

The Social Responsibility of the Christian Church: Between Tradition and Contemporary Challenges

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the social dimension of the Christian Church's involvement, understood as an intrinsic expression of its theological identity and its mission in the world. Rooted in biblical teaching and faithful to the patristic tradition, the Church's active presence in areas such as education, healthcare, humanitarian aid, and ecological initiatives reflects its enduring vocation to promote the dignity of the human person and to serve the common good. The primary purpose of this article is to argue, from a general Christian perspective, for the necessity of an active, conscious, and responsible social presence of the Church in contemporary society. This engagement is not optional, but rather a natural consequence of its spiritual identity and its calling to be a living sign of hope and solidarity in the midst of the world. The article discusses models of social involvement from various Christian denominations, demonstrating that a socially engaged Church—grounded in faith and attentive to today's crises—can become a credible interlocutor and an active presence in the process of building more just, compassionate, and solidarity-based societies.

Keywords: Church, Society, Faith-Based Initiatives, Social Justice, Public Theology

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the world has faced a variety of social crises, extreme poverty, mass migrations, climate crises, pandemics and armed conflicts, which have called into question the ability of secular institutions to provide effective and lasting responses. In this context, the question of the role of religious institutions, particularly the Christian Church, in the dynamics of social transformation is being revisited. Although secularization appears to be a consolidated phenomenon in many parts of the world, the Church remains an institution with considerable symbolic and social capital, especially in vulnerable communities or areas affected by instability.

In addition to its theological role, the Church fulfills an important psychosocial function, contributing to the reconstruction of meaning, hope and resilience among individuals affected by traumas caused by social or natural contexts. Often, the Church plays a vital role even in providing the minimal material support needed by those affected by various types of crises. The religious space becomes a place for emotional processing and the fostering of solidarity, especially where other forms of psychological or community support are absent or inaccessible. The Church's involvement is not only charitable and moral, but also therapeutic, capable of mobilizing both inner and communal resources essential for restoring social balance. However, the Church's social engagement is not a recent innovation, but a fundamental dimension of the Christian mission, deeply rooted in scriptural teaching and patristic tradition. From the early Christian communities that shared their goods according to need (Acts 2:44–45), to medieval charitable works and modern humanitarian initiatives, the Church has consistently cultivated an ethic of care for one's neighbor, especially for those in need. Beyond internal Church disputes, charitable acts and social involvement have continued uninterrupted.

However, in the age of globalization, this involvement may need to be rethought and contextualized in order to respond to current challenges and to overcome the Church's own historical limitations. Naturally, this raises the issue of the resources available to the Church, resources which, as is well known, come largely from members of the local community. One

thing remains certain: with more or fewer resources, whether material or human, the Church will continue to engage socially, offering hope and paths to recovery for those in critical situations. The aim of this article is to argue, from a general Christian perspective, for the necessity of an active and committed social presence of the Church in contemporary society. This argument will be developed along three main lines: theological (the foundation of involvement), practical (concrete examples from various contexts), and critical (an analysis of obstacles and future prospects). Throughout, I will show that a socially engaged Church not only faithfully reflects the message of the Gospel, but also provides concrete solutions to complex social realities, positioning itself as a relevant dialogue partner in the pursuit of the common good.

2. The Theological Foundation of Social Involvement

The Church's social involvement is not a secondary or circumstantial element, but a direct extension of its existential and theological mission. From the very beginnings of Christianity, serving one's neighbor has been understood as an authentic expression and living out of the faith, and Holy Scripture provides both an ethic of love and justice, as well as concrete models of action in favor of the marginalized. One of the most powerful parables in this regard is that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), in which Jesus Christ removes ethnic and religious barriers to place compassion and the restoration of human dignity at the center. As a result, being a neighbor to someone is no longer a matter of belonging, but of responsibility. However, the Church's social activity is not rooted solely in the words of the Gospel, but can also be traced back to the theocratic period of the nation of Israel. The writings of the Old Testament provide a remarkable background for understanding social involvement, starting from the most common human crises, such as widowhood or the condition of being an orphan or a foreigner. The prescriptions are clear: the rights of "widows", "orphans", and "foreigners" were to be protected (Deuteronomy 24:17); the produce of the field was also to be used for the social well-being of disadvantaged groups (Deuteronomy 24:19–21). All these Old Testament prescriptions can be interpreted and understood as social responsibilities of the community.

Commonly used and practiced within the ecclesial domain but brought into the sociological sphere, the statement "being a neighbor to someone is no longer merely a matter of belonging, but of responsibility" implies a shift from collective identity based on group affiliation - whether ethnic, religious or any other form of group identity - toward an ethic of universalist solidarity. This kind of responsibility transcends the traditional boundaries of community or group and promotes a form of social action driven by moral values rather than solely by institutional norms. In this way, the Church becomes a key agent in promoting social inclusion and community cohesion, especially in relation to the vulnerable. Within this framework, compassion becomes a social practice that legitimizes the Church's presence in the public sphere.

Within the same framework of understanding, the eschatological passage in Matthew 25:31–46 brings the discussion of salvation into the realm of acts of mercy: "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed Me; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." This establishes an indissoluble link between love for God and care for those in crisis. Thus, the Church's social involvement is a natural outflow of its love for God, distinguished by the fact that the Church also prays for those it supports in various crises.

The social dimension of the Church's mission is also evident in the life of the early Christian communities. In Acts 2:44–45, it is mentioned that "all who believed were together and had all things in common", suggesting an early form of social and economic solidarity. Although primarily focused on the theology of salvation, the Apostle Paul encourages collections for the poor believers in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 9), emphasizing the indispensable role of generosity in the life of the Church. This theological understanding was

further developed in the Church's Tradition. The Cappadocian Fathers, especially St. Basil the Great, were advocates of a "theology of mercy" that went beyond mere charity. In his Homilies to the Rich, Basil of Caesarea denounces social inequality and the lack of solidarity, declaring that "the bread you hoard belongs to the hungry" (Basil the Great, 1986, p. 407).

Later, in the West, the Catholic Church's social teaching developed concepts such as the "common good," "human dignity" and "subsidiarity" providing a coherent theological and theoretical framework for social engagement. In Protestant theology, Martin Luther maintained that "living faith" naturally produces good works, while the Reformation tradition developed an active vision of work, civic responsibility, and social justice (Luther, 1957, pp. 345–355) - themes that remain relevant in contemporary Protestant thought, including in the discourses of the World Council of Churches. Going beyond the sphere of Christian writings, Stark notes: "Pagan and Christian writers alike are unanimous not only in emphasizing that Christian Scriptures stressed love and charity as central duties of the faith, but also that these [duties] were upheld through daily behavior" (Stark, 1997, p. 86).

A crucial element that distinguishes the Church's social involvement from secular activism is its grounding in divine love: the human being is helped not merely because they are vulnerable, but because they bear the image of God (*Imago Dei*). Irenaeus of Lyons writes that the human being was created "in the image of Christ" (Irenaeus of Lyon, 1997, p. 22). John Chrysostom preached extensively on almsgiving and social engagement, earning the title "the Merciful" and asserted that almsgiving is the mother of love (John Chrysostom, 2005, p. 190). This sacred anthropology underpins not only acts of charity, but also an ethic of justice, reconciliation and peace. Therefore, Christian social theology is not merely a moral add-on, but an integral part of the Gospel.

Keith-Lucas argues that every Christian, *regardless* of profession, can offer insights that may improve the social welfare system. In his debate with humanists—who believe they have no need for biblical wisdom because poverty and need can be eliminated through sufficient professional effort—Keith contends that "each new 'advance' in social conditions creates a new category of needs" (Keith, 1962, p. 39). As a result, society will not be permanently free from natural or social crises; rather, such crises will take on new forms. Even in the face of unprecedented technological, scientific, and cognitive progress, future generations will not be spared from crises. Social environments will continue to generate new crises or ones similar to those of the past.

Particularly in North America, at the end of the 19th century, many evangelicals were actively involved in various social projects. This period came to be known as the "Third Great Awakening," during which numerous evangelicals began to cultivate a "Christian social vision" (Askew & Pierard, 2004, p. 124). This vision is not merely a reaction of pity or kindness toward those in crisis, nor simply an intervention aimed at alleviating social problems, but a theological expression of faith in a God who acts in history through His people. Social involvement is part of the "*missio Dei*", in which justice, mercy and reconciliation are visible signs of the Kingdom of God. Thus, serving one's neighbor carries a sacramental value—a manifestation of divine grace within a society in need—and is part of the broader work of the restoration of creation. But social involvement is also part of the church's morality and "The moral norms of an ethical system define the ethical behavioral patterns of a society or of a group that is more or less heterogeneous in thought and expression" (Dobrin, 2024, 156)."

Christian theology also provides a coherent ethical foundation for social action, centered on the dignity of the human person created "in the image of God" (cf. Genesis 1:27). This anthropology, upheld by the Church, stands in opposition to the instrumentalization of the human being and rejects all forms of marginalization. In this sense, the Church does not merely react to emergencies but offers a vision of a just, reconciled and inclusive society. Furthermore, this ethical foundation enables the Church not only to act on behalf of those in

need, but also to serve as an advocate for the oppressed, denouncing inequality, exploitation and injustice. This prophetic dimension is essential in a world where the voices of the marginalized are often ignored or silenced (Gutiérrez, 1988, pp. xx–xxii). Ultimately, the Church's social involvement in times of crisis is part of its faith DNA. The Church will never remain indifferent in the face of the crises that society or individuals may face.

3. Contemporary Forms of the Church's Social Involvement

In the face of the multiple crises affecting contemporary society - poverty, migration, domestic violence, ecological degradation, ideological polarization - the Christian Church responds through a variety of initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable communities and promoting the common good. Although the scale and forms of involvement vary from one denomination or community to another, the social mission remains a key reference point, present across all Christian traditions. Rather than being seen merely as a response to emergencies, the Church's action is a living expression of the Gospel, which calls for active compassion and concrete solidarity. Through its organized efforts for the benefit of society, the Church becomes an agent of hope and reconciliation, offering not only material assistance but also meaning, dignity and belonging to those who are marginalized (Rotaru, 2017, pp. 57-76).

3.1. Education and Community Development

Education is a traditional area of Christian engagement, regarded as a tool for human empowerment and social responsibility. In many developing countries, faith-based schools - whether Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Reformed, or from other Christian traditions - represent the only viable alternative to an underfunded or non-existent public education system. Organizations such as World Vision, which has an evangelical Christian identity, run educational programs in over 100 countries, focusing on literacy, child protection and vocational training. In 2023, World Vision programs distributed 1,086,902 age-appropriate books, trained 18,460 teachers and equipped 207,811 parents/guardians with skills to support children's learning, fostering an appreciation for education and success (Annual Report, 2024, p. 15).

Referring to the post-communist society in Romania, the social landscape has developed significantly through the emergence of numerous religious educational institutions. Among the most prominent have been confessional high schools. Although many of these schools have been integrated into the public education system, they were originally established within church communities and remain an extension of those communities. As a result, one can find Orthodox high schools, Catholic high schools, Baptist high schools, Pentecostal high schools, Evangelical Christian high schools, Adventist high schools, Unitarian high schools, Reformed high schools, and Greek-Catholic high schools - representing virtually every religious denomination present in the country.

From a sociological perspective, the Church's involvement in education reflects a form of institutionalized social capital through which religious communities compensate for the absence of the state and contribute to the social development of education (Rotaru, 2021, 190-196). Faith-based schools function not only as centers for the transmission of knowledge but also as spaces for moral formation, reinforcing values such as freedom of conscience, responsibility and human dignity. In fragile contexts where public infrastructure is lacking, these institutions become key actors in reducing social inequalities and facilitating access to education, at least at the primary level, for disadvantaged groups. As such, confessional education is not merely a charitable act, but also a form of social intervention with long-term structural impact.

3.2. Health and Palliative Care

Christian churches have been consistently involved in medical assistance and, in many cases, have established hospitals, clinics, shelters for the disadvantaged, or medical offices. In fact, a

large portion of church community members engage in caring for the sick, often volunteering to provide such care. The Catholic Camillian Order administers hospitals and care centers in over 40 countries, with a focus on caring for the chronically ill, the elderly and terminal patients. Camillian priests and brothers help people cope with the emerging illnesses of society, serving as hospital chaplains, nurses, therapists, or counselors (Saint Camillus, About Us). In Poland, the Catholic Church supports networks of hospices where palliative care is offered free of charge, alongside spiritual assistance. For the early Jesuits, pursuing the vision of serving the common good clearly included tasks that might appear more secular, such as educating the young and illiterate, reconciling those who were estranged and offering compassionate assistance to those in prisons or hospitals (Hollenbach, 2002, p. 5). In addition to the examples mentioned, the Adventist movement is highly focused on providing medical rehabilitation programs and is well known for “a multitude of medical institutions” where patients have access to palliative care. Other Christian churches also offer numerous care centers for individuals with medical needs. Even if they do not build hospitals or care facilities, the Church would still be present among the sick through visits made to medical institutions, offering support and spiritual care to those in need.

The Church sometimes seems fixed on the need to see “persons with disabilities healed of their disability,” while true healing occurs when individuals with disabilities are welcomed and included within the life of the Church and our societies. We should not think of people with disabilities as a homogeneous group, but rather as “each individual who is an expression of the human diversity created by God” (WCC, 2022, p. 8). This diversity, shaped by the range of physical disabilities, should not be viewed merely as an imperfection to be corrected, but as a mysterious manifestation of divine wisdom that transcends human standards of normality. Every person, regardless of their abilities, carries within them a unique calling and presence that reveals something of the mystery of creation. Recognizing this reality means accepting that “human worth does not derive from functionality, but from participation in the divine plan of creation.”

In many regions, the Church enjoys a significantly higher level of trust than other public institutions or international organizations. For example, in Eastern Europe and Latin America, studies consistently show that the Church is perceived as one of the most trusted institutions, even in the context of growing secularization (Rotaru, 2006, pp. 251-266). This trust facilitates access to marginalized communities where state intervention is often ineffective or entirely absent. Moreover, the Christian message addresses not only the material aspects of life but also the need for meaning, belonging and reconciliation. Psychologists, social workers and medical professionals acknowledge that the spiritual dimension plays a vital role in an individual’s healing, resilience and reintegration processes. In this way, the Church’s involvement brings a unique and complementary value to that of secular services.

3.3. Social and Humanitarian Assistance

One of the most visible forms of the Church's social involvement is the direct assistance offered to people in crisis situations. From an anthropological perspective, this involvement is justified by solidarity, the recognition of human dignity and help as a cultural structure. As a communal expression of faith, the Church translates solidarity into concrete action, reaffirming our shared humanity by supporting those in suffering - especially since the human being is a relational creature (*homo socius*), constituted in and through connection with others. From the perspective of human dignity, the assistance provided in times of crisis is a reaffirmation of the ontological dignity of the person, regardless of their social, physical, or psychological condition. This aspect is significant because “Christian theology, regardless of its orientation, proposes a unique understanding and approach to human dignity. Every Christian theologian clearly and emphatically affirms that human dignity is a natural consequence of creation, of the fact that the human being is understood as being created by God” (Dobrin, 2024, August 8–9, p. 115). By

understanding help as a cultural structure, the Church does not intervene merely as a provider of material resources, but as a mediator between vulnerability and meaning, between the disintegration caused by crisis and the restoration of the bonds that give coherence and value to human life.

The Salvation Army, a Protestant Christian organization founded in the United Kingdom, provides shelter, food, counseling, and support for social reintegration in over 37 countries (The Salvation Army, 2023, pp. 32–33). Similarly, Caritas Internationalis - the global Catholic network - operates thousands of social centers offering aid to refugees, victims of domestic violence and those affected by natural disasters (Caritas, pp. 32–37). In Romania, the Romanian Orthodox Church runs over 800 social projects through diocesan foundations and philanthropic associations. These include day centers for children, soup kitchens, shelters for the homeless and home care services (Filantropia, 2024, pp. 6–8). A concrete example is the St. Spiridon Soup Kitchen in Iași, which provides hot meals daily to those in need. However, all other Christian churches likewise offer homes and care facilities for the elderly, orphans, abandoned children and individuals with various disabilities.

3.4. Response to Humanitarian Crises and Migration

Crises caused by the displacement of refugees fleeing armed conflicts have highlighted the Church's capacity to mobilize local resources and networks. During the war in Syria, the Patriarchate of Antioch and local Orthodox communities organized reception centers and provided psychological support for affected families. Likewise, during the Ukrainian crisis, churches in Poland, Romania, and Slovakia actively participated in welcoming refugees, offering food, shelter and counseling. In Romania alone, the Brethren Church, through its network of churches and organizations involved in the Ukrainian crisis, cared for tens of thousands of Ukrainians over extended periods, investing significant funds and mobilizing thousands of volunteers for this effort. In Germany, Protestant and Catholic churches collaborated through the Willkommenskultur initiative, promoting the integration of refugees into local communities. These efforts included language courses, legal assistance and mentorship programs to support social inclusion.

The Church benefits from a stable and extensive infrastructure, both physical (churches, monasteries, parish centers) and human (priests, volunteers, lay associations). In many villages, the parish is the only institution with a continuous presence, which creates significant opportunities for educational, healthcare, or philanthropic interventions (Freston, 2004, p. 84). This logistical potential can be mobilized more effectively through training, inter-institutional cooperation and clear social policies. Additionally, religious communities offer a framework for long-term solidarity, not merely temporary assistance. While many NGOs operate in limited cycles (with time-bound projects), the Church maintains a long-term presence, fostering local relationships and loyalties.

There are already numerous examples of Christian social interventions that can serve as models and be replicated globally. For instance, the Sant'Egidio network, active in over 70 countries, provides social services, conflict mediation and programs for the homeless. Their model combines lay volunteerism, community-based spirituality and interreligious dialogue. Another example is Christian Aid, a Protestant organization advocating for economic and climate justice, which develops partnerships with local organizations to support communities in Africa and Asia. Such models demonstrate that social engagement is not merely an ideal, but a concrete reality with systemic impact.

3.5. Ecology and Sustainability

Although not traditionally part of the Church's social agenda, ecology has become a growing priority in recent decades. However, the issue has yet to reach the depth it demands. There is still very limited interest in understanding the deeper causes of today's environmental crises. Against

this backdrop, environmental activism strategies are generally ineffective. Moreover, many evangelicals continue to believe that individual conversion alone is sufficient to bring about social improvements, including environmental change (Gasaway, 2008, p. 67). This position toward the issue of ecology likely stems from the fact that, in traditional evangelical theology, the focus has been placed almost exclusively on the salvation of the individual soul and life after death, at the expense of a holistic view of creation. This dualistic perspective - which separates the spiritual from the material and the eternal from the temporal - has historically led to the neglect of environmental responsibility, with the natural world often regarded as secondary or even irrelevant from a soteriological standpoint. Within this framework, involvement in the ecological crisis has been perceived as a secular concern.

On the other hand, a theological revaluation of the doctrine of creation - which affirms that the Earth is “God’s gift (creation)” and that humanity has the vocation of being a steward (caretaker of creation) - can provide the foundation for the Church’s deep engagement with today’s ecological crises. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* (2015), states that care for creation is “an essential part of faith.” In the same spirit, the World Council of Churches launched the Eco-Congregations program, encouraging parishes to adopt sustainable practices such as recycling, reducing consumption, or protecting biodiversity (WCC, 2020, p. 6). In Romania as well, there are interdenominational initiatives like Christians for Climate, which organize ecological campaigns in both urban and rural areas, emphasizing spiritual responsibility toward nature.

4. Challenges and Criticisms

Although the Church’s social involvement is broad and diverse, it is not without challenges, limitations, or criticisms - both from within and outside the ecclesial institution. Paradoxically, even in an era when social needs are intensifying, the Church’s credibility and effectiveness are frequently called into question. This tension may reflect society’s heightened expectations, the Church’s difficulty in adapting to constantly shifting social and cultural contexts, or simply the complex relationship between the Church and secular human society. At times, a lack of transparency, fragmented efforts, or the blurring of lines between spiritual mission and political agenda can weaken the real impact of ecclesial intervention. Nonetheless, these challenges do not negate the Church’s transformative potential; rather, they call for a theological and practical rethinking of its presence in the world.

4.1. Passivity or Selective Engagement

One of the most widespread criticisms targets the Church’s passivity in the face of systemic issues such as corruption, racism, domestic violence, or social exclusion. Although there are many local initiatives, the absence of a coherent national or international vision is often cited. In some cases, the Church is perceived as favoring isolated charitable actions over a committed engagement with social justice (Hollenbach, 2002, p. 189). This preference can lead to a form of social conservatism that does not challenge the status quo, but merely softens its effects.

Passivity is not a new accusation. In particular, in a critique of North American evangelicalism titled *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994), historian Mark Noll observed that, by the early 20th century, most evangelicals had abandoned their constructive engagement with North American society. They had come to associate social activism with an undesirable entanglement with the world, fearing the influence that society might have on their theology and practices. As a result, “North American evangelicals withdrew into their own communities, relying solely on self-isolation.” What followed, Noll argues, was the development of “a pessimistic view of society within these evangelical communities” (Noll, 2007, pp. 19, 45–46). He further suggests that “this pessimism reflects the deep alienation many evangelicals felt from society, particularly the decline in their ability to exercise meaningful social influence” (Marsden, 1987, p. 4).

4.2. Politicization and Religious Instrumentalization

The Church's social involvement sometimes risks being co-opted for political purposes. In many contexts, religious leaders openly support or legitimize political forces, thereby losing their prophetic autonomy and moral credibility (Volf, 2011, pp. 97–98). Instead of being “the voice of the voiceless,” the Church can become an ideological appendage, with its messages filtered through partisan lenses. This phenomenon is particularly evident during election campaigns or debates concerning minority rights. Yet, even if such situations do arise, one thing remains clear: *Christianity is not, and must not be, subordinated to any political regime or identified with a specific form of government, even a democratic one. At this point, as in others, we must distinguish between the kingdom of Caesar and the Kingdom of God. These two powers each have their own distinct responsibilities* (Schumann, 2005, p. 60).

A socially engaged Church does not mean a politicized or secularized Church, but one that remains faithful to its evangelical calling. Both Church and politics will always be present in any society, however, finding a complete alignment between the two is a complex and often elusive task. Given the Church's social involvement and sincere passion for addressing various social crises, political institutions should make resources available to the Church to help it fulfill its mission more effectively. In an era marked by individualism, fragmentation, and consumerism, the Church is called to be not merely an institution, but a “community of hope” (Moltmann, 2004, p. 129)—a space where faith is translated into action, and the service of God is expressed through service to one's neighbor.

4.3. Lack of Transparency and Impact Evaluation

Another major obstacle is the lack of financial transparency and objective evaluation of social projects organized by churches. While many NGOs are subject to audits and strict efficiency criteria, ecclesial initiatives are not always held to the same standards (Clocke & Beaumont, 2013, p. 105). This lack of transparency can fuel suspicions about the use of funds, especially when social projects are partially financed by public budgets. However, this accusation is not entirely justified, as in most cases the decision to engage in social projects has been supported by the entire local community, and financial and other reports are presented during community meetings. At least within evangelical communities, aid provided for various social projects is consistently directed toward the actual needs in question. Of course, cases in which church-led social projects lack transparency and coherence cannot be ignored. When it comes to impact, the Church is often hesitant to publicly announce its charitable actions, as social involvement is seen as an expression of the love each Christian has for God and for their neighbor. From the Church's perspective, this aspect should not be subjected to industrialized marketing.

4.4. Ecumenical Tensions and Confessional Fragmentation

Despite numerous calls for unity in action, ecumenical collaboration in the social sphere remains challenging. Doctrinal differences and competition between denominations often weaken the strength of a unified Christian message. Institutional pride, historical misunderstandings, and divergent doctrinal paths seem to outweigh the real needs of disadvantaged communities. For example, in some countries, well-resourced churches operate in parallel without synergy or the sharing of best practices. In such cases, the potential efficiency and impact are significantly reduced (Avis, 2008, p. 117). For outside observers, this fragmentation sends a signal of incoherence to society, as the absence of a united front seems to undermine public trust in the relevance and solidarity of contemporary Christianity.

Nevertheless, recent crises—such as migration, urban poverty and natural disasters—have shown that a coordinated response can address a wide range of social issues. Some local initiatives demonstrate that ecumenical partnership is possible when the focus is placed on shared values rather than doctrinal differences. Moreover, effective ecumenical collaboration

can serve as a model of civic unity in a fragmented society. For this reason, it is imperative that Churches overcome certain obstacles and rediscover the power of collective action in service to others. At the same time, we must acknowledge that Christian churches will continue to have differences that may never be resolved, even until the end of humanity. Some of these differences are essential to the very identity of the Church and thus, social engagement—important as it is—will not be the surprising element that dissolves those distinctions.

4.5. The Internal Crisis of Vocation and Training

Another key challenge is the internal issue of insufficient specialized training for clergy and laypeople involved in social assistance. In many cases, social involvement is reduced to goodwill and acts of charity, without professional preparation in fields such as social psychology, social work legislation, psychiatry, medicine, or project management. There is a tacit separation that allows religion to function on the margins of the social work profession, yet this very separation prevents the formal recognition of religion or its acceptance as a legitimate partner in efforts to improve the living conditions of those in need (Cnaan, 1999, p. 48).

This lack of expertise can compromise both the quality of the intervention and the trust of beneficiaries (Swinton & Mowat, 2016, p. 74). Ongoing and interdisciplinary training is beneficial for church-based social assistance strategies; a fact reflected in many church-affiliated organizations and associations. However, such training cannot be imposed—especially on volunteers. In the absence of proper training, the risk of inadequate or even harmful interventions increases significantly, some argue—often without acknowledging that the Church has generally operated within the limits of what it could realistically offer. Although, it is true that collaboration with professionals outside the Church can help fill competency gaps among those involved on a voluntary basis.

In the face of the complexity of contemporary crises, it is increasingly evident that secular institutions—no matter how well-intentioned—cannot fully address human needs without the contribution of an entity like the Church, which brings with it ethical and communal capital. The Christian Church, in the diversity of its traditions, holds a unique potential for social intervention—not only through its material or institutional resources, but especially through its deeply humanizing ethos. Strengthening this role is not a marginal option, but a strategic and theological necessity.

5. Conclusions

In a world marked by structural imbalances, chronic vulnerabilities, and a deepening existential loneliness, the social involvement of the Christian Church is not only timely but essential. Far from being an isolated act of charity or a mere extension of philanthropy, the Church's social action is a coherent expression of the Gospel message: "love for one's neighbor as a reflection of love for God." This involvement calls for an active, empathetic and solidaristic presence amid human suffering and crises. It entails not only material support but also the restoration of the dignity of the person in distress. In this way, the Church becomes a space of healing.

The theological foundation of social involvement calls the Church to action and intervention—actions that have addressed complex situations, even when the Church has not always had professionally trained personnel in the field of social work. For the Church, social assistance is embedded in both its conception and practice. I have argued that the theological foundations of social involvement are solid and coherent—from the parable of the Good Samaritan to the teachings of the Church Fathers and contemporary social encyclicals. This theological framework justifies not only immediate crisis intervention but also long-term commitment to justice, dignity and solidarity. The Church's tradition shows that wherever a crisis arises, the Church is often ahead of political decision-makers—because the Church does not require extensive approvals, only hearts willing to feel with those in crisis.

Concrete examples of intervention—from education to humanitarian aid, from palliative care to ecology—demonstrate that the Church can contribute effectively and contextually to the well-being of society. The initiatives mentioned in this article represent only a small part of the Church's social involvement and highlight its ability to respond creatively and adaptively to the current needs of communities in crisis. In these actions, faith is translated into concrete deeds and social responsibility, while collaboration with other organizations or even with the secular state shows that the Church is a credible partner in building the common good. The Church's active and well-articulated presence in social crises remains a clear sign of its relevance in the contemporary world. There are, of course, many challenges and criticisms, but despite these difficulties, there are ample reasons to strengthen the Church's social mission.

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