

Church and community: New hope for Africa

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Abstract

To be concerned about the present situation in Africa and South Africa, in particular, is an understatement. What can the church do to help establish an ethical, value-based social contract? First, one must understand what the essence of the church is. Secondly, one must understand that the church as the body of Christ must be broken in the world in order to establish new relations with all people. Thirdly, calling people to new life in Christ is necessary, and the church should be the servant church. Fourthly, prophetically, the church shows the way to new life and explicitly rejects all corruption so that the community can alleviate poverty and want.

Keywords: Africa, Church, Community, Corruption, Poverty, Brokenness, New Life, Servant, Future

1. Introduction

One should be most concerned about the present world, a world of war, poverty, illness, hate, destruction, dictatorships, and oppression. Sadly, Africa and South Africa, in particular, are not free from many of these challenges. Church and community have a special relation under such circumstances. The church of Jesus Christ enters into the world as a humble but bold (Bosch) messenger of God's good news and a prophet of a new world in Christ. Ethical living is of the essence. It is essential to explain that the church is the church of the living Christ and must be understood as the living community to bring about new hope in the world. The church should also be the servant church, humbly following Christ as a Servant in the world. The message of the church is relevant in this regard. Unfortunately, the church does not always live out this message. Therefore, how can the church be the new community of Christ with a new message to a world in dire need?

2. Africa in need

One is concerned about the present situation in Africa and South Africa, in particular. It appears that the African continent cannot find an answer to its deeply troubled problems.

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First, there are political problems in West Africa. A few *coup d'états* have recently occurred. It is an extreme cause for concern that democracy cannot be obtained in some African countries. Other countries in Africa struggle with internal wars and other challenges concerning violence. In South Africa, the Zondo Commission on State Capture calls for an end to corruption. All the problems emerging from the Zondo Commission are an extreme cause for concern, especially corruption and the theft of public money. Solutions to these problems are not easy to find. It is usually unacceptable to view what is happening on the African political, economic, social and religious fronts. The challenges are significantly high, and an answer to these must be found.

Nihinlola (2009:163) writes:

Economically, many Africans lack basic material goods – food, drinking water, clothing, healthcare and housing. Social amenities are in extremely poor condition; no good roads, no regular power supply, few industries, sub-standard, medical institutions, educational institutions are under-funded and they are bedevilled with strikes and cultism. In the political arena, many African nations are going through political instability. We are in a desperate search for an appropriate political ideology.

Oyeshile (2009:40) concurs:

The causes of poverty range from natural factors such as climate, geography and history, to man-made factors such as bad or deficient governance. Deficient governance according to Akinyele may exhibit the following features: entrenched corruption, lack of respect for human rights, weak institutions and inefficient bureaucracies, lack of social cohesion and political will to undertake reforms.

Majawa (1998:259-260) mentions that Africa's main sources of poverty and want are slavery and the slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and despotic governments. Regarding the latter, Majawa writes, "Dictatorial regimes in Africa have remained in power through discrimination, oppression, witch hunting, murders, imprisonment, etc. They have continued to deprive people of their human rights and have encouraged institutionalized corruption. The people look up to the Church to speak for them because they are voiceless."

One must refer to other contemporary challenges in Africa. Van der Walt (2003:39 ff.) lists some severe issues, namely social aspects, such as suffering, hunger, disease, low income, dehumanisation and injustice; economic aspects, such as a decline in production, dependence on food from overseas, population growth, poorly developed production factors, bad governance, dependence on the

West, wrong policies; political aspects, such as one-party rule and despotic rulers. In this regard, Van der Walt (2003:43) writes, "The political situation in Africa is bleak indeed, deeply worrying and should be unacceptable to every African." Among other aspects, he lists tribalism, religious intolerance, and the wrong type of Christianity (2003:53-54). He also lists the following problematic aspects of Christianity: dualistic, escapist, pietistic and ecclesiastic.

Agang (2020:8-12) also refers to many current challenges, such as corruption and bad governance, although it must be clear that it is not specifically African problems. Politicians play on African people's fears by using ethnicity, religion and regionality to deceive fellow human beings (2020:9). He is critical of African leaders because they, "lack the moral and ethical standards that can change the continent" (2020:10). There is a great need for education.

The question of xenophobic attacks is also relevant. Okyere-Manu (2016:3) refers to the detrimental effects of such attacks. The way in which women and children are treated calls for intensive review. Ayankeye (2014:13-15) writes, "It is an ethical question. How can we in Africa establish a sound community where it is possible to live in a relation with one another in a positive way and so also to enhance relationships. What is very necessary is for a new ethical relation of all."

Modise (2020:3) explains:

Social sin is, however, a certainty in the contemporary society in the South African context during 25 years of democracy. It is often referred to as social injustice and racism. This practice of sin can be identified in many unfair acts by the government, political and economic structures, and in detrimental actions such as human rights violations, discrimination and racism. Politics and political economy can function as structural forces leading to evil practices.

A new approach is necessary for an ethical, value-based social contract in Africa. Many positives are, however, also present in Africa. Democratic institutions such as free elections and an independent judiciary are promoted.

In this regard, Kobia (1995:29) writes:

The second characteristic of the change is that people have gone and are going through a process of education. The critical sociopolitical consciousness among the electorate and the people in general means that they have started to overcome the culture of silence and fear that had engulfed and dominated them for the last two decades.

One must turn to the church to see how it can be involved in this regard. Some aspects of the church must be explained in order to help the world and Africa understand ethical values better.

3. The church as a holy community and servant

3.1 The essence of the church

One must understand the essence of the church. In this regard, one can turn to the gospel of John, and how it regards many issues in the sense of how the church should be understood. Brown (1975:cviii) explains that, although the words ‘church’ or ‘body of Christ’ do not occur in John, the sense of community as people belonging to Christ is relevant. In this instance, the image of the vine is important. The unity of the community should also be acknowledged (Brown, 1975:cx-cxi). The emphasis on baptism and the eucharist is clearly a way to explain God’s involvement in the human condition in Christ through the church (Brown, 1975:cxiv). Barrett (1976:79) writes, “We may say that John writes with an awareness of the Church which was born of the passion and glorification of Jesus.” The importance of the church in John is evident, and the relation of Jesus and the church is relevant for the church as the church of Jesus Christ (Schnackenburg, 1968:163).

First, John 1:1 explains extremely well that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is One with God from the very beginning. Brown (1975:24) explains that what the Word does, is extremely important. According to the Word, the Son came to this world as the One who is the light of the world. The problem is that the world did not accept Jesus as the light of the world. John 1 clearly explains the problem that the world does not accept Jesus as the light of the world; even his own people did not accept Jesus as the light of the world, but He comes to the world as the Son of God, as the One who is One with God. Therefore, it is essential to proclaim in the kerugma of the church that Jesus is the Son of God, and that the church belongs to Jesus Christ. The church is the community of faith in Jesus Christ; it belongs to and lives with Jesus. It must be emphasised that this is the foundation of the church. The foundation is Jesus Christ himself. Therefore, it is also important to emphasise that the gospel of John regards Jesus as the One who came, so that salvation can be established in Him. In John 3:16, one finds the essence of the church. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The love of God for the world is the foundation of the church.

Brown (1975:35) writes, “The great exhibition of the enduring covenant love of God in the OT took place at Sinai, the same setting where the Tabernacle became the dwelling for God’s glory. So now the supreme exhibition of God’s love is the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, the new Tabernacle of divine glory.”

That is the reason why the church exists, because God loves the world so that the church can explain and confess Jesus as Lord in the church. Jesus should be explained as the One who gave His life so that many can be saved. He did not come to the world to reject the world, but He came to the world to save the world. That is the essence, the aspect of the church that must be emphasised. Regarding all the relations of the world, it is important to realise that it is about the love of God in Jesus Christ for

the world. Even if one does not understand fully, one must confess that in the name of Jesus Christ, so that everyone can hear and understand that He is the Lord of the church. He is the One for the others, the One who was broken on the cross for the sake of humanity, and faith in Him is a condition for belonging to the church.

Irwin (2021:71) explains:

Here I wish to make two basic observations. The first is that Jesus's body remains the site of divine glory: only in Jesus does one see God because in Jesus God reveals his ability to be united to flesh (1:14; 12:45; 14:9). The second is that the glory one sees is deeply counterintuitive – it reveals itself in flesh subjected to torture and death, the marks of which resurrection do not efface but imbue it with glorious purpose.

Furthermore, in John 5:16-28, other aspects are crucial for understanding the church and how the church must be confessed in the world. In John 5, Jesus is the One who brings about salvation. The full power is given to the Son and the Son is the one who brings about the new relation. He has the right to judge; the judgement is given to Him by the Father because He is the Son of Man. There will be a time when the graves will open, and the glory of the Son of Man will be present. In that sense also, the church belongs to Jesus as the Son of Man who has the right to judge the world. In this broken world, Jesus judges for the sake of the world to be saved, and the salvation of the world is, therefore, crucial. Jesus did not come to reject the world, but to save it. Therefore, when the Father gives Him all judgement, the judgement is used to bring people to God so that they can find new life in Him. Jesus is the One who calls us to believe in Him, so that we can be saved and experience the fullness of the glory of the Living God. That means He is the One who does not explain His life from His own, but from the Father, who is in Him and He in the Father. His dependence on the Father is radical (Barrett, 1976:214). He lives in unity with the Father. Therefore, he explains that He was sent by the Father to bring about the glory of salvation. John 6 explains that Jesus is also the bread of life because everyone the Father gives Him, shall come to Him, and He will not reject the one who comes to Him. He is the One who accepts the one who comes to Him. He gives new life to the one who comes to Him. This is also very important for our relation to the people in this world who live life not fully explained. One understands that everything should be considered in light of Jesus who is the living bread, who gave His life, and who understands the situation in this world.

Beasley-Murray (1999:lxxxv) states:

It is in this context that the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper may fitly be mentioned, for the only clear allusions to both are precisely in relation to the life of the new world. The "new beginning" in a human life, by which it is possible for one to enter the kingdom of God (3:3) takes place "through water

and the Spirit" (3:5). The exposition will give reason for believing that the text is authentic as it stands, for interpreting its historical background in terms of a baptism of repentance and the eschatological hope of the Spirit, and will seek to explain their relation in the Evangelist's perspective in an era initiated by the lifting up of the Son of Man (3:14 f.) and the sending of the Spirit (7:39). Similarly, the discourse of chapter 6 in its entirety is oriented to the gift of life through the Son of Man, who gives his flesh for the life of the world (6:27, 31–33, 39 f., 49–51, 53–58); that revelation stands in its integrity apart from the Lord's Supper, but its reality is at the heart of the Supper, to which the discourse is manifestly oriented.

In Africa, the relation between Jesus as the Son of God, and belief in Him are significant so that the church can be a community of faith and righteousness, bringing about righteousness in the world. Furthermore, in John 10, the parable of the sheep and the shepherd is important. Jesus is the true shepherd. This parable explains that the church should always understand itself from connecting with Jesus as the true Shepherd. John 10:14, "There is the good shepherd, and those who follow Him, know Him. And those who know Him and live with Him. Those who follow Him will also understand what it means to be in Jesus Christ and to be relieved in Him."

Reichenbach (2021:591) writes:

"The story of the cross is the climax of Jesus's victory over sin, sickness, and the devil. In this John gives us not so much a theology as a drama of salvation. Through symbol, metaphor, and story, he affirms that we attain a new parentage, not from earthly parents but from above. In rebirth, we do not re-enter the natural order, but by our believing in and receiving Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, we are united with Jesus in life and death, and thereby gain new parentage through a new origin from above, a new identity as children of God, abundant life, and a new mission of obedient discipleship" (21:19, 22).

John 14 clearly states that those in Jesus Christ will have eternal life, and it is very important to understand the church in this sense. The church is the community that lives with its eyes fixed on eternal life, because it is a reality. John 14:1-2 clearly explains that one should not be worried because one has a home in heaven. It is imperative to have this perspective. On the one hand, the perspective of Jesus Christ and the church in the world is to bring about change, new life and eternal life in Jesus Christ, and the wonders of eternity.

The reference to the vine is crucial concerning the church. The church should always be in Christ. Radically committed to the vine, Christ the church receives the fullness of new life. Brown (1972:672) puts this aptly:

“The basic meaning of the vine is quite clear. Just as Jesus is the source of living water and is the bread from heaven that gives life, so is he the life-giving vine. Hitherto the metaphors that concern the receiving of Jesus’ gift of life have involved external actions: one has had to drink the water or eat the bread to have life. The imagery of the *masbal* of the vine is more intimate, as befits the general theme of interiorization in the Last Discourse: one must remain in Jesus as a branch remains on a vine in order to have life.”

Barrett (1976:393) writes, “Only in Christ can Christians live. In Him, there is the fruitfulness of true service to God, of answered prayer, and of obedience in love. All who are in Him are his friends, and they are necessarily united with each other in love.” Lindars (1982:488) refers to the unity of Christ as the true vine and his followers and how the church should be in relation with Christ. To abide in Christ is essential. The image of the vine emphasises this radically (Morris, 1984:668).

Finally, it is crucial to understand that the church is the church of believers in Jesus Christ. John 20 describes the relation between Thomas and Jesus. Thomas doubted but ultimately believed in Jesus Christ because Jesus makes it possible for Him to believe in Him. Jesus does not reject Thomas, but shows Himself to Thomas, so that Thomas can believe in Him and understand my Lord and my God, and that Jesus brings about salvation. It is imperative to understand that the church is committed to Jesus Christ and lives from this relation in Jesus Christ, as is clearly explained in the gospel of John. The fullness of the church must always be understood from this perspective. The church is the church of Jesus Christ, and from this perspective, the church can enter into a discussion about an ethical, value-based society. The church can be the society in this society, the community that lives ethically. The community that understands what it is to belong to Jesus Christ. To belong to Jesus Christ means that the church should always be the new community. The community of faith and ethical life because the church belongs to Jesus Christ. Jesus explained ethical life in detail, and the church needs to be in this relation with the Living Christ. Only if the church is in this personal relationship with the Living Jesus can He also bring about change in the community.

Kingsley (2018:17) explains:

“It is always God’s plan to redeem the chaos and bring blessing. When Jesus talks with the woman at the well, it is to explain to her that he is the water of life, that whoever drinks of his water will never thirst. Our salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate display of how God is always working to bring blessing out of chaos. It is the very heart of God: to redeem and restore.”

What is extremely important is to understand how the church can be involved in the challenges in the world by being the verily church of Christ the Servant following Christ as a servant. Full attention will be given to the servant church.

One should also turn to prominent ecclesialogists to view the implications that this understanding of the church has for the world. Küng (1978:125ff) explicitly regards the church as the church of Jesus Christ. This should always be the view from the start. This church is also the church in freedom. God gives the church freedom; from this freedom, the church reaches out to the world to bring about freedom for all. Moltmann (1977:73ff) emphasises the church in eschatological essence and in the power of the Spirit. It is the church of the eschatological Messiah through the work of the Spirit. In that sense, the church is also the church of the new world in Christ with meaning for all. Volf (1998:160-175) wants to regard the church as the church in communion. The communion of the triune God calls the church to communion. Reaching out from this communion, the church has meaning for all seeking communion. For Van de Beek (2012:25-26), the essence of the church is that it is the church of the crucified Christ. The church is always the church under the cross. The only presence in the world is the presence of the cross. The church has the future hope of the resurrection, but in this world, the church is under the cross.

It is important to understand that one cannot regard the church in any other way than from the relation with the living Christ. The church belongs to Christ and reaches out to the world from this deep relation. One must agree with Van de Beek (2012) that the church is the church under the cross in this world, living with the expectation of the resurrection. Humbly the church dies in the world and lives with Christ. The church has a message for the deep crises of the world from the cross of Jesus.

3.2 Church as a body of Christ

One must understand that the church as the Body of Christ is broken in the world. The body of Christ refers to the unity and the diversity of the body, but also the common experience of the Spirit (Fee, 1993:583). The church of Jesus Christ must be understood in this broken world. Jesus Christ was broken on the cross. Jesus is the slain lamb (Revelations 4). Jesus was the slain lamb who gave His life and blood for the salvation of many. He is broken in this world. We still see the broken Christ in this world: in wars in Africa, in poverty in Africa, in illnesses in Africa, and in the world in Africa.

One realises that one needs to turn to Jesus Christ, the broken One, in order to understand how one should deal with the problems and challenges in Africa. The broken Christ brings hope because He is also the resurrected One. Therefore, in the church, Jesus establishes new relations, challenging the power establishments

because He is the broken One, and the One on the cross. One lives from the perspective of the broken Christ on the cross. Therefore, one can bring about a more ethical understanding of how to live in this world. The broken Christ is the broken Christ in the church itself. The church is a broken church. The church is not a church that can proclaim that it is without any fault and blemish. The church must struggle with its challenges in this world. It has to challenge the power establishments in this world because of the broken world. But the church is also the church that proclaims that Jesus is the resurrected One. Due to the resurrection, Jesus brings about new relations. In these new relations with Jesus, one can see how one can live according to the Word of God. We are called to live before Him, understand His glory, and explain the Word of God from the broken Christ to the resurrected Christ; from the resurrected Christ to the Christ of the ascension to the Christ on the right hand of God ruling over the world. The strength of this church image is that it specifically links it with the broken Christ and others in their need. The body has only one head, and it is Christ. However, one should also consider that He is not only the Head but also the servant of all.

3.3 The church as the new community

It is essential to call people to new life in Christ and to show how they can become a new community and establish new relations. Jesus calls people to Him, as noted in John 5 and 6. Jesus calls people to follow Him. This wonderful message of calling from Jesus Christ encourages one to follow Him in this sense. He calls us so that we can establish a new relation with the Living Christ. It is possible to follow Him in this regard. Jesus calls the people to follow Him so they can be in this new relation. This can only be established from the brokenness before the Living God. The world is broken, so that it can be healed. If the world can understand its own brokenness, it can also understand the relation of the Living Christ, and the new understanding of living with Christ. This is what is understood from these perspectives. Broken before God, but also with a hope of a new life possible in Jesus Christ. The model of the church as a community has the strength of commitment to one another. In communion with Christ, one experiences the richness of relations. Noteworthy is that this communion must always be as servants to one another.

Thesnaar (2014:3) aptly refers to this:

“For the church to actively engage with all the dimensions of our society, it should be realised that the contextual relations within a society simultaneously pose boundaries and possibilities, dangers and opportunities, threats and challenges for the church. Within our current context, secularism should be understood as a boundary and a possibility for our identity. In our modern society, individualism

should be seen as a danger and an opportunity for integration and community. Utilisation is a threat and a challenge for policies and strategies within the political system, and calculation of the finances and resources becomes a possible loss and gain for control. Despite these realities, the church should continue to engage actively with society on the grounds that the core functions are actually enshrined in the goals of the church.”

3.4 The church as servant church

Dulles (2002:81-94) explains the models of the church comprehensively and refers to the church as servant church as very relevant in the present situation in the world. The main issue is that the church as servant church is not an active subject and the world an object as in the models of the church as institute or community or sacrament or herald, but that the church becomes all the more the serving church in a world that came of age. Dulles (2002:84) explains that the church in this model must be seen as part of the world and also sharing in the world. The church is listening to the world rather than only proclaiming to the world. Referring to the secular-dialogical theologians he writes (2002:87), “The servant Church is the community who confirm mankind in its freedom to fashion its culture, protesting the pretensions to ultimacy in any human structures and suffering with men in the struggle against the powers of evil.” The emphasis is on help for others rather than enlarging the numbers of a certain congregation. The church sees herself in a total new light; humble and relevant. Although it is an important view of the church, Dulles explains that there is criticism against it, namely that there is no direct biblical reference to the task of the church as servant (2002:91) One must also understand that Christ is the Servant to God and not of the world, but that He and the Christian are called to wash the feet of others.

Hendriks (2021:39) warns against some aspects of the servant church model. He writes that one must be careful not to limit Christ's work. The fullness of the reconciliation of Christ's death and resurrection is often not fully explained. The church also becomes a certain cause and not the church of the living Christ, “In a struggle the end often justifies the means, dubious methods are often employed and the personal lives of those propagating the transformation often lose integrity. From a theological point of view, the model often portrays Christ in a very unilateral way (2021:39).”

The concept of the servant church will certainly help to understand how the church can be involved in society, but is must never be seen as a substitute for the church as community or body of Christ. The church must never lose its commitment to proclaim Jesus as Lord in a secular world, serving but also showing a different way of living.

3.5 The message of the church to a secular world

Hadebe (2017:6) writes, “From their extensive research and publication, African theologians challenged the hegemony of western theology, colonialism and apartheid, patriarchy, racism and exclusion of African knowledge through a range of methodologies that rooted their work in African cultures and contemporary experiences as an integral part of theological education.”

This does not mean the church has no message for the secular world. On the contrary, this is the most important aspect we can establish. The church has a message for the broken world, namely that new life is possible.

Bosch (1991:366-367) explains that the church’s message to the secular world must neither be reactionary nor revolutionary. He emphasises that a new paradigm of mission is necessary but that it is not a rejection of the past but the reform of ideas. Reaching out to the world, the church should take aspects such as the *missio Dei*, common witness, liberation, and justice into account. Entering the world through the *missio Dei*, the church, renewed and purified, must engage the world (1991:519).

Michael (2020:368ff) challenges the church in Africa because it did not relate significant numerical expansion to deep involvement in society. He lists the following paradoxes: lack of transformation in economic destinies, growth at the expense of establishing industries and companies, lack of clear political manifesto and ethical ideals, still highly superstitious and an emphasis on the spiritual without challenging the evils of corruption and dysfunctional public offices. He believes a vibrant and healthy African church is necessary (2020:376).

It is also crucial that the church should be the salt and light of the world. One should establish the power of kingdom values. Sebahene (2020:384) writes in this regard:

“The Christian faith is not supposed to be a matter of merely personal or private devotional life; it has to be part of all aspects of a believer’s life, including those related to public life. So the church cannot focus only on spiritual matters but must also address Africa’s challenges including its leadership styles, the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources, persisting poverty, gender-based inequalities, social injustices and corruption, ecological abuse and misuse, war and terrorism, to mention only a few.”

Hendriks (2020:397-398) refers to three tests applicable for the church in society, namely the test of the church where the church should be present in the community, the kingdom test where the church should be the sign of God’s kingdom in the whole world, and the gospel test where the gospel is relevant to all and in everything. Van der Walt (2003:546-548) warns against dualism and calls for an answer

to three questions, namely why are we here? Where are we going? and How should we live? To answer these questions, God, in Jesus Christ, should be honoured in the whole of creation.

This can only be achieved by a broken church humbly serving Jesus Christ as Lord. Proclaiming Jesus as Lord is the most essential task of the church in the world. This should be accomplished by being the body of Christ.

Prophetically, the church not only shows the way to new life, but also explicitly rejects all corruption and theft in the community. The church has a relation to the poor and, therefore, a church calls for a new life and a new relation for the poor in that sense. The church calls us to follow the Living God in this regard.

Sekhaulelo (2014:9) explains:

“... it is clear that the church of Jesus Christ exists primarily to worship and adore God. It must praise his most holy Name. However, it can never use this as a form of escapism. It must take seriously the world that he has created and that he loved so much that he gave his only begotten Son (Jn 3:16). Thus, the church as institution and organism should be a visible expression of the Kingdom to those still in rebellion against it. It should show the good news of reconciliation by the relationships between its members of all social, ethnic and economic groups. This should include the relief of poverty within the Body of Christ. The Kingdom should also be evident in the ways its citizens relate to those outside of it, including its work to relieve poverty in general” (Gl 6:10).

The alleviation of poverty must come from this new relation with the Living God. Prophetically, the church calls for and establishes new relations. The church must not be silent in the face of severe corruption and theft.

Wallace (2020:18) refers to new possibilities:

“South Africa’s Constitution must therefore be viewed as an aspirational framework for a new nation, intending on overcoming its discriminatory past through guaranteeing future rights to equality and human dignity as the nation continues to evolve. Fundamentalism, by being uncompromising on its position on personal morality, women’s rights, gender rights, and traditional family structures, aims at reintroducing discriminatory measures to all who do not conform with its worldview.” Section 36 of the Constitution includes a Limitation of Rights, “only in terms of law of general application to the extent that the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom” (South Africa 1996).

The church must call for new relations and a new establishment of these relations. Thus, the church must always be the church of Christ in this world, calling for new

relations with the Living God. God enters the world, establishes his kingdom and works with the people. But in this broken world, one sees the broken Christ, calling for this world to find new hope in Him as the Living Christ. There is new hope only in the Living Christ.

Majawa (1998:261) writes:

“It needs to intensify its efforts in educating people politically so that they may become mature citizens who know their rights as well as obligations, protect the environment, work hard to eradicate ignorance, poverty and disease, etc. Alleviation of poverty and suffering in Africa have to be at the centre of the Church’s pastoral planning.”

All of this has the following implications. The church under the cross of Jesus Christ is committed to the world in deep need. It has a relation with the struggling world in Jesus Christ. It stands next to the poor and the troubled. It calls for healing for the ill and the distressed. It lives in communion with the marginalised. However, as the church of the living Christ, it calls all to repent of their sins and believe in the crucified and resurrected Lord. The church points to a new future. For the people in Africa, it proclaims new hope. Unreservedly, it must regard Jesus Christ as the saviour and call all to Him in mission.

4. Conclusion

The church, as the church of Christ, belongs to Jesus Christ. The church is not in any way something other than the church of Jesus Christ. It belongs to the Living God in Jesus Christ. The church establishes this new relation, calls for new relations and prophetically calls the world to have new relations with the Living Christ. This is only possible in the Living God and in relation to the Living Christ. Christ calls us in this sense. Therefore, mission is still essential. Mission should call people to the Living God and follow the Living God. Mission is the relation with the Living Christ, and it should establish this relation. Therefore, mission is still extremely important, and people should be called to the Living Christ so that they can ultimately live with Christ alone.

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