

Carte Blanche for 'Witness'

Developments in the Terminology and Theology
within the World Council of Churches
and the Roman Catholic Church

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"'Witness' is a fashionable theological word" (1).

R. Schippers 1938

"A frequent use of the word 'witness' and its derivatives belongs to the ecclesiastical and ecumenical fashion of today" (2).

Hendrikus Berkhof 1963

I. Introduction

If it is true that the witness terminology is fashionable, then it is also clear that the fashion trend is not quickly outdated (3). From the International Mission Conference in Tambaram in 1938 (*The Witness of the Church*) to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver in 1983 (*Witnessing in a Divided World*) the witness terminology plays a prominent role. The question could be asked if the frequent use of the terminology is a proper measure of its theological importance (4). The question we want to deal with here is in which documents of the WCC and the Vatican the witness terminology plays an important role theologically. Also we will indicate how the use of the witness terminology developed historically from 1948 to 1985. For details and general background I must refer the reader to my study *Getuigen in Missionair en Oecumenisch Verband. Een studie over het begrip 'getuigen' in documenten van de Wereldraad van Kerken, de Rooms-katholieke Kerk en de Evangelicalen, in de periode 1948-1985*, Leiden-Utrecht, 1986 (5), written on behalf of the Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (Leiden-Utrecht, the Netherlands).

Even if the focus of the present article is determined by a theological interest, the method is literary-historical. I will concentrate on authoritative documents on a world level and analyze a number of passages with a view to the significance of the witness terminology, i.e. the words 'witness', 'witnessing', 'testimony', 'testify', etc., in those passages. The question is whether the **specific** possibilities of the terminology are employed, whatever the congruence with biblical usage. The guiding principle is whether the witness terminology is employed to say something that could not otherwise or not as clearly be said. If, for example, 'witness' is used as a synonym for 'mission', then it is evident that 'witness' is an important concept, but why should one speak of a 'theology of **witness**' instead of a 'theology of **mission**'? (6)

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2. World Council of Churches

In the document **Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the World Council of Churches** (St. Andrews 1960) (7) the word 'witness' comes for the first time into prominence within the World Council of Churches. It is contrasted to 'proselytism' that is understood to be a corruption of 'Christian witness'. The document states:

Such corruption of the Christian witness indicates lack of confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit, lack of respect for the nature of man and lack of recognition of the true character of the Gospel (§214).

The word 'witness' is used to describe a true obedience to the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20). A Christian should witness to Christ both personally and in the community in which he lives. "Witness in word and deed is the essential mission and responsibility of every Christian and of every Church" (§213). 'Witness' is in essence a missionary concept, used here in the context of a 'free mutual witness' between the member churches of the World Council of Churches. This document, that received approval at the Third Assembly in New Delhi in 1961, was also a factor in facilitating the membership of several large Eastern Orthodox churches in the World Council of Churches.

In the preparation for the Third Assembly in New Delhi Visser 't Hooft's study **The Pressure of Our Common Calling** (London 1959) played an important role. He attempts to provide 'witness' with a biblical foundation by appealing to *kêrussein*, *euaggelizesthai* and *marturein* as three representative words describing the 'ministry of the word'. The influence of this study is partially evident in the documents of the assembly. A distinction is made between 'witness', 'service', and 'unity'. In the report of section I **Witness** (8) it is stated that the task of Christian witness is to point to Christ as the true light of the world. The church must be aware of the fact that she can only witness to him faithfully 'in penitence and in humble obedience to the voice of the living God" (§4). Witness is primarily understood to be the task of proclaiming the gospel. At the end of the document, however, it receives a broader meaning:

The command to witness to Christ is given to every member of his Church. It is a commission given to the whole Church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world (§28).

Mission cannot limit itself to one aspect, but requires a 'comprehensive approach':

The wholeness of the Gospel demands a corporate expression, since it concerns every aspect of men's lives (§29).

This entails an emphasis on the role of the laity in mission:

It is obvious that, if the Christian witness is to penetrate into all those areas where the work of the world is carried on, it must be carried there by laymen (§31).

In the first part of the report, however, 'witness' is used in a different, more theocentric sense. God is the real witness:

God is his own witness; that is to say, God has been and is at work authenticating his own message to men (§8).

The content of the testimony relates to all of God's activity in history, especially in Jesus Christ:

God continues to bear witness to the Son, as the only Lord and Saviour of all men. In the apostolic witness, coming to us in Scripture in the Spirit-filled Church, God gives us the foundation of all subsequent witness. In the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, God down the ages of the Church has drawn near to men in Jesus Christ and born witness to his own faithfulness. In the faithful preaching of his Word, God himself bears testimony to the truth (§9).

God is not only seen as the origin of Christian witness. God actually perpetuates this witness. And the very existence of the church is "a constant witness - in silence as it were - to the reality of God's dealing with men in Jesus Christ" (§9). The emphasis here is not on the fact that the church is missionary in essence, but that the church witnesses just by being there. 'Witnessing' in this context means as much as 'being a sign of God's reality'. The report seems to be influenced here by elements from Johannine thought, especially 1 John 5:6-12. Paragraph 10 suggests this in stating that the task of witness can be undertaken in joy in keeping with the tradition of the church:

We can speak as those who know in our lives that 'he who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his own heart' (§10).

Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Church are also said to witness, but continually the formulations are notably theocentric:

Through his Church God witnesses to his purpose to gather all nations, peoples and tongues, all sorts and conditions of men into his city (§15).

In the report **Witness** we encounter consequently a twofold use of the word 'witness'. First of all there is the witness of God, which means as much as God's-being-in-the-world. Secondly, witness signifies the task of the church and of the laity to proclaim the gospel.

At the conference of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in Mexico City in 1963 'witness' is employed as a comprehensive concept describing the missionary and evangelistic task of the church. The attempt to restrict 'witness' to proclamation of the gospel, as proposed by Visser 't Hooft, does not succeed. 'Witness' would seem to denote the same as 'mission' and partially replaces it, perhaps due to misgivings by some of the younger churches on the latter. Instead of 'mission' there is "Witness in Six Continents". It is not necessary to be sent out. Witness can occur wherever a Christian happens to be.

Surprisingly the witness terminology disappears from the vocabulary of the World Council of Churches in the following period. Only in the report **Confessing Christ Today** (9) of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi 1975 is witness again specifically used when 'confessing Christ' is equated with 'Christian witness'.

Generally speaking the use of the witness terminology in authoritative documents of the World Council of Churches on a world level can be divided into the following periods: after a period of relative prosperity (1948-1963), of which New Delhi 1961 was the high point, the witness terminology fades into the background (1964-1979), to which Nairobi 1975 is an exception, before recently resurfacing (1980 to present). At the World Conference on mission and evangelism in Melbourne in 1980 'witness' appears in the title of the report of section III **The Church Witnesses to the Kingdom**

(10) and at the last general assembly of the World Council of Churches (Vancouver 1983) a section was devoted to **Witnessing in a Divided World** (11). In the early nineteeneighties 'witness' becomes a general denominator for the life and work of a Christian. A certain emphasis falls on the practical aspect, what in the Roman Catholic tradition is called 'testimonium vitae'. Reference is also made to martyrdom as an ultimate consequence of the Christian manner and style of life. Under the influence of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church the idea of "common witness" also receives attention (Cf. 4 below).

Another new development is the notion of witness in dialogue with believers of other living religions. Witness is not seen here as something 'from us to them' but as 'mutual witness' (12). In the passage of time the witness has become increasingly modest, moving from a 'proclaimer' to a 'listener'. In this connection three elements and especially their sequence in the description of witness provided in the report **Witnessing in a Divided World** are significant:

To be a witness means to live the life of Christ in the place where we are; it means listening and seeking to understand the faith and perspectives of our neighbour; it means speaking about Jesus the Christ as the Life of the World (§2).

Being present and listening precede proclamation of the gospel here. The triad is not further elaborated.

Even if 'witness' in the documents of Melbourne 1980 and Vancouver 1983 designates matters of importance for the church and for Christians, it nevertheless is used as a general denominator, under which a variety of topics can be treated. The specific possibilities of the witness terminology are not exploited as e.g. in **Witness** (New Delhi 1961).

3. Vatican

The official Roman Catholic usage of the witness terminology is more consistent and less ambiguous than that of the World Council of Churches. That does not mean that 'witness' is not a variegated concept. Nevertheless, the heart of the matter is clear: 'witness' means leading a good Christian life. This is evident both in the documents of Vatican II and in the apostolic exhortation **Evangelii Nuntiandi** from 1975, on which we will focus here.

In the documents of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (13) 'testimonium vitae' is a favourite expression. Even if this "living witness" is not a subject of extensive reflection, the intention is clearly a life of faith and love (14). Witness intends to actualize the presence of God, of Christ or of the church in the world. It is directed to "the nations". The task of witnessing is given to all Christians, especially to the laity. As is clear in the decree on the apostolate of the laity, **Apostolicam actuositatem**, the lay person is considered capable of penetrating - from the inside - into the world "like leaven". Works of love and mercy provide a striking testimony to Christian life (15). A supreme witness is attributed to the religious (16) and to the martyrs (17).

'Witness' is a concept of mission theology. In the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity **Ad Gentes** three aspects are distinguished: 1) Christian witness, 2) preaching the gospel and gathering God's people together, and 3) forming the Christian community. A precise definition of Christian witness is not provided. Christian witness and preaching the gospel are seen as two distinct aspects of mission.

Originally the section on Christian mission bore the title "De preambulis evangelizationis". The bishops were dissatisfied with this because witness in their view must be seen as an actual part of mission and not as a prelude (pré-mission) (18). This latter view did not, however, completely disappear from the document. It is stated, for example, that when there is no possibility of expounding the gospel directly and immediately, then "missionaries can and must at least bear witness to Christ by charity and by works of mercy ("saltem caritatis et beneficentiae testimonium Christi praeberere") Thus they will prepare the way for the Lord and make Him present in some manner" (AG 6) (19).

In the fundamental dogmatic constitution on the church **Lumen Gentium** witness is rooted in the prophetic office of Christ:

Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the kingdom of His Father by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until His full glory is revealed. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity. For that very purpose He made them His witnesses and gave them understanding of the faith and the grace of speech (cf. Acts 2:17-18; Apoc. 19:10), so that the power of the gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life (LG 35) (20).

The laity are further encouraged to join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith (21).

The above conception of 'witness' in the sense of leading a life of faith and love as distinguished from proclamation of the gospel is essential for Vatican II. This does not mean that 'witness' or 'testimony' is not to be found in other contexts. Mention is made of a 'testimonium verbi' (22). And the importance of bearing a "unanimous witness before the nations" is emphasized (23). There is, however, one other important, divergent use of 'witness'. The bishops (whose primary task is preaching the gospel) are referred to as "witnesses".

Episcopi in communione cum Romano Pontifice docentes ab omnibus tamquam divinae et catholicae veritatis testes venerandi sunt (LG 25).

'Witnesses' are here the bearers of highest authority, who are more or less in possession of the truth (24).

Ten years after the completion of the Second Vatican Council the apostolic exhortation **Evangelii Nuntiandi** ("De evangelizatione in mundo huius temporis", 8 December 1975) was issued by Pope Paul VI. This document is based upon the prior bishops' synod on evangelization in the world of today (25). The exhortation pays much attention to the witness of Christians (the laity) in the world.

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness ('testificatio'). Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their

hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine (EN 21).

The emphasis seems to be more on the presence of Christians in the world than on doing good deeds, even if the latter is implicitly intended. The pope clearly rejects the notion that witness must be seen as a prelude to mission.

Atque huiusmodi testificatio iam silens proclamatio est, sed fortis sane et efficax, Boni Nuntii (EN 21).

To be sure witness must eventually be supplemented with oral proclamation of the gospel (26). Preaching and the witness of a true Christian life "given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal" (EN 41) are clearly placed next to each other as two important aspects of mission. Pope Paul VI quotes also from one of his own speeches (27):

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses (EN 41).

In the speech quoted here this preference is derived from the need of modern man for transcendence and spirituality. The exhortation accentuates also that the believer is always confronted with the question: Do you yourself believe what you are saying? Do you experience what you believe? In witness the nearness of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit becomes visible for a world that can no longer believe on the basis of authority, but can only be convinced by experience. The emphasis here in relation to Vatican II has shifted somewhat from the ethical dimension of witness to the spiritual dimension, even if one must be wary of playing them off against each other.

4. The Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (28)

In the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, established in 1965, serious attention is paid to the theme of 'witness'. In 1970 the Working Group presented the document **Common Witness and Proselytism** and in 1981 **Common Witness**. As a result of these studies 'common witness' has become a topic of discussion in the World Council of Churches.

The document **Common Witness and Proselytism** has its roots in the study **Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the WCC** (1960) discussed above. As the title indicates the emphasis lies primarily on the common bond and on the necessity of a common witness to the world. In so many words it is admitted that the term 'witness' was chosen because of the possibilities it offers for **broad** reflection on the issues of concern. The ultimate issue is "to reveal Christ as the true light which shines for every man" (§5) (29). This can occur in worship, in serving one's neighbour, or in preaching the gospel. Witness is a comprehensive activity. It is rooted in the great commandment and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Here we see the tendency, which will become stronger in **Common Witness**, to include all sorts of cooperation, even what is not specifically missionary, under the denomination 'common witness'.

At the end of the document **Common Witness** (1980) (30) the reader is assured that 'common witness' is not an abstract theological concept. "It is very much more than friendly ecumenical relations" (§63). At any rate various forms of cooperation between Christians are included in 'common witness'. It could be argued that 'common witness' is used here more as an ecumenical than as a missionary category. The document represents a form of 'inductive theology'. The results of a broad survey of what can

be understood as 'common witness' are brought together in a concise but often complex document. Practically everything that is linked to '(common) witness' in documents of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches is included here. The question then becomes what is the actual content of the surplus value attributed to the term 'common witness'. I would suggest that the surplus value can be summarized in the thesis: **Christian witness is common witness.**

Support for this thesis is to be found in the most theological section of the document "Christian Witness - Common Witness". There it is stated that witness has its common ground in Jesus Christ. One witnesses to Christ, even if Christ himself can be called a witness. In the subsection, "The Source of Witness", the trinitarian dimension of witness is developed. Christian witness has its source in God, who witnesses to his Son by sending him in the world. Christ is in turn the true and faithful witness (Apoc. 1:5; 3:14) of God who seals his testimony and as it were completes it in his martyrdom. The Holy Spirit is also called a witness of Christ and makes Christian witness possible:

The Spirit comes upon the faithful and makes them also witnesses of Christ (Acts 1:8) (§19).

The Spirit establishes communion both with Christ and among Christians. Only on the basis of this fellowship is witness possible:

We must encounter Christ to be his witnesses, to be able to say what we know about him (cf. I John 1:3-4; 4:14). It is the Holy Spirit who enables the faithful to meet Christ, to experience him. Believers are led to witness to their faith before humankind, because the Spirit witnesses to Jesus in their hearts (John 15:16-17; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6) (§19).

The dimension of communion/encounter with Christ receives great emphasis. Whether this is to be attributed totally to the Roman Catholic contribution (cf. **Evangelii Nuntiandi**) cannot be established with certainty. The fact remains that the 'spiritual' dimension, if I may so call it, is seen to be the source and even the essence of witness. One could even say that Christian witness is an 'epiphany of Christ'.

In the subsection on the church it is stated that the church has received her commission to witness from Christ himself (cf. Acts 1:8):

The Church as a whole is the primary subject of Christian witness. As the Church is one body of many members, Christian witness is by its nature communitarian. When one of the faithful acts in individual witness this is related to the witness of the whole Christian community (§21).

Therefore a witness can never be viewed apart from the community of witnessing believers. Ultimately the church is one community, with one witness to one Lord. The implicit conclusion must be that witness, which is in essence **common** witness, must also be actualized as such. In addition the spiritual dimension receives emphasis: witness must be rooted in contemplation. One could even say that the church witnesses when she deepens her spiritual life and when she develops new life-styles that are a sign of the gospel. The life of the church must make her preaching credible. In this context the acceptance of martyrdom is pointed to as the norm for witness. Necessary is

a comprehensive witness, credible and full of love, given both by the Christian and the Church in every part of life (§26).

Witness is in essence a work of reconciliation that is directed towards expanding the community of the Spirit. It is clear that the gospel demands a common witness. The most crucial point of division is the separate celebration of holy communion (the eucharist).

The further sections of the study explore the difficulties in arriving at more co-operation. 'Common witness' includes the entire life and actions of Christians. Consequently it has become an extremely broad concept with little precise content. This explains to some extent the success of 'common witness'. This success does not limit itself to the documents discussed above. In the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Evangelicals the term appears as well. In a recent document the term is said to be used "in the even wider sense of any Christian activity which points to Christ, a usage made familiar by the documents **Common Witness and Proselytism ...** and **Common Witness ...**" (31).

5. Perspectives for a 'conciliar' theology of witness? A few comments

As the study by Martin Walton, **Witness in Biblical Scholarship : a survey of recent studies 1956-1980** (IIMO Research Pamphlet No. 15, Leiden 1986), teaches us, a comparison of biblical and 'conciliar' (32) usage of 'witness' can best begin with the New Testament word **marturein** and other words of the same root. I want to touch on a few points. First of all it must be said that generally little effort is made in the documents to provide 'witness' with a biblical foundation. In the documents of the World Council of Churches and of the Joint Working Group (Roman Catholic Church/World Council of Churches) 'witness' is used in a very broad and general sense, without adoption of the New Testament concentration on proclamation. In this respect only the document **Witness** (New Delhi 1961) is an exception and only partially so. Even if in the documents of the World Council of Churches and the Joint Working Group 'witness' sometimes has a more specific meaning, generally it must be stated that a broadening of the concept occurs in relation to New Testament usage. The Roman Catholic preference for 'testimonium vitae' has no support in New Testament usage of **marturein**. The most important point of convergence between conciliar and biblical usage is that witness is in essence a missionary concept. The expanded sense of 'witness' means that the usage can be based on more than just the 'marturein' texts (33).

Besides the Roman Catholic usage of 'testimonium vitae' (which can be considered a **topos** of Roman Catholic mission theology) and the description of the 'Missio Dei' in terms of witness (New Delhi 1961), of primary interest is the work of the Joint Working Group. I want especially to consider the use of 'witness' to describe the manner in which Christians and the church are to be present in the world. In **Common Witness and Proselytism** (1970) witness is founded upon the two great biblical commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind" and "you shall love your neighbour as yourself". Even though the document makes no explicit reference to such matters, this basis opens the possibility of doing justice to both the spiritual dimension (communion with God and Christ) and the ethical dimension (service to one's neighbour). Actually, in both the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church witness is often seen as an act of love. Another important point in the document, it seems to me, is the notion that witness is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:8). A full awareness of this would entail a modesty on the part of the witnessing Christian and a respect for the conviction of the other.

These elements return in **Common Witness** (1981). In addition we encounter a trinitarian foundation of witness and a development of the thesis that Christian witness is in essence common witness. Witness is rooted in communion with Christ and a witness

can never be viewed apart from the community of witnessing believers. Ultimately the church is one community, with a witness to one Lord. The terms 'common' and 'witness' are indissolubly linked to one another. In that respect 'common witness' is a concept that can serve as a guideline for both mission and ecumenism.

6. A fashion that makes history

In conclusion a few developments in the usage of the witness terminology will be indicated and a few tentative explanations for its success will be offered.

One of the most important developments, especially in the last decade, is that 'witness' has clearly become an ecumenical category in addition to a missionary category. That does not mean that in a study document like **Common Witness** 'witness' is stripped of its missionary focus. Nevertheless it is clear that forms of cooperation that are not specifically missionary are considered to be a sign of common witness. The shift can probably best be characterized as a shift from 'missionary' to '**ecumenical-missionary**' usage. The term 'common witness' has a great capacity to build bridges. Both in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches and that between the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelicals 'witness' appears to be a common denominator on which agreement can be reached.

A point of perhaps greater importance, especially in relation to the World Council of Churches is that the development in meaning of the witness terminology is extremely diffuse (34). It is very difficult to sketch a (linear) development and to provide explanations. Since the formation of the World Council of Churches 'witness' has been used to describe the entire life and work of the church and of Christians. As a result 'witness' is used to denote various aspects dependent on the context. It is an extremely elastic concept with a tendency to conform to the surroundings. Generalizing conclusions and declarations are almost always half truths.

Nevertheless something can be said in general on the reasons for the contemporary success of the witness terminology. One of the attractive aspects of the witness terminology is that it does not have aggressive connotations. In many documents the aspect of **modesty** is emphasized. Lesslie Newbigin even states: "... witness (**marturia**) is not associated with the strength, vigour, resourcefulness, etc., of the Church; it is associated with its weakness and vulnerability" (35). The witness adopts a vulnerable attitude and is open for the other. It is no coincidence that in recent years there has been talk of "mutual witness" between Christians and believers of other living religions. The success of 'witness' might be viewed as a symptom of the less dominant position of Christianity. The apostolic exhortation **Evangelii Nuntiandi** (1975) states that contemporary man prefers to listen to witnesses rather than to masters. It has become difficult to get people to believe something on authority. The witness can speak out of his own **experience** and is accountable for the same.

Another explanation for the success of such terms as 'witness' and 'common witness' must, it seems to me, be sought in the very broad missionary and ecumenical perspective which they offer. Practically all aspects of Christian life and action can be included. This explains why 'witness' is often used in titles of documents in which quite divergent matters are treated. The weakness of the concept 'common witness', i.e. the very broad and consequently diffuse meaning, is simultaneously its strength. It offers a framework for continued activity. 'Common witness' can be understood as one of the broadest denominators indicating the direction which the ecumenical movement should go.

Is it justified then, as is often done, to speak of the fashionableness or success of 'witness'? In a certain sense it is. I could point to the rise, decline and revival of 'witness' in the development of the World Council of Churches. At the same time such an approach is somewhat estranging. What is so striking about the frequent use of 'witness' in recent times? 'Mission', 'God', and 'Holy Spirit' are also used frequently without anyone suggesting that they are in fashion. Is the talk of fashion or success perhaps a sign of the fact that deep in one's heart one does not really consider 'witness' to be a central concept in Christian doctrine or mission theology? On the other hand 'witness' seems to have accumulated so much credit that it is not unthinkable that the fashion mode will become a mode of living, a sort of Christian way of life.

(This article was translated from Dutch by Martin Walton, Gouda).

Summary

Developments in the witness terminology and theology of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican.

The article summarizes some results of a study project on the 'witness'-theme. The main developments in the witness theology and shifts of meaning of 'witness' and derivatives, in the documents of the World Council of Churches, the Vatican, and the Joint Working Group in the period 1948-1985, are indicated. For instance, in recent documents (especially of the Joint Working Group) 'witness' is no longer a strict missiological category, but it also includes purely ecumenical activities. Finally, the writer tries to explain the success of the concept, especially in recent documents: perhaps more than 'evangelization' or 'mission' the concept evokes modesty from the Christian witness, who can also talk (and live) out of **experience**.

Notes

- 1) R. Schippers, *Getuigen van Jezus Christus in het Nieuwe Testament*, Franeker 1938, p. 201.
- 2) Hendrikus Berkhof, 'Witnesses', in: *Key Words of the Gospel. Bible Studies Delivered at the Mexico Meeting of the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism 1963*, by Hendrikus Berkhof and Philip Potter, London 1964, pp. 98-106, p. 96.
- 3) Besides the two quotes above, see Marc R. Spindler, 'Visa for Witness: a New Focus on the Theology of Mission and Ecumenism', in: *Mission Studies* 3(1986)51-60, p. 55: 'Actually the success of the concept of witness in the current ecumenical and missiological discussion annihilates our effort to restrict the rang of our study project (sc. on the witness theme)'. On the study project cf. n. 5.
- 4) Cf. Berkhof, 'Witnesses' (cf. n. 2): 'I wonder whether its verbal frequency is matched by its existential frequency or whether the first is a sign of the lack of the second' (p. 98).
- 5) IIMO Research Pamphlet No. 16 (= MOLENDIJK 1986). This study is part of a more extensive project. Already published: Martin Walton, *Witness in Biblical Scholarship. A Survey of Recent Studies 1956-1980*. (IIMO Research Pamphlet No. 15) Leiden, 1986. On the design of the programme see the "Preface" by Marc R. Spindler in WALTON 1986 and his article mentioned in note 3.

- 6) In the introduction to MOLENDIJK 1986 (cf. n. 5) several aspects of methodology are dealt with.
- 7) The document is included as Appendix XXVII in ST. ANDREWS 1960 (cf. bibliography), pp. 212-218. I quote by page number. A previous version of the document was discussed at a meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Galyatetö in 1956.
- 8) Published in NEW DELHI 1961, pp. 77-90. Quoted by paragraph number.
- 9) In NAIROBI 1975, pp. 41-56.
- 10) In MELBOURNE 1980, pp. 171-178. Quoted by paragraph number.
- 11) Section report in VANCOUVER 1983, pp. 31-41. Quoted by paragraph number. In a recent document of the "Commission on World Mission and Evangelism": Mission and Evangelism - An Ecumenical Affirmation, in: International Review of Mission 71(1982)pp. 427-451, 'witness' is also used regularly.
- 12) Cf. Jan van Butselaar, 'Dialogue and Witness', in: Ecumenical Review 37(1985) 398-405, p. 402: 'This new understanding of witness, which stresses its relation to culture and the need to listen carefully before speaking, this dialogue-bound witness ...'.
- 13) For the text editions used see the bibliography. The documents are quoted by the numbers with which the sections are marked. For background information see International Bulletin of Missionary Research 9(1985) No. 4 (= "Mission since Vatican Council II").
- 14) 'testimonium fidei et caritatis': LG 50; cf. LG 12; 'test. amoris': AA 17; cf. AA 19.
- 15) '... opera caritatis et misericordiae praeclarissimum testimonium christianae vitae', AA 31.
- 16) Cf. LG 31; AG 40.
- 17) Cf. LG 42; 50.
- 18) Cf. the commentary by S. Brechter in the Latin-German edition (see bibliography) of the documents, Vol. III, p. 46; cf. 48; 54.
- 19) Cf. AG 12: "Closely united with men in their life and work, Christ's disciples hope to render to others true witness of Christ, and to work for their salvation, even where they are not able to proclaim Christ fully" ("... etiam ubi Christum plene annuntiare nequeunt").
- 20) '... sed etiam per laicos, quos ideo et testes constituit et sensu fidei et gratia verbi instruit, ut virtus Evangelii in vita quotidiana, familiari et sociali eluceat'. Cf. LG 12: 'Populus Dei sanctus de munere quoque prophetico Christi participat ...'.
- 21) LG 35; cf. LG 35: "This evangelization, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world".
- 22) AG 11; 13; AA 13; cf. AG 21. Only in AA 13 does it appear that preaching the gospel in a narrow sense is intended.
- 23) AG 6; UR 12; cf. AG 36.
- 24) Cf. GS 3, where the Council is referred to as "testificans et exponens fidem universi populi Dei".
- 25) For text editions see bibliography. Quoted by the numbers with which the sections are marked. For background information see H.H. Rosin, "Current aspects of Evangelization" in: Exchange 10(1975)1-52, and Karl Müller, Missions-theologie, Berlin 1985.

- 26) EN 26.
- 27) Pope Paul VI, address to the members of the "Council of laity" (2 October 1975) in AAS 66(1974) 568.
- 28) For background information on the Joint Working Group, see: Orientierung Ökumene. Ein Handbuch, hrsg. von Hans Martin Moderow und Matthias Sens, 1979, p. 245, and M.R. Spindler, 'Gemeinsames Zeugnis als ökumenische Realität. Bericht über eine Untersuchung der Gemeinsamen Arbeitsgruppe des römischen Einheitssekretariats und des Weltrates der Kirchen in Genf', in: Peter Lengsfeld und Heinz-Günther Stobbe (Hrsg.), Theologischer Konsens und Kirchenspaltung, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 73-91. A French version is included as an appendix in MOLENDIJK 1986 (cf. n. 5).
- 29) The documents of the Joint Working Group are quoted by paragraph number.
- 30) Quoted by paragraph number. Some passages are printed in heavy type, but cannot be quoted accordingly here.
- 31) 'The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977-1984: A Report', in: International Bulletin of Missionary Research 10(1986)2-21, p. 17.
- Somewhat contrary to my expectation the witness terminology is seldom used in documents of an evangelical signature. The preference of evangelicals for '(verbal) proclamation of the gospel' is also reflected in their use of witness. Cf. MOLENDIJK 1986 (cf. n. 5), chapter XII.
- 32) With this term the three groups described above are united in one denominator. 'Conciliar' indicates that the documents are the product of a group ('théologie collective') and that they express a consensus or compromise.
- 33) Cf. F. Durwell, "Christian Witness: A Theological Study" (International Review of Mission 69 (1980) 121-134). Durwell begins with **marturein** but concludes with a broader concept of 'witness' with a broader biblical base. On the so called 'martyrological complication' see M.R. Spindler "Visa for Witness ..." (cf. n. 3). He states: 'Modern missionary statements, e.g. at the CWME Melbourne Conference (1980) tend to blur the distinction between 'witness' and 'martyr' for all practical purposes ...' (p. 57). In my view it would be more correct to say that at the Melbourne Conference the witness theme was linked to the notion of martyrdom. That one thing is linked to another need not entail that the distinction is blurred. In the document **Common Witness** the acceptance of martyrdom is called a norm of witness, which is not to say that a witness and a martyr are the same.
- 34) This thesis can only be illustrated in this article. The evidence is provided in MOLENDIJK 1986 (cf. n. 5).
- 35) Lesslie Newbigin, 'Common Witness and Unity', in: International Review of Mission 69(1980)158-160, p. 159.



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