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KRISTEN L. MAJOCHA

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AT JOHNSTOWN

klynn@pitt.edu

DOMINIC DIDOMENICO

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AT JOHNSTOWN

Examining Mother Teresa's narrative as prophetic: A case study

Analiza przypadku narracji Matki Teresy z perspektywy retoryki prorockiej

Abstract

This paper examines a rhetorical case—Mother Teresa's narrative—for evidence of prophetic qualities, including social calls to action. Mother Teresa's story is considered through established methods of investigating prophecy, such as themes of announcements of judgment and reason and the messenger formula. Her rhetoric is also examined through the theoretical lens of Walter Fisher's narrative coherence for evidence of biblical ideals and body language. Her lived experiences are also considered evidence of her prophetic nature. Mother Teresa's narrative is read and better valued as part of a wider context of social action consistent with prophecy.

Artykuł omawia retoryczny przypadek narracji Matki Teresy w celu określenia jego prorockich elementów, takich jak wezwanie do działania. Opowieść Matki Teresy jest rozważana z punktu widzenia określonych metod badania prorocstwa, w tym motywów zapowiedzi sądu i formuły posłańca. Retoryka Matki Teresy omówiona jest także z użyciem teorii koherencji narracyjnej Waltera Fishera w odniesieniu do biblijnych ideałów i mowy ciała. Ponadto elementy biograficzne w życiorysie Matki Teresy zdają się potwierdzać jej profetyczny charakter. Narracja Matki Teresy może być doceniona jako część szerszego kontekstu działania społecznego nawiązującego do prorocstwa.

Key words

Mother Teresa, prophecy, narrative, Walter Fisher, prophetic rhetoric
Matka Teresa, prorocstwo, narracja, Walter Fisher, retoryka prorocka

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KRISTEN L. MAJOCHA

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AT JOHNSTOWN
klynn@pitt.edu

DOMINIC DIDOMENICO

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AT JOHNSTOWN

Examining Mother Teresa's narrative as prophetic: A case study

1. Introduction

This paper examines a rhetorical case—Mother Teresa's narrative—within the scope of the narrative paradigm for evidence of prophetic qualities including social calls to action. First, Mother Teresa's story is understood through a biographical account. Second, Mother Teresa's narrative is considered through established methods investigating prophecy, such as themes of announcements of judgment and reason and the messenger formula. Her rhetoric is also examined through the theoretical lens of Walter Fisher's narrative coherence for evidence of biblical ideals and body language. Finally, the narrative paradigm is used to investigate Mother Teresa's narrative for evidence of prophetic qualities in her lived experiences.

There have been five tomes published in Mother Teresa's name that include her narrative (see Primary Sources). Each of these publications represents a variety of compilations of her public and private writings such as her prayers and meditations. A thorough examination of each publication reveals that two volumes collectively contain a comprehensive compilation of her writings. The entire body of her private prayers is contained in her authorized published book of prayers and meditations entitled *A Gift for God: Prayers and Meditations*. A comprehensive collection of her private letters (as well as a selection of the aforementioned prayers) is contained in *Mother Teresa: Come be my Light*. These two volumes are examined in this rhetorical case.

Mother Teresa also partook in four official public speaking engagements: her 1979 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, her 1982 Class Day remarks to Harvard University, her 1989 Time Magazine interview, and her 1997 Prayer Breakfast Speech at the White House (Teresa 1994). Each of these speaking engagements is examined as well. These public discourses reveal the prophetic nature of Mother

Teresa's narrative. In order to contextualize Mother Teresa's public narrative, both written and spoken, a brief biographical account of Mother Teresa's life is articulated. This biography is examined to see if it "rings true" with the values that drive her public narrative.

2. A Biography: Mother Teresa's Story

Mother Teresa was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, on August 26, 1910. On September 10, 1946, during a train ride from Calcutta to Darjeeling for an annual retreat, Mother Teresa received what she called her inspiration and her call-within-a-call. She asserted that on that day, Jesus "... took hold of my heart and the desire to satiate His thirst became the driving force of my life" (Vatican.va 2003). In the following months, Mother Teresa reported interior locutions and visions that caused her to focus on "victims of love" who would "radiate His love on souls." She reported that Jesus said to her, "Come be my light. I cannot go alone." These visions included God's revelations of pain caused by the neglect of the poor, sorrow at ignorance of Him, and His longing for the love of the unfortunate.

Mother Teresa's visions also included a report that God asked her to establish the religious community that came to be known as the Missionaries of Charity, which would be dedicated to serving the poor. By 1948, Mother Teresa was granted permission from the Vatican to begin the community that consisted of The Sisters of the Poor. In 1950, the Missionaries of Charity was officially established in the Archdiocese of Calcutta. The congregation grew and, by the 1990's, it had established houses in 123 countries including unlikely Communist locales such as Russia, Albania, and Cuba. In her years of service to the Catholic Church and beyond, Mother Teresa received numerous awards of excellence, most notably the Indian Padma Shri Award in 1962 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. Upon receiving such notable awards, she modestly proclaimed they were for the "glory of God and in the name of the poor" (Vatican.va 2003).

Mother Teresa's life, as addressed in her biography, reveals the biblical virtues and values of her story. These virtues and values (Aristotle 2000, 23-36) chiefly include: humility—her painful and burning longing for His love; selflessness—the spouse of Jesus for eternity; charity—the establishment of The Missionaries of Charity; nobility—her attribution of any awards to the glory of God and in the name of the poor; and honor—Jesus' thirst was the driving force of her life. Mother Teresa's story contains virtues and values that "ring true" with the biblical prophets. Her public narrative will now be examined to see if her larger story corresponds with biblical values.

3. Established Methods for Investigating Prophetic Rhetoric

Established methods for investigating prophetic rhetoric include identifying themes such as announcements of judgment and reason (Brueggemann 2011, 18; Darsey 1997, 24; Koch 1984, xii-xiii; Westermann 1991, 82), uses of the messenger formula (Heschel 1962, 26; Brueggemann 2011, 74), inclusion of prophetic biblical ideals (Brueggemann 2011, 168; Petersen 1989, 42), and prophetic body language (Cosmos 2005, 48; Knowles 2004, 173). First, Mother Teresa's narrative will be examined for themes consistent with prophetic rhetoric: announcements of judgment and reason as well as the messenger formula. Second, Mother Teresa's narrative will be examined for biblical ideals consistent with established understandings of prophecy. Third, the overlap between the established methods for investigating prophetic rhetoric and the narrative paradigm will be understood.

3.1. *Themes of Announcements of Judgment and Reason*

Announcements of judgment and reason offer a correspondence of the judgment of God and the guilt of the people (Darsey 1997, 24). A judgment speech also includes elements of act-consequence (Koch 1984, xii-xiii). Mother Teresa's Prayer Breakfast Speech included judgments and reasoning and act-consequence messages. For example, Mother Teresa did not excuse the father from his responsibility to care for the child and its mother, "The father of that child, whoever he is, must also give until it hurts," (Teresa 1994). Her choice of wording is also characteristic of judgment speech. The audience was made up of affluent adults who may have felt some guilt for not having taken responsibility for their own children, not necessarily by having had an abortion, but by shipping their children to day care or by not seeing their children as often as they wished they could.

Mother Teresa then extended her Prayer Breakfast Speech argument and appealed directly to her politically-minded audience when she said, "Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion" (Teresa 1994). After this statement of judgment and reason, there was brief silence. Then the room broke into thunderous applause that lasted 39 seconds (Teresa 1994).

The message was decidedly partisan and judgmental, thus clarifying her internal resolve to carry what she considered to be the message of God. The story was reasoned because in addition to proclaiming the destroyer of peace—abortion—she provided the audience with evidence of her commitment to restoring peace. She told of her commitment to fight abortion, to support the family, and to care for the sick and dying. She even offered to care for any children facing the unfortunate

reality of abortion: “And also I offer you our sisters here, anybody that doesn’t want the child please give it to me. I will, I want the child” (Teresa 1994). The effectiveness of the announcements of judgment and reason in her narrative was verified by the sustained applause—23 seconds—that this statement received.

Mother Teresa took the opportunity to deliver themes of judgment and reason in her Nobel Address as well. Her advice was less driven by the practical and more driven by the judgments typical of Scriptural rhetoric in which the prophet attempts to move a stubborn and resistant people. Her apparently simple reasoned argument is, in fact, dense and difficult: “Let us love Him and each other with undivided love. And let us feel the joy of loving Him and each other. Let us give love now with Christmas coming so close. Let us keep that joy of loving Jesus in our hearts” (Teresa 1979, “Nobel Address” 5). As she concludes her Nobel remarks, she offers the sort of confident counsel typical of prophetic biblical judgments and reasons. The counsel includes language that offers direction anchored in divine revelation to a world stricken by war, injustice, poverty, and indifference: “Smile at each other. Make time for each other in your family. Smile at each other....Live life beautifully; have Jesus with us. He loves us” (Teresa 1979, “Nobel Address” 6). As with scriptural prophetic rhetoric, the compassion and the passion of the Nobel Address are rooted in reasoned appeals.

The theme of judgment and reason is also present in Mother Teresa’s personal correspondence: “The joy of loving Jesus comes from the joy of sharing in His sufferings. So do not allow yourself to be troubled or distressed, but believe in the joy of the Resurrection. In all of our lives, as in the life of Jesus, the Resurrection has to come, the joy of Easter has to dawn” (Teresa 2007, 300). The abundant quantity of the biblical prophetic themes of judgment and reason in Mother Teresa’s public narrative serves as evidence of the fruits of Mother Teresa’s labor and thus provide evidence of prophetic qualities in her rhetoric. In addition to themes of judgment and reason the established methods for identifying prophetic in the communication and religious communications literature include recognition of the messenger formula theme (Heschel 1962, 26; Brueggemann 2011, 3).

3.2. Theme of the Messenger Formula

Bible prophetic rhetoric is always uttered in the messenger formula similar to “Thus says the Lord” (Westermann 1991, 82; Petersen 1989, 3). Biblical scholar Karl Weyde also notes the additional use of the phrases such as “the word of the Lord came to us” and “the Lord spoke” (Weyde 2000, 5-10). The Bible also addressed how the message of God was uttered: “This is what the Lord has revealed to me” (Jeremiah 38:21) and “He revealed Himself to Samuel through His

word” (1 Samuel 3:21). An oft used phrase in the Old Testament is “The word of the Lord came to me” (Ezekiel 13:1; Haggai 1:1; Jeremiah 46:1; Kings 19:9; 2 Samuel 24:11; Zechariah 1:1). Similar messenger phrases are also used in the bible such as “I have been told” (1 Kings 13:17) and “I heard Him speaking to me” (Ezekiel 2:2-4). The nature of prophetic rhetoric, as Jeremiah passionately argues, includes a compulsion to testify: “I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it” (Jeremiah 20:9-10). The messenger formula is driven by this compulsion.

The messenger formula is evident in Mother Teresa’s public narrative. In her 1989 Time interview Mother Teresa credits God with accomplishing the real work of her missionary organization, stressing not merely her dependence on the direction of God but her genuine helplessness in the face of the overwhelming influence of the divine. She compares herself to a “pencil in His Hand.” She claims her works of love are simply evangelism—the words and message of God delivered through the complex medium of her works. As a missionary, she defines her work as expressing the joy of His direction—and she claims that the Harvard address particularly was what He directed her to say. “I let Him say what He wants” (Teresa 1998, “A Pencil” 3). Within the public discourse of the interview format Mother Teresa self-describes the messenger formula.

When Mother Teresa speaks movingly of the joy she finds in helping the poor, she speaks of her actions not as gestures of love but rather as “the words of God in action”—social action. Thus she makes no distinction between her actions and God’s word, the sublime connection that indicates the prophetic messenger formula and points toward the possibility of social action. When asked when she is afraid, she simply says, “I have Jesus. I have no fear,” (Teresa 1998, “A Pencil” 5-7). Here within the very public sphere of the interview model, she evidences the messenger formula consistent with biblical prophetic rhetoric.

Mother Teresa is neither being hypocritical nor dismissive of the significance of her religious struggle, rather she accepts the prophetic imperative to serve as conduit for the God whose help and support are the sole reliable elements of her message. The messenger formula is perhaps most evident in her personal correspondence: [It] was a call within my vocation. It was a second calling...I heard the call to give up all and follow Him into the slums-to serve Him in the poorest of the poor,” (Teresa 2007, 40). In another personal letter, Mother Teresa utters the messenger formula. This time she harkens to the aim that Jesus has spoken to her (Teresa 2007, 41).

3.3. Narrative Coherence as Evidenced through Biblical Ideals

Another indicator of prophetic rhetoric is the use of biblical ideals (Brueggemann 2011, 168; Petersen 1989, 42) in narrative as well as body language (Cosmos 2005, 48; Knowles 2004, 173). Use of prophetic biblical ideals and prophetic body language is also evidence of narrative coherence through the lens of the narrative paradigm. Narrative coherence cultivates how the parts of the story, including the goal, make a whole, how the characters telling the story are consistent, and the trustworthiness of the story (Fisher 1984, 8). The goals and character of Mother Teresa, as evidenced in the biographical accounting of her story, exhibit narrative coherence. She accomplished the charity goals she set, even against all odds. Her character as a servant of God remained consistent throughout her life and she was celebrated with some of the highest honors a person can receive.

The trustworthiness of Mother Teresa's narrative can be evidenced through her inclusion of biblical ideals in her public rhetoric and thus provide further evidence for narrative coherence. Prophetic rhetoric is indicated through the use of biblical ideals (Brueggemann 2011, 168; Petersen 1989, 42). Biblical ideals present in Mother Teresa's public narrative include prayer, peace, family, brotherly love, love of thy neighbor, marriage, life, courage, and children. This section will examine Mother Teresa's public narrative for these biblical ideals as evidence of the prophetic nature of her narrative as well as evidence of the trustworthiness and coherence of her story.

Mother Teresa's Prayer Breakfast Speech includes biblical ideals. The introduction (Teresa 1994) incorporated an opening prayer, followed by quotes from Jesus, a request for peace, and a request that the audience pray the St. Francis Peace Prayer. She continued this appeal with examples of her work with the sick and the dying in the streets of Calcutta. By carefully reviewing the Prayer Breakfast Speech for biblical ideals, the internal stability of the artifact is established. Clarity and harmony in Mother Teresa's Prayer Breakfast Speech is further confirmed through the use four chief prophetic biblical ideals. The Prayer Breakfast Speech contains the biblical ideals of love (with 100 occurrences); children (with 48 occurrences); family (with 27 occurrences); and prayer (with 26 occurrences) (Teresa 1994). Walter Fisher places love as the highest virtue or motivation: "Love provides the ground of being and is the motive that should inform all others in human decision making and action" (Fisher 1987, 136-137). Again, the overlap between the established methods for investigating prophetic rhetoric and the narrative paradigm is apparent.

Additional evidence of narrative coherence via biblical ideals can be found in Mother Teresa's Nobel Address. Like the ancient public courts wherein prophets were compelled to bring their message of God's word, Mother Teresa was given

the opportunity to deliver not so much the traditional acceptance speech, but rather a message grounded in the prophetic tradition. Traditional Nobel Peace Prize addresses routinely commit to outlining and defending religious causes. The recipients are frequently chosen for their commitment to peace amid particular regional conflicts, thus the recipients offer remarks that are bound to particular causes.

Mother Teresa's Nobel remarks were distinctly different. Rather than espouse peace in particular, Mother Teresa began her remarks by citing scripture and identifying the biblical ideal that God is love: "And we read in the Gospel very clearly—love as I have loved you—as the Father has loved me, I love you....we must give each other love until it hurts. It is not enough to say I love God but I do not love my neighbor. St. John says you are a liar if you say you love God, and you don't love your neighbor" (Teresa 1979, "Nobel Address" 1). As the passage indicates, Mother Teresa freely weaves prophetic biblical ideals into her own remarks—thus aligning her rhetoric with the values of biblical rhetoric. Narrative coherence is established.

Invoking the words of scripture as part of her Nobel Address speech narrative, Mother Teresa assumes additional biblical ideals consistent with the prophetic stance; she uses her remarks to inspire and not to criticize. Criticism may have been a likely secular choice given her international audience. Indeed as the remarks continue, she builds on the argument of love as a necessary element of contemporary behavior that seeks to satisfy the Christian ethos: "And to make sure that we remember his great love he made himself the bread of life to satisfy our hunger for his love. Our hunger for God is because we have been created for that love. We have been created to love and to be loved. He became man to make possible for us to love him as he loved us" (Teresa 1979, "Nobel Address" 2). Mother Teresa catalogues biblical ideals to those most in need of such divine love—the sick, the hungry, the imprisoned, and the unwanted.

Mother Teresa's public prayers also buttress the argument made herein that Mother Teresa's narrative is coherent via the inclusion of biblical ideals. These meditations read less like the standard rhetoric of prayer—that is the direct *petition* to God—and more like preparation for prayer, instructions delivered from Mother Teresa to her pilgrim-audience. Thus, these prayer-meditations assume the same kind of rhetorical significance as her public speeches.

Although Mother Teresa published prayers on a wide variety of Catholic Christian occasions, such as the baptism of a child or illness or periods of financial stress, her use of biblical ideals comes across most clearly in the narrative of her occasional meditations. She devotes these meditations to the place of God's love in a contemporary world caught up in the momentary pleasures of the carnal or hopelessly infatuated with the limited parameters of self-love. With the audacity

of an Ezekiel or an Isaiah, Mother Teresa uses meditation to endorse her total complicity with God, her union with the divinity: “With a will that is whole, I will love God, I will opt for Him, I will run toward Him, I will possess Him” (Teresa 1996, 54). In turn, given that grounding and that certainty, Mother Teresa speaks of the conviction of God’s love as making her faith sacred: “Am I convinced of God’s love for me and mine for Him? This conviction is like sunlight that makes the sap rise and the buds of sanctity bloom” (Teresa 1996, 81). Again, narrative coherence consistent with the narrative paradigm has been established in Mother Teresa’s rhetoric as evidenced through her combination of prophetic biblical ideals with the messenger formula.

Biblical ideals are also found in Mother Teresa’s correspondence. In an early letter to Archbishop Perier in 1953 she writes: “Please pray specially for me that I may not spoil His work and that Our Lord may show Himself, for there is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started ‘the work’. Ask Our Lord to give me courage” (Teresa 2007, 149). The prophetic biblical ideal of courage is evidenced in this letter. There is an overlap between the methods in the literature with the narrative paradigm. The identification of prophetic body language can also assist in the establishment of narrative coherence (Fisher 1984, 10).

3.4. Narrative Coherence as Evidenced through Body Language

Body language is also an established indicator for biblical prophetic rhetoric (Cosmos 2005, 48; Knowles 2004, 173). The dress of the prophet speaks to the prophet’s authority. For example, Jesus asks John the Baptist: “What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes?” (Luke 7:25; Matthew 11:8). The implication is that John’s dress was not socially customary; but John’s rough clothing was suggestive of prophetic identity (Knowles 2004, 170; Mark 1:6; Matthew 3:4). The narrative paradigm overlaps this indicator by attending to the way people are in the world (Fisher 1984, 10).

Walter Fisher asserts that narrative coherence may be discovered in many symbolic actions including non-discursive actions (Fisher 1984, 1-6) such as body language: “Narratives enable us to understand the actions of others because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives” (Fisher 1984, 8). Furthermore, emplotments can account for the material embodiment of stories. Narratives tell their stories with all sorts of symbolic expressions (Fisher 1988, 49). Viewed from this perspective, non-linguistic forms of narrative such as body language can simultaneously serve as evidence of narrative coherence and serve as an established identifier of prophetic qualities in

rhetoric as indicated in the communication discipline and religious communication studies.

Mother Teresa's body language during the Prayer Breakfast Speech is consistent with prophetic body language and matches up with her pious lifestyle. Arriving late at 7:45 a.m., Mother Teresa appeared from behind a parted curtain and walked to the podium. She moved slowly, hunched over, and was dressed in her traditional white blue-edged, floor-length habit. Peggy Noonan, present at the speech, recounted later: "Upon her arrival to the podium (where she had to stand on a stool to be seen) she received thunderous applause. In humble response, she simply nodded," (Noonan 1998, 195). She then took her speech in her hand and began to read (Noonan 1998, 196-197). She read her manuscript for the next 33 minutes, rarely looking up and seldom smiling (Noonan 1998, 198). Her meek demeanor during the Prayer Breakfast Speech is apparent in her tone of voice, possessing nearly apologetic undertones.

Mother Teresa's personal correspondence also reveals evidence of her body language. For example, she writes that "only Jesus can stoop so low as to be in love with one such as me" (Teresa 1997, 268). This passage indicates the self-perception she has of her body in relation to that of Jesus Christ. The inclusion of the word "stoop" in reference to her own physical position is suggestive of prophetic identity (Knowles 2004, 170) and is consistent with the body language indicators of prophetic rhetoric (Cosmos 2005, 48; Knowles 2004, 173).

Mother Teresa's body language matches up with her life, her inclusion of prophetic biblical ideals in her narrative, her values, and her experiences. Mother Teresa's narrative has been shown to evidence qualities consistent with the established methods for identifying prophetic rhetoric in the communication discipline and religious communication studies. These qualities include the themes of the prophetic judgment speech and reason as well as the messenger formula, prophetic biblical ideals, and prophetic body language. The latter two qualities, biblical ideals and body language, overlap and serve as evidence for narrative coherence. This overlap provides a strong rationale for the validity of using the narrative paradigm in the investigation of prophetic rhetoric.

4. Narrative Fidelity: The Prophetic Nature of a Call to Social Action

Consistent with the communication and religious communication literature is the inclusion of narrative fidelity as indication of prophecy. Narrative fidelity is expressed through the lived experience of the prophet—"the fruits of their labor" (Matthew 7:15-17)—as well as expressed through the inclusion of scenarios of alternative social realities through imagination (Brueggemann 2011) or calls to

social action. Mother Teresa's narrative displays evidence of narrative fidelity by routinely including expressions of alternative social realities and calls to social action.

4.1. Lived Experience as a Call to Action

A person's lived experience is in concert with the concept of narrative fidelity (Fisher 1984, 8) as well as in concert with the established methods in the communication discipline and religious communication studies for identifying prophetic rhetoric (Brueggemann 2011, 3; Petersen 1989, 3). A narrative can evidence fidelity through the inclusion of social calls to action in a storytellers lived experience.

In her meditations, Mother Teresa confirms her commitment to social action: "By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus" (Vatican.va 2003). Mother Teresa believed she was entrusted with the prophetic mission of proclaiming God's thirsting love for humanity, especially for the poorest of the poor. For example, she writes: "God still loves the world and He sends you and me to be His love and His compassion to the poor" (Vatican.va 2003). Hers was a soul filled with the light of God, on fire with love for Jesus, and burning with one desire: "to quench His thirst for love and for souls" (Vatican.va 2003). Her lived experience was one of a luminous conduit of social action consistent with indicators of prophetic rhetoric.

Mother Teresa's *Time* magazine interview provides additional evidence to her lived experience. The 1989 interview was heralded by *Time*'s editors as a rare look into the lived experiences of Mother Teresa. This interview is particularly helpful in illuminating the current model of the narrative paradigm as an indicator of a call to social action in Mother Teresa's narrative. The interview offered a chance for Mother Teresa to depict herself as God's instrument for social action. This lived experience is evidenced in an exchange that appears early in the dialogue, "It's His work. I'm like a little pencil in His hand," (Teresa 1998, 1). She describes her life's work as controlled by God. Her call to social action has nothing to do with her, and everything to do with God's will—evidence of the prophetic nature of her rhetoric. Evidence of this call to social action is also found in her personal correspondence: "'If I ever become a Saint I will surely be one of darkness. I will continually be absent from Heaven [instead called to] light the light of those in darkness of earth" (Teresa 2007, 1). Here Mother Teresa eternally dedicates her life's work on earth as a social call to action consistent with biblical prophecy.

Mother Teresa's lived experience as a call to social action has been framed within the biblical prophetic tradition through an examination of her story through the

narrative paradigm. The call to social action as an indicator of prophetic rhetoric can be further strengthened through the indication of prophetic scenarios of alternative realities as calls to social action. These scenarios are consistent with prophetic ideals in the communication and religious communication literature (Brueggemann 2011, 168; Petersen 1989, 42).

4.2. Prophetic Scenarios of Alternative Social Realities

Scenarios of alternative social realities are consistent with established indicators of biblical prophecy (Brueggemann 2011, 172; Petersen 1989, 3), are evidence of calls to social action, and serve as evidence of narrative fidelity (Fisher 1984, 8). Prophetic scenarios of alternative social realities stand in tension with status quo social realities of the dominant community. Prophetic scenarios of alternative social realities are often evidenced by resistance from the audience. The audience is not hospitable to social calls to action that challenge a customary way of life (Brueggemann 1978, xvi-xvii). Mother Teresa consistently offered such prophetic scenarios in her narrative. This section will illuminate her calls to social action as consistent with prophetic scenarios of alternative social realities.

Mother Teresa's Class Day address at Harvard included a resistant audience. The Harvard Class Day Address recognizes that Harvard graduates are expected to implement real social change. Thus Mother Teresa's brief remarks—she barely spoke ten minutes—received an unexpectedly harsh response. Here, espousing biblical ideals, Mother Teresa offered an alternative social reality to the graduates. She elected to deliver an impassioned defense of the sanctity of marriage, the sacrament of procreative rather than recreational sex, the evil of abortion as a lifestyle convenience, and her definition of the sanctity of womanhood as measured by the preservation of virginity. Within the context of the audience, college seniors in the early 1980s, Mother Teresa argued: "The most beautiful gift that a young man can give a young lady, and a young lady a young man, is a virgin heart, a virgin soul" (Teresa 1982, 2). Her remarks within this particular context and harsh reception are evidence of narrative fidelity as well as further evidence of the fidelity of the fruits of her labor. This evidence compares well to the experiences and contexts consistent with the biblical prophets and her remarks clearly attempted to move the audience toward social action. Like biblical prophets who called for social action and faced public rejection, Mother Teresa was booed (Teresa 1982, 3).

The Nobel Address offers additional evidence of Mother Teresa's narrative fidelity. Although not a hostile audience, the gathering was also not religious in scope. When Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October, 1979, her missionary work among the poor in India was openly questioned. Her selection of

topics was a matter of public outcry—her absolute opposition to birth control, her manipulation of controversial public funding avenues to finance her missionary work, and her vow of poverty. The Nobel Address was particularly controversial because it was delivered in the first years of Pope John Paul II's pontificate that would come to challenge nearly four decades of progressively liberal Catholicism. Because of this context, Mother Teresa's remarks upon accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on December 11, 1979, can be identified as offering scenarios of alternate social realities and ensuing calls to social action consistent with prophecy (Teresa 1979, 5).

Mother Teresa's narrative of public prayer offers additional evidence of narrative fidelity. Alternate social realities are evident as she is addressing a post-lapsarian postmodern world where divinity is seldom heard and apostolic callings are rare. Her meditations include this tender prayer: "Love to pray. Feel often during the day the need for prayer, and take trouble to pray. Prayer alone enlarges the heart and makes it capable of containing God's gift of Himself" (Teresa 1996, 74). In Mother Teresa's prayers, there is an expression of confidence and gentle encouragement to social action.

The narrative paradigm as method has successfully indicated the presence of scenarios of alternative social realities as calls to social action consistent with prophecy in Mother Teresa's narrative. Additionally, themes of announcements of judgment and reason were identified, narrative coherence was established by exposing biblical ideals and body language consistent with biblical prophecy, and narrative fidelity was established through an examination of Mother Teresa's lived experience. Each of these indicators is consistent with the established methods of examining prophetic rhetoric in the communication discipline and religious communication studies. By examining the totality of her narrative, this rhetorical case has provided evidence of how Mother Teresa's story holds together. Mother Teresa's narrative has fidelity consistent with biblical prophetic rhetoric.

5. Implications

Investigations such as the present study should be part of the cultural analyses because of the rise in the last generation of religious and spiritual emotionalism in the American experience. Many commentators have argued that the post-Reagan era has become America's Third Great Awakening, an expression of religiosity and spirituality reflected most obviously in the emergence of the political Right, in the massive televangelical presence on cable networks, and in the rise in church membership. In that, the communication model assumed by most twentieth century theorists is suddenly challenged—the voice, audience, and message begin to

blur. The call to social action of prophetic rhetoric, however, returns to a model that raises fundamental questions about the authority of the voice, the intention of the message, and the receptivity of the audience. In all, identifying prophetic qualities in Mother Teresa's narrative can help direct communication and language theory itself into profitable explorations of the nature of religious, moral, and spiritual communication in a postmodern era.

The prophetic nature of Mother Teresa's narrative raises intriguing questions about the nature of the authority of voice itself. Traditional communication models, particularly those articulated in the post-World War II secular era, assume the validity of the voice as a construction of a definable and real entity—the speaker. The authority, or whatever authority the voice manages to command, comes from the marked linkage to the biography, to the lifestyle, to the credentials earned through the specific life lived. The use of the narrative paradigm in identifying prophetic rhetoric in this research challenges the postmodern sense of communication authority. The individual uses rhetoric, sometimes uncivilly, to work toward a collective social good, or social civility. Christ speaks through the vehicle of others. And in the Old Testament writing, God speaks only to and through the chosen few, those utterances subject to what any contemporary communication theorist would emphatically dismiss as unreliable. Yet that sense of a cooperative voice, that vested authority in the dynamic of filtering, is central to prophetic rhetoric. Prophetic rhetoric explicates its presence and impact within the postmodern culture and raises potentially promising investigations into social engagement.

This shared authority makes way for shared responsibility in social engagement. Although it is easy to dismiss the noise of religious televangelism as commercialism, an investigation into the prophetic nature of Mother Teresa's narrative raises questions about the relationship between rhetoric and celebrity. With the possible exception of John Paul II, who engaged the media in ways Mother Teresa would not, Mother Teresa was the most recognized Christian Catholic in her era. Despite her fiercely private lifestyle and her reluctance to engage in public appearances, Mother Teresa was an international presence, easily recognized by her distinctive white habit with the blue stripes, her frail diminutive figure, her wrinkled facial expression, and her doleful eyes. The physical frames of Ezekiel and Isaiah were at best distractions—testified by how the Old Testament leaves no direct physical description of either.

Mother Teresa did not command the kind of charisma that is so much a part of postmodern celebrity. Mother Teresa's narrative fidelity alone provides guidance for others to exhibit constructive social engagement. This distinction is critical for the contemporary communication theorist. Actors, entertainers, athletes, even politicians routinely manipulate language and their celebrity status assumes the

voice is the central authority. The powerful position of celebrity comes from the assumption that voice and authority are the same. The narrative paradigm, however, disengages that assumption. Mother Teresa, according to this study, does not have charisma but rather an aura, an energy that comes not from language but from her presence. In short, the power of her call to social action comes from her words and their bindings to biblical ideals—her presence bearing a sanctified sensibility that in turn enriches her communication dynamic.

If identifying prophetic rhetoric through the lens of the narrative paradigm raises potentially intriguing investigations into the definition of voice and the definition of message, there should be no qualms for the communication scholar to revisit the nature of audience itself. As this study has shown, the rhetorical posture of Mother Teresa assumes that the moral and religious temperament of the audience must be considered. What this study suggests is the need for communication scholars to use the narrative paradigm toward uncovering rhetoric that serves as a social call to action. The narrative paradigm can serve to reveal prophetic qualities of narrative and thus reveal opportunities for agents to enact civility. Mother Teresa is a promising starting point for reinvigorating the respect for religious rhetoric as a medium to engage in real and immediate social engagement. The medium, as it turns out, is not the message after all. The reality that Mother Teresa, like prophets since Ezekiel, faces a stubborn audience does not diminish this sense of message as occasion to ignite action.

The prophetic nature of the narrative that Mother Teresa embodied is one form of a life well lived. The examination of her narrative for prophetic qualities through the lens of the narrative paradigm meets the communication discipline and religious communication studies standard for evidence of biblical prophetic rhetoric qualities. Prophetic components in narrative can increase civility through calls to social action.

Narrative analysis as a means to identify prophetic qualities in one's rhetoric helps us understand a social call to action. Choosing to follow the call can enable us to become a more civil society. This relationship between social action and prophecy may not occur. Just because an academic narrative analysis technically reveals prophetic qualities in one's rhetoric does not mean that others either understand or respond to the prophetic call to social action. The choice is always with the members of the audience. These members must choose to engage in the prophetic call in order to see its benefits. Also, a tale in and of itself is neither dominant nor resistant. This status is determined by the audience's orientations.

This present work suggests that the narrative paradigm be used in order to reveal qualities of prophetic rhetoric. Opportunities for continued research on this topic include developing policy that would guide publics in the examination of

narratives for qualities and evidence of prophecy. The narrative paradigm as method should be central to this public policy. Opportunities to developing policy that would guide the media on reporting prophetic rhetoric would also be fruitful.

6. Conclusion

This rhetorical case reveals that the qualities of Mother Teresa's narrative are consistent with the qualities revealed through established methods for identifying prophetic rhetoric in the communication discipline and religious communication studies. These qualities include the use of announcements of judgment and reason (Brueggemann 2001, 177; Darsey 1997, 48; Koch 1984, xii-xiii; Westermann 1991, 82), use of the messenger formula (Heschel 1962, 26; Brueggemann 2011, 4), inclusion of biblical ideals (Brueggemann 2011, 171; Petersen 1989, 3), and body language (Cosmos 2005, 48; Knowles 2004, 173). The latter two qualities, biblical ideals and body language, were shown to serve as evidence for narrative coherence in the narrative paradigm as well. This is where the established methods for identification of prophetic rhetoric and the narrative paradigm begin to overlap. The rhetorical case presented also employed the narrative paradigm's inclusion of narrative fidelity. Narrative fidelity, as evidenced in Mother Teresa's lived experience and in the inclusion of scenarios of alternative social realities, enriches the discussion of prophetic rhetoric by revealing social calls to action. These calls for social action are essential to prophetic rhetoric (Brueggemann 1978, xvi-xvii).

This rhetorical case reveals that the narrative paradigm adds weight to the claim that Mother Teresa is participating in biblical prophetic rhetoric. The most compelling indication of her status as a prophet is evidenced in her calls to social action. It is the prophetic call to social action that the narrative paradigm reveals and that the existing investigative methods do not reveal. The discussion of what counts as prophetic rhetoric is significantly enhanced by using the narrative paradigm. The narrative paradigm buttresses the existing methods of identifying prophetic qualities through themes and establishing narrative coherence. The narrative paradigm furthers the investigation of prophetic rhetoric by identifying the social call to action through the lived experiences of the rhetor and through the identification of scenarios of alternatives to social realities.

The investigation of the rhetorical case of Mother Teresa's narrative collectively and consistently revealed prophetic themes. Even critics who are unsympathetic to Mother Teresa can be satisfied that her discourse fulfills the established standards for prophetic qualities as well as fulfills the prophetic standards in the narrative paradigm—a social call to action. One such critic is Christopher Hitchens. His writings include an article that dubbed Mother Teresa as “less than miraculous” and another article that labeled her a fanatic, fundamentalist, and a fraud (Hitchens

1996; Hitchens 2003). Christopher Hitchens was Mother Teresa's most vocal critic. He served as the lone Vatican witness against Mother Teresa's beatification, yet he ignored Mother Teresa's Prayer Breakfast Speech as well as the larger body of her narrative. Hitchens' remarks about her rhetoric were consistently made out of context as opposed to within the framework of the established methods for identifying prophetic rhetoric. Critics such as Hitchens, as well as supporters of Mother Teresa, frequently offer unqualified assessments of Mother Teresa's rhetoric. This rhetorical case, however, employed established investigative methods as well as the narrative paradigm as method and successfully revealed indicators present in Mother Teresa's rhetoric that are consistent with biblical prophetic rhetoric.

Mother Teresa did not follow convention, and not just the conventions of successful public speaking, such as reading from a manuscript, not looking up, and using little inflection. But she also broke social rules. She neither softened nor deflected her words. Based on her language, the message she delivered, her obvious lack of rhetorical style and delivery, and the ensuing responses of the audiences, her narrative can be deemed consistent with biblical prophetic rhetoric and consistent with prophetic rhetoric indicators within the communication discipline and religious communication studies. Mother Teresa's narrative can now be read and better valued as part of a wider context of social action consistent with prophecy.

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