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Beyond Witnessing

A New Way of Humanising the World



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EDITION

Chapter One

Introduction

In this research work, we intend to take our exploration to a level of what we choose to call *beyond (prophetic) witnessing* – a rather new way of humanizing our world today. As it is the case, a true praxis of ‘witnessing beyond’ is what one sees clearly in the personality of Jesus Christ – who is truly God and Man (prototype-human). His entire life on earth was a clear encapsulation of how to free human persons from the shackles of slavery of ‘political entanglement of playing guitar while Rome is on fire’ (quipping with distributing bread and handouts – while the two-third of world-humans are dying of hunger and poverty). Christ’s mission of ‘humanizing’ the human world was clear from the beginning. In other words to be truly Christ was to truly bear witness to the Father *par excellence* – and that was clearly his mission. As he said, “For I have come down from Heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me (Jn. 6.38). *A fortiori* not to witness is to be ‘un-christ-like’ which would simply be a contradiction in terms – meaning in essence that this quality or ‘un-christ-like-ness’ would simply be inimically to the personality of Jesus Christ, to his quintessence as God come to our human earth and abode. In the same vein, to be a Christian and not to witness for Christ on earth would be truly an aberration of ‘the Christ-like-ness of our truly human image and likeness that has it’s fullness in the personality of Christ. Thus in the personality of Christ we notice that witnessing permeates and encompasses every aspect of his life. In sum, *to be Christ (Christ – ian)* is to truly witness to the truth of the Gospel and it’s entire implications in concrete (Luke 9: 23–24; Matt 10:38–39), but much more than that; because the Christ of witnessing was equally the Christ that devoted much more time in true, silence and devotional prayer (Luke. 5:16).

In other words, we see in the personality of Christ, Faith – prayer – life (*Glaude*, German word for ‘Believe’) being realized in Hope (*Hoffnung*, German Word for ‘Hope’) – hope as promised as concretely in the action of giving (*Liebe*, German word for ‘Love’). These three qualities: *Glaude* – Believe (you pray as you believe), *Hoffnung* – Hope (on what is not) and Love – *Liebe* (love others as yourself...including your enemy} are essential qualities for witnessing and living a life beyond witnessing in concrete as encapsulated in the personality of Jesus Christ and as a way of humanising the human world

truly today beyond the shenanigan of ‘world-politics of humanitarianism’ that sneers at true love of witnessing and witnessing really *beyond*.

In this sense we have to realize here from the onset that this work is not another ‘manifesto’ on liberation theology nor does it intend to be one. But an effort in reclaiming the quintessence of what true witnessing is in the light of combining ‘true activism with contemplativism’ – a clear case of Mother Teresa of Calcutta as against the modern and postmodern day ‘dry-politics of humanitarianism and mere *philanthropism*’.

And so in this work we intend to accomplish our pursuance via Seven Chapters. In the first Chapter we intend to state the case of the matter in question – the disenchantment of separating action from prayers or prayers from action: active life from contemplative life and vice-versa.

1.1 Stating the case

The same devotional attitude of Jesus in the Scriptures was emulated and lived by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, as she writes, “If we pray – we will believe. If we believe – we will love. If we love – we will serve. Only then will we put our love for God into action, through service to Christ in the distressing disguise of the poor.”⁴ In the same vein Benedict XVI attests that there was no clear separation between the life of prayer, loving ones neighbor vis-à-vis Charity in the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. In other words in her, just like Christ we see contemplative and active lives brought together in one harmony, as should be the case today. The Pope argued,

Die Selige Teresa von Kalkutta ist ein sehr offenkundiges Beispiel dafür, dass die Gott im Gebet gewidmete Zeit dem tatsächlichen Wirken der Nächstenliebe nicht nur nicht schadet, sondern im Wirklichkeit dessen unerschöpfliche Quelle ist.⁵

In light of the forgoing, this Christ-like attitude of Mother Teresa of Calcutta remains a big challenge for today’s humanitarian and philanthropic engagements. And most of all to religious bodies and congregations today that seem to have left the inner life of prayer which have always served the backbone of the Church’s

4 ANGELO D. SCOLOZZI (ed.), *MOTHER TERESA, Thirsting for God: A yearbook of prayers, Meditations, and Anecdotes*, (St. Anthony Messenger Press), Cincinnati, 2000, p. 86. See, ROSWITHA KORNPORST (Hg.), *Freude ist Gebet: Worte von Mutter Teresa*, Kevelaer, 2010.

5 Benedikt XVI, *Mit dem heiligen Vater durch das Jahr; Ein Lesebuch*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rom), Augsburg, 2008, p.154. English literally translation: The Blessed Teresa of Calcutta is a very obvious example of the time devoted to God in prayer, the actual work of charity, not only does no harm, but in fact is the inexhaustible source.

internal renewal ‘to serving table only today.’ The consequence of such negligence:

Much disorder has come into the world through the neglect of family prayer and prayer in religious communities. Such neglect may destroy holiness, the very fruit of prayer. Jesus said, “wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples when they were together in prayer with Mary. Fidelity to prayer is the beginning of holiness.⁶

This reason for this stance argues Benedict XVI is equally for the fact that,

Wer betet, vertut nicht seine Zeit, selbst wenn die Situation alle Anzeichen der Dringlichkeit besitzt und einzig zum Handeln zu treiben scheint. Die Frömmigkeit schwächt nicht den Kampf gegen die Armut oder sogar das Elend des Nächsten.⁷

As it’s clearly the case, it’s only through the eyes of prayerful devotion that one can really see the poor as Christ really saw them without serving one’s stomach in the name of serving the poor or even in some extreme cases ‘serving against the poor’ in the name of serving the poor as times has been the case with some modern humanitarian organizations today. In this last instance one recalls some allegations that some NGOs have been accused by the Press of using their means of supplying food to the poor and war-torn countries as opportunity to equally push in arms thereby escalating the conflict to the level of no end in sight.⁸ The foregoing attitudes are actually real contradiction that smacks of hypocrisy in the light of true ‘witnessing to the poor’. In other words it is only via a life ordered and anchored on true and sincere life of prayer that a true and honest witnessing to the poor would be most ennobling. And within such purview of life that one would be able to:

Greet the children, the poor, the suffering, and the lonely with a happy smile. Give them not only your care but also your heart. Kindness has converted more people than zeal or eloquence. Our service to others should be kind, sweet, humble, and unspoiled by selfishness. Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness.⁹

How would such a ‘spirited’ gesture be possible today, if not via a life that is anchored on prayer and devotion as the stepping-stone to true witnessing? Such

6 ANGELO D. SCOLOZZI, p. 171.

7 Benedikt XVI, *Loc. cit.* *English literally translation*: “Those who pray are not wasting their time, even if it seems the situation appears desperate and seems to call for action. Piety does not weaken the fight against poverty, or even the plight of our neighbor.

8 Cf. Prof. Daniel Hellinger, *Humanitarian Action, NGOs and Privatization of the Military* in, http://www.eisf.eu/resources/library/hum_action_mil_privatisation.pdf, consulted on 05/09/2012.

9 ANGELO D. SCOLOZZI, p. 172.

a life is in *au courant* with the truth of our Christian baptismal challenge. A challenge that becomes more obvious and demanding in a postmodern era of razzmatazz-publicity of Charity via the media and cheap gaining of public attention by flashing one's offer in the *publicum*. An attitude that smacks of the Christian attitude of 'not-letting-your right hand know what your left is doing' (Matt. 6:3), thereby exposing the poor perhaps to disrepute and dishonor of their human integrity.

The contrary of the above should be the case. Thus true demeanor of *witnessing beyond*, is the challenging case of one of the greatest Christian activists of our time, Martin Luther King (Jr) who reflects the same spirit of Christ in combining devotional prayer with a true and concrete activism – a case of 'living the prayer-life in the concrete existential human *sitz-im-leben*. He writes,

When you are aware that you are a symbol, it causes you to search your soul constantly – to go through this job of self-analysis, to see if you live up to the high and noble principles that people surround you with, and to try at all times to keep the gulf between the public self and the private self at a minimum. One of the prayers that I prayed to God everyday was: "O God, help me to see myself in my true perspective. Help me, O God, to see that I'm just a symbol of a movement. Help me to see that I'm the victim of what the Germans called a *Zeitgeist* and that something was getting ready to happen in history."¹⁰

It was true prayer lived out in the concrete existential *facticity*¹¹ of the *human person integrally and adequately* considered that was behind, and at the basis of the empowerment of Martin Luther King's (Jr) activism and success story of struggle for the poor, poverty, and the marginalized in the American society and by extension in the entire world where the poor and weak were under operation.

10 CLAYBORNE CARSON, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York, 2001, p. 105.

11 *Facticity* is a word that was frequently in the mouth and writings of most existential philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger. It essentially refers to the 'essential fact and givenness in ones situation.' The deployment of the word here is not used in the atheistic sense as Jean-Paul Sartre or most atheistic existentialists used, in which 'human freedom' becomes a 'thrust' on the neck of the human person, that he or she cannot not but be free (*condemned to be free* – strictly the expression of the existentialists). The use here is only to refer to the existential, marginal situation of the minority in the USA like extreme racism in which the blacks found themselves during the time of Martin Luther King (jr) – a kind of Albatross of situation for the people then. Of course this situation was greatly overcome with the great declaration of equal right for all in the American Constitution. Narrowly in this use it could be seen to be similar to the use of the existentialists, but only similar but not wholly to the use of the Atheistic existentialists. The difference being that for the atheistic existentialists this situation of the human freedom was simple 'an albatross', but in the case of the situation of the blacks in the USA then they did overcome it with the constitutional recognition of their right and equality before the law.