FUNCTIONS OF NARRATIVE GENRES FOR LIVED RELIGION

Tuija Hovi, Ph.D., Academy of Finland: postdoctoral researcher
Åbo Akademi University, Finland
tuija.hovi@abo.fi

Today, scholars of religion talk about *lived religion* (e.g. McGuire 2008) while focusing on everyday life and personal experience. Analysing Ingrian memorates as a genre of oral tradition, Lauri Honko indicated that "[t]hrough them we grasp *the living essence* of folk belief". Honko presented his role-theoretic idea of the reciprocal relationship between collective oral tradition and supernatural experiences in the very first issue of the *Journal of the Folklore Institute* in 1964. The article "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs" was an inspiration to my own doctoral research (2007) in comparative religion, which dealt with functions of personal narrative for religious experience, such as conversion, healing and providence within the Neo-charismatic Christian tradition of the late twentieth century.

In this paper, I will present the results of my study, which combined psychology of religion and folkloristics in the qualitative analysis of empirical ethnographic material compiled in a local Neo-charismatic congregation. Personal narrative is discussed as a representation of the collective tradition of a religious community. It is a socially learned way to interpret and share religious experience and thus construct and confirm the faith, both individually and collectively. In Neo-charismatic tradition, everyday speech draws on literal (biblical) tradition as well as on socially shared narrative genres like ritual testimonies, prophecies, sermons and casual personal narratives of co-believers. The faith-creative power of these stories can be found in their performative utterances, evaluative structures and non-communication.

Honko, Lauri 1964. "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs" - Journal of the Folklore Institute 1:1/2, 5-19.

Hovi, Tuija 2007. Usko ja kerronta. Arkitodellisuuden narratiivinen rakentuminen uskonliikkeessä. [Faith and Narration. The Narrative Construction of Everyday Reality in the Faith Movement.] Annales Universitatis Turkuensis, C 254. Turku: University of Turku.

McGuire, Meredith B. 2008. Lived Religion. Faith and Practice in Everyday Life. Oxford: Oxford University Press.