


Biblical mission in the context of vulnerability in Africa

1 Cor. 2:1-11 and vulnerability in Africa

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Abstract

To understand vulnerability in Africa in a biblical sense, we must turn to the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is central to understanding how we should relate to this world and its challenges. The challenges of Africa are immense, and we must regard these challenges in light of the cross of Jesus Christ. In terms of people's lives and their well-being, the death of Jesus on the cross is central to our understanding of its relation to the suffering in this world. Paul emphasised that he only wants to know about the cross and Jesus Christ on the cross. In that, we see the meaning of life. We see the problems of the world, but we see God's reply. Christ, the crucified One, brought about new life and new relations. How must we understand the cross? First, according to Paul, it is clear that the death of Jesus on the cross is beneficial because it brings salvation. The death of Jesus on the cross changes everything, and new hope and new life are possible. Everything has changed because Jesus has come and died on the cross. At the cross, the One is in the place of the others. We cannot speak about Jesus in any other way than as the One who died on the cross and was resurrected. The cross is central in this world with all its suffering and problems. In our vulnerability in Africa, we should turn to the cross, to Jesus, the only One who can change the situation and bring about new hope for people in this world. Vulnerability in Africa is also the vulnerability of the crucified One. This has implications for all people in Africa, meaning that they can look up to the cross of Jesus Christ to understand their vulnerability and how they can live according to the Word of God. However, in this world, the Jesus of the cross is also the Jesus of the resurrection. Jesus' resurrection brought about new hope and a new situation for all. The cross is, therefore, central and always leads to the resurrection. In a vulnerable situation in Africa, the cross and the resurrection should be regarded as one. It is, however, also crucial to turn to the world in terms of the suffering of the world. In order to understand this, practical involvement is necessary and the Church cannot turn its back on the practical issues of suffering in the world. Therefore, the Church should be involved in the most practical way. This article emphasises the cross of Jesus Christ in being involved in this world. Practical issues such as looking after

people, bringing peace among people, alleviating suffering and poverty, as well as healing those in distress should be addressed. Therefore, not only advocacy, but also practical involvement in these issues should be addressed. This article shows that the cross of Jesus has implications for the most practical issue of the individual in this world.

Keywords: Biblical, Mission, Vulnerability, Africa, 1 Cor. 2:1-11

1. Introduction

To understand vulnerability in Africa in a biblical sense, we must turn to the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is central to understanding how we should relate to this world and its challenges. We must consider the immense challenges of Africa in light of the cross of Jesus Christ.

We must take into account the current serious challenges in Africa. Problems are a major challenge from a theological point of view. The forgotten war of Sudan, where thousands of people were killed and displaced, calls for involvement from the world, because it is as dreadful as the wars in Gaza and Ukraine. The attacks in both the African Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique call for engagement in a new way and for setting new goals for involvement. South Africa's inconclusive elections can also lead to serious problems. The United States of America's (USA) involvement points to many challenges on the continent. Neocolonial involvement from the USA, Russia, and China, as well as foreign involvement of people, cause major challenges in polity in Africa. Africa became a lost continent because of these challenges; it has not been embraced and has not been resolved; thus the call for involvement. If the problems of Africa persist, we must take them seriously and get involved in a new way, in order to bring about change in Africa. Sometimes, we do not get the full picture of the challenges. From a theological point of view, we need to face these problems, in order to bring about a new situation.

The question remains: How should we be involved in the world and all its challenges, and the radical differences among people. It is necessary to be involved in the most essential aspects of the world. Therefore, from the cross of Jesus, the Church should be involved in the most critical aspects of the individual in the world. The Church should work out how to be involved in addressing and alleviating suffering and poverty.

Regarding the involvement of the Church in the world, new aspects should be addressed, namely how the congregation in itself should be the community of peace, love, and healing in this world of challenges. The congregation should not only be the community where people find solace and help, but also the community that protests against the terrible suffering of the world, by living next to one another and dealing with one another's challenges. By helping one another

in these challenges, we should not only consider our well-being spiritually, but also our well-being in all the challenges of the world around us, and dealing with the possible.

2. The vulnerability of Africa

What are the present challenges in Africa? In previous articles published in *Missionalia* (Verster 2022) and a chapter in another book, Christ's love moves us to reconciliation and unity (Verster 2023). Some challenges such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, economic hardship, and neocolonialism must be explained in more detail (Verster 2023:85-86). Van der Walt (2003:40) also summarised the main social, economic, and political challenges of Africa. Van der Walt mentions suffering, hunger, disease, low income, dehumanisation, economic decline in production, dependence, and so forth. Political massacres and bad government are also worrying challenges. Van der Walt (2003:57-58) is especially critical of a wrong kind of Christianity, namely dualism. We should have a vision of a better Africa, by taking charge, organising, and following the will of God.

Poverty remains a serious challenge: "Poverty in Africa is clearly far greater than in any other part of the world." (Pillay 2015:642). Pillay mentions the widespread poverty in Africa. Of the 24 nations needing development, 22 are in Africa. A total of 414 million people are needy. HIV/AIDS still causes deaths in Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic brought havoc to Africa. "The last epidemic that approached anything near this scale occurred in 2003, when the SARS outbreak infected more than 8,000 people and lasted nine months. In much less time than that, COVID-19 has infected many millions of people, and millions of deaths have been recorded." (Agang 2021:2).

Pillay (2015:644) also mentions political instability and dictatorship in Africa. "It seems that military coups d'etat or assassinations become the only alternative methods of change in ruling." According to Pillay (2015:645), religious and ethnic violence persist. Pillay (2015:650) also avers the institutional challenges for the Church: "Ecumenism in Africa is surrounded by crisis and opportunity: crisis as we observe the demise of previously strong ecumenical organizations (such as SACC), but opportunity as we note the changing dynamics of ecumenical engagement in a fast-changing Africa."

Mwandayi and Mukole (2024:5) reject the false premises of many rulers in Africa: "There is a visible shift from a God-centred perspective of life and leadership as it was in ancient Israel, to a man-centred perspective. This can be attributed to the attempt by leaders to do away with any form of accountability to God and the constituents they govern ... Upon a closer analysis, we find that the practice of acquiring a long list of titles by new presidents soon after their countries were liberated from foreign rule is probably because they saw themselves as the indispensable sole liberators of their people and this explains why they could not come to terms with term limits and wanted to be presidents for life."

Enegho (2011:532) also refers to the collapse of good rule: “In most African nations, there are instances of excessive use of power by leaders. African leaders believe that they should make their positions felt by all means – good or bad.” The misuse of the police is also a serious challenge. The present elections in South Africa are also cause for concern. They took place largely without violence, but there are still those who call for violence if their cases are not heard.

Foreign countries plunder Africa’s wealth. All is not well concerning human relations: “The xenophobic attacks on African migrants have brought to the fore recently underestimated, yet important aspects of our moral and social lives.” (Okyere-Manu 2016:233). Religion often leads to abuse (Ayankeye 2014:21).

We must consider the many serious challenges in Africa on different levels. In terms of people’s lives and well-being, the death of Jesus on the cross is central to our understanding of its relation to the suffering in this world.

There is, however, new hope. Karamaga (2014:99) explains: “Two decades of political silence is being broken by a period of activism that is spreading across the continent as the power and exuberance of politics is discovered by new generations.”

Is there hope for the continent? There are signs of good governance. New relations are valuable. Economic self-rule is available. Overall, there are still many challenges. This vulnerability still asks for theological engagement.

3. The cross and vulnerability

3.1 The implications of the cross

Paul emphasised that he only wants to know about the cross and Jesus Christ on the cross. In that, we see the meaning of life. We see the problems of the world and God’s reply. Christ, the crucified One, brought about new life and new relations.

Jesus’ presence is the only way in which we can address these problems. The cross of Jesus shall serve as the way to engage and help others, by the One who was there for all the others and brings about a new situation for others. The implications of the cross are clear, namely He is broken for us. To be involved in the vulnerability of Africa, we must understand Africa and be able to engage with Africa. The One on the cross is involved in the problems of the world. Jesus becomes the One for the others and, in doing so, he becomes the One who has also risen to save us.

How must we understand the cross? First, according to Paul, it is clear that Jesus’ death on the cross is beneficial because it brings salvation; it changes everything, and new hope and new life are possible. Everything has changed because Jesus has come and died on the cross. On the cross, the One is in the place of the others. We cannot speak about Jesus in any other way than to regard Jesus as the

One who died on the cross and was resurrected. The cross is central in this world with all its sufferings and problems.

3.2 1 Corinthians 2:1-6

SBL

2 Καὶ γὰρ ἔλθων πρὸς ὑμᾶς,
ἀδελφοί,
ἤλθον οὐ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας
καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ ^[a]μαρτύριον τοῦ θεοῦ.²
οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά ^[b]τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν
εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν
καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον³
καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ ἐν φόβῳ
καὶ ἐν τρόμῳ πολλῷ ἐγενόμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς,⁴
καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν [c]πειθοῖ σοφίας
ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως,⁵
ἵνα ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν μὴ ᾗ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων
ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ.

NIV

2 And so it was with me, brothers (and sisters). When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.^[a] For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.³ I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,⁵ so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

NKJ

2 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the ^[a]testimony of God.² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.⁴ And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of ^[b]human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The structure clearly shows that the crucified Christ is the centre of the statement *καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον*. The Holy Spirit is then also emphasised, by confessing *ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος*. The entire pericope hinges on these two aspects, the cross and the Spirit.

3.2.1 Concerning the cross.

The Corinthians faced many challenges under extreme conditions. Many were poor and even slaves. New hope came with the Gospel (Orr & Walter 1976:146). Paul knew his limitations. According to Kovacs (2005:36), some became conceited, and different groups were formed. Paul proclaimed the Gospel with fear and trembling (Thiselton 2000:223). Thiselton (2000:215) shows how Paul's fear and trembling intensified. Nothing could, however, compromise the central place of Jesus (Thiselton 2000:211). The cross was a sign of utter degradation (DeSilva 2004:497). Only the power of God will win them over. Paul refers to his inferior skill and presentation (DeSilva 2004:565). Mare (1976:198) explains: "2 Paul says he came with the sole purpose of centering his attention on the truth concerning Jesus Christ – on the fact and meaning of his crucifixion. The "for" (gar) introducing this verse confirms the statement of v. 1 about his simple proclamation of the cross. It did not suffice for Paul to tell about Jesus and his life; he also had to tell about his death for sinners (Acts 10:37-43). Christ died on a Roman cross in Jerusalem and his death was effective then and is effective now to bring forgiveness to sinners (Gal. 2:16)."

3.2.2 Concerning the Spirit.

Conzelmann (1975:55) explains: "Many exegetes are for taking *πνεύματος* and *δυνάμεως* as objective genitives. Paul would be adopting almost exactly the position of the Corinthians. It is easier to take them as possessive genitives. This can also be understood in the sense of the Corinthians: by their gifts of the Spirit, they prove the truth of their views. It will depend on the theological interpretation of their existence as a whole; Paul holds the ecstatic phenomena and the miracles that take place in the community to be workings of the Spirit. But, in his eyes, these phenomena are subject to the eschatological proviso. They are provisional/transitory (see Chapter 13). They do not prove the truth of the word of the cross, but they are, for their own part, subject to the criterion of the cross. When Paul presents himself as a pneumatic, he points to his "weakness" (2 Cor. 12:6)."

The Son of God shall ultimately bring about a new situation and Jesus will engage the problem of the others.

We must understand how different theologians expressed the reference to the cross. Paul clearly states that he has nothing else to say than that the cross of Jesus is all important. His whole theology is related to Jesus on the cross. In Roman Catholic thought, the cross remains crucial and has, through the years, been explained as essential for theology. However, Aquinas denied the radical necessity of the cross and opined that the cross showed Christ's love and obedience (Heick 1973:285). The reference to the salvation in Jesus Christ was explained by the sacramental view of the cross. Therefore, in the communion, the priest offers Jesus. The cross is, in fact, reenacted in the way in which Jesus is explained on the cross. Luther explained that the cross is about God's personal involvement in the world (Heick 1973:285). Calvinism has another view of Jesus on the cross. Calvin opined that Jesus' death on the cross is beneficial to the believer and

that salvation is achieved by the death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus' death on the cross is the way in which the elected people are saved. The cross became the way of salvation for the elected. The elected are saved by the cross and the way of the cross. Jesus' death on the cross is thus the way to salvation. The cross was cursed and Christ took the curse away by dying on the cross (Calvin *Inst.* 2.16.5-10). In post-Calvinism, the importance of the cross is still relevant. The cross is explained as a way in which Jesus, through his sacrificial death, brings salvation to the people. Although election is still important, the way in which the cross is beneficial for all is emphasised, and God is not the author of sin (Heick 1973:474). The Enlightenment challenged this view. Some challenged the view of the cross as the salvation of people and rather took Abelard's view that the cross of Jesus is an example of how we should give our life for others so that we will be able to surrender and others can follow us like we have followed Jesus Christ. For us, this salvation is beneficial because it is an example of how to follow Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross is thus not a sacrifice for the benefit of others, but an example of how we should yield in the danger of murder. Barth emphasised the concept of the cross as both the 'no' and the 'yes' of God for the people in the cross. God says both 'no' and 'yes' to the sinner. The cross is God's answer to the extreme need of people in the cross. The 'yes' of God is explained fully in the cross of Jesus. 'Yes' is the way in which God changes the whole aspect of humanity. A new humanity is brought about and this new humanity can, in the 'yes' of God to people, experience universal salvation. As such, the cross became a universal view of salvation. It is important to understand that in Barth's view. The salvation has implications for all. According to liberation theology, the cross is a protest against evil and against those who reject Jesus. The protest is then in the cross so that others can follow in the protest against the evil in the world. This protest is important for the salvation of people and leads to a new way of dealing with the challenges of the world.

"The dialectic between a holy God and sinful man is not sufficiently resolved, even by making Christ central. The result of this is that many of Barth's best interpreters seem to find it impossible to resist the urge to place the cross itself at the heart of the Trinitarian discussion. In this way, Barth's God can be seen more clearly to be a God of compassion, of suffering even, who involves himself with the lives of his creatures." (Pugh 2012:294).

Enlightenment exponents reject sin and evil. Kugler (2004:18) writes: "Enlightenment philosophers groped towards a 'natural' alternative to the Christian self: liberated from superstition, free to obey nature in the form of the innocent passions and interests as described in early psychological theory, all according to the methods of the natural sciences. Long ago Christians had adopted late classical, particularly Epicurean or Stoic, techniques out of various concerns: for rational defenses against the intrusion of social chaos leaking into the soul; for ritual purity; or for neo-Platonic imposition of mind over body. All aided the Christian in placing the body and the emotions under the authority of some type of discipline."

In post-modernism, the cross became an open-ended view of humanity in the cross. We can experience the fullness of humanity that should be emphasised. In the future of the cross, the people can live according to the fullness of this experience.

Cahill (1965:208) explains: "Some theologians, of course, feel that the task of interpretation has been effected by Bonhoeffer when he calls God, 'the beyond in our midst', by Tillich when he calls God 'the inexhaustible depth of our existence', 'ultimate concern', 'the ground of our existence'. Yet others have wondered, sometimes with a degree of vigor, if these interpreters are speaking of the biblical God at all. Agree or not with the particular men and their individual procedures, it must be affirmed with Ebeling that interpretation and translation is necessary when the original message ceases to be comprehensible in its own terms."

Paul has a specific view of the cross; it can save us. Therefore, he only wants to hear about the cross itself. The cross is the centre of the Christian gospel and we should consider this when dealing with the problems of the world and the vulnerability of Africa.

For Bosch (1991:422), the cross is essential, and mission and contextualisation are very important. Mission must be brought to people in their context; this is about people living different aspects of their lives. Therefore, he explains that the contextualisation of the Gospel is necessary. The Gospel of Christ is incarnated in the world, and we have to deal with the incarnation of Christ in this sense (Bosch 1991:422, 423). Therefore, there is an epistemological break with the past and an understanding that we now have to deal with people in context and in its ambiguities from the perspective of the cross.

It is, therefore, important to regard God's turn to the world and to explain that God is intensely worried about people and how they live their lives. We must always say that God is entering the world, the people's lives, and how God changes those lives. We must understand how God brings about new wonders in that sense. It is not only a relation of practice and theory, but also an intensive inclination of how God deals with the present situation.

Bevans and Schroeder (2006:340-345) also relate to the important issues of the cross and how the cross should be understood, namely as crucial and essential for understanding mission and the engagement of the Church in the world. Through the *missio Dei*, the triune God engages in the world. However, Christ as a universal saviour brings about the radical reign of God through the cross of Christ and through the radical redemption in Christ. Bevans and Schroeder (2006:340) emphasise Christ's centrism, and the importance of relating to Christ. "Full humanity is achieved not only through economic security or political autonomy, but also and most fundamentally through communion with God in Christ and transformation by the gospel." (Bevans & Schroeder 2006: 3450). Therefore, the concept that human beings are sinners is crucial for the vast majority of

the ecumenical churches. It remains extremely important to acknowledge that reconciliation is needed in Christ for salvation.

Skreslet (2012:34) emphasises that reconciliation is essential in the Gospel through Christ's involvement in the world. The victims of rejection enter a new relation with the glorious God. The parable of the lost son explains this in detail. Therefore, peacemaking is essential in this sense for the Christian Gospel.

As a woman's voice in Africa, Phiri (2016:10) also emphasises the role that women theologians are playing in Africa at present, and how they are calling for new engagement with the serious challenges of Africa. She writes that it is essential to engage from the woman's perspective on "gender inequality, HIV/AIDS, destructive masculinity, corruption, poverty, oppressive and repressive governance, all forms of violence against women, and socio-political and economic injustices." The women's voices in Africa have a clear view, from the perspective of suffering, that must be addressed. They are also against the traditional view of the cross. They emphasise, from their perspective, that the cross has more to do with suffering and the alleviation of suffering than that Christ died for the sinner on the cross in the hands of God. We must seriously consider this, but it is not correct in the sense that the cross must always be viewed in light of God's involvement in the world of human beings through the suffering of Christ, taking away the sins of humanity. It is, however, crucial to still regard the influence of women theologians in Africa and to observe how they emphasise the fact that we have to engage with the problems of Africa in a practical and radical way, making it impossible to reject the suffering of many people. We need to speak up about it and engage in these challenges from a Church perspective.

In this regard, Akinbobola (2021:218) writes: "The supreme ground in the Christian tradition for a theological assertion of the centrality of the love of God has always been an interpretation of the New Testament record in terms of God's self-giving in the sacrifice of his Son, and in Jesus' self-giving to God and mankind."

3.3 Africa and the cross

Africa is called to follow Jesus on the cross because, in light of Jesus' death, the burden of vulnerability can be realised and lead to Africa's ability to come to a new understanding of how to embrace the problems. A few aspects should be mentioned and explained.

In Him, it is very clear that we must be involved in the suffering of Africa and that we cannot turn our backs on it. The cross calls for following Christ, the crucified, and for being involved in the world and its challenges. A new way and a new situation are, therefore, possible. Africa's ability for renewal should be viewed as a friend of the people of Africa. The new colonial exploitation of Africa should be addressed. The Church is also the humble Church of the cross, following Jesus as the One on the cross.

First, in terms of social needs, all aspects of social challenges should be engaged from the perspective of the cross. The cross helps us understand that we must reach out to the most vulnerable in society, those who are hungry and needy, due to illnesses. The Church needs to be radically committed to Jesus' cross and help those who are most in need in the community. The Church should, therefore, reach out and be involved in the needs of the people from the perspective of the cross. The Church cannot turn away from people in need.

Secondly, on the economic front, a new engagement is necessary from the Church. The cross calls us and the rich to reach out to the poor. A very important text in this regard is 1 Timothy 6, where the rich should help the poor. Although they may be rich, they should use their substantial financial means to help people and their needs. The cross calls us to humbleness, to reach out to the poor, and to make new possibilities a reality. But we must always consider that economic policies must not lead to more poverty. Economic policies must help people take responsibility for their lives and engage other people in their needs. The cross is followed by the resurrection. Therefore, in economic policies, the poor should be helped to empower themselves, by doing what they can to broaden their possibilities. Entrepreneurs are needed.

On the political front, the Church should not become a political church, and it should guard against the politicians who use the community as a political force. The Church, however, following the cross of Jesus, will call on politicians to be of benefit to the people and to do everything they can for their well-being, so that people can be helped. There is no room for conceited politicians. Jesus' cross draws a line for a politician misusing political power for him-/herself. Humbleness is one of the most important aspects of a politician if s/he is engaged by the cross of Jesus.

On the religious front, the cross also calls us to humbleness and never to reject other people, but to stretch our hands out to other people, even to people of other religions, to help and guide them to a new life. Jesus' cross is for the benefit of all, and it calls all to follow Jesus in such a way that it brings about peace, instead of strife and war. The cross is the cross of peace, and people should be viewed as people of peace by the cross. Previously, it was never possible to reject others because of their religious views. The cross is always a cause for love and prayer for peace among all. This means that the cross is the cross of humbleness of service.

Following Jesus under all circumstances is the cross of those dealing with the problems of the world and the vulnerability of Africa from the perspective of being crucified with Christ. The problems of the world can be addressed from the perspective of the crucified Christ. Sins are forgiven because Jesus died for us so that we may be saved. The cross is, therefore, the total rejection of sin by the total renewal of the person in Christ or new life and a new possibility.

According to Mugambi (1992:119), it is clear that, in politics, there is always the issue of power. If we want to deal with power, we have to deal with the cross, and the cross is the power of the powerless. Where does the cross help the powerless to be able to come to the fore and explain how to live within this situation? God is on the side of the powerless and the downtrodden, helping them, with the eyes Jesus' cross, overcome the oppression. Therefore, referring to Africa, Jesus' cross has implications for overcoming oppression, cherishing people. Mugambi (1992:119) explains that we should be actively involved in guiding the oppressors towards change and changing the situation with new revelation. A new understanding is necessary for the Church to become involved in the situation. This struggle has more to do with the cross of Jesus and empowerment. The latter leads to a new political situation where freedom is also possible. African Christian theology should consider that.

Dickau (2019:53) writes: "I believe that living into a kingdom vision is what has led us to hold together elements of the mission of God that are often split apart. By seeking this vision over the long haul, we have been able to embrace both prayer and justice, personal and systemic transformation, holiness and prophetic witness, evangelism and formation, empowering leadership and relational accountability, and an emphasis on both our actions and the action of God."

Radical engagement is thus needed. The Church must get involved. It should, however, always be from the perspective of the cross where Jesus Christ surrendered himself in his vicarious death for human beings.

3.4 Africa and the resurrection

The resurrected Jesus changes everything and brings about new hope. He gives us hope. We have a new way of dealing with the problems. Problems are solved in light of the cross and the resurrection that can bring about change and a new situation that is needed in Africa. The resurrected One leads us to follow Him in vulnerable Africa. This has implications for all the people in Africa; Jesus' resurrection should embrace the vulnerable people. The resurrected One wants us to be in a new relation with God and our fellow human beings, in order to empower those who have been rejected.

A new situation calls for a new Africa. Democracy, freedom, personal development, and a new way of dealing with finances are essential to bring about a new situation. In our vulnerability in Africa, we should turn to the cross, to Jesus, the only person who can change the situation and bring about new hope for people in this world. Vulnerability in Africa is also the vulnerability of the crucified One. This has implications for all people in Africa. This means that all can look up to the cross of Jesus Christ to understand their vulnerability and how they can live according to the Word of God in this world. However, the Jesus of the cross in this world is also the Jesus of the resurrection. Jesus was resurrected and brought about new hope and a new situation for all. The cross is central, but it always leads to the resurrection. In a vulnerable situation in Africa, the cross and the resurrection should be regarded as one.

4. Renewal

The vulnerable situation in Africa calls for renewal and the involvement by the One who will change Africa. It also calls for involvement from a new perspective. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus bring about the new situation.

“God must be the basis on which power and accountability are formed in African leadership so that we can reduce the struggle we often see regarding power.” (Mwandayi & Mukoled 2024:6). Oladejo-Babalola (2019:10) also explains that “the Christian faith is potent enough to survive the challenges of this time arising from the culture of postmodernism in Africa. The basis of this claim is on the proof presented that the faith had survived all trials, persecutions, and oppositions of the past ages.” According to Nel (2021:18), “[t]he church is primarily a missiological institution that exists for the sake of the salvation of the earth. In contrast, prosperity theology is concerned with the interests of the individual believer at the cost of the world.” Van der Walt (2003:59) emphasises that Christianity is committed to seeking the will of God in all instances. According to him, Africa can be reborn. The Christian community must be the salt and light in a challenging world.

Renewal is possible because God brings about new life. Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected. He calls us to hope and new life. Africa can be saved because Christ is alive.

5. Conclusion

We must engage with the substantial challenges of Africa in the best possible way, in order to bring about relief for the people of Africa. Besides the many positive signs in many places, there are also serious challenges that are calling for new engagement. The wars in Sudan, the Congo, Mozambique, and the famine in many places call for serious engagement. In Jesus’ cross, God showed his love for the people of this world. Jesus revealed the love of the Father on the cross. He surrendered himself on the cross so that he can be one with the people and thus share in their vulnerability in this world. He is one with us and He wants us to be one with Him. He calls us to new possibilities because He made it possible on the cross and in the resurrection without rejecting us. He comes to help us in a new way. This is the way in which Africa should seek a new dispensation. Africa’s leaders should abandon all intentions to be massively powerful. They should rather be humble; they should try to lead Africa in a humble way to new possibilities. Africa’s leaders should turn to Africa itself to bring about new possibilities. New colonialism should be rejected, and Africa should seek possibilities and relations among its people. This means that even Africa’s leaders should be humble before God and seek the countenance of God in this respect. When we are humble before God, we will be able to bring about new relationships. In this sense, the Church should also be a church of seeking the will of God in humbleness as a vulnerable church. If the Church is vulnerable, it can also reach out to the

vulnerable people around it. It can then also point to Jesus, who was crucified and resurrected, in order to ultimately achieve new hope. The Church should, however, also be involved in a positive way, being humbled and broken. This does not mean that the Church is not involved in the issues of this world. The Church should be a community of love, reaching out to people. In the present world, what is that? What conclusion must we draw? The cross has specific implications for people in need. The Church should not only be the community of love, but also the community involved in healing, helping, and struggling for a better world in which we live. Although it is not possible to change the world in one day, it is possible to find a new perspective that will help the individual in the most daring circumstances to understand a new way of living in that sense. The Church should live from the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. It should emphasise a new way of living.

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