

ISSA Proceedings 2010 - “I Have Like A Message From God” - The Rhetorical Situation And Persuasive Strategies In Revival Rhetoric



1. Nokia Missio

Nokia Missio is a Christian revival movement that began in the Lutheran church in Nokia, Finland, after the charismatic awakening of the vicar, Markku Koivisto, in 1991. He began to hold revival meetings that featured intense praise and prayer and the use of spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues and healing through prayer. This was in considerable contrast to traditional Lutheran meetings (Juntunen 2007; Pihkala 2007; Nokia Missio n.d.). Soon, tensions arose between the Nokia revival and the rest of the Lutheran congregation. Koivisto then founded *Nokia Missio*, a registered association, but remained a minister of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church.

The bishop of Tampere repeatedly called the practise and theology of Koivisto in question (Pihkala 2007 & 2006; Koivisto 2007; Aro-Heinilä 2006, pp. 130-131). With *Nokia Missio* the discussion about the place of charismatic Christianity within the Lutheran church reached an acute stage (Laato 2001, p. 1). It should be noted that, for most Finns, Christianity is known in its Lutheran and non-charismatic form (97 % of those who belong to a religious group or church in Finland, belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church; Väestö n.d.; Uskonto Suomessa n.d.).

Finally, Koivisto announced his resignation from the Lutheran church altogether and founded a new church alongside the *Nokia Missio* association. *The Nokia Missio Church* started in August 2008 (Nokia Missio, n.d.; Nokia Missio perustaa uuden kirkon, 2008).

Since 2003, meetings have been held in a multipurpose arena in Tampere. In 2005, the activities have expanded also to elsewhere in Finland. The meetings are

visited by members of different denominations as well as by members of the Lutheran church (Nokia Missio, n.d.; Hovi 2009).

No research has yet focused on the rhetoric of this movement (*Karismaattisuuden haaste kirkolle* 2007; Hovi 2009; Riihimäki 2009). Since the rhetoric of *Nokia Missio* differs remarkably from what Finns are accustomed to regarding religious speech, it is an interesting object of analysis. It would seem that the rhetoric is a part of the movement's success. I here present an initial analysis in order to shed light on the rhetoric at play.

2. *The Revival Meetings of Nokia Missio*

The analysed material consists of all publicly available audio recordings from the revival meetings in Tampere of the first year of the *Nokia Missio Church* (Seurakunnassa puhuttuja saarnoja n.d.; Äänitallenteet, n.d.).

Based on the recordings, the meetings of *Nokia Missio Church* (hereafter *NMC*) usually follow this broad pattern: (1) an introductory part; (2) the main sermon; and (3) a concluding part (with music and prayer).

I focus on the introductory part, which usually comprises the following elements, the internal order of which varies from meeting to meeting (the order of the individual parts is not important – I only wish to give an overall impression of the content of these meetings): (a) words of welcome; (b) announcements; (c) worship-session; (d) testimonials; (e) words to the audience, “divine speech”; (f) worship-session; and (g) collection sermon. These elements are often present, although not in every meeting or in the same form (e.g., in meetings with a Holy Communion, the introductory part differs both in structure and in tone, cf. 10.8, 21.9, 5.10, 9.11.08).

Worship often flows together with prayer, song, words to the audience, and testimonials. “Praise” refers to song of praise including declarations of faith in God. “Words” refer to words from God, “divine speech” that the speaker understands to be mediated from God through the Holy Spirit and the speaker.

I exclude the part that usually receives most consideration when Christian persuasive verbal communication is in focus: the main sermon. I hypothesise that the introductory section may be of similar importance as the main sermon and therefore warrants an analysis on its own. Even though the main instructional content of the evening is presented through the sermon, the introductory section

performs two important functions. First, it sets the stage, as it were, by focusing the evening on basic tenets of Christian life such as it is understood within *NMC*. This is clearly beneficial for the subsequent sermon, but also, second, the introductory section offers a variety of stimuli that on their own can have a substantial impact on the attendees.

I venture to assume that, for many attendees, the introductory part of the evening may determine whether they will experience emotional or cognitive change during the meeting.

3. *The Rhetorical Situation*

I take my departure from Lloyd Bitzer's groundbreaking article (1968) on the rhetorical situation. Bitzer writes that rhetorical "discourse comes into existence because of some specific condition or situation which invites utterance", and he defines *the rhetorical situation* as follows (p. 6): "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."

Some situations present some kind of defect, challenge, or problem, which calls for a change or treatment, as it were. If this change can be started or partially or completely be realised through speech, we have a rhetorical situation. As Bitzer puts it, communication gets a rhetorical meaning in a similar way as an answer is born as a reaction to a question.

The rhetorical situation has three components: *exigence*, *audience*, and *constraints*. Bitzer describes *exigence* as "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (p. 6). This imperfection creates a need for rhetoric.

The rhetorical situation requires an *audience*. According to Bitzer, a rhetorical audience consists of people who (a) can be influenced to think or act in a certain way, (b) who have the possibility, and (c) the will to create the change that can correct the problem.

The third element concerns *constraints*. This includes such elements of the situation that, "have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence", such as beliefs, attitudes, traditions, etc., that stand in the way of the audience responding properly to the exigence (p. 8).

Bitzer (pp. 12-13) describes a four-stage life cycle of the rhetorical situation:

beginning, maturity, decay, and resolution, as follows.

Beginning. The rhetorical situation arises when a problem surfaces. The situation cannot develop further until there is an audience and rhetorical prerequisites are present. At this stage, the speaker needs to make the target-group aware of the problem.

Maturity. When the problem, the audience, and the circumstances are in a favourable constellation to each other, the situation is mature. The audience is aware of the problem and sensitive to the rhetorical response of the speaker. A rhetorical situation may, however, be more or less complex, and can be weakened in several ways, for example because of two or more simultaneous rhetorical situations that compete for attention, or because the audience is scattered.

Decay. When the situation develops further, it may become partly solved or more difficult to influence, perhaps because (a) people have formed their opinion about the situation or because (b) the interest for the matter has diminished.

Resolution. The rhetorical situation is resolved or disappears either since the problem no longer can be corrected (rhetorically) or because the problem has been dealt with, corrected, or for some other reason has ceased to exist.

Bitzer's original article sparked a discussion about the rhetorical situation. Miller (1970) argued that the speaker has a greater creative space than Bitzer's theory allows for. Vatz (1973) argued that situations are rhetorical, not the other way around, that the rhetoric controls the response of the situation by creating and defining the situation. These criticisms are still pertinent.

Incomplete as it may be, Bitzer's theory is widely used. It helps in understanding some important prerequisites for persuading an audience. Although persuasion research has shown that numerous additional variables are at play in the persuasion process (see, e.g., Hart & Daughton 2005), Bitzer's approach can be satisfactory for certain types of analyses. To keep my analysis focused and to maintain a specifically verbal-rhetorical perspective, I find that Bitzer's theory provides a good starting-point.

The material does, however, invite many other kinds of approaches as well and, where useful, I will complement Bitzer's approach with a few observations taken from Classical rhetoric, modern psychology, and speech communication.

4. Analysis

4.1 Introduction

As I go through the introductory part of the meetings, all spoken parts are analysed except for announcements and the collection sermon. The collection sermon certainly contains persuasive moves, but it would better be analysed as a type of sermon.

NMC has edited the recordings slightly by deletions. The lengths of the recordings indicate that in most cases only little of the spoken portions of the evening has been deleted. The average length of a recording is 1h 25m.

After an overview of the situation of the audience, I advance in the order typical for the meetings: words of welcome, praise and prayer, testimonials, and divine speech. Throughout I focus on the rhetorical situation and its life cycle in relationship with the audience.

4.2 Overview of the Situation of the Audience

Along with actual members, each meeting is visited by a diverse group of people. This is considered by the organisers who at times address those who do not yet believe as this church does (e.g. 2.11.08, 6m 56s, “flee you who do not yet know Jesus ... change your course tonight”).

It is unlikely that those very critical to the church would attend, but rather the attendees' relationship with *NMC* ranges from curious guests to steadfast supporters. The starting point is rhetorically favourable: the members of the audience have chosen to attend. Consequently, the audience fulfils Bitzer's first condition for a rhetorical audience, that it is possible to influence it. Since the change in question is a change of opinion, values, lifestyle, etc., it is in principle possible to achieve the desired effect also, the second condition for a rhetorical audience.

Without a will to change, the third condition, a rhetorical address cannot effect change. The first task is thus to remove this constraint by awakening and strengthening the will to change. I here want to use the idea of the life cycle of a rhetorical situation as a template for the rhetorical situation from the point of view of different categories of attendees.

From this perspective, some of the participants can be placed at the beginning of the life cycle of a rhetorical situation, others at the mature stage. Regarding the third and fourth stages, the rhetorical situation never decays, nor is it resolved. Those who decide that this church no longer interests them, no longer attend the meetings. For those who continue to attend, the situation is never truly resolved since fortification of one's faith and growth in Christian life are lifelong processes.

Thus, the rhetorical exigency can be upheld indefinitely. Bitzer (1968, pp. 12-13) notes that some texts speak to us because they speak to situations which persist and that are in some measure universal, and mentions as examples Socrates' apology and the Gettysburg Address.

We can, then, assume to find the following four groups of attendees that require three different rhetorical strategies in order to be reached effectively.

(a) Non-believers, who only have a slight or temporary interest in the meetings (e.g. accompanying a friend). This is presumably a very small group. Here the rhetorical strategy needs to be to make the exigence clear. In other words, the speaker needs to let a rhetorical situation arise. According to Bitzer (1968, p. 2), however, "it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence", not the other way around. Should we, then, understand the situation so that these non-believers are at the very beginning of a rhetorical situation, that they do have a problem but are not aware of it? Or is it, contrary to Bitzer's theory, possible to give rise to a rhetorical situation through speech? I would suggest the latter, but with the comment that it is much more difficult to create an exigence than to respond to one.

We could consider that we here deal with a foundational type of problem: man's place in the world, God, and existential questions shared by many. In this light, the rhetorical situation can be understood to exist even though one is not actively aware of it. By addressing this group of attendees, it may from one perspective seem as though the problem is brought about by rhetorical address, but from another perspective the address only makes a dormant problem clear. In fact, Bitzer allows for a rhetorical situation to consist of elements that make up "an actual or potential exigence" (p. 6).

To complicate matters further, one could argue that the problem created in a revival setting is what Bitzer calls a sophistic rhetorical situation, one that is not real or genuine in the sense that a critical examination cannot certify its existence. A sophistic rhetorical situation can be the result of error or ignorance, or fantasy, in which exigence and constraints are "the imaginary objects of a mind at play" (p. 11). However, if the exigence can be made to seem real for the attendees, this distinction becomes rather academic.

(b) Non-believers who have a personal interest in what *NMC* can offer, perhaps due to some spiritual need that makes them receptive to a gospel of salvation. If one can connect this exigence with a salvation-existential message, the rhetorical

situation can be made acute and steer the listeners towards a mature rhetorical situation, and to conversion.

(c) Believers, who do not live the type of charismatic life of revival of *NMC*, but who are more or less interested in it. Also here the rhetorical strategy first needs to focus on making the exigence clear, not regarding conversion as for groups *a-b*, but regarding the need for a charismatic life.

(d) Charismatic revival Christians, who belong to *NMC* or a similar group. Here the rhetorical strategy needs to focus on upholding the rhetorical situation by focusing on spiritual development, commitment, etc.

Consequently, the challenge for the speaker is twofold: (a) to make the exigence clear, and (b) to move listeners from the beginning to a mature state of the rhetorical situation. Regardless of when the exigence first arises, during a revival meeting the speaker exerts considerable influence and can make the listener clearly aware of a problem, in Bitzer's words, of "an imperfection ... a thing which is other than it should be". Here the problem is the need for salvation and conversion is the answer. The final goal, however, for all groups, is to advance into group *d* (cf. 23.11.08, from 11m 9s).

Although these groups can be seen as being on different stages in the life cycle of a complex rhetorical situation, it is more precise to view them as being in four different rhetorical situations, each with its own exigencies and constraints. If one views these as four different, less complex, rhetorical situations, it is easier to describe the various elements that affect each group, as I have done above. This would, then, in part help explain why only some participants are (presumably) effectively met each meeting: it is because two or more simultaneous rhetorical situations weaken a situation (Bitzer 1968, p. 12).

4.3 Persuasive Moves in Words of Welcome

In the transcripts I have indicated certain features, simplified from Seppänen (1997), for example the following:

now - emphasis

OPEN UP - spoken loudly

>never< - spoken more rapidly

<yes> - spoken more slowly

\$happy\$ - passage said smiling

@love@ - a change of tone of voice; explanation within double parentheses

((3s)) - approximate length of pause

I have not converted the speech into normal sentences (e.g. no capitals are used, with the exception of “I”). The examples are my translations of my transcripts from the audio recordings in Finnish.

In the words of welcome of the first meeting after the summer-break of 2008 we find several persuasive moves.

(1) how many of you, have been *looking* forward to these evenings? ((1s)) *I* have waited all summer and I have ((1s)) already had a taste ... as this our revival through finland tour has begun and ... today we are here ... and ((2s)) it's been absolutely *amazing* already and I believe that today, today god meets us here god's *presence* is already ((1s)) in this place. I'll read ... ((reads Psalm 135)) @*hallelujah!* praise the name of the lord ... @ let's here stand up ((music starts to play)) and let's ... give the *best* to god ... ((raises his voice)) father thank you for being in this place ... thank you that ... you *speak* to us ... today is the day of *salvation* and of *healing* and ... good things will happen to us (10.8.08, 0m 10s-3m 9s)

The persuasive technique used here is typical of the words of welcome. The main objective is to arouse a sense of expectation (this is clear during the first few minutes of the majority of meetings, e.g. 10.8, 7.9, 5.10, 7.12.08 and 11.1, 22.2, 5.4, 31.5, 14.6.09).

First, the speaker testifies that he has awaited these meetings. As a role model he indicates the ideal: expectation. Then, indirect greetings from the ongoing revival tour set a background; it has already been “wonderful”.

The speaker declares that God will meet the attendees. This may trigger a wish to sense what the speaker seems to be sensing. The expectation of change is a recurring element in the meetings (cf. also 18.1.09, 1m 15s, “lord we expect you to change us today lord appear! ... change in our lives those things that need to be put right”).

The passage from Scripture exhorts the hearers to praise the lord and the command to rise activates the attendees: they cannot only observe from the outside, participating as spectators, but they should all stand in worship of God. Praise is far more than singing: the attendees are in the presence of God, where God can be revealed and even healings can take place (cf. 11.1.09, 2m 32s: “I hope that also you have a feeling of expectation, as I do ... that during worship god will heal the sick”; 16.11.08, 1m 30s).

Before the singing starts, the speaker focuses on the presence of God and sets

forth a Christian ideal with a life filled with joy, salvation, and healing, and anticipates “good things for us” this evening. The prayer is in itself a mini-sermon or testimonial.

During the first few minutes of the evening we see an attempt to trigger expectations and deep emotions among the attendees. This gives the meeting an intensive start and corresponds well with the classical rhetorical goal of the *exordium* to raise the audience’s interest (*Ad Her.* I.6-7; *Inst.* IV.1.5). This interest may, however, not be without tension: such a strong beginning can create an exigence. It is unlikely that all members of the audience can identify with the intensively devoted charismatic output by the speaker. This can cause emotional tension, which in turn gives the speaker an opportunity to show the way towards a fuller life with God.

In the worship-session that follows, the expectations and keywords mentioned in the beginning are reinforced and carried forward through the lyrics of the songs and in-between comments by the worship-leader. For example, one speaker explains how the lyrics of a song help to expect that, “heaven draws close tonight”, and as the music begins, his voice is filled with emotion and he almost starts to weep (31.8.08, 4m 8s-6m 53s); or ecstasy can be mimicked through speech, music, non-lyric singing, and chanting (16.11.08, to 2m 59s); or music, speaking in tongues, blowing, and shouting can be combined in a suggestive manner (15.2.09, from 7m 9s).

The chapter of Tampere commented critically that the meetings are designed so that religious ecstasy results (Aro-Heinilä 2006, p. 147). The material is certainly a rich source for an analysis of *actio* - the delivery - even though we only have one component, the voice, available. This indicates the richness of the performance in rhetorical terms. Aristotle considered the voice to be the prime element regarding delivery (*Rhet.* III.1.4).

At the beginning of another meeting we find similar features, “>we experienced something *wonderful* and *strange* never before \$experienced\$ he he the presence of god’s *spirit* and *anointment*< ... OPEN up your hearts and receive from god ... >he wants to give ALSO TO YOU<” (5.4.09). Here the speaker testifies that she experienced wonderful things and indicates that the same can happen now, and tries to engage the attendees.

The speaker wants the attendees to feel the presence of God (cf. also 19.4.09, 1m 25s, “he fills you with the spirit now ((2s)) the holy spirit blows ((1s)) over all of

this great crowd"; and 7.12.08, 1m 45s).

On many occasions, the speaker amplifies expectations by conveying an impression that the specific meeting is unique. This is well illustrated in the following passage where Koivisto speaks just before his sermon: "let us all ... pr..pray along with this song ((2s)) that that *here today and now* IS NOT AN *ORDINARY* night but *a night* where the *word of god* becomes alive" (11.1.09, 14m 1s). The formulations about a special night are typical (cf. 25.1.09, 2m 30s).

In summary, the main objective of the words of welcome is to arouse a sense of expectation of "good things" during the evening, specifically a meeting with God. This is achieved by activating the attendees physically and emotionally through (a) a positive message; (b) claims that this particular meeting is unique; (c) appeals to the attendees to participate wholeheartedly, with open minds; and (d) through a varied use of voice in the delivery (*actio*). This last technique is important throughout the evening.

4.4 Persuasive Moves in Praise and Prayer

In the following, a man presents the worship-session at the beginning of a meeting, after which a woman continues with a prayer of thanksgiving.

(2) >receive wh..that which god wants to give (you) during the worship< ... ((praying, with stronger voice; worship-music plays)) ... you can remove all those bonds that people have ... you will crush all hindrances from the road towards that your name would become exalted ... we want to *hand* over at this moment also all those friends ... save them ... ((a woman continues, emotionally)) ... lord, we like want to believe in you. we want to *choose*, I *choose* to believe in you (1.2.09, 0m 13s-2m 2s)

The man underlines that God wants to give something to the attendees and he encourages them to receive it. They are repeatedly reminded not to be passive listeners. In the prayer we have what could be called a manipulative prayer, that is to say speech that formally is a prayer but contains material that seems to fulfil the combined function of prayer, teaching, and emotional suggestion of the audience (see also example 1). An important indication of this is the dominance of statements of belief (e.g. "you can remove all those bonds that people have") over requests and thanksgiving.

Since the audience is at least formally joining in this prayer, the speaker becomes the mouthpiece for the congregation. Considering the context, the music, and the group dynamics of many people gathered together and standing in front of a

stage with a religious authority addressing God, it is easy to be drawn into joining the prayer also on a deeper level. Through the prayer, the attendees may come to acknowledge the statements of belief and of intent verbalised by the speaker.

In this way, the prayer-leader can “smuggle in” certain beliefs, wishes, goals, and so on into the consciousness of the congregation, as described by the group of theories known as dual processing (see also the beginning of 21.9, 2.11, 16.11.08, and 18.1.09). According to these theories, there are two different modes of processing, one unconscious, rapid, automatic, and high capacity, and one conscious, slow, and deliberative. The first tends to be intuitive, stimulus bound, and impulsive, whereas the other is analytic and reflective (Evans 2008, pp. 256-257).

By creating a mode of reception that is experience-based rather than cognitive-deliberative, it may be possible to reach some hearers more effectively. Through this technique it may even be possible to increase the resolve to embrace the goals and beliefs of the movement among those who rationally would not do so otherwise. It can also increase the expectations concerning the rest of the evening, for example regarding the main sermon, divine speech, and healing.

The speaker also formulates the thoughts presumably of those who lack certainty (i.e. *ethopoeia*, the rhetorical simulation of living character in discourse, in particular to understand or to portray the feelings of the character): “lord, we like want to believe ... I *choose* to believe in you.” The purpose seems to be to act as a mediator on behalf of those who need a push into faith, so to speak, by putting herself in their position.

In summary, praise and prayer is mainly used in order to create a mode of reception that is experience-based rather than cognitive-deliberative. The use of music is crucial in order to engage the attendees physically and emotionally. This makes it possible to smuggle in certain beliefs, goals, and so on into the consciousness of the attendees by bypassing the critical cognitive sift. During worship and prayer the speaker functions as a mouthpiece for the whole congregation, drawing it into the prayer, indirectly committing the attendees to the contents of it.

4.5 Persuasive Moves in Testimonials

Examples are a powerful inspiration and have a prominent place in revival meetings. By providing paragons of the ideal, the speakers facilitate an emulation of this ideal.

The following excerpts (3.1-6) are from the meeting 5.4.09, which begins with claims about the time we live in.

(3.1) god appears forcefully. and now is not only the time to give one's life to jesus if you don't know god but also the time to *be lit* with god's fire ... to *burn* for the lord (0m 0s-3m 19s)

If carried away by the *pathos* of the speaker, the listener can share the experience of a special time in history. The participants may suddenly feel that the situation projected is real and that God's acts are upon them. A rhetorical situation can thus be carried from beginning to maturity through rhetoric itself. It can be heard from the reactions of the audience that the mood is in fact rising.

After the opening-words, testimonials of God's work follow. The soft background-music that at times rises to a crescendo supports the impression of miraculous events. The effect of the auditive stimulus of rhythm and harmony should not be underestimated: it is a vital part in creating a certain air of spirituality and God-presence.

(3.2) ((reads text)) @*thank* you lord,@ someone has written on the web, @today I found *faith*.@ ... thank you lord, that also today is such a night when *your* life (- -) this night who does not *know* jesus ... today could be *li*.. ((stronger voice)) the eh best day of your LIFE (4m 20s-5m 11s)

Against the background of others who have "found faith", the speaker suggests that now could be the night when those who do not "know jesus" find faith as others have before them.

Some of the "works of the Lord" are fairly mundane: a lease for an apartment and a new job. These testimonials testify to the all-encompassing scope of spiritual life (cf. 5.4.09, 5m 23s). During an evening of "testimonials and prayer" (19.10.08) the organiser even made up a list beforehand with headings under which those wishing to testify could register, such as, "how God has guided in getting a place of study".

The meeting continues with acts of physical healing.

(3.3) a woman who suffered from serious cancer ... radiation treatments for the tumour in her abdomen had not been effective. >as a physician I would say that if that kind of radiation treatment is taken in the abdomen for a long time then it is< *palliative* ... there was nothing to be done. she got this prayer cloth. ((1s)) the other day the patient went to a check-up ... and <*the tumour had disappeared without a trace*>... PRAISE BE TO GOD! ... FATHER WE EXPECT ALSO TODAY

GREAT DEEDS ... *NOTHING* is impossible (6m 13s-8m 17s)

Here an extraordinary healing is used as a backdrop for increasing the intensity of the thanksgiving. "Great deeds" are expected also today, "nothing is impossible" for God. The message is emphasised by *genus grande*. Since this modus is rarely used by speakers in Finnish society it generates an emotional response even regardless of content (cf. *Speech Culture in Finland 2009*, Ch. 1). Sharp exclamation is discouraged by the classics (*Ad Her.* III.11.22). Note also the ethically questionable argument of authority, where a physician at least indirectly uses her authority to confirm the miracle.

In summary, testimonials provide paragons of the ideal, *exempla* for God's work in the lives of individuals. One type of testimonial relates to conversion and leads up to the idea that this very night could be the night when non-believers find faith as others have before them. Another type of testimonial illustrates how all aspects of life are governed by faith. A third type substantiates the belief that God heals physical ailments.

The testimonials are also used to manipulate the mood of the evening. By effectuate use of background-music, in combination with fantastic testimonials and the use of *genus grande*, the mood of the meetings rise, leading up to the feeling that "nothing is impossible" (see also 14.9.08, 16m 32s-21m 28s; and 30.11.08, 11m 5s-17m 10s).

4.6 Persuasive Moves in Words to the Audience, "Divine Speech"

The following words to the audience should be understood against the belief that a person with the proper gifts of the Spirit (*1 Cor.* 12-14) can receive "words of knowledge" and the power of healing. Since the mood of the meeting from the previous (example 3.1-3) is already intense, it is easier to accept that such gifts are at play than the case would be in a more serene service.

(3.4) ((background-music softens; Koivisto speaks gently)) ... came to my mind that *today* there are are many individuals that god mee..mee..touches by the area of the abdomen ((4s)) a..and you feel already *now* ((4s)) that that the *ailment* that you have had there ((2s)) there comes already *now* relief and the *pain* leaves at this moment ... there are *also* these eeh these *cancer* growths. and *today* in the name of jesus ... know and ALSO *FEEL* that it disappears the tumour. (9m 11s-9m 55s)

The passage exhibits three typical traits for this kind of divine speech. First, the person or persons targeted are defined by describing how they feel or think and

what their problem is. These kinds of descriptions typically contain both vague and specific details. Second, some kind of promise or hope of healing is proclaimed. Koivisto even goes so far as to saying that the pain leaves, “at this moment” (the declaration of instantaneous healings is critically noted by the chapter of Tampere; Aro-Heinilä 2006, p. 147).

Third, the style is remarkably soft and almost tentative. This gives the impression that the speaker is “listening in” the situation through the Spirit. Lowering one’s voice is another example of *actio*, here underlining the importance of what is said.

The next passage exhibits another gift of the Spirit: prophecy. The recipient of the message is not specified. It can be received by whoever who feels that it speaks to him or her.

(3.5) as god’s, holy spirit is poured >we will become< a *crossroad-people* ... a country where *sound* and *light* become one >and ... god ope..has opened< his heaven ... I felt that god wants today to give <*your* voice the harmony of clarity there where *you* go.> ((loudly)) ... not just *your* words but ... *powerful*, and they cause healings when you pray for the sick, and they cause conversions (11m 41s-12m 58s)

The speaker indicates that God will make something special out of the Finnish people and that God will speak powerful words through “your” mouth. The syntax in this passage is erroneous and several phrases lack a coherent meaning. We seem to have *aposiopesis* at a few places (see also example 3.4). Combined with the use of abstruse symbols and, again, *genus grande*, the speaker conveys a sense of exceptionality and urgency.

How different groups are taken into account is exemplified during the same meeting when Koivisto address the elderly:

(3.6) I have like a *message* from god ((1s)) that ... suddenly ... it is just arranged that you’ll have new friends, new contact, perhaps some..someone young or some..someone kind of younger anyway who *comes* to see you and *helps*. today god has <heard your prayer> (11m 41s-12m 58s)

Koivisto promises that their prayers have been heard and that these people will get new friends. This is a hazardous rhetorical strategy: the message is comforting, but unless carried through in real life, will cause disappointment.

Sometimes the speaker combines several types of speech, such as tuition, evangelising appeal, and divine speech (e.g. 5.4.09, 14m 16s-16m 55s). By

pushing many buttons, the speaker can address many levels of thought and emotion at the same time. Combined with an intimate address, the speaker can give the impression that he (and God) knows and reaches out to the hearer personally, as in phrases like these: “dare today. surrounded by god’s love to encounter also what’s in your innermost ... you get ... forgiveness” (15m 40s).

In summary, divine speech is predominantly of three types: promises or proclamations of physical or emotional healing, prophecies, and words of knowledge. Regarding healing, the promises vary from a promise of instantaneous healing “now” to the beginning of a process of healing. The prophetic words are often visions regarding how things or people will change according to God’s plan (e.g. 23.11.08, 1m 11s).

The recipients of words from God are defined by describing how they feel or think and what their problem is (*ethopoeia*), at times quite intimately. In the case of physical ailments, the description typically contains both vague and specific details. Second, some kind of promise is proclaimed. The speakers do not shrink from promising instantaneous physical changes and improvements in the life-situation of the hearers.

The style is soft and almost tentative, giving the impression that the speaker is “listening in” what God wants to say or do. Lowering one’s voice underlines the importance of what is being said.

5. Conclusion

It is easy to understand why the public interest regarding the Nokia revival has been most unusual. Any theological aspects aside, even just a rhetorical analysis of these meetings raises questions regarding the ethical integrity of the movement.

My analysis gives plausible confirmation to the hypothesis that the introductory part of the evening plays a key role regarding how the attendees are affected during meetings (only a field-survey could confirm this with certainty).

Using Bitzer’s idea of the life cycle of a rhetorical situation as a template for different categories of attendees, I have described the strategies needed for four different rhetorical situations, each with its own exigencies and constraints. Briefly put, the speaker needs to (a) make the exigence clear, and (b) move listeners from the beginning to a mature state of the rhetorical situation.

I have above summarized the analyses of four different types of spoken material in the introductory part of the meetings. Briefly put, change is effectuated in

several ways and through several channels, pushing different emotional-experiential and pre-deliberative buttons. Together with the main sermon, which was not taken into account here, it is understandable how the meetings of *NMC* can attract certain types of attendees and effectuate change in their lives.

Throughout the meetings, *actio* stands out as the dominant feature alongside the dramatic content of what is said. The speakers exhibit a most varied use of voice and the performance is amplified with background-music and song. During proclamations the speakers often reach *genus grande*, speaking with an abundance of assurance whereas they during divine speech often lower their voice and speak softly and tentatively. A varied use of voice is in line with the ideal that a speech should delight (*delectare*).

The most striking feature of the meetings of *NMC* is the intensity – the almost tangible emotional experience –, which is apparent even just from audio recordings. This could not have been achieved without the use of various rhetorical techniques and persuasive strategies.

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