

Framing “Loss and Restoration” in Christian Communication: Perspective of an Involved Inspirational Speaker

Samuel Okere, Ph.D¹

Department of Mass Communication
Babcock University
Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State
samokere1@gmail.com; okeres@babcock.edu.ng

Oluwafemi T. Olomjobi ²

Department of Mass Communication
Babcock University
Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State
femiolomjobi@gmail.com

Abstract

Christian communication’s dominant theme of loss and restoration is often persuasion-dependent. This is fostered by the positive character and credibility of the speaker as perceived by the audience. It is in this light that this paper examined how a Christian communicator, generally called inspirational speaker, could attain an acceptable ethos while engaging his audience in spite of the fact that he entered the communication context with a “damaged” reputation. This paper studied the sermons of Dr. Samuel Pipim, an African-born former Christian clergy and inspirational speaker based in the United States of America, who had once experienced a moral fall. Framing theory provided the theoretical foundation to this paper. The first series of sermons delivered by Dr. Pipim after his moral fall experience were purposively selected and examined, using the rhetorical analysis method. It was found that metaphor, repetition, scesis onomaton, and hypophora were the rhetorical devices prominently used in the selected sermons. It was also discovered that Pipim relied on his personal experience of loss and restoration as the content of his sermons to frame a positive ethos in the minds of his audience. This paper, therefore, came to the conclusion that a Christian communicator mindful of his damaged reputation, can frame his message from a personal experience to attain an effective ethos that could elicit persuasion.

Keywords: Rhetoric, Christian communication, Ethos, Framing, Loss and restoration.

Introduction

Christian communication is often persuasive-driven with the dominant theme of loss and restoration. At its core is the dissemination of the love of God through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ to restore lost humanity to a perfect relationship with God. It therefore calls the attention of humanity to maintaining “a lifestyle that is in

agreement with the revealed will of God as exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ” (Okere, 2006, p. 84). Christian communication seeks for the most part to inspire a change in attitudes and behaviours of individuals in preparation for a new world order of everlasting peace and joy, a world that is free from sin, corruption and the perverting influences of the present age (Engels, 1979). Christian communication is necessitated by a commitment to achieving both in-reach and outreach goals; meeting the needs of the immediate “flock” as well as reaching the “outside” masses. Meanwhile, Christian communicators aim beyond the transitory effects of emotional and even social stimulation. They strive to inspire their audience to conviction on spiritual matters by utilising the essential elements of a persuasive rhetoric. It is for this reason that speakers on the platform of Christian communication could be seen as inspirational speakers.

Various factors may undermine the effectiveness of a Christian inspirational speaker. These include blind dogmatism, dilution of the message with banal talks, presenting opinions as facts, concealment of true purpose, and other deviations from the ethics of persuasion (McLaughlin, 1979; Nelson & Pearson, 2001). The most significant factor, meanwhile, is the personality of the speaker. When the personality of an inspirational speaker is negatively perceived by the audience, his or her message tends to be scrutinised in close juxtaposition with his personality. This situation has a high tendency of adversely affecting the perceived veracity of the message and could, thus, limit the message’s effect on the audience as intended by the speaker. In such a case, the speaker is put on a challenging task of employing a high level of persuasiveness to help the audience look beyond his or her personality in order for them to be able to consider the message delivered on its own merit. It is based on this notion that this paper set out to explore how an involved inspirational speaker – one who had once experienced the ignominy of a moral fall- could frame his “damaged” *ethos* effectively, bearing in mind that the damage could affect his ability to persuade his audience on messages from the Bible.

The researchers have purposively chosen the case of Dr. Samuel Koranteng Pipim, a former Seventh-day Adventist (S.D.A) Church pastor based in the United States of America. Dr. Pipim was actively involved with the young adults’ ministry of the S.D.A Church in Michigan. He also frequently travelled and served as a religious cum inspirational speaker at various events, especially those designated for students and youths, around the world. He was revered by many people within and outside his church for his forthright messages on Christian living. Pipim’s reputation as one who stood for and championed the cause of biblical truth was, however, smeared when it became public knowledge in 2011 that he had been involved in a sexual scandal, an experience the preacher would later describe as a moral fall, spiritual failure and betrayal of trust on his part (Pipim, 2012). Meanwhile, after accepting and going through the process of church discipline (which involved momentary dis-fellowship, and loss of his ministerial license), repentance, and re-baptism into the church, he finds himself a new and refined Christian communicator who is conscious of the fact that the Christian journey is one of loss and restoration. It is against this backdrop that this paper sought to conduct a

rhetorical analysis on how Dr. Samuel Koranteng Pipim- more as an independent (freelance) Christian inspirational speaker- framed his *ethos* in his post-fall messages.

Statement of the Problem

With its underlying Christian principle of faith and practice integration, Christian communication impels an agreement between the substance of the message conveyed and how the message is conveyed. Often than not, the effectiveness of a message communicated cannot be detached from the context of the messenger’s personality (Milica, 2015). The speaker- overtly or covertly- is seen as an extension of the message. Therefore, an audience’s acceptance of a Christian message may tend to be anchored on their assessment of the credibility or reputation of the speaker bringing the message to them. The implication of this is that the speaker’s *pathos* (emotional appeal) and *logos* (logical appeal) in his message may never be enough in eliciting conviction and cognate responses when the audience deem his or her *ethos* (personal character) questionable. It is for this reason that this inquiry is focused on how an involved inspirational speaker – one who has had a “damaged” reputation – could frame the Christian communication dominant theme of loss and restoration with maximum persuasiveness.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the rhetorical devices prominently used by Dr. Samuel Pipim in his post-fall messages.
2. Ascertain the framing patterns adopted by Dr. Samuel Pipim in presenting his *ethos* in his post-fall messages to attain persuasiveness.

Literature Review

Rhetoric as an Endeavour of Persuasion

Rhetoric, drawing from the classical works of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, gained its earliest conceptualisation from the realm of politics (Balla, 2004; Klosko, 1993). Today, rhetoric has extended to other fields where human communication is fundamental. Sezler (2004) asserts that rhetoric can be approached both as a productive and interpretative enterprise, in that the focus can be on the use of language to produce effective communication and also on how language is used towards understanding communication. This explains why rhetoric is considered a dialogic or interactional process between the speaker or author and the audience (Downing, 2006).

Aristotle defines rhetoric “as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Roberts, 2008, p. 10). The purpose of rhetoric, by implication, is to persuade. In Simonson’s (2013) words, rhetoric is a “communicative address with the potential to alter or solidify beliefs, sensibilities, identities, communal attachments, and ways of living in the world for the audiences who receive it” (p. 87). Hence, rhetoric is an act towards persuasion and a mediator of change through the engagement of the thought and action of the audience (Bitzer, 1968). Meanwhile, persuasion, according to Perloff (2003), is “a symbolic process in which communicators

try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviour regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice” (p. 8)

Conceptual demarcation between rhetoric and persuasion can be quite blurry. The two concepts are often used interchangeably. It can be argued, however, that while persuasion is a psychological process of creating, shaping, reinforcing or changing people’s responses in terms of beliefs and actions (Lucas, 2012; Nelson & Pearson, 2001), rhetoric is a communicative process of exerting influence on people’s attitudinal and behavioural responses to issues through purposefully conceived and conveyed messages. Rhetoric and persuasion are not synonymous concepts but rather interrelated, with the former being a means towards achieving the latter. Considering Aristotle’s reasoning that “persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated” (Roberts, 2008, p. 6), it can be asserted that rhetoric is a communicative demonstration towards persuasion in method and purpose. To this end, rhetoric is the art of persuasive communication.

Aristotle, in his classic work, *The Art of Rhetoric*, identified three modes of persuasion: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. To him, *ethos* has to do with the persuasive appeal generated through the personal character of the rhetor. It is an appeal hinged on the reputation, authority, trustworthiness and credibility of the speaker. In other words, *ethos* is the means through which a speaker convinces the audience that he is the right and credible person to speak to them on a particular subject or issue. Lucas (2012) observes that competence and character are two factors that affect the credibility of a speaker before his audience. According to him, competence concerns how well the audience consider a speaker to be an expert, as well as an intelligent and knowledgeable interlocutor, on a subject. Character, on the other hand, is about how the audience see a speaker as being sincere, trustworthy, and having a genuine interest in their well-being.

Aristotle argues that *ethos* of a speaker should be judged by what he says (in other words, within his rhetorical act) and not by what people think about his character before he begins to speak (Roberts, 2008). Yet, there remains the plausible chance that the audience would always decide on the modicum of credibility (positive or negative) to accord a speaker even before he utters any word. Scholars have identified different typologies of *ethos*. For instance, Amossy (2000) posits that there are two types of *ethos*: preliminary *ethos* and discourse *ethos* (as cited in Mshvenieradze, 2013). Preliminary *ethos* is what the audience think about the rhetor’s credibility before he starts to speak to them; and discourse *ethos* is how credible the rhetor evinces himself before the audience through what he says and does during the speech. Lucas (2012) outlines three types of credibility: Initial credibility (the credibility of the speaker as assessed and determined by the audience before the rhetorical act commences); derived credibility (the credibility of the speaker during the course of his speech); and terminal credibility (the credibility of the speaker at the end of the speech).

In light of Aristotle’s postulations, *pathos* refers to the emotional appeal deployed by a speaker. The speaker can set the audience in a particular frame of mind with a range of feelings such as compassion, fear, pride, anger, and guilt (Lucas, 2012).

This is the appeal with which a speaker forges a connection with the audience. Mshvenieradze (2013) describes *pathos* as “the power with which the writer's [or speaker's] message moves the audience to his or her desirable emotional action” (p. 1940). By stirring the emotions of the audience, the speaker can create an atmosphere of empathy and sympathy. Indeed, the audience are often roused to actions and to take certain stance on an issue more by the accompanying emotions the speaker evokes than the intellectual soundness of the speaker's argument.

Following in the Aristotelian tradition, *logos* refers to logical appeal a speaker uses in the rhetorical act. *Logos* is using the speech itself to prove a truth or an apparent truth through persuasive arguments (Roberts, 2008). The speaker appeals to the reasoning or intellect of the audience in the bid to convince them of certain facts. To carry this out effectively, the speaker needs critical cognition, analytical skills, good memory and purposeful behaviour to pass across his arguments (Mshvenieradze, 2013). Lucas (2012) asserts that, in making use of logical appeal, the speaker's responsibility is in two folds: first, to ensure that his own reasoning is sound, and, second, to make the audience agree with his reasoning. Lucas further points out that the speaker can present his arguments through such methods as reasoning from specific instances (inductive reasoning), reasoning from principle (deductive reasoning), causal reasoning (cause and effect), and analogical reasoning (comparisons).

Persuasion in Christian Communication

A focal point of Christian communication is the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ to His followers for them to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). From Jesus' words it is clear that rhetoric is fundamental in the task of making disciples. Helping to organise and manifest Christian tenets, rhetoric plays a mediating function of “making present what sometimes lies beyond the immediate senses” (Simonson, 2013, p. 87).

Preaching and teaching are the two major rhetorical acts that Christian communicators deploy in persuading people to accept becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and remain so. In Christian communication, persuasion is attempted and manifested through various communication contexts. These contexts include, but not limited to, one-on-one evangelism (interpersonal communication), home Bible study (group communication), outdoor or indoor evangelistic meetings anchored by a preacher (public communication), and through Christian messages in the traditional and new media (mass communication). This means Christian communicators can explore different strategies to disseminate the Christian message both at the level of in-reach and outreach. It, then, behooves a Christian communicator to use the best rhetorical goals and methods possible, considering “how crucial the gospel message and its proclamation is to the destinies of men” (McLaughlin, 1979, p. 106).

A Christian preacher, according to Milica (2015), has the responsibility of voicing the truth of his faith through the persuasive function of his speech and the

performative function of his actions. Milica concludes that “the Christian orator must be a living example, who convinces more through his conduct than through the craft in composing beautifully-adorned and well-argued speeches” (p. 7). In other words, the persuasiveness of the Christian message is largely dependent on the *ethos* of the Christian communicator, however much the *logos* and *pathos* of the communicator’s rhetoric may be important.

A Christian communicator has a special assignment of presenting to the audience messages of hope that explicitly or implicitly demonstrate the love of Jesus through his death, leading the audience, thereby, to see their need for salvation and take the decision to accept Jesus Christ. At other times, this assignment involves helping the audience to see the dangers ingrained in certain beliefs, norms, and practices, which not only have spiritual implication, but also spell negative repercussions for individual well-being, interpersonal relations, and societal sanity. Christian communication, in essence, can be initiated towards theological ends as well as social effects ends (McLaughlin, 1979). The former is what Okere (2013) describes as communicating values that “are considered as spiritual and transcendental” (p. 47).

Theoretical Framework: Framing

Framing theory helps to situate the perspective from which a speaker delivers his message on issues and how it influences the interpretation given to such issues by the audience. In other words, the speaker sets the narrative of discourse, and the direction of the audience’s interpretation of issues transpires from how such issues are being framed by the speaker. This theory has its origin in cognitive psychology and anthropology, but was later adopted in other disciplines, including communication (Gorp, 2007). To Goffman (1974), frames are cognitive structures that guide the representation of events. Gamson & Modigliani (1989) defined it as “a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (p. 3).

According to Gross & Aolain (2014), “whoever manages to control the framing of information greatly influences, and can manipulate, the interpretation and meaning that recipients of that information are likely to attach to it” (p. 243). The adoption of this theory is based on the understanding that how a rhetor frames his speech plays a significant role in the process “by which people [the audience] develop a particular conceptualisation of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104).

Method

This paper is focused on the reputation of Samuel Korenteng Pipim and how it affects the persuasiveness of his messages as a Christian inspirational speaker. The qualitative research approach was adopted for this paper. Samuel Pipim was purposively selected as a case study due to the researchers’ familiarity with the complexion of Pipim’s influence as a Christian communicator before and after his moral fall. At any

rate, the aim of this study is to provide profound contributions to extant literature on the rhetorical dynamics of Christian communication.

The population of the study is the first seven sermons Samuel Pipim gave after his “moral fall” became public. The seven sermons were presented as a series under the title, “My Song in the Night”. The total enumeration sampling technique was used to study the entire seven sermons due to the manageability of the number. This series then served as the rhetorical artifact for this study. This one-week-long series presented between March 18, 2012 and March 24, 2012 was Samuel Pipim’s first public ministration after his scandal became public knowledge in May 2011. Being Pipim’s first public ministration after the moral fall experience, “My Song in the Night” represented a means through which the speaker could set the “the story straight” and possibly make a case for himself toward public acceptance in the face of a tarnished reputation.

Available audio version of the “My Song in the Night” series were downloaded from a website (www.eaglesonline.org) curated by Samuel Pipim. Contents of the sermons were then transcribed for analysis. The titles, dates, and time duration of the sermons selected for this study are outlined in table 1. For referencing purposes, the abbreviation SKP (Samuel Koranteng Pipim) is used along with a number in chronological order. For example, SKP1 refers to the preacher’s first sermon delivered on March 18, 2012, SKP2 refers to his second sermon presented on March 19, 2012, and so on.

Table 1: Samuel Koranteng Pipim’s Sermons in His “My Song in the Night” Series

<i>Label</i>	<i>Sermon Title</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Duration</i>
SKP1	The Theme of My Song	March 18, 2012	42min 32sec
SKP2	Satan Will Sift You	March 19, 2012	41min 49sec
SKP3	Your Faith Should Not Fail	March 20, 2012	49min 49sec
SKP4	But I Have Prayed For You	March 21, 2012	49min 47sec
SKP5	You Will Return	March 22, 2012	46min 14sec
SKP6	Strengthen Your Brethren	March 23, 2012	52min 20sec
SKP7	Brothers, Let Us Be Strong	March 24, 2012	1hr 07min 35sec

In examining the rhetorical devices Pipim employed to deliver his messages and the framing patterns adopted, the paper was restricted to textual analysis. Therefore, the focus was exclusively on the contents of the selected sermons; precluding the visual analysis of the speaker’s performance. Units of analysis for this study were developed from concepts in extant literature. During the process of coding and categorisation, different rhetorical devices and framing patterns were identified in the rhetorical artifact. Focus was, then, turned to analysing the most prominent rhetorical devices and framing patterns thematically.

Context and Synopsis of “My Song in the Night”

“My Song in the Night” is a series of devotional messages delivered by Samuel Pipim between March 18, 2012 and March 24, 2012. It is a collection of 7 sermons, interconnected by the theme of God’s amazing grace in the face of human susceptibility to temptations and trials. It should be noted that Pipim’s immediate audience were members of a Christian men’s ministry group in New York, USA. The messages were broadcast on radio in real time, and later made available on the internet, to a more heterogeneous and scattered audience.

According to Samuel Pipim, the “My Song in the Night” messages are a reflection on Apostle Peter’s spiritual failure in light of his own personal experience. Pipim states that, as his preoccupation, he intends to use his own experience to present “messages about the lurking dangers of temptation, the costly nature of sin and its consequences, and the amazing grace of our Lord Jesus” (SKP1, 2012, 02:25). The preacher bases his homily on Luke 22:31-32, which contains the ominous words of Jesus Christ to Peter sequel to the latter’s eventual denial of the former. The passage reads:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren.

The preacher explains that, as in Peter’s case, God is never caught unawares by the spiritual failure of his children. God foresees and gives his children warnings and the fortitude to endure the danger before them. Using Jesus’ warning to Peter as an object lesson, Pipim points out that the devil’s main purpose for initiating temptations is to cause the faith of Jesus Christ’s followers to fail. The preacher enjoins the audience not to lose sight of the extraterrestrial perspective to trials and temptations they face; as their spiritual struggles are a part of an ongoing cosmic conflict between God and Satan for the allegiance of humanity. Notwithstanding, everyone is responsible for his own sins. Pipim states that Satan can only try to lure- and not force- someone to do his biddings. Sins, he continues, though aided by the enticement induced by the devil, are ultimately perpetrated from people’s personal decision or freedom of choice.

Alluding to Jesus’ assurance of having prayed for Peter, the preacher explains that Jesus intercedes for every of his followers when they are within the cusp of spiritual failure so their faith would not collapse altogether. He cites his own experience to further convey this point. He states, “My heart was touched when in the middle of the failure [his scandal] some five thousand young people organised themselves to pray for me one Sabbath day. I am forever grateful for your prayer and encouragement. But do you know what, the most encouraging news of all was to read in Luke 22:31-32 that Jesus himself was praying for me” (SKP4, 2012, 40:20).

The audience are encouraged not to sink into despair when they fall. Pipim states that failure is not determined by the number of mistakes a person makes but by how one

responds to them. Explaining what he terms the six-more-chances mindset, the preacher submits that Christians should always maintain an attitude of getting up when they fail and fall, depending on the unlimited pardon, healing, and restoration found only in Jesus. After conversion, they are empowered to use their experience to warn and strengthen other people in similar situations. To underscore this point, he directs the attention of his audience to the life of Peter who, despite denying Jesus Christ three times, got forgiven, restored and re-commissioned to ministry by Jesus himself.

Pipim concludes with the promise that the second coming of Jesus will eventually put an end to the attacks God’s children suffer in the hands of Satan. He, meanwhile, asserts that God is desirous of seeing a crop of genuinely converted men stand up to strengthen the home and church fronts.

Findings and Discussion

This paper was guided by two objectives: identifying the rhetorical devices prominently used in the selected post-fall messages of Samuel Korenteng Pipim; and ascertaining the framing patterns adopted by the speaker in presenting his *ethos* in the selected messages to attain persuasiveness.

Prominent Rhetorical Devices in Samuel Pipim’s “My Song in the Night”

The rhetorical devices prominent across the seven messages in the “My Song in the Night” series include: metaphor, repetition, scesis onomaton, and hypophora. *Metaphor* refers to direct comparison between two different things. Unlike simile identifiable by the use of “as” and “like”, comparison in metaphor is usually implied. Pipim used metaphor recurrently in his series of messages. For one, the caption, “My Song in the Night”, a theme under which the preacher umbrellas his messages is a biblical metaphor. Pipim elucidated that the caption was gleaned from some Bible passages such as Job 35:10, Psalm 71:5-7, and Isaiah 30:29. According to him, he had to adapt the sentiment expressed in the phrase from the aforementioned Bible texts to present his sermons. He directly compared “night” to negative circumstances Christians sometimes experience in their walk with God: “night of sorrow, night of pain, night of persecution, night of doubt... But the greatest of all is the night of spiritual failure” (SKP1, 2012, 08:04).

To the extent that “night” connotes dark moments in the life of a Christian, the preacher used “song” to mean the lessons and testimony of hope that emerges from and despite the negative situations faced by a Christian. Pipim used this metaphor to convey his preoccupation to the audience from the outset. He stated, “While also I’ve had my dark night, but the Lord has given me some songs in the night” (SKP1, 2012, 09:43). He then attempted to convince the audience that his moral fall precipitated his own “dark night”, and that the sermons he was presenting to them were his “songs” from that experience.

Pipim deployed metaphors to graphically illustrate the thrust of his messages. For instance, after explaining the meaning of “sift” as an agricultural procedure whereby the chaff is separated from the wheat kernel, the preacher stated, “In this violent shaking,

he [Satan] aims to treat us as chaff- *chaff of sin* instead of *wheat of grace*” (SKP3, 2012, 04:20). This was used to illustrate the point that the devil seeks to tempt and keep the followers of Jesus Christ in sin perpetually in order to render them estranged from God’s grace. Placing the metaphors “chaff of sin” and “wheat of grace” side by side helps the speaker to underscore not only the futility and worthlessness of sin, but also the wholeness and satisfaction one finds in the grace of God.

Similarly, the speaker used metaphor to illustrate the point that hope is available for those who experience spiritual failure (sin) and other forms of failure. Pipim declared, “The clouds might cover your sun for a while, but it does not mean it is sunset for you” (SKP5, 2012, 06:46). Here, he evoked a firmamental imagery to help the audience see failures (compared to clouds) as transitory and not an end (compared to sunset). The audience are, thus, encouraged to keep getting up when knocked down by failures.

The use of *repetition* is a major highlight of Pipim’s rhetorical act. Keywords such as “failure”, “sin”, “hope”, and “grace” kept recurring across the seven sermons. Pipim also constantly repeated thoughts reflecting the titles of his sermons: “Satan will sift you”, “Jesus has prayed for you”, “You will return”. Essentially, he repeated his sermon titles to create emphasis. Pipim’s use of repetition as a rhetorical device helped him place salience on certain aspects of his messages. By so doing, it would be easy for the preacher to reinforce the thrust of his messages in the minds of the audience, and possibly provoke intended responses.

There is also the intermittent use of *anaphora*, which refers to repetition of words at the beginning of successive phrases or sentences. For instance, Pipim averred, “Behind every temptation to sin is Satan. It’s *not your* husband or your wife. *Not your* parent or children. *Not your* boss or colleagues at work. *Not your* professor or classmate.” (SKP1, 2012, 25:42). Similarly he stated:

Satan sifts us in order that we [might] lose our faith, because he knows without faith it is impossible to please God. *He knows* our faith is our shield against his fiery arrow. *He knows* our faith is that which overcomes the world. *He knows* that faith-our faith- is one of the tests of God’s people in the last days (SKP5, 2012, 17:01).

The repetition of “not your” and “he knows” in the above two instances infuses some rhythm to the rhetoric of the preacher. Beyond this, however, these anaphora play a role in expanding or buttressing on the antecedent theses in the two statements: that “Behind every temptation to sin is Satan” and “Satan sifts us in order that we [might] lose our faith”.

Furthermore, the preacher created a pattern by opening each of his sermons with the assertion that “the Bible is the inspired word of God” and also urging, “Let us study the Bible. For if we do so, we will find rest for our souls.” He then proceeds each time to give a background on why he chose the theme, “My Song in the Night”, before

beginning the day’s sermon. With this consistent pattern, Pipim seemingly aimed to elucidate, remind, and convince the audience that their interpretation and understanding of all they hear from him should be on account of biblical tenets.

He also employed *scesis onomaton* - use of synonymous phrases or sentences to emphasise an idea. The sermons under study were suffused with this rhetorical device. Pipim expressed certain ideas in variegated nuances through synonymous sentences. For example, when speaking about Jesus’ assurance to Peter that he had prayed for him, Pipim said, “Before he [Peter] failed, God foresaw it. God saw it coming all along. He knew everything before it took place. He knows ahead of time of our failure. God foresees the spiritual failure of his children coming” (SKP1, 2012, 31:19). It is apparent here that the speaker tried to convey an idea with synonymous sentences: the omniscience of God. The preacher, thereby, attempted to emphasise that Jesus’ assurance of having prayed for Peter is an indication of his foreknowledge that the disciple would later deny him three times, and that, as a lesson, the audience should draw some respite from the fact that no temptation or trial coming their way catches God unawares.

Meanwhile, Pipim also deployed this rhetorical device to clarify that Jesus provided a preemptive help for Peter: “Even before Peter knew it, Jesus had already prayed for him. Long before Peter failed, Jesus had already prayed for him. Even before Satan planned to cause Peter failure, Jesus had already prayed for him” (SKP4, 2012, 23:30). This appears to be an indirect invitation by the speaker for the audience to ensconce themselves in the assurance that Jesus intercedes on their behalf before and in the midst of their trials and temptations.

Using the case of Apostle Peter, Pipim also expounded on the responsibility of spiritual leaders and their susceptibility to trials and temptations. In his attempt to encourage all leaders- be it in the home, school, church and workplace- the preacher applied *scesis onomaton*. He affirmed that “God knows the heavy load the leaders carry. He knows the stress and strains on his faithful workers and leaders. Therefore, he [has] prayed for them.” (SKP4, 2012, 27:58). “Heavy load” and “stress and strains” have similar denotations, and are, indeed, used complementarily. The synonymous sentences would, most probably, help the audience to comprehend the preacher’s point on the burden of responsibility on leaders better.

Another device used is *hypophora*- a rhetorical device in which the speaker raises questions and, unlike rhetorical questions, goes on to proffer answers to them. Using this rhetorical device, Pipim would often put forward questions and offer assertive answers to them immediately. For instance, the preacher said, “He [Jesus] prayed for Peter’s faith not to fail. The question is: Did Peter’s faith fail? Yes, to some extent, we would say. Does it mean Christ’s prayer wasn’t answered? No. Is there a contradiction or embarrassment in Christ’s prayer there? Not at all.” (SKP5, 2012, 20:30). At other times, the rhetorical device is used to make certain plausible speculations. Here is one instance of this in Pipim’s messages:

Why was Peter singled out for prayer? Perhaps, it is because, though Peter was not perfect, his heart was in the right place, and Christ saw potentials in him despite all his flaws. It could be that Christ saw dangers of Peter’s overconfidence and self-trust more prominent than all the others [disciples]. It could also be he prayed for him because of his natural leadership abilities. And whenever there is a leader, Satan always targets them more than any other person. (SKP4, 2012, 27:23).

In all, Pipim deployed hypophora as a teaser to set the minds of the audience in anticipation of what was to come. This explains why the speaker quizzed his audience quite often when delivering his sermons, intermittently asking questions such as “what is the message here?” and “what is the lesson for us today?”

Framing Patterns in Samuel Pipim’s “My Song in the Night”

From the outset, Pipim presented himself to the audience as a penitent sinner who had suffered loss as a repercussion of his moral fall. In the background to his first sermon, “The Theme of My Song”, Pipim offered a recap of his moral fall and how, as consequences, he voluntarily resigned and lost his ministerial license as a pastor of the S.D.A church, subjected himself to church discipline and withdrew from public engagements afterwards. This experience, which he repeatedly referred to as his “dark night”, had cast no small blemish on his reputation as a spiritual leader and speaker. On this basis, it could be adduced that Pipim entered this particular rhetorical act with a negative preliminary or initial *ethos*. It is, hence, conceivable that Pipim’s decision to talk about this experience as early as he did was a deliberate strategy to sway the audience to begin the rhetorical situation with him on a “clean slate”; for them to see him as sincere and trustworthy despite the trails of bad reputation that had followed him into the rhetorical situation.

Pipim explored certain rhetorical strategies to redefine the fall narrative and frame an improved- if not totally positive- image of himself to the audience. The preacher framed himself as a restored messenger with a new ministry. He conceded to the audience time and time again that his moral fall was a failure on his part, but that he had experienced the forgiving, transforming and restorative grace of Jesus Christ. According to him, he had to withdraw from the public glare during this experience in order to learn painful, yet important, lessons from his failure. He described his recess as “the dark” he had to endure, and lessons learned as “the songs” the Lord taught him. He stated that these lessons have given him the impetus to chart the course of a new ministry: “And for the remaining of my life, I intend to share these songs with the world. I do so in the hope that my songs will encourage, instruct, and inspire those who are being tried in the fires of trials and temptations” (SKP3, 2012, 03:07). Pipim revealed to the audience that the public admittance of his sin had given many people the courage to approach and confide in him their own struggles. He also appealed to the audience to use their own experiences

to warn and encourage those in the continual danger of temptations, just as he was doing. Through this, the speaker establishes himself as one who knows the battle with failure quite well, and, thus, invites the audience to trust him as an experienced guide in the venture of gaining victory over sin and other forms of failure.

By and large, Pipim constructed a relatable *ethos* through the thrust and content of his sermons - God’s grace in the face of human sins. Pipim alluded to his failure as a practical example of the forgiving, transformative and restorative grace of Jesus Christ. In effect, the audience would more likely be prompted to evaluate the preacher’s failure on the basis of their understanding of such Christian values as forgiveness, mercy and grace. Members of the audience who may have held a condemnatory view about the preacher’s personality before his sermons would probably be persuaded to re-evaluate or altogether change their stance after his rhetorical act. Furthermore, Pipim displayed a profound knowledge of the subject of discourse and an expertise in biblical exegesis, which is bound to improve his credibility (at least his competence if not his character) in the minds of the audience during the sermons. He constantly referred to Bible passages to provide logical evidences to his views, and sometimes deconstructed the Greek origin of words or phrases in those passages in order to give the audience a better understanding of the message.

Notably, in framing his *ethos* within the selected post-fall messages, Pipim forged a connection with biblical characters in the context of their sins and subsequent victory. He mentioned that despite their stints with failure, “many Bible characters refused to quit. Moses refused to quit. David refused to quit. Elijah, even when he once prayed for death, refused to quit... And do you know, the speaker you are listening to also chose not to quit” (SKP5, 2012, 37:03). Particularly, the preacher drew affinity with Peter in temptation and triumph. In terms of temptation, Pipim declared: “Like the Apostle Peter, Satan has sifted me like wheat” (SKP6, 2012, 05:29); “In the context of my own spiritual failure, when I read Luke 21:31-32, I understood God speaking personally to me even as he did to Peter. I put myself in the shoes of Simon Peter...” (SKP2, 2012, 19:16). Yet, regarding triumph, the speaker enthused: “I chose not to quit. And like Peter, I have returned” (SKP5, 2012, 39:23); “And another legacy of Peter, he left two epistles- two letters, two books [of the Bible] - for the strengthening of his brethren. That is why, by the way, I’m writing. That is why I will be preaching” (SKP6, 2012, 46:26). By implicitly equating his own experience of sin with those of revered characters in the Bible, the speaker seems intent on demonstrating to the audience that no one is actually beyond the possibility of falling.

Furthermore, Pipim attempted to persuade the audience by framing certain observations and counsels in a reasoning triad, making a “them-me-you” progression. He would connect a particular phenomenon, first, to Bible characters (them); then move on to connect that phenomenon to himself (me); before finally bringing in the audience (you). For instance, when talking about the inevitability of Christians facing trials and temptations, the preacher asserted, “A shaking is soon to take place. It happened to Peter. It happened to every Bible character. It happened to me. It will happen to you” (SKP2,

2012, 11:46). Another instance of this is his submission that “we must watch and prayer always. For if we are left to ourselves, we would fall. It happened to the Apostle Peter. It happened to the disciples. It happened to every bible character. And yes, it happened to me. And it will happen to you” (SKP3, 2012). Invariably, this framing pattern allows the speaker to build credibility in the minds of the audience to such extent that they can take a cue from his own experience in the same way they would pay attention to the experiences of Bible characters.

In more than a few instances, meanwhile, Pipim employed the pronoun “us” (as well as “we”) as a fusing alternative to the pronoun-splinters of “me” and “you” in his often used “them-me-you” reasoning triad. This is discernible in his statement that “what happened to Peter can happen to *us*. If he could fall, *we* could also fall. And if he could come back, then, anyone of *us* can also come back after a spiritual failure. There is hope for *us* all” (SKP2, 2012, 33:44). In another instance, he affirmed, “If Peter could speak of the matchless grace of God to the sinners, then, there is hope for every one of *us*” (SKP7, 2012, 01:00:48). The use of “us” (and “we”) helps the speaker to establish a common ground with the audience. This is an indication that Pipim adopted what Branham and Pearce (1996) have termed the inclusive conversational frame, which is described as a rhetorical strategy used by a rhetor to create “intimations of intimacy and identification” with his or her audience, toward obscuring “the hierarchical relationship between speakers and listeners” (p. 426). Indeed, Pipim’s clear identification with his audience could only further bolster his credibility before them.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed how Samuel Pipim, a Christian communicator, used his *ethos*, after experiencing a damaged reputation, in framing a “loss and restoration” rhetoric. Pipim effectively utilised rhetorical devices including metaphor, repetition, anaphora, scesis onomaton and hypophora in his attempt to persuade his audience on the thrust of his messages. By constantly drawing parallels between his own experience of sin and those of known Bible characters, the speaker relied on a “borrowed” or derived *ethos* to frame his image and improve his credibility in the minds of the audience. He conscientiously held himself and his damaged reputation, as it were, as an epitome of instruction to the audience, thereby bolstering his *logos* and *pathos* through his *ethos* and vice versa. To a reasonable extent, one can conclude that the speaker in his rhetorical act adopted an inclusive conversational frame- in line with the postulations of Branham and Pearce (1996)- to persuasively move the audience, through the use of intimacy and identification signals, into seeing themselves as his “ostensible partners”; to enact a message of determination and responsibility; and also, if only latently, to reconstruct his public identity that had suffered damaged.

Whereas Pipim began “My Song in the Night” rhetorical situation with a negative *ethos*, he eventually finished with a much improved- if not totally positive- *ethos*. This, perhaps, lends some credence to Aristotle’s assertion that persuasion through *ethos* can be “achieved by what the speaker says [within the rhetorical situation]” and not solely

“by what people think of his character before he begins to speak” (Roberts, 2008, p. 11). It is concluded, therefore, that a Christian communicator with a damaged reputation before entering a rhetorical act can be as effective as one with a good reputation in the endeavor of persuasion; in as much as he or she is able to mindfully take “advantage” of his negative *ethos* to genuinely frame a positive message from his or her personal experience.

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Authors

Samuel Okere, Ph.D is an Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication Babcock University, Nigeria, His area of research interest publishing

Oluwafemi T. Olomjobi is a Doctoral student, Department of Mass Communication Babcock University, Nigeria