THE CHURCH OF FAITH, LOVE, HOPE AND MISSION

PIETER VERSTER

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SUNBONANI SCHOLAR

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

It is essential to understand the relation between the church and mission, in order to establish the meaning of the Gospel for this world. At present, the world is facing massive social, political, economic, and religious challenges that are getting more serious. Relations among people are under tremendous strain. Ethnic violence is causing hatred between people, especially in Africa. Racism is still a scourge in the world. The cultural divide between people and groups is an enormous challenge when it leads to the subjection of some to others. On the political front, democracy is under siege, not only in Africa but also globally. Governments to the left and to the right are struggling to cope with the demands of their people. Dictators who have no regard for the will of the people rule in many countries. The war in Ukraine is horrendous. The world is in a serious economic crisis. Rich and poor are struggling to cope and the divide between them is causing problems in many areas. Religions are challenging one another. The persecution of Christians is very disconcerting. Hewitt (2017:2) writes in this regard:

> *"A coalescing of all global ideological forces of hatred, sexism, xenophobia, indecency[,] and anti-democratic populist movements are throwing overboard political correctness, values of decency, tolerance, truth-telling, compassion[,] and simple common sense to create a toxic brew of global instability. Extremism is displacing the voices of reason and common sense as they take over some mainstream media, the social media[,] and other forms of mass communication to transform the political and economic environment of many nations."*

Mission is relevant in this world. The church is radically important for all aspects of mission. Although there are many different ecclesiologies and different ways to view a church, it must be emphasised that, in many of these instances, the church must be regarded as influential in mission. It is also understood that mission originated in the church because of the salvific work of Jesus Christ. The church is important for the world around it. Church and mission is, therefore, one of the most important aspects of any theological discussion.

At present, the notion of the missional church is very important, and it should be experienced and engaged. The missional church is also crucial for understanding church and mission. The church should be regarded as the church in mission. The church can never reject its missionary calling. The church cannot be a church without mission. The church should be involved in mission. We must understand that mission has many implications, and we should engage it, in order to view the essence of mission.

Concerning the church, it is also important to establish the way in which the church is involved in, and influences the community, as well as what the church does in the community. We must emphasise that the church as an entity is involved in bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News of bringing people out of the darkness into the wonderful light of God. That remains extremely important for the church, and for the church as a missional community. The missional community can never simply be a community that reaches out to people about the general aspects of community life. We should always emphasise that church and mission view the relation between Christ and the world in light of Christ's salvific work. It is, therefore, important to consider three aspects of the church and mission.

The Heidelberg Catechism confesses that the church is God's own and that faith is essential for the church.

> "LORD'S DAY 21
>
> Question 54: What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ?"
>
> Answer: That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a Church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain, a living member thereof.
>
> Question 55: What do you understand by 'the communion of saints'?
>
> Answer: First, that all and everyone who believes, being members of Christ, are in common, partakers of Him, and of all His riches and gifts; secondly, that everyone must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members."

Rynkiewich (2020:345) explains that there are many challenges for missions:

> ***"There are challenges in the contextualization of the gospel with people who are on the move (migration) or settled far from home (diaspora), people who are able to exhibit multiple identities (hybridity) supported by appropriate languages (multilingualism), all within a single church or denomination (multiculturalism)."***

What should one expect from this book concerning the church and mission? It is an engagement with the most essential aspects of the church and the way it relates to mission. The church is not a general human endeavour; it is the community called by God. It has implications for how the church is present in the world. Therefore, it should clearly be understood as the church of the living

God and, in that sense, the church is the body of Christ. Deeply challenged in the world and broken, the church points to Jesus Christ. Jesus is wonderful in his majesty, but He was also broken on the cross. The broken church lives in community with the Christ of the cross and the Christ of the resurrection. This must be true of a church in community with God and one another. Belonging to Christ, the church should also seek unity with other churches that also clearly acknowledge Christ as Lord. These churches should seek to glorify God in Jesus Christ. Mission is the total involvement of the church in the world. The church must be involved through Christ in the world. It is now important how the church of faith, love, and hope can be present in the world in mission.

To understand how the church should become involved in the community, it is necessary to refer to the concept of 'missional church'. This means that the church is also essentially missional. Every member is called by God to mission. The church as community should present Christ in mission to the whole world. In this respect, the relation of the church and mission is always a relation in Christ. It is always the mission of God in Christ by the church to the world. Christ must always be glorified in the church through mission. Mission is, therefore, never only the commitment of the few. It is the church moving in Christ in the world. It is the wonderful message of true salvation. Salvation has relevance for this world and the world to come. To engage these aspects, it is necessary to have a clear view on the meaning of faith, love, and hope.

This also means that the church is relevant and meaningful for a world in need. Being the body of Christ, the future is open in front of the church. Living in community with Christ, it is the hope of the world.

First, we must emphasise the church of faith that should exalt Jesus Christ as the King and Lord of the church. That should be regarded as the viewpoint or starting point to bring the Gospel to others around it. The main question is: How should we regard faith as the essential element of the church. It is extremely important to understand the implications of faith for the church. What is the relation between faith and the church?

Secondly, the church is the church of love. We must always regard the church as the church of love because God is the God of love. In light of this love, we must explain the missional task of the church. Being a missional church is being a church of God and reaching out into the world with the love of God. The church should be the church of love in the communities of the world, even in challenging communities such as informal settlements. The church should be a community of love. What is the meaning of this love and how is the church viewed in light of this love? Can the church be a church of love that addresses all the challenges in the world?

Lastly, the Church should also be the community of hope, reaching out into the world with new hope for people with radical problems. The challenging world with war, want, poverty, and illnesses calls for the church to be involved as the church of hope. The church of hope should also be the church of hope for this earth, bringing about ecological renewal in light of the involvement in this world. The church must also be involved in bringing about new relations to many people. We must, however, also understand that the church proclaims new life in the future for the person who is in Christ. Eternal salvation is possible because the church is the church of hope. What are the implications of this hope?

In each of these instances, we should engage in an exegetical and hermeneutical encounter with the most important text of the Bible concerning the church of faith, love, and hope. From the understanding of these texts, owe should then engage with the relationship between church and mission, in order to obtain a missiological perspective.
The main question is: How must the church be understood in its relation regarding mission. We must also establish the meaning of faith for the church in mission, the implications of the love of God for the church, and how hope will empower the church to be relevant in the world.

Chapter 2:

Methodology, hermeneutical and exegetical views from a reformed perspective

In engaging the question as to how the church should be the church of faith, love, and hope in mission, we should turn to a deep exegetical and hermeneutical encounter with the Bible. To understand the different aspects of the text and their relevance, we should turn to the reformational understanding of exegetical and hermeneutical views. In this regard, it is very important to return to the concept of ***Sola Scriptura***. Scripture should not be regarded in the way in which it is not revealed. Scripture should be regarded in the way that it is understood as Scripture itself. The canonical understanding of Scripture is very important. It is all about the canon, the Word of God, ***Sola Scriptura***. This is how God revealed himself and the revelation in the Scripture should be highly regarded. We should refer to 2 Timothy 3:16:

> ***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17] so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work",***

and to 2 Peter 1:20-21:

> *"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. [21] For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

Although these texts do not mention Scripture as a whole, it is explicitly clear that the Word of God is inspired by God, so that we can understand the fullness of the implications of this message. Heyns (1978:19) explains that Scripture was breathed (theopneustied) by the Holy Spirit who made it possible for the writers of the Bible to give a comprehensive and truthful account of God's Word. ***Sola Scriptura*** also means that we have to engage Scripture when we talks about the church and engage it fully in relation with the church. When we talk about church and mission, we have to engage church and mission from the perspective of Scripture. We have to reveal what mission is all about. When Jesus sent off his disciples in Matthew 28:18–20:

> *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'",*

he clearly had a definite view of mission in mind. It is inherently part of the Gospel to understand that.

Different aspects of mission are important, and we have to engage these different aspects, in order to note how they relate to the view of the Gospel. It remains extremely important to understand that Scripture is explaining Scripture in itself and we should also consider this old reformational view. ***Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres est*** [Scripture is its own interpretation]. When we have to explain difficult passages of Scripture, we must engage these passages with other clearer passages and in light of the revelation of God and the community. This relation between the living God and the living community can only be viewed in light of Scripture revealing Scripture itself.

To engage Scripture, we also have to realise that the different aspects and views of the various books should be considered. We should always consider that the Gospels are different from the letters of Paul, and that poetical passages such as the Psalms are different from narratives such as the Book of Kings. Scripture has meaning for the revelation of God. The living God reveals Himself in Scripture as God and He reveals himself to people to see the wonders of God. Seeing God in this regard is crucial. God reveals Himself to the community, the people, and the world. This revelation of God is the highlight of the relation between church and mission and should always be regarded in that sense.

It is also very important to regard the church as the church of God. It is the church of Jesus Christ from the beginning; it is not a community without a direct link with Jesus Christ. Christ is the essence of the community of the church. Christ is the One who calls the church to be the church, who bled and died for the church, so that the church could be saved and belong to him. Therefore, regarding the church and mission, we should always consider the deep Christological emphasis. It is also very important that, through the Holy Spirit, the church is empowered regarding the relation with the living God and should live in that relation with the living God. The church is, therefore, the church of Jesus Christ. The Triune God reveals to the church that Jesus Christ is the one who calls the church to existence. A Trinitarian view is important.

We must now explain how exegesis will be accomplished. Bruce (1977a:21ff) refers to the different views in understanding New Testament studies. This developed through the years and formed an understanding of how to relate to New Testament studies. He explains the development from the Apostolic age of orthodoxy and heresy to developments in the second century of Marcion and his school, Origines and others, to the school of the Latin fathers, and later to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation. There was always an understanding of how to deal and struggle with the New Testament, in order to work out in what ways it should be understood. The post-Reformational period is also very important. New ideas such as background studies and textual studies emerged as a result of the Enlightenment. Criticisms of the Bible in the 19th century called for new understandings in exegeses

from the different schools and the 20th century new criticism was established. Both realised and present eschatology are important. Schools such as the history of religion school and the new hermeneutical were part of the modern endeavour to understand the Bible in a new way and to reveal it to others. Criticism of the Gospel led to a new quest for historical exegeses. Bruce (1977a:54) writes:

> *"With the aid of tradition criticism and form criticism the exegete's task is undertaken in three stages as he works back from (a) interpretation of our canonical Gospels and their written sources through (b) interpretation of the tradition lying behind these to (c) the reconstruction of the preaching about Jesus or the preaching of Jesus Himself. An over-concentration on tradition and form criticism, however, like an over concentration on source criticism, can easily obscure the important work of the evangelists themselves."*

Gooder (2009) explains extensively the different kinds of involvement with the text, in seeking the meaning of the text and in understanding the view of the text for the present day. She explains three different aspects.

First, from event to text, the text itself, and from the text to the reader. She also explains how these different aspects have relevance for understanding the text and how they should be engaged. It should, however, be noted that Gooder refers to a large group of interpretations and we have to decide how to interpret the text from a specific point of view. From event to text, she refers to historical, social science, form, source, and reduction criticism. Concerning the text, she refers to textual, translation theory, canonical, rhetorical, narrative, as well as structural and post-structural criticism. From text to reader, she refers to reception history, theological interpretation, reader response, feminist, queer, liberation, sociopolitical, Black, post-colonial, Asian, and ecological criticism. Gooder (2009:18) writes:

> *"The order of this volume has been shaped by a common typology, or classification, of New Testament interpretation which sees method of interpretation as focusing on one of the three areas:*
> *1. Behind the text, or the concern to recreate and understand the events that lie behind any given text.*
> *2. Within the text, or the concern to understand the actual words of the text, regardless of the events that inspired them or the reader who is reading them.*
> *3. In front of the text, or the concern to understand the way in which the context of the modern reader effects interpretation."*

Gooder (2009:20) refers to the fact that we are seeking the meaning of the text, and she asks whether "the 'original' meaning of the text intended by the author is recoverable, and, if recoverable better than any other meaning that can be discovered within the New Testament." Many people differ in this regard. Some discover the original meaning that is the true meaning of the text. Others discover the original meaning besides other relevant meanings that must also be considered. Others cannot discover the original meaning that remains essential and must be sought. Lastly, some mention that there are many different meanings and that the only correct one cannot be found.

All these different views of criticism are behind the original meaning of the text and are important. We must then scrutinise those views of interpretation that could be used, in order to come to an understanding of the Biblical text for the theme of church and mission, and especially the missional church. It is thus crucial to engage the text and to take it very seriously, and to understand that to engage the text means that we enter into the world of the text and want to understand what the text is all about. As such, narrative criticism is important as a present view.

Gooder (2009:80ff) engages narrative criticism. The text or narrative is then engaged as follows, from the perspective of the real author, the narrator, the implied audience, and then the real audience. The narrative is explained to understand what is behind the message of the text. Gooder (2009:82) explains this as follows: the implied authors

persuade the implied audience to get a view of the story told. Many different aspects are explained, including events, characters, and settings.

It is very important to consider this when we engage the text of the narrative: To understand in what way the narrative refers to how the story is developed and how the different aspects of the text can be understood. Regarding the text of the narrative taken to the reader, it is also important to consider the implications of the text.

Theological interpretation remains very important, as Gooder (2009:120) explains, to refine and enhance modern approaches as other theological purposes, promising alternative paths. What then is the view for engaging the text in this regard. It is crucial to consider the narrative view of the text and how it explains the story to the person listening to the text. The way in which the text is viewed, and how the text communicates is also crucial.

Tolmie (1999:2ff) explains that it is important to understand that narratology or narrative criticism is at present relevant for the study of text, including Biblical text. The implications of this study of the narratology leads to a better understanding of the text and how the different scenes in these texts are related to one another.

The basic framework of narratology is to understand how the real author communicates, and how the implied author and the narrator explain the different aspects such as characters, events, time, and setting to the narratee, the implied reader, and the real reader. Very important are the so-called implied author and implied reader, as they play an important part in understanding the references in the narrative being explained (Tolmie 1999:6).

It is also crucial to understand that, in the narrative text, the reader becomes part of the narrative communication. There are certain indicators in the text to understand the text, different ways of explaining the text for those who understand the text. Narrative levels are, therefore, very important. Tolmie (2009:16) writes:

> *"the narrator and narratee on the primary level of narration are called the* ***extradiegetic narrator(s)/narrate(s)****, whereas the embedded narratives and narratees are called* ***intra-diegetic narrator(s)/ narrate(s)****. If another set of speakers or listeners are embedded in this level, they are called* ***hypodiegetic narrator(s)/narratees****."*

It is very important to consider the need to understand how the narrative works. The extent of participation in this story and the degree of perceptibility are very important. Tolmie (1999:20) explains that there are different ways of perceptibility in the text, "description of setting, identification of characters, temporal summaries, description of characters, events, reports of what the characters did not think or say, and commentary". "Re-liabilities" and the functions of the narrator are also very important. Different aspects of these can be explained. First, the directing function is the internal organisation of the narrative, of the ideological function (Tolmie 1999:22). Voicing different views should be regarded. Testimonial function, relationship with the narrative: he has to tell his story. Focalisation is, therefore, also essential (Tolmie 1999:29). Focalisation deals with the persons in the narrative. It can be a first person; it can be an authorial narrative with an omniscient author.

Regarding focalisation, it is important to understand the locus of the focalisation and the objects of the focalised. It is extremely important to understand the character of the person and how that character is worked out in the narrative. The process of characterisation leads to an understanding of the character. There is thus a direct characterisation (Tolmie 1999:42) or indirect characterisation by way of other aspects such as actions, speech, appearance, or environment (Tolmie 1999:45).

"Events" is explained as aspects of the narrative that are understood in the way in which they are explained. The surface structure of the events is thus explained. Three steps can be used to analyse the surface structure, namely paraphrasing the events, classifying the events, and determining the relationship between the events (Tolmie 1999:64). We can explain the event by paraphrasing it. We can classify the event and various types of events. We can determine the relationship between the events. The

hierarchy between the different events can be explained: the micro- and macro-sequences of the events, and the deep structure of the events.

Time should also be considered. This relates to order (Tolmie 1999:87), duration, and the explanation of the timeline. Setting is to place the narrative in a specific environment in time and space. Implied author and implied reader in the narrative explain how the narrative is being constructed, in order to understand the way in which it was defined.

Tolmie (1999:115) explains that the implied author is extremely important because the whole development of the narrative depends on the narrator. In that way, s/he takes the narrative forward.

In the biblical narrative, the ideological perspective is very important for the evaluative perspective in the biblical text, because the reader will have to be convinced of a certain aspect. Focalisation is also very important. Tolmie (1999:119) writes:

"The implied author arranges a locus of Focalization in such a way that it is situated externally. The events are portrayed in such a way that it seems [that] as if they are viewed through the eyes of an onlooker who does not play any role in the story by him/herself."

Tolmie (1999:131) explains extensively how one should regard the narrative in biblical text.

Van Wolde (1989:80ff) explains how a pericope has specific main elements. Subjects enter into relations with each other. We should establish who the main actors are. There are implications for the way in which these actors enter into these relations. This is also helpful in the exegetical process. The subjects as actors are the main carriers of the line of thought. By establishing their relations, we can infer a great deal of the meaning of a pericope.

The speech act theory with Grice's (1989:26; Verster 1999:14–16) maxims for the speech act is important and also has implications as a text act theory on how the text is structured. There are four supermaxims, namely quality (do not say what is false or lacks adequate evidence); quantity (the contribution should be as informative as possible); manner (avoid obscurity), and relevance (be as relevant as possible). There are implications when these maxims are flouted.

A holistic approach for exegesis and hermeneutics is taken, in this instance. First, we must establish the structure of the text with the most used entities. Then, in light of Van Wolde, we must explain how the agents in the text relate to one another and the narrative. Narrative understanding is then also necessary. In this regard, we must refer to Tolmie and to the way in which the narrative is structured.

Chapter 3:

Mission and the missional church

Mission

First, we have to refer to mission and to what mission is all about. Currently, there are a few challenges to mission, because of the post-colonial interpretation of society and the world. There are challenges to mission because mission is sometimes regarded as a colonial endeavour that should be rejected because of the way in which colonial endeavours led to great suffering in the world, especially in Africa and the East. We should consider that some missionaries were very closely linked with the colonial powers and that, in many instances, what they did was sometimes not acceptable. But we should also consider that mission was to the glory of God, and that many of the missionaries explained, to the world, the wonders of the mission of God, living with God in a difficult situation. Missionaries buried their children and wives and they themselves were often buried on the mission field, due to malaria and other illnesses. They continued to spread the Word of God by all possible means, so that people could hear that God was the God of love. Although they were sometimes closely linked with colonialism, they always emphasised that God calls people to the church of Christ. When they planted the church, they wanted to plant the church of Jesus Christ, be it Catholic, Protestant or Pentecostal.

Views on mission saw different applications. The view of Bosch (1991:368ff) is still extremely important. For him, the concept of ***missio Dei*** undergirds our view of mission

as ecumenical endeavour. Although he has great regard for aspects of ecumenical mission such as mission as justice and liberation, he also emphasises aspects such as evangelism and common witness. Bevans and Schroeder (2006:396ff.) seek constants in context in mission:

> *"Christians today must recognize at a deep level that first and foremost they share God's mission. They must recognize their service of the reign of God and God's justice as constitutive of their identity as church. They must confess the absoluteness and uniqueness of Jesus Christ while pondering the implications of the Spirit's apparent presence within the traditions and practices of other religious ways."*

Recently, Kritzinger (2011:32–59) discussed the views of Bosch, Bevans and Schroeder, and Schreiter. He came to the conclusion that it is not always necessary to choose between the different views of theologians. The question on how we should regard mission is very important. What we understand in this regard and how we deal with that is, for Kritzinger, of great importance. He mentions Bosch's transforming mission and asks how it should be engaged in dealing with the different aspects of the church and how the theology of mission should be understood. He asks some questions regarding Bosch: How do the different aspects of mission relate to one another; how should the spiritual arguments be raised; how should the contextual concerns be established, and whether doctrinal questions could be raised (Kritzinger 2011:38–39). He asks about whether ideas change the situation, or the context and the practicality of changing a new context. He notes some omissions in Bosch's work. He did not come across postmodernism or post-colonial aspects (Kritzinger 2011:41–42). A new aspect should also come across in a different context; the whole question of missiology should be understood.

Kritzinger (2011:43) also turns to Bevans and Schroeder regarding the different dimensions, the creative tension, and the already and not yet. Finally, he turns to Schreiter and Langmead. Ultimately, Kritzinger asks whether we must choose between the different views of mission of Bosch, Bevans and Schroeder, and Schreiter.

Kritzinger (2011:57) writes:

> ***"May we be faithful and creative in how we live and act as though sent, called, guided, blessed, empowered, challenged by the living God, as we risk doing Mission in God's name today."***

Stenschke (2011:167–187) engages the way in which Paul was used regarding mission, and refers to Bosch's transforming mission and Paul's mission by early missionaries. He also refers to Paul's expectation of congregational involvement in mission. He opines that the concept of mission is deeply entrenched in what Paul has written and explained. The Gospel should be explained, communicated, and proclaimed. It should be embedded in churches (Stenschke 2011:184). Therefore, it should be explained that it is all about the mission of the church.

Conradie (2011:82) refers to Bosch's multidimensional understanding of mission and how it is explained. Then he turns to Bosch's view of soteriology as mediating salvation. He explains that Bosch refers to ways in which mediating salvation is understood and sometimes horizontalized. Then he also calls for a comprehensive salvation. He wants to engage Bosch's soteriology. Bosch understood that there should be a pneumatological shift, also in the ***missio Dei*** as God's mission.

The question, especially relevant for Botha (2011:18ff), is whether Bosch has a real African perspective and a real postmodern perspective as well as a perspective on children in his missiology. He questions how contextual Bosch is in his missiology. Is it really contextual in the African sense (Botha 2011:24–25)? He enquires if the question of postmodern critic against transforming mission is unjust and how it should be regarded. Botha (2011:30) suggests a new way of missiological epistemology.

Saayman (2011:5) mentions that Bosch refers to the alternative community as the church. This led to many implications in his theological understanding. Therefore, Bosch became, in a sense, a public theologian. Saayman then also refers to the fact that we must understand the church as an antibody in this world, because the church

is a different entity from the entities in the world. Saayman then regards Bosch's rejection of apartheid as proof that he viewed the church as a total antibody in this situation.

In this regard, we should also consider the relevance of the different views of the church, and how they should be understood. Mission also implies bringing people from darkness to the wonderful light of God. We should also consider that it is sometimes linked to colonialism. However, it also has to proclaim the living Christ and the fact that one is saved by the living Christ through the work of Christ. This means that, although colonialism was a terrible scourge, mission also uplifted people by building hospitals, schools, and community centres. Missions were involved in so many wonderful things to help people in their situation. This cannot be disregarded and it should be considered and understood as beneficial. We should regard mission as often, not always, very beneficial for communities to understand how they should live, empowered by mission to live new lives.

Missionaries could not leave the communities as it were, but they had to empower them. In many instances, missionaries helped people develop and be empowered. Missions should, therefore, have some aspects to it. First, mission is from God; therefore, we have to emphasise the ***Missio Dei***. It is the mission of God; it is God who reveals Himself as the living God working with people, bringing His glory to people in the ***missio Dei*** by God, the sending One, sending his Son, Christ Jesus. We should always emphasise that, in mission, there is a revelation of Christ giving his life for so many, as the One for the others, so that they can enter into the glory of God and be part of the wonderful relation with the living God. Greenway (1990b:21ff) explains that it is very important that mission is God's plan for the world, and that the church must be involved in this plan of God, in relation with God and living out this new plan of God in the world. Evangelism remains extremely important. We have to be involved in God's plan, by "co-labouring, co-suffering, and co-witnessing". Greenway (1990a:35) also asks:

> *"What is God doing? Mission suffers because "1. We don't care that much, 2. We don't see very well, 3. We don't think there must be some other way, 4 Our prayers are peripheral, 5. Someone isn't listening."*

McGavran (1990:68ff) calls for evangelism in different situations by understanding people, their lives, and their engagement in different situations. We must understand the mosaic of mankind and enter the mosaic in different ways.

The Holy Spirit also engages people so that they can live in this new relation with the living God. They can continue to understand how wonderful God is, and how to live in this relationship with the living God.
Mission has to do with the proclamation of the Word of God in Scripture. In mission, we proclaim the wonderful Gospel of Jesus Christ. We proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, that Jesus is the living God, and that He is God from God, verily God from verily God, and that He is, according to Nicaea, our salvation, helping us be in a new relation with Him. In this sense, it remains extremely important to emphasise the glory of the living God and the power of the living Christ, because he is the One who saves us. It should be emphasised that Christ is the One who empowers us to live in relation with Him and to live in this new relation.

The church is established through mission. The church should be acknowledged when we talk about mission. It is not a church next to mission; it is a church of mission, and we should acknowledge that.

Luzbetak (1991:3) explains that mission has to do with the Holy Spirit that leads people to a living faith in God and brings about a new relation with the living God. It is a living faith, a faith empowered by the Holy Spirit:

> *"Those engaged in mission must be, above all, individuals of deep, living faith, sincerely believing what they preach, with God as the very heart and centre of their lives, the mainspring of their innermost selves. It is a basic theological assumption of the present approach to mission that every*

Christian, but especially those engaged in a ministry, must strive to be of 'the mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16) to such an extent, in fact, that he or she can say with Paul, 'For me 'life' means 'Christ'' (Phil 1:21) and 'the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me' (Gal 2:19f)."

The missional church

Introduction

At present, a new way of understanding mission in light of the church is relevant. It is to view mission through the lens of the missional church. The missional church is the church reaching out to the world in need. It is a church existing in mission. The most important recent exponents of the missional church should be noted. Newbigin (1989) initiated it, by asking how mission can be relevant in Western culture. Nikolajsen (2013a:261) shows how Newbigin opened the way for a new understanding of the church and mission. He developed his ecclesiology in this regard. The understanding of the missional church views the very important relation between the church and mission in light of the task of the church in the entire community. Challenging the present culture of communities, the missional church suggests a new way of living with God, namely in love with God and our neighbour. Mission should be regarded as part and parcel of the church. Where mission was understood as missionaries winning souls for Christ, it is nowadays understood as the activity of the entire church. From the point of view of mission as ***missio Dei***, God's mission, the missional church is the church sent by God. We should regard all members of the church as missionaries. The church has a new existence, which leads to a church that lives out the ***missio Dei***. The ***missio ecclesiae*** is the church sent forth by the ***missio Dei***. Jørgensen (2004:561–562) writes that, to be part of God's missionary work, the church should be the community of God through the Spirit. He refers to Newbigin's emphasis on a changing world (Jørgensen 2004:556). The move from the missionary society and the hard and fast understanding of mission to the missional church is essential. Bosch brought about the new understanding to move away from the ***corpus Christianum*** (Jørgensen

2004:561) to a community, from Constantine to a missional identity, and he refers (Jørgensen 2004:562) to differences between Constantinian and missional identity. From a majority church in the centre of culture to a marginalised minority church; from a mono-cultural religion to a multicultural religion; from world evangelisation accomplished to new evangelisation of every generation; from unchanged structure of the church to ***ecclesia center informanda***; from institution to sojourning; from focus on control to uncontrollable, guided by convictions, focus on control and rules; from institutional resourcefulness to powerlessness of the suffering servant; from a church that is a co-sponsor of cultural to the church as a critic of the cultural (Jørgensen 2004:562).

View of the missional church

To understand the missional church, certain aspects of the church should be established. Niemandt's (2012) view of the missional church is of importance. He understands the church in light of the Trinity and as church in the power of the Spirit. The missional church is the church of the new life sent by God. The church should also be contextual. In this world, the missional church takes its calling in the world very seriously. The relational aspect of the church also takes **koinonia** seriously in light of the Trinity. The kingdom of God is the destination of this church. Discernment is then necessary. Niemandt (2012:s.p.) writes: "Discernment is the core practice of a missional church – seeking the presence or movement of the Triune God in relationship with all of creation."

Snyder (2010:2) explains that there are different models of understanding the church and mission. He refers to the following models: "The church as institution; the church as mystical communion; people of God; the church as sacrament; the church as herald; the church as servant." The missional church has to do with the Kingdom of God. Church in mission has to do with new models. Snyder (2010:18ff) refers to the following models of the Kingdom:

> *"the Kingdom as future hope, the Kingdom as in spiritual experience, the Kingdom as mystical communion, the Kingdom as institutional church, the Kingdom as counter system, the Kingdom as political state, the Kingdom as Christianised culture, the Kingdom as earthly utopia".*

Therefore, the church should be renewed; there are various models of church renewal. We must understand church work in a wonderful way, and come to some kind of synthesis of the church as missional church in the world.

Fleming (2014:53–57) refers to the fact that there are many different ways of dealing with the task of the church. Holiness is sometimes not viewed correctly. People do not understand that holiness is essential for the church. 1 Peter establishes a relation between mission and the holiness of the church. Although we are aliens and exiles, according to 1 Peter, we are called to live holy lives, as a holy priesthood. In the church's identity, holiness and royal priesthood as well as the holy nation have implications for the mission of the church. Christian conduct is also very important. Therefore, a lifestyle of holiness is extremely important. People bear witness to the presence of the church around them.

Van Gelder (2004:425) states that the missional church stands in contrast to the idea of a corporate church and tries to amend the denominational organisational approach to church. Movements of renewal, growth, and effectiveness have been central in this direction. The Trinitarian establishment of the church is, therefore, all the more important. In the past, the colonial church and the church of Christendom had serious challenges. The emphasis on the missional church as the church of the books of Acts referring to the church of the Kingdom of God is, therefore, extremely important. The church has to be the church between the now and the not yet. Through the work of the Spirit, the missional church has given birth to God's mission in the world.

Guder (2005:425) is emphatically of the opinion that we have to understand that the current view on missional church has as its background the engagement of the church with the world. Basic theological questions should be asked and engaging with

the question of the modern world, how the church should be present in the world, and be the church of the ***missio Dei***. Therefore, there should also be a critical engagement with Western theology and how it was understood, and how it can be empowered again to regard the missional church. The missional church has to engage from a comprehensive understanding of how the church is involved in the community, not an inward but an outward way of work and witness (Guder 2005:428). Discipleship and apostleship are thus very important in the missional church. Disciples should be formed (Guder 2005:430). Worship and sacramental practices should also be considered, and must always be inclined towards the world.

Prebble (2014:237) refers to the fact that a missional church has become a buzz word, but that the most important aspect of the missional church is that it should be regarded as the theological rediscovery of the church and mission. The importance of church and mission should be emphasised, and the church should be viewed as a theological concept. A general concept of Christianity should rather be avoided, and the local church should be emphasised as the future of the church. The concept of the emerging church is challenging, but it also has limitations. The missional church was understood not as a goal of God's mission, but as an instrument of God's missional work as a Kingdom–shared mission. The flowering of mission is the Kingdom.

The missional church should always be the church committed to Christ, living for the world with a view to the vulnerable people in need. It should, however, never lose sight of the confession that Christ is the Lord of the church. When it becomes a community of goodwill and loses sight of the One who saves, the true message will also be lost. The missional church should not become a general church without radical allegiance to the triune God. It is God's church, related to Christ the crucified one. It must be missional in its calling to follow Christ.

Koopman (2008:241) asks for a vulnerable church in a vulnerable world towards an ecclesiology of vulnerability. He explains that the church is in a vulnerable world and that the church should also be vulnerable in this vulnerable world, in order to be a true church of God. Faith has to do with the fact that we are living in a vulnerable world

and that we have seen the vulnerability of God in this vulnerable world. Therefore, the church is called to be a church for the most vulnerable (Koopman 2008:246). The message of hope is then viewed in the way in which the vulnerable church in the vulnerable world brings hope for all the people in different situations (Koopman 2008:253):

> *"It clearly demonstrates that the vulnerability of the church, humans, and the triune God is not a surrender to the threatened powers of the world, but a victory in the midst of seaming defeats, light amidst darkness, and joy in the midst of sorrow. The royal church awaits the dawning of the day when the reality of victory in Christ will be fully actualized, operationalized and fulfilled."*

Becoming the missional church

To explain how churches can become missional, MacIlvaine (2010:216–219) shows that the church can become missional, through being involved in the community and entering into relation with the world around it, while answering to the crises in the world. The crises in the world also elicit questions about leadership development. Spiritual, cultural, mid-life, interpersonal, moral, situational, health, manage, and learning crises also lead to missional change. The church should enter into these crises to become a true missional church that is involved in the community.

The crises call for a new engagement from a missional perspective. There should thus be a movement from crises to missional vision (MacIlvaine 2010:224). A renewed relationship with God, communitas, leadership environment, missional initiatives, awareness of the need of missional transition are essential. This implies that the church, as body of Christ and new community, should live as people of God, acknowledging his glory and experiencing his love. Community is also extremely important, and the missional church should seek community with one another in Christ. One should also create an environment of leadership to flourish in the church. More initiatives are needed because the church is never static. Therefore, it is always necessary to develop in a new way.

To achieve this, the following specific steps must be taken:
Step 1: There must be one missional transition.
Step 2: There must be a growth in understanding what it means.
Step 3: Evaluation must take place in the church.
Step 4: Missional experiments must be created.
Step 5: There must be a commitment to include the majority of church members in missional ventures.

Missional churches can also be the way to engage postmodern people (MacIlvaine 2010:233).

Nikolajsen (2013b:464) engages the question of moving away from the past in the Western world, from Christendom to post-Christendom. The relation of the church to the community should be established again in this regard. The church should always be the church of Christ in this world and not be understood in sectarian ways. In a post-Christendom era, the church should consider very important issues, sent by a missionary God, and be a church of **koinonia**, of community, of **diakonia** as servant (Nikolajsen 2013b:466), of **kerugma**, a prophet, and oriented towards the Kingdom of God (Nikolajsen 2013b:469). Mission should, therefore, determine the church's existence in the world. Only from these perspectives can the church really be a true missional church in the world.

To become a missional church, it must become the church under the cross. Living a life under the cross and bearing the cross is necessary. Peterson (2015:164-168) refers to the aspects of suffering in light of Hall's contribution and justifies the whole question of the theology of the cross and the ***Ecclesia Cruci***s. The church, as a small flock, is also the church of the cross. Therefore, we must also refer to mission as ***missiones Crucis*** and the church should be under the cross if it wants to be the true church. For the church to be the true church, it should be the church under the cross, the suffering church, with regard to Luther's understanding of this suffering church. The church is called to participate in this reconciling way in which God saves the world. Suffering should be viewed in the Trinitarian way. Starting with the Spirit and understanding church in suffering as ***Ecclesia Crucis***, the church can be a true missional church.

Dulles (2002:115ff) explains the true church. He mentions that many communities try to be the true church of God and the question of the true and false church remains a serious one. In the beginning, it was explained that the true church is where the proper teaching of the Gospel and the proper administration of the sacrament occur. Dulles (2002:116) explains that Luther expanded this into seven modes: preaching the true word of God; proper administration of baptism; correct form for the supper; powers of the keys; lawful location of the nation of minister; prayer and the singing of psalms in the vernacular, and persecutions.

The Roman Catholics replied to this: the church is one holy Catholic Church. They explained that this is the way to understand the true church. One must, however, explain that there is no clear understanding of what the true church is (Dulles 2002:128). Some view the holiness of the church in society at large, where the church is present as a servant (Dulles 2002:128).

The missional church also has implications for how exponents of mission such as the church growth school view missions. Van Rheenen (2006:26) refers to the strength and limitations of church growth thinking and to the problems concerning church growth. Therefore, the main question still remains: What is the Gospel and how should we view it? Church growth is viewed as a missional alternative to engage people from the perspective of missional orientation towards God and the community. The church growth paradigm should thus be expanded to include the missional paradigm.

The missional church facing the challenges

There are many challenges in the world. The missional church should address these challenges by being the church of Christ in the community. There are different aspects of the church regarding its involvement in the community.

The church must be aware that it may become a church of the elite when it does not consider that it should be there for the community. Spellers (2010:32–35) engages the fact that the episcopal church was sometimes referred to as the church for the

elite and that the missional people of God should be reconsidered anew, in order to understand that the church should engage people of all groups in the areas where they live. This is a crisis concerning the church in the world. People are suffering globally and the question is: Where does the church stand in this regard? To become a missional church is to engage people in their struggles and in their troubles. God's love is clear in the ***missio Dei*** when God enters the world. The missional church should, therefore, be a church that reaches out to the people in the world. The church should be a community of the reign of God; a messenger of the reign of God, and the servant of the reign of God.

We should also engage the extremely serious challenge of COVID-19 in the church. The missional church is involved in society and its challenges. Illnesses such as AIDS and COVID-19 should be addressed. Mpofu (2021:s.p.) writes that the church should become a truly missional church facing the challenges of COVID-19, which disrupted the dynamics of church and society. There is a new opportunity for the church to become a true missional church in this regard by entering into a relation with the people around it. Therefore, it is possible to intersect scientific narratives and religion, in order to produce a new relation in this regard.

Another challenge is migration. The church cannot disregard the plight of these vulnerable people. It should rather engage them with service and love. Magezi (2017:4) writes about the whole issue of migration and how it should be engaged from different disciplines. It should also be approached from various ecclesiological theological responses. There are many challenges in the approaches such as the approach that is limited to particular social contexts. Theological responses also focus on theological motives and ministry praxes. The approach focuses on Israel as a paradigm of how native Christians and hosting nations should treat their migrants. A systematic theological approach focuses on the communion in the triune formulation that responds to the migration crises.

There are also challenges concerning ecumenical relations in mission. Armstrong (2015:241) reviews the church in contemporary, ecumenical missional movements

such as Together towards life in dialogue with the Cape Town commitment and Evangelii Gaudium. He engages the recent documents of the WCC Together towards life 2013, the Lausanne movements Cape Town commitment 2011 and Pope Francis exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium in 2014. The church should, in word and deed, be a missional church reaching out to people in the community, in agreement with Pope Francis. There is a new insight into how the Spirit works. He emphasises that Pope Francis' primary concern is not the church, but how the church in unity in mission should be established, by becoming spiritual joyful communicators of the good news in both word and deed. New ecumenical relations are then possible. The proponents of the missional church regard these relations as extremely important.

Pillay (2015) suggests how missional churches can be developed and lead to new relations, by emphasising the ***missio Dei***, God's mission as well as mission and context. A missional message should be very important. We are experiencing a total missional renaissance that impacts on the whole of the church, globally. We have to observe the church again in new ways so that the church can be the true church of God in light of Nehemiah.

The missional church also has implications for public theology. It is a church in the world. It is radically committed to enhancing the lives of people in the world. Hughson (2011:173–194) explains that the missional church must be emphasised as being missionary by nature. How should the church be relevant in secular society? Hughson (2011:178) refers to sociology and public religion in a secular society. A change is coming about the missional church not being linked to Christendom in all instances. The commitment to Jesus should, however, always be the essence of the church. Leading people out of darkness into God's wonderful light remains essential.

Transforming the community into a responsible community is also very important. Manyaka-Boshielo (2018:s.p.) refers to the fact that it can also be an entrepreneurial church in the community. The church existing for the community must also be entrepreneurial, in order to help the community bring about holistic community transformation by implementing successful enterprise, restoring human identity,

interrelationship, relevant skills, establishing social enterprises in townships, and empowering workmanship. Baron (2019:s.p.) explains the issue of sin and deprivation. We should also discuss corruption in South Africa and the task of the missional church to enter into a new relation with the church, because the canons of Dordt emphatically emphasise that all are sinful and in need of salvation. The missional church should, therefore, engage the community in this regard. Reformed churches must engage in mission regarding corruption and should revisit the canons of Dordt in this regard.

The missional church as the church of Christ

It is extremely important that, in all instances, the missional church should never lose sight of its commitment to Christ Jesus. The church may never become simply another community organisation. It must remain radically committed to Jesus Christ. The salvation in Him should always be the central focus. As it is no longer the church of Christendom, it must be the church of the Crucified and Risen one, who yielded Himself for us. Following Jesus, fellowship, and service with Jesus and one another should remain essential. Honouring him as the one for others should remain the focus of the church.

Chapter 4:

The church of faith

Let us point out the implications and meaning of the church and how the church should be understood. The church is the church of faith. There is nothing more important than to realise that faith in Jesus Christ and in the Triune God is glorious and wonderful. Faith also helps us understand the wonders of the living God. To be in a relation with the living God in order to understand God and to live with God.

Faith

The church is the community of faith. It is important to access the most important aspects of faith, in order to explain the meaning of faith for the church. The church is committed to a relation with the living God. That is what it is all about. The church should be connected to the living God through faith. Hebrews 11 is crucial in this regard.

The structure of Hebrews 11:

"Now faith
is confidence in what we hope for
and assurance about what we do not see.
2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 By faith
we understand that the universe was formed at God's command,
so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
4 By faith
Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did.
By faith
he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings.
And by faith
Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.
5 By faith
Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death:
"He could not be found, because God had taken him away."[a]
For before he was taken, he was commended as one who
pleased God.
6 And without faith
it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe
that he exists
and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
7 By faith
Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save
his family.
By his faith
he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in
keeping with faith.
8 By faith
Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance,
obeyed and went,
even though he did not know where he was going. 9
By faith
he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country;
he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same
promise.

10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

11 And by faith
even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children
because she[b] considered him faithful who had made the promise.
12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead,
came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky
and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

13 All these people were still living
by faith
when they died.
They did not receive the things promised;
they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance,
admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.
14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.
15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left,
they would have had opportunity to return.
16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one.
Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith
Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.
He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,
18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."
[c] 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead,
and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

20 By faith
Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.
21 By faith
Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons,
and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.
22 By faith
Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt
and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.
23 By faith
Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born,
because they saw he was no ordinary child,
and they were not afraid of the king's edict.
24 By faith
Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.
25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God
rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.
26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt,
because he was looking ahead to his reward.
27 By faith
he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger;
he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.
28 By faith
he kept the Passover and the application of blood,
so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.
29 By faith
the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land;
but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

30 By faith
the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.
31 By faith
the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.[d]
32 And what more shall I say?
I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah,
about David and Samuel and the prophets,
33 who through faith
conquered kingdoms,
administered justice,
and gained what was promised;
who shut the mouths of lions,
34 quenched the fury of the flames,
and escaped the edge of the sword;
whose weakness was turned to strength;
and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.
35 Women received back their dead,
raised to life again.
There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released
so that they might gain an even better resurrection.
36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.
37 They were put to death by stoning;[e]
they were sawed in two;
they were killed by the sword.
They went about in sheepskins and goatskins,
destitute, persecuted and mistreated—
38 the world was not worthy of them.
They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

39 These were all commended
for their faith,
yet none of them received what had been promised,
40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together
with us would they be made perfect."

The structure is strongly built on the emphasis on faith. First, the most important aspect in the very beginning is that faith is assurance and knowledge. Faith is certain of hope. Faith acknowledges the Creator and creation. Faith is explained by the faith of those who committed their lives to God and the persecuted who remained steadfast in their faith. Those who believed put their trust in God to change their situation and be with them. Abel was more righteous because he acknowledged God. Henoch confessed his faith in God with his life. Noah acknowledged the warning of God against sin and obeyed Him. Abraham is the shining light of radical commitment to God. Those who believed kept on believing with their eyes on the future and longing for the fatherland. The faith of others such as Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph includes them in the fold of God. Moses is an example of those who continued to have faith in difficult circumstances and experienced God's miracles and providence. The list includes those who kept their faith even under persecution. They had to look to the future of God's deliverance. The agents are clearly demarcated as the three main agents, namely God, the believers, and those who reject the faithful. Faith is all about belief in the living God. The relation with God is established. Persecution and the future are also emphasised.

By the excessive use of faith, quantity is flouted with the implication that faith is all important. As relevance is also extremely well explained, it is also flouted to emphasise the radical aspect of unconditional faith. The implication is clear. All emphasis is on faith. Therefore, the full meaning of faith is explained.
Although this is not a narrative text as such, it contains all the elements typically found in narratives. The implied author is a person of faith. The implied readers are also people of faith whose faith is strengthened by reading or hearing about the people of faith. The characters, events, time setting, and focalisation in the narrative have the main idea to fill the implied reader and the real reader with the fullness of faith.

There is a clear ideological emphasis in the text, namely that faith in the living God is all important. This aspect is further emphasised by focalising the characters in the story.

It is an ulterior narration. It is narrated after the events. It is also extradiegetic, as the events are narrated as primary events. It is also heterodiegetic because the narrator is not part of the events. The narrator is reliable because the events are established in history. The ideological function has to do with the relation of the believer and faith, which is explicitly explained.

Concerning focalisation, it is also clear that the characters are focalised internally. The persons of faith clearly relate to the wonder of faith. This explains total relation to faith. Characterisation is, therefore, also direct because each person of faith knows about the realisation of faith.
The events are so structured that the meaning of each event is clear. The sequence of events dramatically builds up to a final climax. The deep structure undergirds the relation of the believers' faith and God in opposition to those who reject the faith.

Concerning time, the scenic representation amplifies the meaning of the central issue, namely faith. The historical setting causes the implied reader to relate to the events.

The structure, the value of the agents, Grice's maxims, and the narrative imply that faith should be regarded as totally essential in the life of the person seeking God but also for the consequences of this faith. Faith then is not something abstract; it is a reality, with implications for both present and future life.

The church of faith should be the community that lives in a deep relation with the living God, knowing Him and seeing the unseen world. This has implications for mission. Faith in God is the essence of mission. The church of faith should call people to faith. Morris (1981:113) writes in this regard:

> *"Faith is a present and continuing reality. It is not simply a virtue sometimes practiced in antiquity. It is a living thing, a way of life the writer wishes to see continued in the practice of his readers. Faith, he tells us, is a hypostasis of things hoped for."*

Lane (1991:394–395) adds to his explanation:

> *"In the exposition that follows, faith is characterized as a quality of response to God that celebrates the reality of promised blessings and the objective certainty of events announced but as yet unseen (11:1). This understanding is substantiated by a catalogue of persons and events viewed from the perspective of faith in action. The demonstration of the effective power of faith under the old covenant verifies the character and possibilities of faith for the Christian community.*
> *Faith is shown to be a temporal orientation to the future. The eschatological, forward-looking character of faith invests the realm of objective hopes and promises with solidity. It is the property of faith to render hope secure. The writer finds in faith a substantiation of hopes as yet unrealized and events as yet unseen. Faith celebrates now the reality of the future blessings that are secured by the promise of God. It recognizes that it is the future, and not the past, that molds the present. By conferring upon objects of hope the force of present realities, faith enables the people of God to enjoy the full certainty of their future realization."*

This quotation clearly shows that faith is a response to God. In this response, believers accept that God's promises are real. Faith also looks at the future. Faith and hope go together. This is extremely important for the church.

We have to acknowledge that this faith is connected to the living God. Hebrews clearly relates this to the One who offered Himself for others, namely the great high Priest Jesus Christ. Baugh (2006:132) explains that the witnesses should also be regarded as referring to the fulfilment of the promises of faith in Jesus Christ. The new world comes

from Christ but it is also present in the references to the Old Testament believers. Hebrews, however, has everything to do with Jesus. Therefore, faith must be faith in Jesus Christ. The church becomes the true missional church through this faith in Jesus Christ. This faith has meaning for the world. It is something essential. Baker (1997:444) explains this aptly:

> *"Hebrews 11 reveals the depths of faith. Faith is much more than a doctrinal statement or a magical formula to get what we want. It is built on a relationship with God. Faith is active. It is committing our lives to a belief in a reality that is not seen in the world and may never be seen. It's knowing that something is real even when it seems impossible. It's knowing something is so true that we trust our life to it."*

This again emphasises the aspect of a living relationship with God. There is radical commitment. The church should realise this and should live in this truth. DeSilva (2004:781) writes that the community had to deal with new challenges such as losing their property and so on, but they were called to remain faithful because they saw the faith of those who went before them and how they kept the faith in God (DeSilva 2004:786):

> *"Read Hebrews 11:1–12:3 The author's encomium (praise) of the examples of faith aims at arousing emulation among the hearers. One of the direct purposes of the funeral eulogy was to reaffirm the commitment of the living to the values exemplified by the deceased. The hearers would go through a mental process of comparing the accomplishments of the deceased with their own achievements and would be aroused to emulate the deceased as they would secure a praiseworthy remembrance as well. The author of Hebrews praises the hearer of the Jewish Scriptures and the intertestamental period writings for their demonstration of faith. This was a means both of defining how faith 'operates' in this world and of rousing the hearers to run their own race with excellence, having all these successful runners as spectators."*

Brown (1997) explains that we should also acknowledge that the revelation in the New Testament clearly explains that Jesus is the Son of God and that we should acknowledge him as such. All the different aspects reveal that He is the One who came, so that revelation can occur from above to the world.

Goppelt (1982:125–129) explains that faith was a very important issue in the New Testament. This also implied faith by Christ. Christ's faith, but also faith *in* Christ, so that both must be understood in the best way possible for the community to understand how to deal with the relation with God. Jesus himself described faith, but faith was necessary in Jesus. The content and essence of faith are clearly described by the way in which Paul dealt with faith. Paul explains very clearly that the content of faith is Christ Jesus himself, that we should view the self-sacrificing offering of Jesus Christ as the context and object of faith. Therefore, trust in God always has to do with faith in Jesus Christ, so that we can understand how to believe in Jesus Christ and how to live with Him as the living Son of God. Paul always linked faith to salvation.

Bruce (1977b:100) writes:

> ***"Since his first encounter with Jesus, like his continued experience of him, impressed on him that Jesus was the risen Lord, this aspect remains primary in his consciousness. Yet the risen Lord, with whom he enjoyed immediate acquaintance, was in his mind identical with the historical Jesus, with whom he had not enjoyed such acquaintance. Hence perhaps his characteristic word-order 'Christ Jesus' the enthroned Christ who is at the same time the crucified Jesus."***

Jeremias (1975:165) also refers to the important aspects of faith in the Synoptic Gospels. There are not as many instances referring to faith in the Synoptic Gospels as there are in Paul. Jesus calls for the acceptance of salvation, and to trust in God for that. Faith can move mountains. Even weak faith in God is like a mustard seed that can produce so much. The validity of faith is, therefore, very important to be understood in this sense.

What should be emphasised concerning the church of faith? One should consider that when referring to ecclesiologists such as Küng, Moltmann, Van de Beek, Volf, and Migliore, in order to understand that faith always remains extremely important and that we have to understand the wonders of faith and how we view that in different instances.

Kärkkäinen (2002:211ff) writes about different aspects of ecclesiology. He refers to many different theologians who wrote about ecclesiology, such as John Zizioulas, Hans Küng, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, James McClendon, and Lesslie Newbigin. It is very important to rediscover Christianity. Kärkkäinen understands that there is a new threshold of a new era, and how the church should relate to the industrial captivity of the church. The question is: How can the church be understood in a postmodern post-Christian age? The loss of the church's missional character is very disconcerting. Churches should revert to their missional character. Kärkkäinen (2002:226) writes:

> *"The church and the world are there for [being] mutually and intimately related but not along the traditional lines of 'secular' and 'holy'. The relationship is more nuanced and complex. Both church and world are 'secular' realities, in the original sense of the Latin term saeculum (literally: heaven) which refers to time, to the temporal period between fall and eschaton. The church's profession of Christ's lordship over earthly rulers authorizes it to speak to the world in God's name. But this changed dramatically after Christianity became established as the religion of the state. The change of status for Christians was sudden and unpredictable, from harassed and persecuted counter movement to the establishment of Rome."*

What could Christians envision for the future, other than an unprecedented opportunity to further and fulfil the coming of God's Kingdom, now that even an Emperor was favourable to God's cause?". Kärkkäinen (2002:227) concludes:

> *"What is equally tragic is that despite the loss of political and moral power, most Christian communities continue to embrace some form of Constantianism, a mindset totally foreign to a postmodern, post-Christian world. The first two thousand years or so of its history have not yet convinced the Christian church of the need to retain its identity as another city. What is the place of the church in [the] third millennium amidst the 'risk culture' of postmodern cacophony?"*

Kärkkäinen (2002:233) also refers to the question: What will the church really be? And how must we understand the church and what should be regarded as the true church, and how should we regard the church to be the true church? How should we enter into life after true church, to understand what it is all about and how to live as church among the nations as the people of God?

This should remain very important for the person's relation with the living God. That means very important issues of faith should be considered. First, faith is a gift from God. Faith is not how we view ourselves, and something from ourselves. Faith is a reaction from ourselves, influenced by the Holy Spirit, regarding how God helps us understand the fullness and glory of God. Faith, therefore, is not something from ourselves; it is something from God. Faith is something to which we ourselves are related. We believe, and it is not that Jesus or God believes in our instances, but that we believe that we have to believe. Faith is, therefore, essential for the church. The church is regarded as the church of faith because faith is so extremely important and is the foundation of the church.

What is faith all about? Faith is all about acknowledging Jesus Christ as Saviour, living in Christ, having the living Christ in us, acknowledging the relation with Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as Saviour, but also as the One who leads us forth into a new community and a new life. This faith is also important for us to understand how we should be engaged in the glory of God and in explaining that glory. Faith is also explained as a certain knowledge of, and a true belief in the things that we know and the things that we do not see. This is challenged in many instances at present. Dawkins

(2006:137–189) challenges the belief in God and asks if it is possible to believe in God? Is it possible to regard it as still relevant? Is it possible to say that there is a living God, and that we should engage in that because the church is the church of faith? When Dawkins, for instance, rejects the belief in God, and states that there is probably no God, he rejects the view of faith in the living God, and the living God is then rejected as the One in whom we find ourselves and our faith. Faith is, therefore, much more important than simply relating to one another as a community of faith; it is also faith in the living God and acknowledging that God is alive. It is confession in the world. Faith is the confession that God is alive and that we should acknowledge God and be in a relation with the living God. Therefore, faith also has to do with how the church lives in accordance with faith. If the church has faith, it has to explain and live that faith out in the world. The world must see the faith in Jesus Christ in the church. In the church, it is possible to reveal the glory of God and the wonders of faith in Him. It is in this sense that we also have to proclaim the living God. We have to proclaim that God is alive and that we also see the revelation to the church in the living God. The church must, therefore, always be a community of faith. It is impossible for the church not to believe. If the church does not believe, it is no longer a church. If the church does not explain that the wonders of faith are also in its theology, the essence of what it is all about, the church has to regard itself as not truthful and not available to all. The church should always be the new community living in God and explaining God to all. The church should be the community of faith. The church should explain to the world that God is the living God, and that the church is, in this regard, also the community of faith.

The community of faith means that the church has a relation for every member with the other member. The members are linked to one another in faith. They have koinonia in faith because they believe that they are one in faith. Faith is the reason why they believe, and why they live their faith out in the community. That is the way in which faith is explained in the world because the community has these wonderful experiences of the living God and faith in the living God. The community is, therefore, also the community that lives out a very important issue, so that in their relation to one another, this community is a community that has faith in God. This does not mean

that the community rejects people in any sense, but they are the community of faith, because Jesus is honoured and regarded as the One of faith.

Kärkäinnen (2009:15–21) also explains that there is a new renaissance in Trinitarian thinking and that people are talking about the Trinity in a new way. Communion Theologies are emerging. We must also understand the practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is viewed as a new way to engage the present challenges in this society. The Trinity is viewed in context among African theologians. We must not reject the old ideas about Trinity and this must be emphasised in totally new ways. This has definite implications for the faith of the church.

It is very important that Ridderbos (1975:172) refers to the fact that faith is faith in Jesus Christ, and the church to be the church of faith has to be the church that believes in the living Jesus Christ and understands how to live with Jesus Christ in this way. Salvation is the result of faith in Jesus Christ and this means that grace is observed in the faith of the believer.
With regard to the Old Testament, Paul explains that faith is not a work, but an acceptance of the glory of God, and that faith is given by God so that we can be saved. Ridderbos (1975:172) writes:

> *"Man is justified not on the ground of what he is himself or has or achieves, but precisely on the ground of that which he does not possess and which he in himself does not have at his disposal, but which he must receive, obtain, by faith."*

Therefore, the church is the church of faith because it is a new way of existence before God and a new relation with the living God. It is very important for the church of faith and for mission to understand that faith has to do with the new relation with the living God and to understand this in that sense.

Exponents of faith and the church

The reformers

First, let us observe Luther and his view of the church. Exalto (1990:104–105) explains that Luther had a clear vision of the church linked to the Word of God. God's Word must be the first and foremost aspect of the church. The Word of God is in the church. Baptism and the eucharist are also very important. For Luther, communion with God is important. On the issue of discipline and the offices of the church, Luther always regarded these in relation to Jesus so that the church service acknowledges Jesus as Lord. Luther set himself against the positivism of the Roman Church, and regarded some people' spiritualism as not acceptable.

Concerning Calvin, Van 't Spijker (1990:143–160) mentions that it was extremely important for Calvin to distinguish between the visible and the invisible church. For Calvin, the visible church is a church in this world full of problems and challenges. The invisible church is the true church of God. The true elected people of God lived before God and they know God. They lived in this total relationship with the living God. Very important also for him is that the church should emphasise Scripture and the fact that the church and election are linked to one another. He mentions that there are certain ways in which we can see who is chosen by God through their confession of faith, their lives, and their commitment to the sacraments whereby they honour the One and only God in Christ. Calvin wanted to establish the church as the church of Christ. Van 't Spijker (1990:174) mentions that a relation with Christ is all important and that we should always regard this as implicit for the church.

According to Wendebourg (2018:217–220), Martin Luther emphasised very strongly the implications of the church that is from God and should be regarded in light of God. It is a communion of those who believe in Christ. It is also a hidden church. Although it is a reality, it is hidden. He explains that the church is closely linked to Christ and that all emphasis must be on Christ. The doctrine of justification plays an extremely important role (Wendebourg 2018:226). Calvin also plays a very important

role (Wendebourg 2018:231). He has the notion of the invisible church, the true church is the invisible church, but one can also recognise the true church in the world by the pure preaching of the Word of God and the lawful administration of the sacraments. The elect is also closely linked to the communion of the faithful (Wendebourg 2018: 232). Discipline in the church is also very important, according to Calvin (Wendebourg 2018:233). Although he comprehends the invisible church, he also understood that the church should be visible in the world (Wendebourg 2018:233). He strongly rejected the ecclesial downfall in the church of the Pope, mentioning that there may still be some messages of the true church, the false church, like baptism, and even through Christians in the congregation.

Concerning the Reformation, Kärkkäinnen (2002:51–55) writes that Luther and Calvin emphasised the proclamation of the Word of God and the correct administration of the sacraments. For Calvin, there was something new in the issue of confession of true faith, and life according to the Word of God. Therefore, we should live according to the Word of God, according to Calvin. He accepted the whole question of the commandments. Although, for Calvin, the church is visible, he also has a notion of the invisible church and he understands that the church is also more than the visible church in the world, but that it should become visible by the grace of God. It is very important to understand this from the point of view of the covenant. The covenant plays a very important role in Calvin's view of both the church and faith. Calvin and Zwingli emphasised very strongly that faith is necessary for the use of the sacraments.

Prill (2017:8ff) asks a very important question: Is it correct to say that the Reformers did not have a strong commitment to the whole question of mission, and that in their commitment they did not realise that they would have to do missionary work on a worldwide scale? Prill mentions that a few scholars opine that the Reformers were not totally committed to mission. He then asks the question: What is true mission? Is mission only the aspect of going far away to people who do not believe? Or should we also realise that the Reformers had a strong belief that the Christian gospel should be spread through those who are living in their situation. He refers to the fact that many of the Reformers and their followers explained the truth of the Gospel in the

churches in cities and so helped Protestant cities to be established and led many people to Christ in these Protestant cities. One can say that they were also committed to mission work in the sense of the emerging Protestant cities (Prill 2017:36). Prill then continues to say that the message of the Gospel, the message of justification, should be realised with regard to the message of the church. We should always realise that this is also very important, as is the proclamation of the Gospel (Prill 2017:51). It remains important to mention that the Reformers emphasised God, as the author of mission, in many instances, and that the church as instrument of God's mission (Prill 2017:56) should also be acknowledged.

What then is the motive for mission? As far as the Reformers are concerned, Prill (2017:63) explains that the motive for mission is the perspective of a passion for God and for people:

> *"The Reformers emphasised not only the lost nature of human beings and their need of salvation but also their obligation to exclusively worship the God of the Bible."*

The response to the mission was faith in Christ. Mission always calls people to faith in Christ (Prill 2017:64ff.). This also has to lead to good works. It is also a spiritual battle (Prill 2017:69ff.), but one has to enter the world by proclaiming the Word of God to people in need. It is a fact that the Bible is the book of mission. Prill (2017:78) opines that the reformers strongly emphasised mission in a new way. They understood that God is the One who is the true author of mission, that it is God's mission. They also radically emphasised that God has inspired the Word as the source of mission. The Word should be the one and only source for the church and for the world. The church as the church of the living Christ should reach out to all in the world through the Gospel.

Although the reformers had a clear idea of how the church should glorify God, they did not pay enough attention to the message of salvation in the world. Mission remained limited and the church did not view the world in the sense of bringing all to Christ.

Barth

Bender (2018:362) refers to the fact that Barth was negative regarding the church, but also understood later on that God's grace is noticed in the church. All self-justification must, however, be rejected. There is hope in the church only because the Gospel is proclaimed. It is also God's judgment in the church (Bender 2018:363). The judgement of God's "No" to the people in the church is also God's "Yes" in Christ for the church. He changed from a critical to a constructive ecclesiology. Bender (2018:366) writes:

> *"Therefore, in spite of the imperfection of the church and its sin as witnessed throughout history, It lives not only in contradiction to the will of God, but, because of the divine work within it that both calls it into existence and preserves it, It lives in correspondence to the divine will as well. The church's true existence as divinely constituted is known only to faith for it is invisible yet this invisible power of the Spirit, calls the church into visible existence – the church is therefore both invisible and visible, the invisible becoming visible. The church should always be a community in a living relation to the living Jesus through the Spirit and never be a community that is only limited to itself. Therefore the church also had the witness to the world."*

Hans Küng

Küng (1978:125) clearly emphasises that the church is the church of Jesus Christ, the people of God today in freedom. For Küng, freedom is essential for the church of faith. The church is also the creation of the Spirit and, therefore, the church lives in new freedom because the church was called to be the church of the Spirit. The emphasis is on the church in relation to the Spirit. The church is the body of Christ because its members, as the body of Christ, are baptised in Christ. The fellowship at the Lord's Supper is the guarantee of belonging. The church should always regard its tasks and calling in the sense and in the freedom of belonging to Christ (Küng 1978:151). Freedom means that we are not own own, but that we belong to God (Küng 1978:153). Küng (1978:153) explains:

> *"Freedom means the obligation of living not according to this world but according to the will of God (cf. Rom. 12:2). The new freedom means a new 'service' (Rom. 7:6), the service of a 'living and true God' (1 Thess. 1:9) and of 'Christ' (Rom. 14:18; 16:18), and hence of 'one another' (Gal. 5:13; cf 1 Cor. 9:19). For the Christian, freedom means an attitude of openness and service towards God and our neighbours. The man who is no longer anxious about himself loses his 'fear' (Rom. 8:15) and is granted 'peace and joy' (Rom. 14:17; 15:13; Gal. 5:22)."*

God clearly asks the church and its members for faith and love in Him. We can only be free in the spirit when we belong to Christ and we are renewed by the spirit. The spirit links us to God who brings about a new community (Küng 1978:164).

Küng (1978:165) also defines the church as the holy eschatological community of faith. The Spirit leads the church to fullness in the eschatological expectation of freedom. This freedom is freedom in the Spirit (Küng 1978:174.) Küng (1978:199) writes:

> *"For all the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work where and when he wills, he is not a Spirit of what enthusiasm, but a Spirit bound to the definite eschatological saving action of God in Jesus Christ".*

The church is the body of Christ. We must, therefore, acknowledge the strong link between Jesus Christ and the church. The Word proclaims Jesus Christ and through the Word we are in a relation with the living Christ (Küng 1978:220). Christ should be acknowledged as the Head of the church (Küng 1978:236). Küng (1978:291) emphasises that unity of the church must be found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a whole and the basis for unity must be in the relation with this Gospel and with the One God. The church is also Catholic, that is important for those outside and inside the church (Küng 1978:318). According to Küng (1978:235),

> *"[i]t is the believers who have been set apart from the sinful word by Gods saving act in Christ and have entered a new Christian existence who make up the original 'communio sanctorum'; they constitute the Church of the saints, and hence the holy Church. The Church is holy by being called by God in Christ to be the communion of the faithful, by accepting the call to his service, by being separated from the world and at the same time embraced and supported by his grace.*

The church is also Apostolic, as it belongs to the teachings of the Apostles (Küng 1978:345).

Kärkkäinnen (2002:103) also refers to Küng, whose view is that the church lives in this world. It is a church of sinful people for sinful people, and faith does not mean that we emphasise certain expectations but that we live in a close relationship with Jesus in the sense of sacrifice and self-giving. Küng also mentions that it is important to note that the people of God are humble people and not an eclesivistic group. They are always the people of God in relation to the living God (Kärkkäinnen 2002:107.) Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the church is, for Küng, the church in freedom to serve God.

He should have paid more attention to the freedom in Christ alone. Freedom is never general and the reference to it should be explained more clearly. To live in freedom in the church is, however, extremely important.

Bram van de Beek

Van de Beek (2012) refers to the church as the living body of Christ. Regarding the question of faith, the most important aspect concerning the church and faith, for Van de Beek, is that the church is the church of the crucified Christ. The church should be regarded in light of the cross of Jesus Christ. The God of the cross is One. The church is the church of the God of the cross. Radical commitment to Jesus who died on the cross is essential. The people of the church no longer belong to themselves; they belong to Jesus; they find their identity in Him. They do not even belong to this world; they belong

to Christ and the eschatological reality of belonging to Christ. For that reason, because they belong to Christ, they are, in a sense, strangers in this world. They live a life not for this world, but for eternity. To establish this, the eucharist is very important. They see everything in light of the eucharist (Van de Beek 2012:13). This also means that, in baptism, they belong to Christ. This is very important for understanding the Church as the people of God and the Temple of God. They belong to Christ and, therefore, the body of Christ is such an important metaphor or image of the church (Van de Beek 2012:16). The unity of the church and the belonging to Christ are extremely important. The church belongs to Christ. Christ makes the church possible. In the church, we are related to Christ the living One (Van de Beek 2012:21). In this sense, the Holy Spirit makes a church possible because the church belongs to the living Christ. The church should always be viewed in light of the cross. Where do you see Christ in the world in the church? Through the Holy Spirit, the church is the image of the indwelling of Christ in the world. This means that the cross is essential for understanding Christ in this regard.

Suffering is very important regarding the cross. Jesus Christ's suffering implies that the church is the church of suffering (Van de Beek 2012:25). The church carries the cross of Jesus Christ. The church also prays for the world, as Christ prayed on the cross to forgive the sins of the world (Van de Beek 2012:26). Christ was also crucified for our sins and, therefore, the church carries the sins of the world in that it belongs to Christ and is in Christ on the cross. This means that there is another possibility for enhancing the world around us. The world will not get better. The world is also under the cross of Christ and the church is the image of the world under the cross of Christ. One cannot speak ideally about the church. The cross is the reality of the church, but the unity of the church is thus extremely important for Van de Beek. Unity should be established because the unity in Christ matters and that makes it possible, through baptism and the eucharist, for the church to exist in this world. In the unity of Christ, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the One God, the church should also be the one in unity. Therefore, baptism is so important, because baptism into the church is this unity in the church.

It is also very important to establish the holiness of the church. We clearly observe and

experience the un-holiness of the church in this world (Van de Beek 2012:51). Radical criticism is lodged against the church for its un-holiness. The holiness must be viewed differently. This means that we are given to God; that is why we are holy. In Christ, we are living with God. Holiness means that, when we are separated, we establish the holiness of the church in relation with God. Therefore, the church belongs to God, in Jesus Christ on the cross. That is the reason why the church is holy, not because the church lives according to certain rules and regulations, but because it belongs to God (Van de Beek 2012:59).

The early church showed its love for the people around it. It showed that it is holy by the way in which it treats others. The Roman Emperor Julianus tried to bring the worship of the old gods back. He explained that the reason why the heathen did not flourish, was because they did not do what the Christians were doing: looking after the poor and the destitute. A church must show that it belongs to the living Christ and because it belongs to Christ, it knows Christ and lives with Him (Van de Beek 2012:67). The Catholicity of the church or the fact that it is a general church is very important. The church is universal and the Apostles took the church into the world. In Jesus Christ, the church brought salvation to people around it (Van de Beek 2012:72). The church is there from the beginning to the end because it brings the Word of God to the people. It brings the Gospel to the whole world (Van de Beek 2012:79), to all the people (Van de Beek 2012:81). The church is Catholic in the sense that it regards salvation from all sins, but that does not mean that sin is not taken seriously. There is also the aspect of confessing our sins so that we can establish its importance. The church forgives sin (Van de Beek 2012:85), but the sin must also be confessed, because the danger of sin, the earnestness of sin should be established. But the church is also a Catholic church because of all the presents and gifts of the church.

According to the Apostolicity of the church, it should be established that the church is the church of the Apostles, of the message of the Apostles. As Paul said to the community, he wants to establish what he receives among the churchgoers, especially the communication of the sacraments (Van de Beek 2012:93). Confessing in the Word of God and also the sacraments, preaching the Word of God is very important. In the

Reformation, this was viewed in light of the relation with the Word of God and the sacraments. A very important aspect of Van de Beek's view is the relationship of church and Kingdom of God. Van de Beek explains that we should be very careful not to view the Kingdom of God in light of this world being renewed. Van de Beek is radically critical towards this kind of understanding the Kingdom. For him, the Kingdom has to do with Christ as the Son of man in Daniel, and this Kingdom of God is eschatologically bound to the Living Jesus Christ. In this world, the church is not working towards improving the world, but towards proclaiming the cross of Jesus Christ. We cannot colonise the world, the church is the broken church in the broken world, because it is under the Word of God and has to proclaim this Word in the broken world.

Van de Beek (2012:126ff.) understands the Kingdom of God in a totally new way. He understands the Kingdom of God in the suffering of Christ on the cross. He as the Son of man takes the sins of the world onto Himself. In Christ, the world is judged. The church has to be critical towards the new movement where the Kingdom of God is regarded as established here and now and people want the Kingdom of God to come into this world. The Kingdom of God is against the powers of the world, the powers of politics, and the powers of people in the world. The Kingdom of God is the rejection of the powers of the world and the power that is against God and the answer to this is the eucharist where the community of God links the eucharist to people. It is also critical to the idea that the church should be a community of charismatic faith, in order to become, in that sense, the answer to the problems of the world.

Mission is not trying to better the world as the Kingdom of God. Mission is to belong to Christ on the cross, to suffer with Him, and to proclaim that we have suffered with Him. We have to suffer with Him in this world. We are the suffering church. Therefore, baptism is belonging to Christ in His death (Van de Beek 2012:141). The power of the glory is seen in the church of the cross, and that should always be proclaimed. The church is in crisis. The world is in crisis. Christ came to die for it. In the past, the crisis was the calling of people to return to God. The present crisis is the people rejecting any reference to God. In this world, they want to become their own answer to the problems of the world. The church is also in crisis because it wants to relate to this

world becoming a better world, and not relate to the cross of Jesus and to the judgment of Jesus on the world. When the church is the church of judgment, it belongs to Jesus on the cross and the judgment of the world lies in what Jesus has done. Therefore, in the liturgy, we must meet Christ in deep supplication in acknowledging our sins, admitting that we are also wounded (Van de Beek 2012:184). The church must be with Christ, and the only way the church can be with Christ is through the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit brings the church and all other aspects of the church into the most profound relation with the living Christ, the church understands that we must be seen, through the Holy Spirit, as belonging, helping us to belong to the living Christ, and belonging to Him in future.

As always, Van de Beek's emphasis on the cross as essential for the church is extremely relevant. Christ is the Christ of the cross. The church is the body of the Christ of the cross. However, a clear eschatological view of the church pointing to the future in Christ is lacking. A stronger emphasis on the unity in faith is also necessary.

Daniel Migliore

Migliore (2004:116) explains that faith is the essence of the church. Faith is the simple trust and confidence in the benevolence of God, extended to us by Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Migliore understands faith as the end of all idolatry, either of the self or of others. We have to enter the realm of God (Migliore 2004:116). We have to make room for others; faith is not regarding ourselves as all-important. We have to enter to the freedom of God, and this has to be understood from God's grace.

The church's calling is to do mission. For this reason, the church is not something or someone that is understood only by the church itself. The Triune God in the missio Dei is a God of mission. The church should always be regarded as the church entering into the realm of God and doing the mission of God as God sends forth the church (Migliore 2004:266). In mission, the threefold office of Christ is also very important. Because Christ can be understood as the first true missionary, the church should explain the mission of God in this regard. If the church follows Christ, it should always follow Christ

to the cross; it should be the church of the cross. It is essential to follow Christ on and to the cross, so that the cross can be confirmed and explained. Through the Spirit, this mission is also explained and the mission of the church should always be regarded as from the Spirit (Migliore 2004:267).
The church is totally different from a club in the world. The church is the living church of the living Christ of the cross, through the Holy Spirit. In the power of the Spirit, as a gift to the world, the church must initiate new situations. Migliore (2004:268–269) writes:

> *"In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, all receive a new identity and enter into reconciled and reconciling community. In this way, the church anticipates, however partially and brokenly, the coming reign of the Triune God."*

Although his understanding of faith and of life in faith is extremely important, more attention must be paid to the way in which the church should become an instrument of mission.

Jurgen Moltmann

Moltmann (1977:73ff) finds it very important to realise that the church of Jesus Christ has a specific relation with Him as an eschatological person. The Messianic mission of Jesus and his passion should be recognised. The church becomes the community of the cross with liberation from the compulsion of sin (Moltmann 1977:87); from the idols of power (Moltmann 1977:89), and from God's forsakenness (Moltmann 1977:93.) The church should also be a liberated church. A church for liberation, living in this new relation with the living Christ. Moltmann (1977:104) writes:

> *"The church exists if, and to the extent to which, men are obedient to the rule of the Servant of God, and received their liberation from his self-giving. Participation in a liberating rule of Christ through a new way of life presupposes that men have experienced and believe in this liberation through the lordship of Christ in themselves. Therefore, there is a specific*

kind of fellowship in the church of those who proclaim the risen Christ. But there is also a longing for a feast without end in Jesus Christ, in the risen Christ himself."

Life should be lived with Jesus Christ (Moltmann 1977:114). The church should also view itself in the friendship of Jesus. Jesus' open friendship must be realised. Moltmann (1977:123) writes:

"If we enquire about the promises of his presence in this way, we find three different groups of assurances in the New Testament.
A. By virtue of his identifying assurance, Christ is present in the apostolate, in the sacraments, and in the fellowship of the brethren.
B. By virtue of his identifying assurance, Christ is present in the 'least of the brethren'.
C. By virtue of his identifying assurance, Christ is present as his own self in his Parousia."

Moltmann (1977:150) also refers to the way in which the church should relate to other religions. We must warn against absolutism because we have a new situation in the world. We should guard against absolutising faith. Moltmann (1977:155) also warns against the relativism of enlightenment, stating that a church should take up the beliefs of other religions in its faith. As far as dialogue is concerned, we should enter into a relationship with one another. Moltmann (1977:163) writes:

"For Christianity the dialogue with the world religions is part of the wider framework of the liberation of the whole creation for the coming kingdom. It belongs within the same context as the conversation with Israel and political and social passion for freer, [more just] and more habitable world. Christianity's dialogistic profile ought to be turned to the future of the liberating and redeeming kingdom in the potentialities and powers of the world religions. That is a profile which Christianity can only acquire in dialogue with others."

The church should also expect the coming of the King in the full Kingdom of God as the Messianic church, as the church longing for the fullness of the Kingdom, the coming Kingdom in the Messianic church, and it will look to the future in this regard (Moltmann 1977:196). The church is also the church in the power of the Holy Spirit. It should become a fellowship of friends (Moltmann 1977:314). In a community, we should live in this relationship with the Holy God.

Kärkkäinnen (2002:126ff) opines that Moltmann has a very strong Christological focus because he wants to talk about a messianic implication of the church. Therefore, the church must also be viewed in the passion of Christ (Kärkkäinnen 2002:128). The church should always be a church of commitment and community, a church for the others (Kärkkäinnen 2002:129.) The church is always in the power of the Holy Spirit and that is how the church should be understood in its mission in the world and to deal with the mission of the world.
His views become too general. The relevance of the church, as body of Christ and different to all other communities, needs much more attention. Faith in Christ should also be radically explained as the essence of the church.

Miroslav Volf

Volf (1998:173) warns against individualistic faith. Faith is in communion. The church is then in the image of the Trinity. God is not a lonely God but a God of communion. Faith is then never our act to receive the grace of God. God gives faith. But we are not passive. We believe in receptive activity. Communion with God is also reflected in the communion of the church. In this respect, the church of faith is also the church that shows allegiance to the Trinity (Volf 1998:160). Volf develops a non-hierarchical but essential communal ecclesiology. He also wants to develop a culturally sensitive and culturally critical ecclesiology. He is deeply concerned about the transmission of faith. How do we receive faith for salvation? The church is instrumental in mediating faith. Although the gift is not from the church, faith is promised to the entire congregation, and always has a communal character. The church remains essentially important.

Faith is found in the church (Volf 1998:174). This, however, also means that faith should also lead to entrusting our life to God. The Spirit tells us to have faith. The believers are in union with one another. The Spirit is the One in all. Communion with the Triune God is possible in the Spirit. The relationship is important.
Croasmun and McAnnally-Linz (2017:3-4) explain that Volf also tells us to have a good life. The Trinitarian God is the God of love. God creates out of love. The God of love redeems. The God of love indwells through Christ and the Holy Spirit in people. Creation is called to consummation by the God of love. There will be a world of love. Human beings are created for God to indwell in them. In this regard, the church is also crucial for human flourishing:

> *"Human beings are created to be indwelled by God – that is, for God to be in them and to work through them – and in a different sense by one another. To be human is to be created for this indwelling."*

Schwöbel (2017:65-68) explains that hope is possible for Volf because of the communion of the church with God in hope. The relation of the church with God is a communion of the triune God. Human flourishing is possible because God makes it possible. As Creator, He encounters the human in a creative relationship. Human destiny is, therefore, essential for the understanding of what it means to be human, also in other religions. To live the good life means to channel our desires to the source of love, namely the triune God. Love for God and love for human beings must always be in a relation together (Marandiuc 2017:144). Volf (1998:199-200) writes:

> *"The correspondence of ecclesial to trinitarian communion is always lived on the path between baptism, which places human beings into communion with the triune God, and the eschatological new creation in which this communion is completed. Here the correspondence acquires an inner dynamic, moving between the historical minimum and the eschatological maximum. For a sojourning church, only a dynamic understanding of its correspondence to the Trinity is meaningful. If the church remains at a statically understood minimum of correspondence to the Trinity, it misses*

> *possibilities God has given it along with its being; if by contrast it reaches for a statically understood maximum, it risks missing its historical reality, and certainly if it claims to realize this maximum, its self-understanding turns into ideology."*

Kärkkäinnen (2002:141) writes that, according to Volf, Christ is present in the church. The church can be understood there where Christ is present. The presence of Christ is important, but people must assemble in the Name of Christ in the church. It is not only in a dogmatic way that the church is understood not only from a dogmatic point of view, but people are committed to Christ in the life of the true church. Therefore, according to Kärkkäinnen (2002:141), Volf opines that the churches must acknowledge the fact that, in accordance with their being called and endowed by the Spirit of God, all members of the church portray and offer the grace of God through their actions and words (1 Peter 4:10–11).

Volf remains too general in his view of community. The community in the Trinity cannot be made applicable to the church in the way in which he does. This community is different from the community in the Trinity.

Adrio König

König (1983:118) refers to the church of faith as the community of believers because faith in God is essential, not because it is simply a kind of belief, but because it is deeply intrinsic in their relation with the living God. The essence of faith is not things, but persons. Faith is also trust, and must also be viewed as what it really is, trust in the living God. The radical way in which God puts us right with him to obtain righteousness is through faith. That is possible because the faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ and this means that we put our trust in Him, in his cross, and in his resurrection. There is only one hope and that is trust in the living Lord. No one but Christ can stand in for us because of his deliverance (König 1983:125). This also means that faith is obedience to God (König 1983:127).

The church of faith is also a community involved in society because obedience means that we are also part of society and want to bring about a new situation (König 1983:128). We should warn against dualism. Creation implies that the church should be involved in society. Christ remains the Lord of all life and Christ's glory must be proclaimed. He is Lord of all (König 1983:212–214). König also refers to the fact that the structural church is important to confess to Christ in this world. The church walked a path that was not always beneficial to others, in so far as what happened in South Africa. We need a new way towards the future. The unity of the church is therefore crucial (König 1983:233). We should be able to share in the future (König 1983:236). His emphasis on the structural unity is important, but it should always be viewed in light of the one true faith. Faith makes the church possible. In faith, in Christ, true unity is found.

It is clear that the church in mission should be a church committed to Jesus Christ in faith. It is also the church of communion with the triune God and with one another in faith. Life is new in faith in the living God. This faith is always faith in the crucified One. In this regard, Van de Beek is totally correct. In this world, we see the crucified One. We long for the new life of the resurrected One.

Other exponents

Other exponents are also relevant in this regard. Avis' book (2018) is extremely important. Issues regarding church mission and community that have implications for missions should be visited. The book of Schoeman (2020) is also helpful.

Mannion (2012:24–26) is of the opinion that ecclesiology should call for response and humility because of God embracing the risk of loving the world. The challenge of the church is very clear: not all engagements with the world are beneficial to the church and the world. The way of interacting with the world is very important. The signs of our times must be discerned, and we all have to be humble in our endeavours. The problem is that, in contemporary times, we forget about the doctrine of creation and providence, which emphasise that God is the One who brought it all into existence.

In his communication, Barth explains that in the incarnation Jesus shows us that He is a humble God and that we, in the relation with God, also have to be humble. We have to imitate God self, God's loving in his self-communication. That means that we also have to take risks in following Jesus Christ. We need sacramental ecclesiology, to emphasise that the doctrine of creation shows that God emptied himself self-humbly in his creation.
Pernigotto (2012:43) refers to the problem that the church is often a place of exclusion in an inter-cultural community. The question is: How should the church react to culture, and how should it relate to the communities to which it brings the Gospel? The question of exclusion must be identified (Pernigotto 2012:46.) The church and the Christian community must always understand themselves to be in a mutual exchange. Therefore, an inter-cultural community must be emphasised (Pernigotto 2012:47-48.)

Spini (2012:51) writes that there should also be inclusion in the public space. Total change in context must be considered and we also have to understand the different democracies in this regard (Spini 2012:54.) Therefore, the notion 'theology in public' is better than 'public theology'. The Christian gospel and witness must also be understood as something different and as something calling people to a new relation (Spini 2012:60).

(2012:227) explains that a relation to the faith-based communities must be established. Close relationships are important. We have to take that into consideration.

Annan (2012:280) refers to the situation in Africa, the challenge, and the issue of reconciling and healing. The sacraments must be understood in the sense of healing and reconciliation in postmodern categories. A postmodern analysis of the sacraments is necessary (Annan 2012:287).
Avis (2018:31-32) explicitly refers to the relation of missiology and ecclesiology. He explains that mission can never be something that people do on their own, besides the church. It is not the endeavour of freelance individuals; it should always be regarded from the perspective of the church. It should always go hand in hand with ecclesiology. Ecclesiology should also be informed by mission, especially in the

present-day Western world, where we have left behind a deep acknowledgement of Christ and his work. Therefore, a practical ecclesiology will be according to critical pastoral theology. Practical theology and ecclesiology will go hand in hand. Specific issues are also very important. The question is whether Jesus found the church to be imperfect, that divisions in the one church are a serious challenge, and that the whole question of the local versus the universal church is relevant.

Lincoln (2018:115) emphasises that the church should also be a witness in the world, and that the Johannine church is a church of witness to the world. The church is also the light of the world. It has to carry the light into the world. It has to explain the wonderful salvific deliverance of Jesus, as well as his judgement to the world. "When JE tell believers not to love the world, the sense of the world is spelled out in terms of the attraction of an evil system that is passing away: falsely orientated desires and pride (1 Jn 2:15-17)." Lincoln (2018:116) continues:

> *"The Johannine vision of the church is of a community whose existence is shaped by God, Christ and the Spirit. It is caught up in God's mission of providing life for the world. Within the context of the divine mission the raison d'être is to bear witness to Jesus in whom this life is embodied and through whose own mission, death and resurrection it is restored for humanity. This witness is accompanied and empowered by the Spirit who mediates eternal life and the presence of God and Christ to the community and draws out the truth of God's verdict in Christ for the community's changing circumstances in the world."*

Adams (2018:127) explains how Paul used the original meaning of ecclesia differently, in order to explain that it is a community that is together; a group identified by belonging to Christ. The metaphors of the Body of Christ, of the Temple, and of the family and household are thus very important (Adams 2018:128-129.)

We must also consider the feminist critique of the church. Graham (2018:527) refers to the historical perspectives on how the new feminist views arose, and how feminist scholarship was established (Adams 2018:531). The vision of the church is for a non-

patriarchal Christianity, and women should also be established in the church. The concrete lives of women should be considered.

Gonzales (2018:591) refers to liberation theology that would also be reflected in the different aspects and understanding of post-colonialism, and the independence theory, and Latin American liberation ecclesiology that emphasises the poor and the liberation of the poor. However, there are calls for the end of liberation theology, but these are premature as liberation theology is still important in the world.

African ecclesiologies are also important. Ilo (2018:619) explains that African ecclesiology is important, although it is difficult to link it to one specific aspect. It is very important to emphasise humanity. This means that the church in Africa is still developing in many ways. The crucial question is whether it is an African church or a church in Africa. The church in Africa is both young and old (Ilo 2018:623). For Ilo (2018: 630), the future for African ecclesiology is inculturation. Ilo (2018:635-636) writes:

> *"The greatest pastoral challenge facing the churches in Africa today in the complex social context of Africa is how to proclaim and enact the praxis of hope to the poor by being a poor church for the poor in Africa. This is particularly so with regard to accountability to God for the gift of the church to Africa, and accompaniment of the churches in Africa with the people of Africa, especially those on the margins, by being fully immersed into social condition of the poor, while speaking from the chaos of their lives. The decisiveness of this will be reflected in theologies of the church which grow from the living faith of the people and are being translated into pastoral actions, performance, and praxis of social transformation for Africa."*

Joubert (2020:57) refers to the issue of metanoia and how Jesus calls people to be disciples following Him, to become part of the new family in Jesus and how the natural family is changed to become a new family in Jesus. Mark emphasises specific aspects

such as cross bearers, servants, slaves, implying the living church. To do the Jesus walk, we have to commit ourselves to Jesus, because the call is to follow Jesus in all instances.

Schoeman (2020:93–95) mentions that the church should always seek new possibilities as to how to engage in the world. It is important to study ecclesiology, to understand how the church should be viewed in the world. We should take into account that there can be different ecclesiologies. Schoeman emphasises ecclesiologies at grassroots level because, for him, it is very important to understand that ecclesiology deals with the people.

Pali and Schoeman (2020:212) refer to the fact that we have to consider Africa and the indigenous understanding of the church in Africa and the indigenous leadership in the different churches in Africa. That is all-important for understanding ecclesiology the African way. They exchange different markers for contemporary African ecclesiologies that should be important. They consider Africanising the Christian Gospel, in order to understand it within the context in which Africans live, according to Black liberation ecclesiology.

It is very important to regard the church of faith always as the community radically committed to Jesus Christ. As body of Christ, this is the essence of the church. Exponents of the church should always realise this. In Christ, true community is found. In Christ, is the true faith. In Christ, is glory. In Christ, is the future of the church and the community.

Can religions play a role in the renewal of society? Beyers (2021:52) explains that there are different ways to understand religious transformation. It can be because of an agent or an object. Religion is very important in different aspects, and can be understood in different ways. One must always take into account that religion can sometimes be beneficial to society and sometimes not. The question is: Can religion bring about transformation and a new situation? (Beyers 2021:53). Another question is: What is true transformation and when is transformation in a positive sense

to be understood and what is to be transformed in society? The role of religion in transformation is also important and has a positive and sometimes negative impact on society. Beyers (2021:59) explains both the positive and the negative impact on society. In a positive way, many aspects should be understood such as honesty, integrity, openness, tolerance, and a moral direction. On the negative side, there are many instances where religion led to strife and violence and some even say that religions are inherently violent (Beyers 2021:62). However, we must also consider the spiritual dimension of religion that can bring about a new situation. Beyers (2021:65) concludes:

> *"Religion will continue to fulfil the ambiguous role in social transformation, oscillating between negative and positive influences. A broader understanding of religion, with an emphasis on its spiritual nature, reveals a different approach to the role spiritualized beings can play in society. Spirituality-inclined human beings will have a social conscience, willing to address injustices, by considering values and principles not necessarily reflecting religious affiliation or religious need for power in society but emanating from a spiritually attuned orientation."*

Chapter 5:

The church of love

The church is the church of love. We cannot speak about a church if it is not about the wonderful love of God in the church. God's love makes the church possible. God could have rejected the world in sin, turned his back on the world in sin, and view the world as rejectable. But God entered into the world in Jesus Christ, his Son, so that this world can be saved.

Love

The church of love is the community that lives in love. The church should acknowledge the God of love. This love causes society to be engaged.

The structure of John 3:1–21:

"3 Now there was a Pharisee,
a man named Nicodemus
who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.
2 He came to Jesus at night and said,
"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher
who has come from God.
For no one could perform the signs you are doing
if God were not with him."

3 Jesus replied,
"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. [a]"
"How can someone be born when they are old?"
Nicodemus asked.
"Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"
5 Jesus answered,
"Very truly I tell you,
no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.
6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[b] gives birth to spirit.
7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You[c] must be born again.'
8 The wind blows wherever it pleases.
You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."[d]
9 "How can this be?"
Nicodemus asked.
10 "You are Israel's teacher,"
said Jesus,
"and do you not understand these things?
11 Very truly I tell you,
we speak of what we know,
and we testify to what we have seen,
but still you people do not accept our testimony.
12 I have spoken to you of earthly things
and you do not believe;
how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one
who came
from heaven—
the Son of Man.
[e] 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness,
so the Son of Man
must be lifted up,[f]
15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."[g]
16 For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life.
17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but to save the world through him.
18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned,
but whoever does not believe stands condemned already
because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
19 This is the verdict:
Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light
because their deeds were evil.
20 Everyone who does evil hates the light,
and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds
will be exposed.
21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light,
so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the
sight of God."

The structure of the text emphasises that God is the God of love and that we have to acknowledge Him in faith. Being born again means that we have faith in Him as the God of love. This is not something unimportant, but we must realise that God sent his only Son for the salvation of human beings. The structure builds up to belief or rejection of the Light of God. The agents are Nicodemus, God, the Son of God, born-again believers,

and those who reject God. Quantity and quality are flouted by an excessive explanation, using the essential words that those who believe in Christs have eternal life and those who reject Him will perish. This implies that there is a radical call to believe in Christ.

The implied author admits that the calling to believe in Christ is essential and that the implied readers receive the calling to believe in Him. The characters in the story imply that God is the God of love because He leads us to faith in his Son.

The narration is extradiegetic; it is explained after the events. It is reliable because the narrator implies that one can understand the events. The ideological perspective of Jesus who confers love and new life by the love of God is clear. The focalised objects or characters, namely Jesus, Nicodemus, God, and the unbelievers are also presented in such a way that the main implication of the love of God is clear. There is a direct characterisation of Jesus because He has all knowledge of God, and his love also implies radical commitment. The events build up to Jesus' key explanation that God is Love. The deep structure undergirds the call in love to the God of love and the rejection of those who do not believe in Christ. The time duration in the narrative is a clear indication of the structure. The setting calls for acknowledging Jesus even by those who visit him by night to see the true love of God. The textual strategy implies that Jesus is the Lord who brings the believer to faith in the God of love.

Beasley-Murray (1999:51) refers to how the love of God is present:

> *"A confessional summary of the Gospel follows: it originates in the love of God for a disobedient world, it centers in the giving of the only Son to and for the world, and its end is that people may not be lost but live under the saving sovereignty of God. The giving of the only Son clearly embraces both incarnation and vicarious death; it is the entire mission of the Son that is in view."*

This quotation clearly shows that God is the God of love in giving his only Son. God is the God of love in his saving grace in his Son.

Tenney (1981:49–50) explains that this love calls for radical commitment. To believe otherwise, we would perish:

> *"The presentation of the good news of God's love offers only two options: to believe or to perish. Eternal life, which is accepted by believing, is a gift of God and brings with it the fullest blessings God can bestow. To perish does not mean to cease to exist; it means to experience utter failure, futility, and loss."*

Van der Walt (2011:443–444) explains the Gospel of John's perception of ethical behaviour. He refers to the very important question: What is sin? How should sin be understood in the Gospel of John. He emphasises that sin is all about not accepting Jesus Christ as the true Lord. Doing the wrong thing is not accepting Christ as the Son of God, not relating ourselves to the true Light, not listening to the true prophet. Therefore, sin is, in its most radical implication, not accepting Jesus and living in this relation with the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole problem of sin in its deeper sense is relational because Jesus is not accepted as the true Lord in the life of the person, who thus rejects the love of God. The church can only be the church of love if it acknowledges and proclaims the God of love. The church can confess love in the world.

Streltsov (2020:355) explains how important it is to understand that the love of God is radical for the "world" because the "world" has such negative connotations in the Johannine literature:

> *"It is remarkable that here love is specifically being spoken of not as love within God nor the love of Jesus to his disciples, but as love to the whole world (for characteristics of the world, see John 3:19; 5:42; 8:42)."*

Essentially, love and faith go together. Rejection of this love leads to failure. This love is magnificent but also dangerous. It calls for utter commitment. Kim (2021:23) emphasises that we should remain in the light of Jesus, but also engage the world by living with Him.
Ladd (1974:248) explains that Jesus, as the Son of God, has this special implication: He gives the divine love because He was sent by God; He has exclusive knowledge of God, and He fulfils the Word of God. He does not only give eternal life (John 3:16), but He also calls on people to accept deliverance in Jesus Christ, to accept what He calls for them, so that they may not be judged (Ladd 1974:249). Ladd (1974:252) explains that there is a twofold view of Christ in the Gospel of John. He is indeed God and He is also fully human. Jesus is there for the true one who can bring about salvation and, in the church, the love of God.

Lindars (1982:159) refers to John 3 as most important concerning the love of God. Naturally, John 3:16 is the essential text. Both the incarnation and the passion occur in the same sentence. God gave his Son, the incarnation, but God gave His only Son also in the sense that it is the passion of the Son and, therefore, the love of God is quite clear in what the Son achieved in the passion of God. God gave his Son, thus leading to salvation. We should not perish because we are in Christ. Lindars (1982:160) also explains judgment as the way in which God rules over sin and judges the rejection of his Son. It should thus be established that the true love of God should be accepted in the believing response to Jesus. An attitude of mind, accepting Jesus, is essential. The new relationship with Jesus can be established by turning to Him and accepting the Word of God in Him.

Schnackenburg (1968:398–399) also refers to the wonderful passage where the love of God is explained in full: Jesus came to this world, so that we can be saved and experience the fullness of the redemption in Jesus Christ through the wonders of God who sent His Son to the world and brought about a new relation with the living God. The way of salvation should be regarded in light of the incomprehensible love of God for human beings. God showed his love so that human beings can be saved. It should be understood from John 3:16 that God is merciful. God gave His Son so that his Son can become the One who saves the world. Schnackenburg (1968:399) writes:

> *"Thus the expiatory death, as the supreme manifestation of God's love, may already be implied, but the perspective has been shifted from the 'exultation' of the Son of Man to the entry of the Son of God into the 'world'. In the Johannine Theology of incarnation mission, the greatness of God's act is manifest in the very bridging of the chasm between God and the 'world'. Here, as whenever the mission of the Son is spoken of, the notion of 'world' is neither quite neutral, nor quite negative. The 'world' is not simply the place where men live, but sinful mankind, would just turn away from God."*

Morris (1984:229) refers to the most wonderful text of God's love for the world: so that the world may not perish, but may be saved in Jesus Christ, meaning that we have to be committed to Jesus Christ and understand the wonders of such commitment. The Jews understood God as loving Israel, but a broader love for the entire community and for the world was not so prominent. Note John's distinctly Christian view of God loving the world, so that the world may be saved, because He is God and because He is simply the God who works in the world, bringing deliverance and salvation. God gave His Son not only in His relation of deliverance, but also as the Son bringing about salvation through the cross. Therefore, when God gave His Son, the cross is also implied in what God is doing in His salvation for mankind: "His love is not a vaguely sentimental feeling, but a love that costs. God gave what is most dear to Him." (Morris 1984:230).

Barrett (1976:169) also refers to the meaning of the love of God for the world, when Jesus speaks to Nicodemus. He explains that it is very important that the Son of God came into the world to bring salvation from God who gave his Son for the benefit of human beings, so that they can be transformed from being lost and perishing to being saved, although they are called to accept the Son who was given to them. God calls for a deep understanding of who his Son is, and what his Son did. He also has the authority to judge (Barrett 1976:181).

According to Brown (1975:147), it is very important to understand that John wants us to note how God gave His Son to the world so that the Son can bring salvation to the

world. Brown explains that the passage is a new passage, where God the Father explains the Son's love and God's love. He also considers this in light of Abraham's generosity and sacrificing His Son. The Isaac typology does play a role in what is explained in this instance. It is viewed in the way in which we have to understand and observe the way in which God is involved in both the world and the community. It becomes the salvation of the world, but we must also understand that, in John's view of the world around him, he is clearly restricting this to Christ's salvation.

De Silva (2004:35) explains that the New Testament and its foundation were a pastoral response to the questions of the community that followed Jesus. It is very important to understand Apostolicity and Catholicity. He refers to the Gospel of John where the love of, and faith in God are clearly explained and emphasised. We must also understand that faith and love go together. Faith in the Lord Jesus is very important for understanding how to live according to, and accepting His word. Jesus' death is the hour of His glorification. John explicitly views Jesus as the One from God, the One who came from God and is in the world, the One who is glorifying God. The love of God must be viewed in the sense that Jesus is the One coming from God (De Silva 2004:419). It is very important to explain the fact that Jesus came from God, in order to understand the love of God in this sense.

The structure of 1 Cor. 13:1–13:

"13 If I speak in the tongues[a] of men or of angels,
but do not have love,
I am only a resounding gong
or a clanging cymbal.
2 If I have the gift of prophecy
and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge,
and if I have a faith that can move mountains,
but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor
and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,
[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is
patient,
love is
kind.
It does
not envy,
it does
not boast,
it is
not proud.
5 It does
not dishonour others,
it is
not self-seeking,
it is not
easily angered,
it keeps
no record of wrongs.
6 Love does
not delight in evil
but rejoices with the truth.
7 It
always protects,
always trusts,
always hopes,
always perseveres.
8 Love
never fails.

But where there are prophecies,
they will cease;
where there are tongues,
they will be stilled;
where there is knowledge,
it will pass away.
9 For we know in part
and we prophesy in part,
10 but when completeness comes,
what is in part disappears.
11 When I was a child,
I talked like a child,
I thought like a child,
I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man,
I put the ways of childhood behind me.
12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror;
then we shall see face to face.
Now I know in part;
then I shall know fully,
even as I am fully known.
13 And now these three remain:
faith,
hope, and
love.
But the greatest of these is
love."

The structure undergirds the implication that love is more than any other gift. The structure builds up to the final aspect that is fully proclaimed, namely that love is the greatest of all. The agents in this pericope are God and the believer who experiences love. Love is extensively mentioned and flouts the maxim of quantity. The implication

is that love is the essence of the pericope. Love should always be essential for the church.

Fee (1987:628) refers to very important aspects in this regard:

> *"Two further points must be made: First, because of the lyrical nature of this section, it is easy to think of love as an abstract quality. That is precisely to miss Paul's concern. Love is primary for him because it has already been given concrete expression in the coming of Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world. Love is not an idea for Paul, not even a "motivating factor" for behavior. It is behavior. To love is to act; anything short of action is not love at all. Second, love is not set over against the gifts, precisely because it belongs in a different category altogether. For Paul it is not "gifts to be sure, but better yet love"; rather, love is the way in which the gifts are to function."*

Fee's explanation clearly shows that love is not abstract; it is a very real aspect of life. Love should always be central in the church.
Conzelmann (1975:i–iv) refers to the implication of this for the church:

> *"In Paul's sense this Wisdom teaching is Christian teaching, even if there is no explicit mention of Christology. For ἀγάπη, "love," is for him a given Christian concept (Rom 5:3ff.*; 8:35ff.*), and indeed he links up emphatically with the values of the Christian church. But at the same time he allows them to appear as universal values. He speaks, like Jewish Wisdom teaching, of love, etc., in general. He is aware of the continuity in usage between the Old Testament and Judaism on the one hand and Christianity on the other. This tradition, more especially the aretalogy of Wisdom, also explains the fact that the question does not arise whether it is a case of love for God or of love for men."*

The church must, therefore, commit itself to this love, so that it can be present in the world. The church of love should always be an example of this love. It is a life and existence with the God of love. Cox (1996:533) explains that faith, hope, and love go together:

> *"The essence of the Christian life is love, which gives rise to faith and hope; it is, therefore, the greatest of these three virtues (v. 13). When we nurture love and faith, but neglect hope, we fail in our spiritual life. As we hear about violence through the media, a common factor is that the violator has no hope, outside of violence."*

Guthrie (1981:104) explains that the love and grace of God must clearly be understood from the way in which God deals with this world. We cannot move away from the fact that God is the God of love and that it is assumed that God is the God of love in the Gospels, especially in John. Paul pursues the same argument because it is clear that God gave His Son, so that those who are saved are in the realm of salvation. This has specific implications for the believer. The believer will live in this relationship of love with God and that will be a wonderful understanding of the love of God. God is also the God of grace and to understand the love of God, we must also understand the grace of God (Guthrie 1981:105). The mercy of God is very important to understand the love of God (Guthrie 1981:107). Guthrie (1981:108) explains clearly that God's mercy, love, goodness, and faithfulness go together.

Concerning the church, Guthrie (1981:787) explains that it is important to understand that the church has everything to do with the community after the resurrection of Christ. The church can only be understood from the perspective of the resurrection of Christ and this is the basis of the Christian church. This is always linked to Jesus Christ and His resurrection, and is brought about by Pentecost, showing how the Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit in the world, and how the church should be and live from that understanding. Initially, the church consisted of individual members in small, local communities. In the New Testament period, the church consisted of the communities in the world around them. The whole concept of being in Christ is also very important. The church cannot be understood, except that it should always be in Christ, namely

Christ makes it possible for the church to live in a community with Him. This leads to worship in the community (Guthrie 1981:788).

God gave himself in Christ as the God of love (Romans 5). He even loved his enemies and because He loved his enemies, He makes it possible for us to believe in Him. This love of God should also be noticed in the church. We cannot experience the love of God; we cannot have a relation with the God of love, and we cannot explain God's love in any way other than by faith in the God of love in the church. Only in the church can we notice the love of God clearly in this world when the church is the community of love. Therefore, the church should regard commitment to the community because the love of God is very important. The church should enter into a relationship of love with the community to explain that, in this world, the love of God can be noticed and experienced. This love must be lived out in the world. The church must be the church of love.

This can also be explained very clearly when referring to 1 Corinthians 13, where Paul speaks about love. It is important to live in this love and the church should regard it as conditional for its existence. It should be clear in the church that Christ showed his love on the cross. Fear is conquered in love (1 John). Love drives out fear. Fear is terrible, fear is disgusting, but fear is driven out by the glory of God, so that we can believe in God and experience the revelation of the living God in love.

How should this materialise in the missional church? The members in the missional church should explain this by revealing the living God and the God of love. The missional church should reveal the living God in this world. He is the God of love who gave his Son for the sinner and He is the God of love because He makes eternal life possible for so many. Belief in Christ leads to love in Christ. This love in Christ should be explained and revealed to all in the community.

Concerning the issue of how the church should be in the world and relate to the needs of the world, Trimp (1990:407) explains that we must realise that diaconia is essential for the church. He warns that, although the needs of the world must be considered,

the emphasis must always be on the work of Christ. The needs of those in the church itself must also be considered. We will have to care for the people of God in the church and we should not forget the needs of the people in the church itself.

The love of God also means that the political needs of people should be addressed. Gerssen (1990:494) refers to the fact that we belong to God and that we should not be silent, but also confess Christ and call to conversion in the political world. The call is for confession of faith and to call people to accept that they belong to Christ. They will have to come to Christ to experience the new life in fullness.
Dulles (2002:16ff.) refers to many models of the church, and he explains that the following models are presently relevant to the church: "The church as institution, as mystical communion, as sacrament, as herald, as servant, and the church eschatology."
It is very important in this regard how Dulles implies the different aspects of ecclesiology, in order to understand what the church is all about. Certain aspects in the models of the church are related to one another. The church as servant is the way in which he understands how the church can relate to the community. The church, in this regard, has implications for the whole community. The church as servant should be viewed not as an active subject and the world as an object, but as a servant in the world. Because the world has currently become independent of the church, the church should be viewed as a community helping society. Therefore, the most important aspect is love. The church should be a community of love. This means that the church is not viewed, in the first instance, as linked to a definite confession, but that the church is viewed as a humble servant of the Lord, as Jesus himself was a servant.

Therefore, the church does not want to gain new concrete establishments. The church is a sign of help and hope for others. The strength of this view is that the church is available to help in the world, to bring about new changes, and to transform society. Therefore, the church is very relevant in the world. The church is a community that has something to submit to the world. There is the issue of biblical relevance and of the fact that there are no clear biblical views in this respect. Although Christ is viewed as

a servant, it should also be explained that Christ washed the feet of His disciples, and that the church must do the same (Dulles 2002:94).

Regarding discipleship and mission, Dulles (2002 112) explains that the task of the church is more than simply being a church. It has to go out into the world to be the work of God. Dulles (2002:215) explains that the church must replicate the works of Jesus and must be present in society to do just that so as to proclaim this work of God.

Agang (2020:5ff) explains that it is necessary to engage Africa in a positive way. The African heritage regarding suffering is that Africa is groaning, that there is suffering, that there are refugees, that there are orphans with HIV, that there are problems with droughts, and that there are other concerns. A very solid theology is needed. The question is: How can the church be involved in Africa? How can the different aspects of the community be reached? How can politicians and governments in Africa be changed, so that the people can be helped by education, and thus generate hope in Africa. A great deal can be achieved, if we have a public theology that is involved in and helps the entire community.

Naudé (2020:104) refers to economics and how to view economics, when we want to improve life in Africa and sort out the problems. There are too many politically unstable countries, where corruption occurs. The trading partners outside the continent and climate change lead to a very vulnerable situation. There are, however, also opportunities such as technological development. The young population also contributes significantly to the economy. There are high growth possibilities with an abundance of minerals, and tourism potential. The importance of Christian involvement must not be underestimated. There are certain criteria for a better situation (Naudé 2020:105) such as integrity of creations, stewardship, human dignity, and the Imago Dei (Naudé 2020:106). Striving for an equal society, the local congregation can be involved in special care for the weak and the marginalised and assist in times of crisis. Naudé (2020:111) concludes:

> *"The horizon of the church's work and its inspiration is the coming of God's kingdom. The church's resilience in its determination to care and, despite all odds, take a stand against exploitative economic powers stems not from our own commitment but from a reliance on God's promise that his kingdom is coming and that the new earth will be a gift to us. There will be a time when all tears are wiped away and the lion and the lamb will lie together in the peaceable kingdom of God. This future vision is not a way to escape economic realities but encourages us to confront those realities in the power of God's transformative Spirit."*

Banda (2020:115ff) explores the problem of poverty and shows that the God of love through his church calls for involvement in the lives of the poor. There are numerous causes of poverty such as the colonial legacy, geographic elements, weather and epidemics, incompetent and corrupt leaders, gender imbalances, religious world views, a consumer's culture, and then also sin, in that we do not live in the right relation with God. How can this source of poverty be driven out? There should be a critical role in public life (Banda 2020:123–124). The church should engage with public theology concerning poverty and adopt a holistic multidisciplinary approach along with a sound eschatological hope.
Michael (2020:376) also calls for the church to be involved in the challenges in Africa, in order to change the situation by being a church involved in society. He explains that African Christianity does not accept easy answers to the challenges in Africa. There are many historical and contemporary influences in Africa. It is clear that it also affects the theology of the church in Africa and how African Christianity regards its position. Many different positions are taken; but there is a general theological resilience to engage the challenges of Africa.

Sebahene (2020:388) asks: How should the church be mobilised. There should not be a dualistic church, but a church involved in the whole of society with the power of the Kingdom values (Sebahene 2020:384). The church should fit into society to bring about change. God calls the church to abundant life. The church should witness to God and be a community that brings about faith in society (Sebahene 2020:388).

Kärkäinnen (2013:364ff) refers to reconciliation as a church's mission in the world. Reconciliation must be the key perspective on how the church can be involved in society and bring about new relations but also from the view of God's involvement in the world. Because there is not only reconciliation among Christians, it is more self-sacrifice, redemption, and substitution. He explains that this has to lift up the church in the reconciliation of communities and different relations among communities. The salvific work of God must be understood in this sense. Therefore, it has to do with all kinds of relationships as well as with different relations with the world in which we live. The work of God is continuing in Christ's salvation (Kärkäinnen 2013:368). It also has to do with liberation (Kärkäinnen 2013: 372.) The Christus Victor framework must also be considered.
Durand (1978:153) explains that it is necessary to refer to the many aspects of sin in the Bible, in order to understand the love of God. Sin is essentially a relationship with God that went wrong. The words **chattaat** and **awoon** in the Old Testament, and the words **pesja**, and **hamartia** in the New Testament refer to sin. In the New Testament, sin has the notion of a relationship with God that went wrong. There is also the relational aspect of sin; it is related to all our different endeavours and essentially influences all the relations of people. We must also mention that we cannot understand it at all. Our sin is something so radical that we cannot relate to it because it is always a sin against God. It is also a sin against our fellow human beings, and a broken relation with God (Durand 1978:155). The power in sin, as a powerful involvement, must be understood. Rejection of Christ is the main issue in sin (Durand 1978:157). It is also unbelief and rejection after the salvation in Christ.

Migliore (2004:161) refers to love as the new way to being human, with and for others, supremely embodied in Jesus Christ empowered by us in the Holy Spirit.

Essentially, in Christianity, love is self-giving. All other aspects of love should be regarded in light of self-giving. It is also an act of freedom and must imply turning away from ourselves towards others, helping others, and relating to others. It is, first, not a duty, but it is also an understanding that we can do it, because we have the love of God. From the love of God, we move towards our fellow human beings and bring

the love of God to them. By living in this community of faith, the love of God is also established and brought to others in freedom. Freedom and grace are very important and linked to one another.

Heyns (1978:132) explains that it is essential to understand that love has to do with the relationship with people in Christ. Therefore, love has to do with the fact that we do not want to be served, but that we want to serve others. It is not love for ourselves, but love towards others. It is also a comprehensive view and understanding of our neighbour, and how to help our neighbour in forgiveness and in all instances, and to know the wrongdoings, in order to bring about forgiveness and new relations. Only if the love of the church is viewed in the relation with the living God, can we have love for our neighbour, as a serving love. Loving serves and is part of the holiness of life.
Berkhof (1973:188) refers to the issue of humanity. We can understand that a person is human, and the difference with animals is that a person loves. Berkhof (1973:188) maintains that human beings are built on love and freedom for love. Human beings have a relationship with the living God; they know God and see God in freedom. A human being can answer God. Humanity is found in the relationship with God (Berkhof 1973:191).
The love of God brings freedom. The freedom of humanity is the freedom to love and to be in this relationship of love with God and other human beings. Love for a human being establishes our freedom and our free will. Human beings are also incomplete because their identity lies not in them but before them. When we talk about human beings, we must also talk about guilt. Sin is a reality, and it is not only our forebearers who sinned. Sin is noticed in the structure of humanity, because freedom was misused (Berkhof 1973:200). We do not want to seek our help from God Himself, but we want to seek it; we reject the freedom that we have. We do not want to seek our relationship in the lovingness of God, but we reject it. Sin is an absolute reality.

Jesus Christ confronts the church and, in so doing, the church is taken up as a home. The home is in Christ, where it is formed and renewed, where the charismata and the Holy Spirit help us understand what God is all about (Berkhof 1973:360).

Louw (2016:336) explains that we must understand that, when we deal with the ***missio Dei***, we should also link it with the compassion of the church. The passion of the church should be linked with the passion of Christ. Louw explains the very important aspect of the missio, as giving, and the ***passio Dei***, as living with God in the understanding of God's passion for people in the world. He even calls for Theopastic thinking for the practice of God. Although the suffering of God is victorious in Christ, we should also consider that we have to live out this compassion towards people around us.
Christian hospitality is also essential. Louw (2016:350) writes:

> ***"Compassion should then be interpreted not merely as empathy and some sympathetic emotional feelings with the other or a rational accommodation of a foreign cultural context, but rather as a new mode of being stemming from a sound theological basis. It consists of a new and different ecclesiology."***

Ridderbos (1975:293) explains that the church can only be the church of love if it is in direct relation with the living Christ and knows the love of God in the community, and that faith and love go together. Love is significant for the community, so that they can live in this personal relationship with one another. The love of God is, as always, the love of Jesus Christ. But then also love in the community of those who believe in Jesus and are understood by those who live with him. Love is, therefore, an essential element of the church and should be understood as such. Ridderbos (1975:296) writes:

"Just because love, even as faith and hope, is the mood of existence of the Christian church, it must reveal itself in this bond to the brethren, in placing itself at the service of this upbuilding; therefore, Christian love is not individualistic, proudly separative, but always above everything else concerned with the body and not the individual. For this reason to lack this love means to be nothing, with whatever brilliant charismata one may be endowed. For without love there is no communal of the body, in which alone a share in Christ is to be found."

Chapter 6:

The church of hope

Finally, it is important that He is also the church of hope.

Hope

The structure of Romans 5:1–5:

"5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we[a] have peace with God
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in
which we now stand. And we[b] boast in the hope of the glory of God.
3 Not only so,
but we[c] also glory in our sufferings,
because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
4 perseverance, character;
and character, hope.
5 And hope does not put us to shame,
because God's love has been
poured out into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit,
who has been given to us."

The structure undergirds the view that hope is essential when talking about God's love. Hope implies the love of God. The agents are God, Jesus Christ, and the believers. The maxim of quantity is flouted because the word 'hope' is extensively used, and its meaning emphasised. The line of thought builds up to the fact that hope is not in vain. Hope is always linked to love. Harrison (1976:58–59) explains hope and love:

> *"This helps to explain Paul's statement that character produces "hope." Looking back, we see that hope consummates a series of items beginning with sufferings. But just prior to that Paul has considered hope from the standpoint of another series–faith, peace, access, grace, and then hope of the glory of God. So we are entitled to say that just as our present access gives hope of sharing the divine glory, so with our sufferings. They help to produce character, and approved Christian character finds its ultimate resting place in the presence of God, not in a grave. By the tutelage of suffering the Lord is fitting us for his eternal fellowship.*
> *Next, Paul makes it plain that this hope is not just a pious wish, for it does not put one to shame. It does not disappoint, because it is coupled with the love of God (v. 5). Human love may bring disappointment and frustration, but not the love of God."*

The church of hope is the church of people living with God in hope. From the cross, the glory of God is present, and this leads to hope. This means that the church is also a church of the future. Hope always has an eschatological aspect to it and the church becomes the eschatological community.

In the Psalms, hope is linked to God's justice. We can refer to some Psalms where the relation between God's righteous laws and hope for the future is possible.

Psalm 119:
"for your righteous laws."
165 "Great peace
have those who love your law,
and nothing can make them stumble."

166 "I wait for your salvation, Lord,
and I follow your commands"

Psalm 143:

"or I will be like those who go down to the pit."
8 "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I entrust my life".

Psalm 147:11:
1 "the Lord delights in those
who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love".

These Psalms show how the believer finds hope in trusting God. God and the believers are the agents, and their relation is of the essence to find hope.

Kraus (1993:iiii–v) explains:

> *"We must be careful to note that the assertions of the divine oracle of salvation belong to a characteristic complex of tradition. The old orders of salvation of the people of God—the ownership of land, the Northern Kingdom's belonging to greater Israel, the prerogatives of Judah—all these are considered inviolable. Even in moments of great revolutionary catastrophes this old order of salvation is proclaimed anew. Even though Northern Israel is full of foreign powers, the land belongs to Yahweh. And the old vassal states Edom, Moab, and Philistia also are included in this order of salvation. There can be no doubt even for a moment that the salvation theology of the Davidic sanctuary is here involved (cf. v. 6*)."*

Salvation is found in the future with God who makes it possible. It has a relation with the past and with God's promises in the past, but it also reaches out to the future in which God makes hope possible.

Isaiah 33:2 also commits us to hope in God:

"Lord, be gracious to us;
we long for you.
Be our strength every morning,
our salvation in time of distress."

Isaiah explains in full that hope is found in the gracious God. So new life is possible.

Hope is confessed in Ephesians 4:

"4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then,
I urge you
to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
2 Be completely humble
and gentle;
be patient,
bearing with one another in love.
3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit
through the bond of peace.
4 There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called to one hope
when you were called; 5
one Lord,
one faith,
one baptism;
6 one God and Father of all,
who is over all and through all and in all."

Called to hope is the essence of the church living in hope. The agents are God and the believers. The maxims of quantity and quality are flouted because one is emphasised extensively. This line of thought emphasises that the church should live in hope in the oneness of faith in God.

Hebrews 6 explains the fullness of hope:

"16 People swear by someone greater than themselves,
and the oath confirms what is said
and puts an end to all argument.
17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs
of what was promised,
he confirmed it with an oath.
18 God did this so that,
by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie,
we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.
19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul,
firm and secure.
It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,
20 where our forerunner,
Jesus, has entered on our behalf.
He has become a high priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek."

The structure implies that hope is central, as it is a cornerstone in the pericope. As agent, God is explained as the one who cannot lie.

Lane (1991:155) explains:

> *"The promised salvation secured through the high priestly ministry of Jesus is certain because it is guaranteed by God. The present time is the time of sure and steadfast hope precisely because through his sacrificial death Jesus has entered the presence of God on behalf of his people and has made it possible for them to approach God in priestly service. As a unit, 6:13–20 serves to place the ensuing exposition of 7:1–10:18 under the aspect of an event of promise that is confirmed with an oath."*

We should always regard hope as hope in Jesus. He is the One who makes it possible in his sacrificial death.

Colossians 1 refers to hope as the source of love and faith:

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
when we pray for you,
4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus
and of the love you have for all God's people—
5 the faith and love that spring from the hope
stored up for you in heaven and about which you
have already heard in the true message of the
gospel"

The way in which hope is explained fulfils the relation to love. The agents namely God, Jesus and the believers (we) explain the implications of hope in love.

O'Brien (1982:16) refers to the new hope:

> *"In accordance with his usual custom Paul began his letter to the Colossians by reporting his thanksgiving to God for the faith and love of his readers. This faith which they have as men and women in Christ Jesus and the love*

they continue to show toward Christians around them are both based on a sure and certain hope that is kept for them in heaven where no power, human or otherwise, can touch it. Such a hope is centred on Christ himself (1:27) and was an essential element of the gospel Epaphras preached (cf. v 23). That gospel produced a vigorous and increasing fruit of Christian life and testimony at Colossae and was working in the same dynamic way throughout the rest of the world. Epaphras, as Paul's faithful co-worker, representative and minister of Christ, had diligently taught the Colossians that gospel. They may, therefore, be assured that they had been instructed in the 'truth'."

Hope is secured in Christ Jesus. He makes it possible to hope. In him, the future is secured.

"1 Peter 1:13-16 calls forth believer to set their hope on God
13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober,
set your hope on the grace to be brought to you
when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.
14 As obedient children,
do not conform to the evil desires you had
when you lived in ignorance.
15 But just as he who called you is holy,
so be holy in all you do;
16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."[a]

The structure is built on hope as the link by grace to Jesus Christ. The agents are God, Jesus Christ, and the believers (obedient children). Jesus reveals hope.

Michaels (1988:5) explains:

"The key to the section as a whole is the "living hope" mentioned first in v 3 and designated in a variety of ways throughout vv 3-12: as an "inheritance"

> *(v 4), as "salvation" (vv 5, 9, 10), as "the outcome of your faith" (v 9), as "the grace to be given you" (v 10), and as "praise, honor, and glory at the time when Jesus Christ is revealed" (v 8). Vv 13–21 are framed by explicit references to this hope: "... with full attention set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (v 13); "... so that your faith and hope might be in God" (v 21)."*

Michaels (1988:70–71) also emphasises:

> *"Consequently, the ethical impact of the epistle barely begins to make itself felt. The call to action and to a holy and reverent life is general rather than specific. The imperatives of hope and of godly fear have more to do with eschatological expectations than with ethics, and more to do with the readers' relationship to God than with their relationships to each other or to their pagan neighbors."*

The living hope is secured in Jesus. It is linked to the eschatological future. This implies that life with God is possible and that there is the reality of a future with God.

In Revelations 21, eschatological hope is finally completed:

"21 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth,"
[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and there was no longer any sea.
2 I saw the Holy City,
the new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.
3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people,
and he will dwell with them.
They will be his people,

and God himself will be with them
and be their God.
4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death'[b]
or mourning or crying or pain,
for the old order of things has passed away."
5 He who was seated on the throne said,
"I am making everything new!"
Then he said,
"Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."
6 He said to me:
"It is done.
I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the Beginning and the End.
To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.
7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and
I will be their God and
they will be my children.
8 But the cowardly,
the unbelieving,
the vile,
the murderers,
the sexually immoral,
those who practice magic arts,
the idolaters and all liars—
they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.
This is the second death."

The structure undergirds the aspect of God bringing total renewal. The structure also builds up to the proclamation that God in Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. The

agents are God, Jesus, the children of God, and the rejectors. The maxim of quantity is flouted to reveal, by extensive usage, who God is. The implication is that God is all encompassing and will help and engage the children of God.

With respect to the narrative, it is clear that the implied author shows that God gives hope. This narrative looks to the future. This implies that the implied readers should expect the future in God, but that the unbelievers should expect rejection. It is a reliable narrative because it emphasises God as the primary agent. Highly ideologically, the emphasis is on God who brings hope in a world of despair. The focalised objects (the characters) also imply that God, as the main agent, is able to engage the people in this world and bring hope. God's authority is beyond dispute. The events build up to the proclamation that God also rules in the future. The structure of the fundamental involvement of God in the world is juxtaposed with the rejection of the unbelievers. Time is focused on the future when God will bring about the new world, implying that only He can bring about that change. The setting is the new world of God. The textual strategy is to confront the reader with God's intention of hope.

DeSilva (2004:923–927) writes that, concerning Revelation, it is important that we must always take into account that this is about Jesus Christ. Central in everything, even the eschatology and the hope of revelations, is the fact that Jesus is the centre of the revelation. Jesus is the Lamb of God, who brings about new hope and the new situation. He should always be remembered as the One who died on the cross to bring about the total revelation of new life in Him. Therefore, it is possible to have hope in Jesus Christ.

For the church, this implies that there is new hope, regardless of the situation in which the persecuted church finds itself. God makes things new. For the world in absolute need, this is the message of the church: turn to God to receive God's new world. The church of hope lives in this expectation, regardless of the circumstances. Calling the world to repentance and hope is the clear message of the missional church.

Aune (1998:1132–1133) emphasises the eschatological aspect:

> *"The descent of the New Jerusalem is accompanied by an explanation from the throne that God now dwells with people and that all death and suffering are now eliminated from human experience (vv 3–4) since primordial conditions of bliss and perfection have been reinstated. In some strands of Jewish eschatology, the heavenly Jerusalem descends to earth to replace the earthly Jerusalem, or a heavenly temple becomes a replacement for the earthly temple."*

The church of hope envisages the eschatological hope that comes from God. From this perspective, it also commits itself to a life of hope. This hope is, however, never general but radically linked to Jesus as Lord. The missional church should always call to faith and warn against the rejection of Jesus. Heide (1997:37) explains that aptly:

> *"The message of hope answering the many cries for help throughout the centuries since Christ's ascension finds perhaps its fullest expression in the words of Revelation 21. John's vision of the new heaven and the new earth provided an escape for those enduring persecution for their commitment to Jesus. Though their life may end, they could hold fast to the knowledge that a better life awaited them at the fulfilment of God's plan for this world."*

The church is the church of hope. We turn again to Hebrews and to Revelations. In Hebrews, it is stated that they will see the New Jerusalem far away and that, even though they do not receive final peace in this world, they will see it in the distance. The same is also true of Revelation. Although there is persecution, rejection, and trouble in this world, we can see the wonders of God in the future. We can live with the hope of achieving the wonders of the living God. We can read into this wonderful place of revelation in God.

Concerning Revelation 21, Mounce (1977:369) highlights that we must understand that it is beyond human expectation to understand what happens. The new hope is

so wonderful and so complete that no human being can understand it fully. Moloney (2020:321) refers to the fact that, in the Graeco-Roman world, God gave hope to even the martyrs because of the death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection. True life is possible like water from a spring.

This hope should reveal the God of hope for people in dreadful situations, even in informal settlements. But there is the living God who brings about hope. He is more than our circumstances, our needs, and our terrible sins. He leads us forth from our sin to glory in God and to the glorious life with the living God. This enables us to live with Him, to understand His glory, and to explain that to all other people around us. In this respect, God is the wonderful God of the revelation of hope. This hope already has meaning for this life when we see that we can have and experience hope in this life. We can also experience the future of hope in the future. God brings about hope in this world, and in the future. But it is possible to follow God and, even in persecution, to understand that the glory of God can lead us forth to hope in a new world. Hope is, therefore, possible because this world has not the last say, even in persecution and in rejection. The last say is the glory of God in the future and the glorious implication of how we understand and live with God. We gloriously enter into the fullness of God, and the fullness of the revelation of God, so that we can experience hope. The church in mission is thus a church of hope for the world. People can see hope for the future in the church. Although this world appears to be going to pieces, the church reveals God's involvement. When God, as the fountain of all that is good, is involved, there is also the possibility of the future and living for the future. In this sense, God makes it possible for us to engage in the future, to see the future, to live in the wonderful hope for the future, to see what is possible for us, and how to enter into that glorious future. The future is not dark; the future is open because God makes it open, because the future reveals the living God coming again. It is possible for the living Christ to come again, as He is the glorious God who makes it possible to live with Him. He is the glorious God who makes the future possible. He engages us so that we can also engage others with this message of hope. In the promise of Revelations, all tears will be wiped from our eyes, and we will see the glory of God. That God will be the light because we will need nothing else. There will be fullness of light; Revelation will be the fullness

of the glory of God, and we can enter into that fullness. This is possible because God makes it possible. God gives us this glory, so that we can live in this new relationship.

This means that we can also proclaim that it is possible to know God. It is possible to know Him in His glory and to know the message that He gives us and the glory that He explains to us. Therefore, we engage in this glory with God and see what He is telling us for the future: Living for God, the God of faith, love, and hope. We are the church of hope bringing a mission to the world, a new missionary view, so that the whole world can experience the glory of God and the mission in God that is possible because He is the glorious God, and we can experience that in Jesus Christ.

Frevel (2021:165–194) mentions that the living way of encountering tradition is very important, as noted in religious reform in society. We must understand that innovation is also renovation. Tradition was invented as innovation. Frevel also refers to religious reform under King Josiah (2 Kings 22–23). In the Torah, there was renewal. Frevel (2021:185) concludes by saying that inherited traditions are reinstalled:

> ***"All three examples made it clear that invention, innovation, and tradition are not mutually exclusive, but rather are characteristics of a reflexive approach to tradition."***

Terblanche (2021:268–270) explains that a very important text in Jeremiah 31:31–34 implies how transformation can be brought about by the covenant and by the way in which it is renewed, although it might be a renewed or a new covenant. Terblanche also links that part of the new covenant to the new heart in Ezekiel. It will radically redefine reality. YAHWEH will enter into the lives of people and bring about total change. This challenge will bring about a new situation and will radically redefine reality.

Migliore (2004:162) explains that hope is the new freedom towards God's future, in which we live in the expectation of the fulfilment of a gracious promise of God in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Migliore explains that the Spirit of God works in us, so that we can look forward to God's revelation and change of the world. It is

about human freedom, freedom in God, looking towards the future in God. It is not utopian, but it is in God that we find freedom. It is also understood that the troubles and challenges of this world do not have the last word, but that we live in Christ and see the future in Him.

Hope for the future is possible, according to Heyns (1978), because God calls us towards the future; we are human beings open to the future. God puts us on the way to the future, so that we can have hope in that sense, but it comes through the present to the future. This world is full of incompleteness, but we are working towards the wonderful life with God.

Heyns (1978:352) differs a great deal from Van de Beek concerning the Kingdom of God and the future of the Kingdom of God. He understands that the church is not the Kingdom of God. We must understand that the church is different from the Kingdom. The Kingdom is brought about in the whole world, and we have to establish the Kingdom in this world, through faith in Jesus Christ and through the church. We must always understand that the church and the Kingdom are not the same. The Kingdom is a wonderful aspect of life. Heyns (1978:353) refers to the Kingdom in the following ways. The Kingdom of God is a universal reality; it is a dynamic reality; it is a present and future reality; it is a reality that knows an anti-reality. The church, on the other hand, is a visible sign of the Kingdom, but church and Kingdom are not the same. The church is a sign of the Kingdom and it is part of the Kingdom. In the church, God is present in His Kingdom. Therefore, the church is an exemplary community of the Kingdom protesting against sin, but the church also points to the fullness of the Kingdom (Heyns 1978:354). Therefore, the Kingdom is more complete than the church. The Kingdom is also the visible reality of God's rule in the world. The church stands in a relation with God. In God the Father, the church is established through the Son and receives its essence through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the bridge to new life with God. Heyns uses the concept of critical solidarity in that the church is in critical solidarity with the world.

The church is the Holy church because it belongs to the living Christ. The church is present and global as an institution and a system.

Van der Walt's (2003) view is radically different from that of Van de Beek. Regarding the church in the world, and looking towards Africa, Van der Walt (2003:482ff.) opines that the only way in which there can be hope for Africa is in the renewal by the Kingdom of God in Africa, so that Africa can experience a totally new way of living in a new hope for the future. A totally new understanding is necessary. Van der Walt (2003:512) asks for an integral biblical world view as a key to rebuilding Africa. In this sense, he is radically against and rejects a dualistic world view, where the work of God is limited to where God is working on a Sunday and not on a Monday when the church and its people go out into the world. Van der Walt proclaims that the church should be present in the world. He is of the opinion that the dualistic world view has a pagan background, where God is limited to renew certain aspects and not each and every aspect of our lives. Van der Walt calls for renewal in every aspect of the community and of the world. He does so against the background of a reformed understanding by getting involved in the community. Van der Walt (2003:533) mentions that we must get rid of the dualistic world view. This is difficult because we have to understand that it is entrenched in the Christian view. He asks for a new understanding of creation and that we must be involved in creation from the perspective that we need to renew the world. Therefore, faith means that we must get involved in the world. Van der Walt (2003:541) asks for a biblical reformed world view. The ultimate question of meaning is thus answered. When we get involved in the world, we empower the believer to be present in every aspect of a life-changing world; in the suffering and groaning world (Van der Walt 2003:542). Christian life should be like salt in this world, always renewing the world. Three aspects are very important: God, creation, and his laws for creation (Van der Walt 2003:545). The following questions should be asked: Why, where, and how? Why do we exist? Where am I going? How should I live?

Why are we here? (Van der Walt 2003:546): we belong to God and God enters this world, and we have something to say for this world. He created the world, he created it for Himself and for His glory, but also for the human beings to live in, to acknowledge

Him. Where are we going? The destination of the world, of the final way in which we must see it, is that we must grasp hope as it is a reality; there should also be hope for this world in the creation. Where are we going? We ask. One word, creation. Not to destroy, but a renewed creation. Not another worldly abode for angels, but this same world as pilgrims with the song of hope in our hearts when we are going to our final destination (Van der Walt 2003:547). How should we live? We should live in such a way as to be on our guard, and we should do so through faith, hope, and love. That is not only a good feeling, but it is entering the life of others, bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others. We understand all of God's commandments (Van der Walt 2003:549) relating to love. To summarise our answer to the third question of What are we doing? And how it is termed?, the answer is briefly God's will. In it He calls on us daily to be unselfish in service of love, in obeying his will, then our lives overflow with meaningfulness. In essence, Jesus Christ is the answer to these questions. God is the answer to the question: Why? because of creation. In His Creation, He should be acknowledged. Christ is the one who suffered.God the Creator formed the redeemer and redeemed Creation, and the Holy Spirit provides the norm for our lives here and now.

Concerning the future and hope, Guthrie (1981:791) also explains that the future coming of Christ is the essence of hope in the Gospels. He came as the Messiah of the people, but He will come again in His parousia, to change everything and to bring new hope for the people. We can thus live with this definite view of living with Christ. Revelation clearly explains that the suffering of the people of God will be changed into the hope of living with the true God. In the early Christian church, it was definite that Jesus would come again, and that he would bring about total deliverance (Guthrie 1981:817). There is also the belief in the afterlife; the resurrected body will be a reality (Guthrie 1981:818).

Faith, love, and hope

Migliore (2004:162) writes:

> *"Faith, Love and Hope are ways of living into the image of God, realized for us, promised to us in Christ. They are a gift and practices of a new human relationship with God. A new way of being human solidarity with others. A new expectation of God's coming reign. Grounded and nurtured in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 13:13, You must always understand the church also as a new community. It is through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit that we understand that there is a new community. God seeks a relation with people, to bring about a new relationship (Migliore 2004:248).*

There are a few images in the New Testament concerning the church. Migliore (2004:262) establishes that the church calls to communion. He relates it to a Trinitarian understanding of ecclesiology. Koinonia is established through the Spirit. The communion in God is also the communion of the church. The church has the community of the Holy, people who belong to Christ.

All the different practices of the church should be regarded from this communion with the living God in Christ. These practices include prayer, proclamation, praise, celebration, sacraments, study of scripture, nurture, forgiveness, bearing one another's burdens, and service to the needy neighbours (Migliore 2004:264).

Ridderbos (1975:248) also explains that faith and hope go together. One can never understand faith and hope without understanding that they go together. Because we believe in Jesus Christ, we also have hope and that hope can be viewed as something significant in the lives of people and in the community. Therefore, hope is always from, in, and through faith. It looks to the future, but it is also entrenched in a community and love with God. The resurrection of Jesus is clear for understanding our hope in Jesus Christ (Ridderbos 1975:249).

According to Berkhof, the community is in Christ. It is also in his radical amazing grace and in the church's commitment to Jesus Christ by following him and by being obedient to him in the community with one another. The community of Christ is endangered in the world because it is a world of self-establishment, power, and misuse. The church should be a community of love and a community of freedom. The church should also intensively help the community come to Christ in every workplace in the world. The essence of the community is self-criticism because it belongs to the living Christ. The church, as people of God, is the first to bring in the crop. The church is a bridge-building community. The church is looking towards the world; it is an agent to bring the Gospel to the world.

There are four aspects for the church to look towards the world: pray for the world; proclaim the Word of God to the world; help in service, and prophecy. In this way, the church can be present and be committed to the world.

Chapter 7:

Mission and the church of faith, love, and hope

The call to mission remains extremely important. The church of faith, love, and hope should be a church committed to Jesus Christ. In this world, the cross is the place where the church meets Christ.

Faith is faith in the crucified One. God encounters the world on the cross of his Son. Faith in Him is possible because He makes it possible in Christ's death for the others. Faith is faith in the One for the others. The community of faith exalts the One who took away the sins of the world. A new relation with God and new relations are possible in Him. Together, faith in Him leads to community. A new missional community is possible in Him. The church engages the world from this position of faith. This is the one faith in the one God. It is essential to spread this faith, as it is the calling of the missional church to lead people to God. This is not possible without faith. It should be a living faith in a living God. It should be the faith in Him of the cross and the resurrection. The missional church becomes the community where others can also enter into community. This is not possible without faith.

Committed to Jesus Christ, the church is also the church of love. This is again viewed from the perspective of the cross. We can only meet the God of love in the cross of Jesus, where God for once and for all made it clear that He is the God of love. The church can only be a missional church if it is the church of love and that is only possible if the church is the church of the One on the cross and the risen One. The love of the church should be clear in the humble following of the One on the cross who is also risen. The church should be a church of service, caring for the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those who are suffering. The church should proclaim the love of God in Christ. The missional church should show that God is the God of love.

Looking towards the future, the missional church is the church of hope. This hope is not an empty hope. It is filled with the expectation that God will make everything new. This process has already started. In this world, there is hope because of the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Committed to Christ, we receive all the promises He made. Already here and now the church experiences hope in Him. However, there is also the promise of eternal future with Him. It is possible to live now with hope as we long for this future. The missional church can spread this hope to the whole world, by calling all people to new life in Christ. Hope in Him is a reality.

What is then the conclusion of this study. For a world in terrible need, the church of faith, love, and hope gives communion with God. It is possible to know and experience the love of God. It is communion with the living Christ. Concerning poverty, this church calls all to new relations in community. Loving the poor, the church should help and empower them. It should call to responsibility and justice. It should never reject the poor. It should be a community of love. Concerning war and strife, the church should call all to peace. The church of faith, love, and hope is a church of peace. Peace must, however, be the peace of justice. In Christ, this peace is attainable. Concerning crime and murder, the church should always explain that violence against the person, especially against women and children should always be absolutely rejected. The church should be the heaven for those who suffer. They must see, in the church, the love of God for them, even in their predicament.

The church of faith, love, and hope is the church of mission. As such the church can become the bearer of light in a world full of darkness.

The missional church of faith, love and hope has a real message for the world. It is the message of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Among all the challenges of the world, this message radically uplifts people to have faith, love, and hope, because the triune God makes it possible.

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