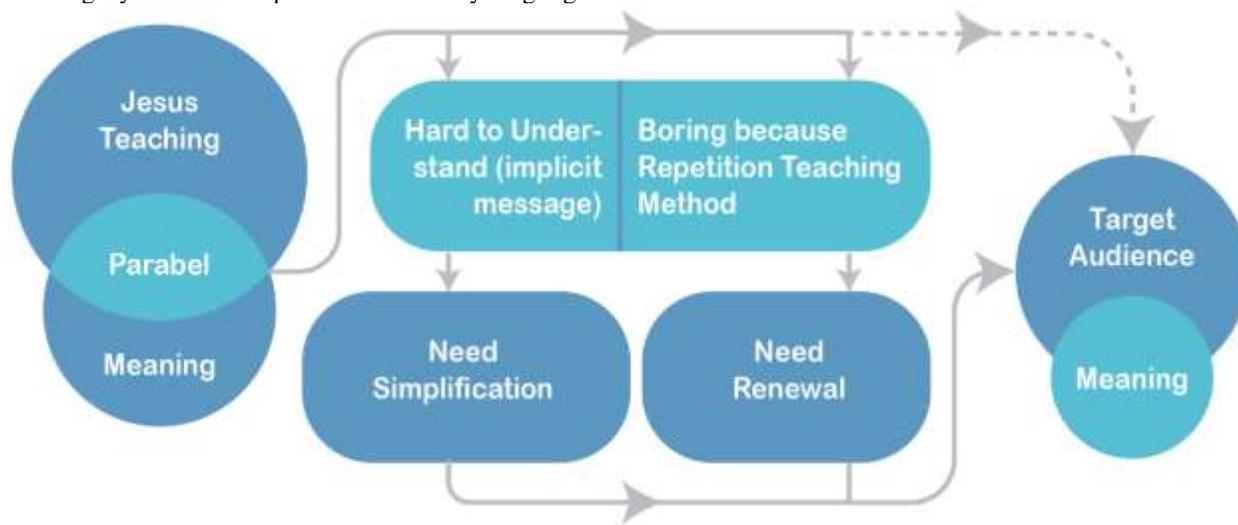

Figure 2. Problems and Needs of Creation. Source: Author Team's Works.

The selection of the audience fell on the church youth, aged 12 - 17 years, namely in the formal operational phase of the Child Development Theory (Piaget, 1972), who have experienced the development of abstract receptivity (thus matching the Gestalt MoVS approach) and have a tendency to seek something new and in accordance with the life experiences they have experienced (so that a correlation of stories in a context that is relevant to the audience is needed). In addition, there is also a gap in teaching media for teenagers, where the teaching media for church children tends to be in-depth because it is only introductory; including the existing animations only provide a storyline, while the presentation of sermons is considered less interesting due to the minimal use of audio-visual content.

Figure 3. Media Gap for Teaching Young Church People. Source: Author Team's Works.

The author realizes this need based on his personal experience as a marginalized person in the disposition (habitus) of Christian life since childhood, with modalities (capital) in culture and symbols (both theology and education), and with arenas (fields) consisting of: (teleological/purpose) delivery of messages and new visual appeal, (axiological/value) exploration of values and moral meanings in the three essences of the story, namely forgiveness, repentance, and gratitude, (ontological/existence) with the nature of existence and reality in visual representations that provide a new dimension to the story's message, (epistemological/validity) creation based on the Bible in the point of view of audience perception and interpretation, and (terminological/definition) referring to the concept of Gestalt psychology MoVS which focuses on stories, forms, and overall visual structures, movements, sounds, and creative and interesting minds.

2. THEORY REVIEW

Gestalt theory of Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka. This theory emphasizes the natural human tendency to organize and understand visual information based on five main principles: similarity, proximity, continuity, closure, and figure-ground (Wertheimer, 1938). These principles explain how humans complete incomplete images, follow certain visual patterns, and arrange separate elements into a meaningful whole. Therefore, the author

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team applies the Gestalt approach to create interactive visual compositions; including the sign of denotation and connotation (Eco, 1979), where the audience is required to complete and find meaning from unfinished visuals, follow the inserted imaginary lines, and recognize hidden patterns in each animated scene. With this approach, each image presented not only functions as an illustration of the story, but also invites the audience to actively participate in the meaning-making process.

Gestalt MoVS (Movement on Voice and Spirit) becomes a scalpel of creation, the author uses this method which consists of: closure, continuity, proximity, symmetry/similarity, and figure and ground, in building the configuration of design elements; including: point, line, curve, volume, color, texture, and space; which becomes a form that can be perceived as a representative of the form to be used with the design principle; including: unity, balance, proportion, rhythm, contrast, harmony, and emphasis. For the application of Gestalt MoVS. In movement includes the movement of characters, backgrounds, and scene transitions following the principles of animation; including: solid drawing, squash and stretch, timing and spacing, anticipation, slow in and out, secondary action, arc, follow through and overlapping, straight ahead and pose to pose, staging, exaggeration, and appeal.
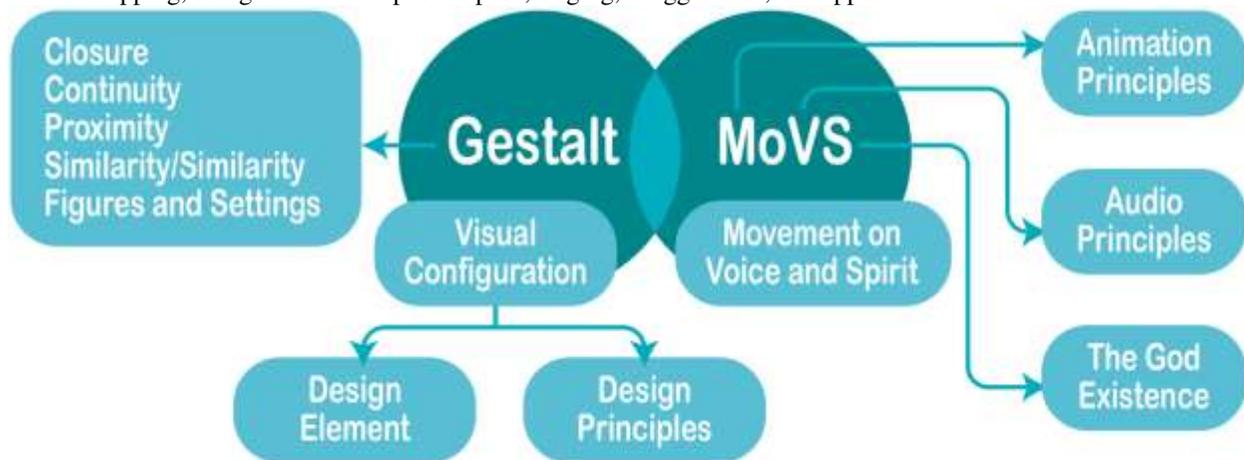

Figure 4. Gestalt MoVS Explanation. Source: Author Team's Works.

In audio or voice includes synchronization of sound and movement made more expressive to increase emotional involvement according to the principles of audio engineering (Barthes, 1977); including: signal flow, gain staging, equalization, compression, and reverb. And in the spirit includes the entire visual and sound composition coordinated to create a unity of emotional and reflective experience in beauty approach (Barron, 2015), in accordance with Thomas Aquinas' God's Existence; including: motion, efficient cause, possibility and necessity, gradation, design, animation, movement, and audio visual.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial step taken by the writing team in creating this animation was a correlation study between the target audience and the in-depth story of the parable of the 'Prodigal Son'. This process was carried out through data collection that included a study of biblical literature, discussions with experts (pastors, animators, child psychologists, and media experts), and the implementation of focus group discussions. The results of this discussion were then analyzed to determine the right creative approach for the church's teenage audience.

From discussions with pastors, the writing team gained the view that the story of the 'Prodigal Son' not only conveys a message about the Father's infinite love, but also contains a complex paradox of salvation (Keller, 2008). This shows that while the story is easy for children to digest, its understanding becomes deeper when discussed from a more mature theological perspective. In addition, the pastors also emphasized that church teachings aimed at teenagers do not have to follow formal sermons, but need to be presented in a way that is more attractive and relevant to their world.
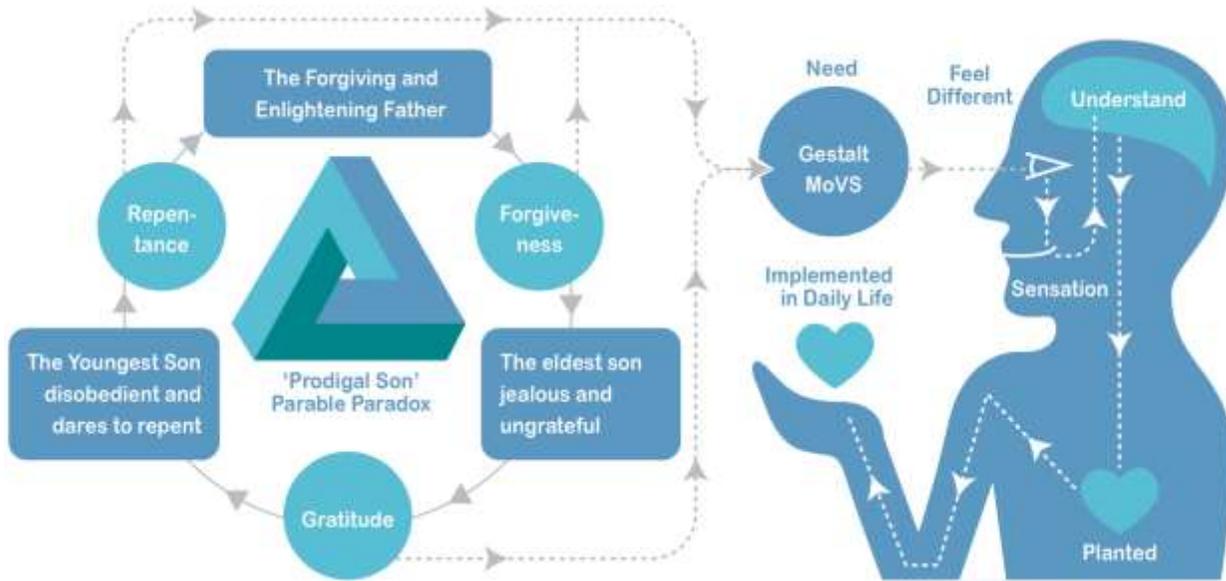
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Figure 4. Journey of Creation. Source: Author Team Work.

On the other hand, input from animators highlighted the importance of visual novelty in conveying a message. Even though an animated work carries a classic theme, fresh visual elements can create a new experience for the audience. To achieve this, a narrative descriptive visual approach is highly recommended, where the use of movement, characterization, and scene continuity are designed in such a way as to strengthen the storyline. Animators also emphasized the importance of considering the hierarchy of movement and technical continuity in animation to facilitate audience comprehension without reducing its visual appeal.

Input from psychologists and media experts highlighted the unique characteristics of the teenage audience, who are highly curious and inclined to explore new ideas. Teenagers tend to be more receptive to innovation and more critical in evaluating the content presented. Therefore, a presentation that is too familiar can reduce the appeal and effectiveness of the message. In this context, a bold, different, and critical-thinking visual approach is considered important to maintain audience engagement. The experts also reminded that there is no need to compete in presenting spectacular visuals, because the essence of the Gospel itself is strong enough to be the centre of attention. Based on the results of this discussion, the writing team formulated three main hypotheses that include philosophical, hermeneutic, and semiotic perspectives:

1. Philosophical Scope: The process of repentance involves the active role of humans in understanding the paradox between obedience and freedom, and accepting the abundance of God's love as an authentic act of acceptance. In a visual context, this is translated through characterization and movement that reflects the inner dynamics of the youngest son and father.
2. Hermeneutic Scope: The delivery of spiritual messages can be strengthened by the use of prominent semiotic elements (Schleiermacher, 1998), such as consistent colours and shapes, and symbolic gestures that describe the inner journey of each character. This means that every movement and expression of the character must have a symbolic meaning that describes the process of repentance, acceptance, and gratitude.
3. Semiotic Scope: Interpretation of the story of the 'Prodigal Son' in animation can clarify the meaning of repentance and God's love through symbolic interpretation and deep visual interaction between characters. This approach will emphasize the use of visual signs and symbols that can be interpreted in various ways, according to the context of the scene (Chandler, 2007).
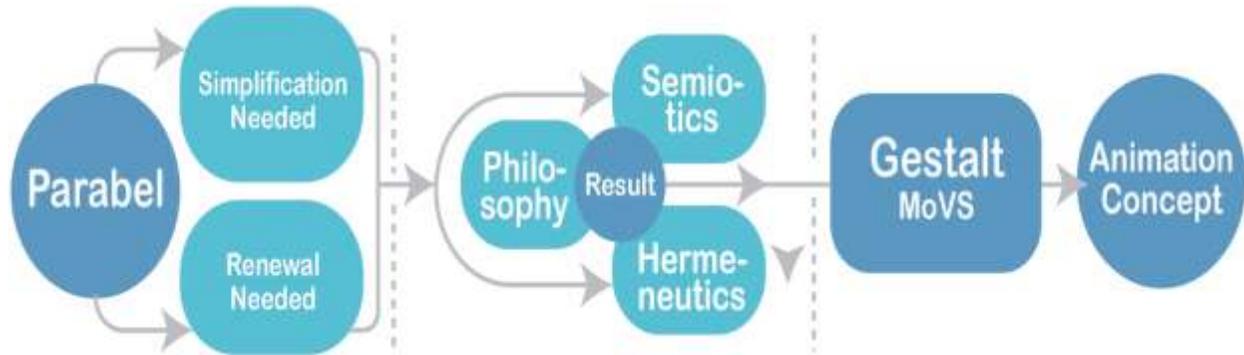
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Figure 5. Concept of Creation. Source: Author Team's Work.

From these three hypotheses, the writing team developed two main conceptual approaches:

1. Scope of Simplification of Story Message: The writing team emphasized the importance of using minimalist and symbolic visual narratives to simplify the three main message essences: repentance, forgiveness, and gratitude. This simplification is applied to the visual design that uses motion symbols, smooth transitions, and the use of colour blocks to highlight the emotional changes of each character. Thus, the teenage audience can grasp the deep spiritual message without having to rely on complex verbal explanations (Stein, 1994).

2. Scope of Gestalt MoVS: The use of Gestalt principles with MoVS in the arrangement of visual compositions is the main approach to maintaining visual harmony with character and background design, movement in audio visual (Kress. 2016). The five main principles of Gestalt — the tendency to complete, follow, group, unite, and find — are applied to the use of colour, shape, pattern, and movement in each scene (Merriam, 2009). Followed with applying animation principles and audio principles. These principles serve to direct the audience's attention to the main message, as well as create a cohesive and meaningful visual experience.
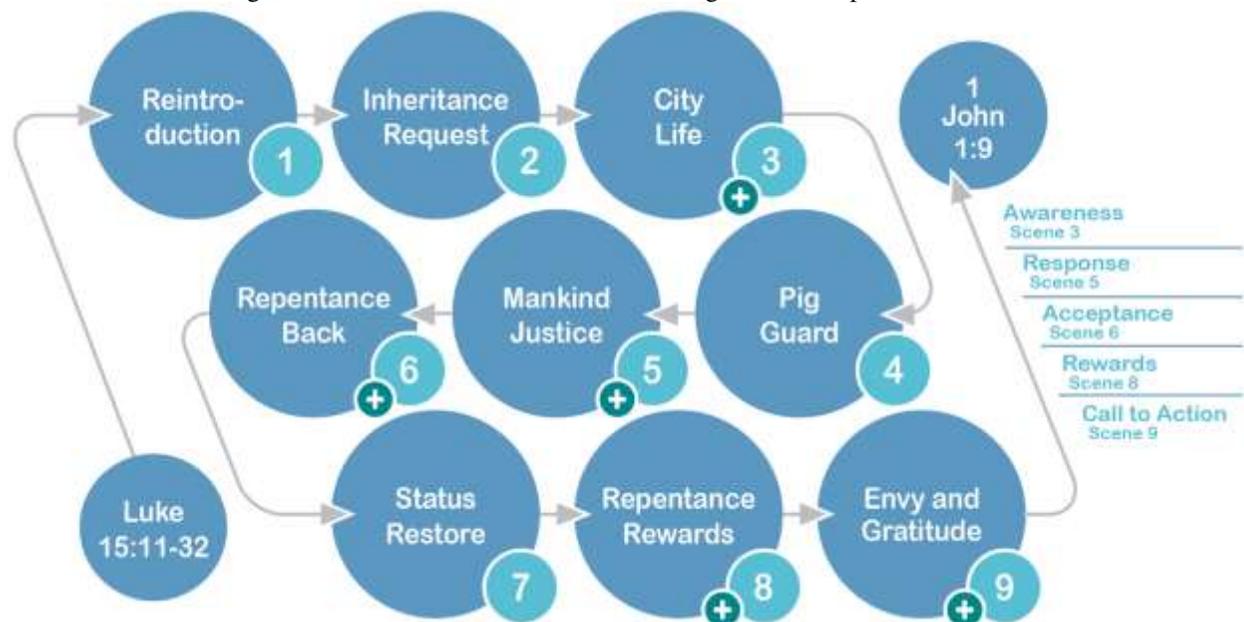

Figure 6. Story Segmentation. Source: Author Team's Work.

Thus, the writing team formulated the concept of creating the animated Bible story 'The Prodigal Son' as an animation that conveys a message through the Story Message Simplification and Gestalt Visual Style approaches. This animation uses geometric shapes, colour blocks, and balanced visual composition. Each character and scene is designed using Gestalt MoVS principles to highlight the essence of three main meanings: repentance, forgiveness, and gratitude. The story is delivered with a continuous descriptive narrative and motion symbolism, combined with theological elements to create a new and interesting experience for the teenage audience. As a result, this animation is expected to be able to convey the Bible message in a fresh, easy-to-digest way, but still has a depth of meaning that suits the characteristics of the target audience.
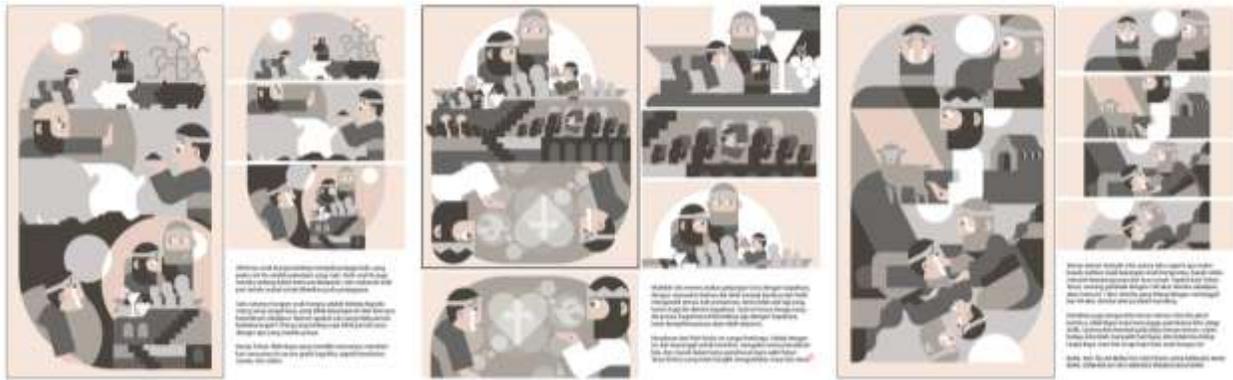
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Figure 7. Storyboard. Source: Author Team's Work.

The first stage in the production of this animation involves creating a storyboard divided into 9 narrative segments, in accordance with the story structure in Luke 15:11-32. The structure includes several important scenes, namely the re-introduction and invitation, the request for inheritance by the youngest son, the life of the youngest son in the city, the poverty of the youngest son and his job as a swineherd, the difference between human justice and the invitation to repentance from God the Holy Spirit, the repentance of the youngest son, the forgiveness and return of the status of a son from the father, the giving of gifts of repentance, and the envy of the eldest son followed by an invitation to be grateful. Each segment is designed to build a continuous storyline, which ultimately emphasizes the moral message of repentance and grace. In designing the storyboard, each scene is detailed with clear visual clues, both in terms of camera angle and transition sequence timing. This approach is in line with the concept of Visual Storytelling which emphasizes that every element in the story must function as a visual narrative medium to convey the message effectively (McCloud, 1994).
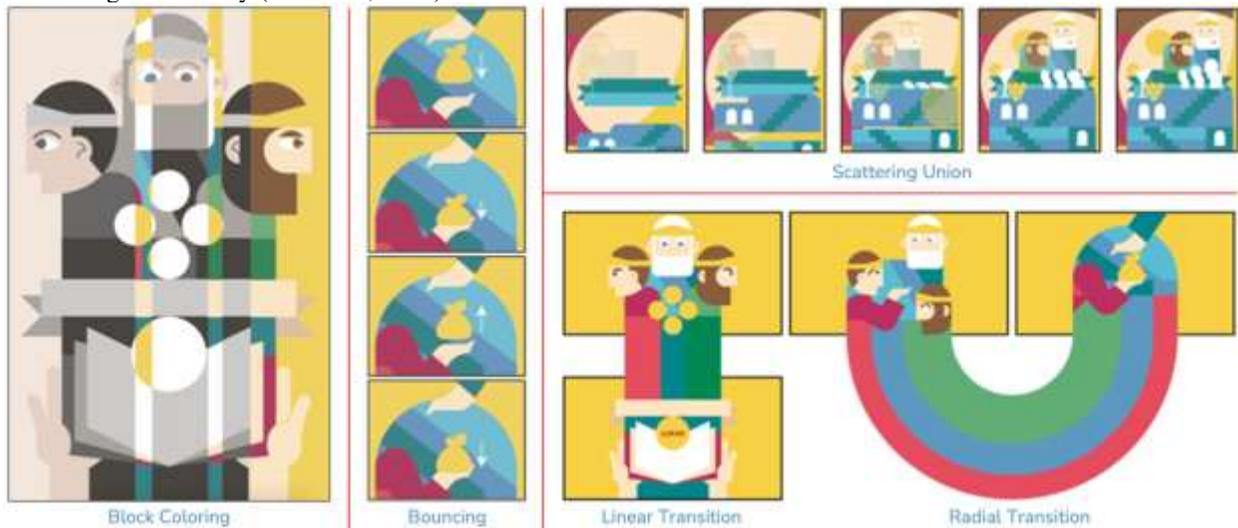

Figure 8. Animation Production Phase. Source: Author Team's Work.

After the storyboard is complete, the next step is to enter the animation production phase which includes colouring and adding dynamic movements to each character and background elements. Bouncing motion is applied to give the impression of a lively and interactive character, in accordance with the Squash and Stretch principle in classical animation theory (Thomas, 1981), which emphasizes the importance of elastic movement in creating the illusion of life in animation. In addition, the animation process also pays attention to the selection of transitions, both linear and radial, to ensure that each scene change remains smooth and supports the main narrative. The use of this transition not only functions as a connector between scenes, but also to create a coherent and aesthetic visual rhythm, in line with the Staging theory which emphasizes that each visual element must be directed to direct the audience's attention to key moments in the story (Williams, 2001). This emphasizes that making animation does not only involve static visual elements, but also the dynamic integration of various animation principles that aim to create a complete and meaningful cinematic experience.

Figure 9. Animation Result of Creation. Source: Author Team's Work (bit.ly/VideoSeminar2James).

The entire process of creating the 'Prodigal Son' animation aims to bridge the gap between the Bible teachings that have been repeatedly delivered in church environments and the needs of teenage audiences for more relevant and in-depth learning media. Based on the results of theoretical studies and discussions with experts, it can be concluded that teenagers' understanding of this parable story is often hampered by an overly formal teaching approach and less dynamic visualizations. Therefore, the approach taken integrates various theories, such as Edgar Rubin's visual simplification theory, Max Wertheimer's Gestalt theory, Wolfgang Köhler's, and Kurt Koffka's, as well as philosophical, hermeneutic, and semiotic perspectives to construct a more meaningful visual narrative.

4. CONCLUSION

In the creative process, the use of Story Message Simplification and Gestalt Visual Style became the main strategy to present the essence of the message of repentance, forgiveness, and gratitude in a simple yet profound way. The simplification of the narrative was done through the use of geometric shapes and visual symbolism, while Gestalt MoVS principles were applied to construct a harmonious and cohesive composition. This is intended so that every movement and visual transition can describe the spiritual meaning contained in the story without having to rely on excessive verbal explanations. With this approach, animation is expected to be able to present a more reflective and engaging experience for teenage audiences, who are in the formal-operational cognitive development phase according to Jean Piaget's theory.

Thus, the animation of the 'Prodigal Son' that was developed is not only a medium for conveying the storyline of the parable in a narrative manner, but also becomes a visual communication tool that prioritizes philosophical, hermeneutic, and semiotic understanding. This is expected to build a more meaningful, profound, and relevant interpretation for the church's teenage audience, as well as becoming a new contribution in conveying theological messages through innovative and contextual media.

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