

# The Role of Spirituality: Towards a Biblical Model of Collective Social Responsibility (CSR)

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the critical role of Christ-centered spirituality in shaping a biblical model of Collective Social Responsibility (CSR). Rooted in theological analysis and scriptural interpretation, the research examines how biblical spirituality extends beyond personal devotion to inspire ethical action, justice, and sustainable socio-economic development. Drawing from biblical texts and theological scholarship, the study highlights the integration of faith with public engagement, emphasizing how spirituality contributes meaningfully to healthcare, mental resilience, and ethical behavior. Contrary to traditions that perceive spirituality as withdrawal from societal issues, the findings affirm that Christ-centered spirituality actively fosters compassion, equity, and communal well-being. Jesus' ministry is presented as a model for faith-driven engagement, calling believers to address systemic injustices and care for the marginalized. The study proposes a holistic CSR model grounded in biblical principles—one that challenges individuals and institutions, particularly the Church, to embody justice, mercy, and advocacy in practical ways. By aligning spirituality with social responsibility, the study reframes faith as a dynamic force for both personal transformation and collective impact. It asserts that the Church's mission extends beyond spiritual guidance to include proactive participation in socio-economic reform and human dignity advocacy. In doing so, Christ-centered spirituality serves as a framework for ethical engagement, unity, and reconciliation. In a world marked by inequality and fragmentation, biblical spirituality offers a compelling vision for collective responsibility. It calls believers to live out their faith through service, justice, and compassion, becoming agents of transformative change. Ultimately, a biblically rooted model of CSR provides a powerful means to cultivate communal flourishing and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Christ-centered Spirituality, Collective Social Responsibility (CSR), Faith, Justice, Altruism, Socio-economic Development.

## INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is a profound and multifaceted concept that transcends religious boundaries and cultural perspectives.<sup>1</sup> At its core, spirituality reflects a person's connection with the divine, their sense of purpose, and their moral and ethical values. The Greek words *Psychikos* and *Pneumatikos*, used in the New Testament, illustrate the distinction between the soulish and spiritual person, emphasizing the transformative nature of spirituality in human life. This article explores the biblical and theological dimensions of spirituality, highlighting its role in shaping both individual faith and societal well-being. It examines how spirituality influences physical and mental health, fosters a sense of collective social responsibility, and contributes to socio-economic development.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it underscores the importance of integrating spiritual principles into social action, advocating for justice, compassion, and care for marginalized communities.

<sup>1</sup> Bag, Tanima. "Religion And Morality: Connected or Separate?" *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research* 12, no. 8 (2023). Retrieved from <http://ijmer.in.doi./2023/12.08.54>. See also, Rajiman Andrianus Sirait, and Olis Olis. (2024). "Religion and Culture Education: Understanding the Interplay and Significance". *Anugerah: Jurnal Pendidikan Kristiani Dan Kateketik Katolik*, 1 (3):01-12. <https://doi.org/10.61132/anugerah.v1i3.43>; Sajjad Ahmad Warraich and Javiria Kokab. "Comparative Analysis of Major World Religions: Similarities and Differences." *Al Haqeeqah* 3, no. 1 (2023): 1-10.

<sup>2</sup> Doug Oman, and Carl E. Thoresen. "Do religion and spirituality influence health." *Handbook of the psychology of religion and*

The spiritual and ethical values of human social life enhance our understanding of the importance of spirituality in fostering social transformation. We live in a world of diversities of spirituality. For instance, India is known for its rich multireligious heritage and profound spiritual diversity.<sup>3</sup> Our society today is buildup of a spiritually oriented social structure. Some would look into religious belief for spiritual enlightenment and encouragement only; others would look into religious systems and norms for spiritual growth and economic development; eventually, many would see religious institutions as playing a specific role in fostering social responsibility, spirituality and values in society. True spirituality demonstrates and demands true love for our enemies and neighbors (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; Luke 6:27, 35; Jam. 2:8-10), reinforcing the principle that faith must be accompanied by action.<sup>4</sup>

It is rational to evoke awareness on a theological assessment of spirituality that helps develop social welfare and economic development.<sup>5</sup> A healthy and wealthy society demands a healthy relationship with God and His Word. The society that does not seek and serve God may struggle to achieve lasting social and economic stability. Various dimensions of spirituality play a vital role in the development of our societies. Today, however, a growing number of studies reveal spirituality may play a bigger role in the healing process of humans than the medical community previously thought.

By understanding spirituality not merely as a religious concept but as a vital force for holistic well-being, we can appreciate its significance in addressing contemporary social challenges. This article examines the role of spirituality, fostering a biblical model for Collective Social Responsibility (CSR).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs theological analysis, utilizing biblical texts as primary sources to examine the role of spirituality in fostering a biblical model of Collective Social Responsibility (CSR). It integrates scriptural interpretation, ethical perspectives, and theological discourse with scholarly publications and critical interactions to highlight the intersection of spirituality, social justice, and economic development.

## RESULT

The study finds that Christ-centered spirituality plays a crucial role in shaping both individual faith and societal well-being. It demonstrates that a biblically grounded approach to spirituality fosters justice, compassion, social responsibility, and sustainable socio-economic progress. Additionally, it highlights the positive impact of spirituality on healthcare, mental resilience, and ethical behavior, illustrating how religious values contribute to community well-being. Finally, the study explores the profound implications of spirituality for collective social responsibility.

### Collective Social Responsibility

Numerous scholarly articles have explored the concept of ‘corporate social responsibility.’<sup>6</sup> This concept pertains to a business model wherein a company integrates social and environmental concerns into its operations and interactions with society.<sup>7</sup> The church, however, is not a corporation but rather the body of Christ comprised of individual members who are sanctified and transformed by the blood of Christ. ‘Collective social responsibility’ within the context of the church refers to a collective group of individuals who share

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spirituality 24 (2005): 435-459; Todd W. Hall, “Christian spirituality and mental health: A relational spirituality paradigm for empirical research.” *Journal of Psychology & Christianity* 23, no. 1 (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Satheesh K. P. Kunjumon (2024), “An Investigation of Christian Mission Approaches in the Context of Religious Pluralism in India in the 20th Century,” *BIBLICAL STUDIES JOURNAL* 6 (3):18-34. Retrieved from <https://www.biblicalstudies.in/index.php/pub/article/view/27>. <https://doi.org/10.54513/BSJ.2024.6303>

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Liebert, "The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality." *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 1 (2002): 30-49. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/scs.2002.0011>.

<sup>5</sup> Platovnjak, Ivan. "The Role of (Christian) Spirituality in the Economy in the Light of Laudato si'." *Synthesis philosophica* 34, no. 1 (2019): 73-86. <https://doi.org/10.21464/sp34106>.

<sup>6</sup> See, Lindgreen, A., & Swaen, V. (2010). Corporate social responsibility. *International Journal of Management reviews*, 12(1), 1-7; Auld, G., Bernstein, S., & Cashore, B. (2008). The New Corporate Social Responsibility. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 33(1), 413-435; Jones, T. M. (1980). Corporate Social Responsibility Revisited, Redefined. *California Management Review*, 22(3), 59-67. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41164877>.

<sup>7</sup> Hohnen, P., & Potts, J. (2007). *Corporate social responsibility. An implementation guide for business.*

equal accountability to the Lord in fulfilling both the spiritual and social mandates of the church. It involves a collaborative approach to addressing spiritual, social, environmental, or economic issues through joint action.

### Spirituality Unites Body, Soul, and Spirit

There are two Greek words that describe two states of a person. Namely, the first one is '*Psychikos*' which refers to "The *soulish* person" and the second one is '*Pneumatikos*' which means "The *spiritual* person". There are six times the word '*Psychikos*' is used in the New Testament (1 Cor. 2:14; 15:44, 46; Jam. 3:15; Jude 19). Thus, the meaning of the adjective '*Psychikos*' is "someone as being dominated by an unredeemed state."<sup>8</sup> The second adjective '*Pneumatikos*' is used for twenty-six times in the New Testament. The basic function of this is to identify the thing described as belonging to the spiritual realm. From an anthropocentric perspective, the body, soul, and spirit are united as one with an external force of existence.<sup>9</sup> Sparby argues that this oneness is connected to the nature and experiences of transcendence or enlightenment.

The use of these terms signifies that each type of living being (i.e., humans) is equally important from a biblical perspective and that their existence, both spiritual and physical, is derived from God. Therefore, no human being should be treated lightly. Christian spirituality does not negate the physical and social aspects of human existence. Each person possesses unique worth and dignity. The spirituality of an individual is dependent on their relationship with God, as spirituality is a divine quality originating from Him. This nature of spirituality enables individuals to be united with God, which Schneiders calls as "interior life" – includes prayers and devotion to God.<sup>10</sup> According to the World's Bible Dictionary, "The New Testament goes further and uses 'pneuma' to refer to that higher aspect of man's nature that enables him to communicate with God and have religious experiences." (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:35; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 3:3).<sup>11</sup>

Christian spirituality is rooted in a profound relationship with God through the mediation of Christ, fostering acts of compassion and social responsibility. In contrast, spirituality in a secular point of view includes: a belief in a power operating in the universe that is greater than oneself, a sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures, and an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life and the development of personal, absolute values.<sup>12</sup> It is the way man finds meaning, hope, comfort, and inner peace in his life. Although spirituality is often associated with religious life, many believe that personal spirituality can be developed outside of religion. Acts of compassion and selflessness, altruism, and the experience of inner peace are all characteristics of spirituality. Many Americans are becoming interested in the role of spirituality in their health and health care.

### Spirituality and Health Care

Spirituality fosters a more positive attitude toward challenging health issues. Christian spirituality, in particular, provides individuals with the strength to overcome the fear of death. A deep belief in God and consistent spiritual practices serve as vital sources of resilience in coping with suffering and loss. Programs with a strong spiritual component, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), show that spiritual disciplines may be especially effective for drug and alcohol addiction.<sup>13</sup> The regular practice of prayer and meditation is strongly associated with recovery and abstinence from drugs.

<sup>8</sup>Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 576.

<sup>9</sup>Terje Sparby, "Body, Soul, and Spirit: An Explorative Qualitative Study of Anthroposophic Meditation and Spiritual Practice," *Religions*. 2020; 11(6):314. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060314>.

<sup>10</sup>Sandra M. Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (2005): 23-24. Retrieved from [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=9573236107590248302&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0,44&as\\_vis=1](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=9573236107590248302&hl=en&as_sdt=0,44&as_vis=1) (Accessed March 9, 2025).

<sup>11</sup> Don Fleming, *World's Bible Dictionary* (Lowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, 1990), 418.

<sup>12</sup>Several scholars and authors have explored spirituality from a secular perspective, emphasizing elements such as belief in a greater universal power, interconnectedness with all living beings, and the search for life's purpose and personal values. For instance, scholars such as Sam Harris (2014), Robert C. Solomon (2002), Cornel W. du Toit (2006), and Peter van der Veer (2013) have argued for a form of spirituality that does not require belief in the divine. For spirituality as "inner peace," see, Xi, Juan, and Matthew T. Lee, 'Inner Peace as a Contribution to Human Flourishing: A New Scale Developed from Ancient Wisdom', in Matthew T. Lee, Laura D. Kubzansky, and Tyler J. VanderWeele (eds), *Measuring Well-Being: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the Social Sciences and the Humanities* (New York, 2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 22 Apr. 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197512531.003.0016>, (Accessed March 9, 2025).

<sup>13</sup> Steven D. Ehrlich, "Spirituality: What is Spirituality?" *Mount Sinai*, (November 6, 2015). Retrieved from <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/treatment/spirituality>.

Many young adults today infected by HIV/AIDS<sup>14</sup>, an important health issue which destroys the social life. World Health Organization (WHO) states, "HIV remains a major global public health issue, having claimed an estimated 42.3 million lives to date."<sup>15</sup> As a physician, Christina Puchalski identifies that "Among 90 HIV-positive patients, those who were spiritually active had less fear of death and less guilt."<sup>16</sup> Poverty, social exclusion, unhealthy relationship, poor education, labor and migration effect transmission of HIV. It creates an unhealthy environment and uncertain future in our society. Aroma G. Sam argues that HIV/AIDS affects economic growth adversely by destroying human capital. Without proper nutrition, health care and medicine that is available in developed countries, large number of people in developing and under-developed countries are falling victims to this epidemic.<sup>17</sup>

The one that infected with the germ of HIV probably will have no hope in life to live longer unless initiate a celestial intervention by a Divine power. The religious precepts and rituals can give him/her hope and comfort. However, results from several studies indicate that people with strong religious and spiritual beliefs heal faster from surgery, are less anxious and depressed, have lower blood pressure, and cope better with chronic illnesses such as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and spinal cord injury. Spirituality reduces depressions and anxiety.

One clinical study at Duke University found that people who attend regular religious services tend to have better immune function. In another clinical study of 232 older adults undergoing heart surgery, those who were religious were 3 times less likely to die within the 6 months after surgery than those who were not. Not one of the 37 people in this study who described themselves as deeply religious died.<sup>18</sup> Of course, the studies are not comprehensive, and many people find help in spiritual resources for numerous conditions. Spiritual care impacts mental health.<sup>19</sup>

Spiritual practices tend to improve coping skills and social support, foster feelings of optimism and hope, promote healthy behavior, reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, and encourage a sense of relaxation. Towards a healthy socio-economic lifestyle needs a complete elimination of the following elements from the social structure of the society: drugs, alcohol, tobacco, unhealthy behavior, sexual Abuse, child labor, and poverty.

### Spirituality and a Healthy Society

Spirituality plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy society by promoting ethical behavior, emotional resilience, and social harmony. It fosters values like compassion, forgiveness, and interconnectedness, which contribute to reduced stress, better mental health, and stronger community bonds. Research suggests that spiritual practices, such as meditation and prayer, enhance psychological well-being and reduce anxiety and depression.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, studies indicate that societies with strong spiritual foundations often exhibit lower crime rates and greater social cohesion.<sup>21</sup> Spirituality also encourages prosocial behavior, leading to increased volunteerism and altruism, which strengthen communal support systems.

<sup>14</sup> Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. This is one of the most serious health issues that prevent socio-economic growth ever since it came to light in 1981.

<sup>15</sup> World Health Organization, "HIV and AIDS," retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>. (Accessed March 8, 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Puchalski, Christina M. "The role of spirituality in health care." In *Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 352-357. Taylor & Francis, 2001. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/08998280.2001.11927788>.

<sup>17</sup> Aroma G. Sam, "Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS" *TIBT Journal* Vol.9:2 (2007), 33.

<sup>18</sup> Ehrlich, "Spirituality: What is Spirituality?" *Mount Sinai*, (November 6, 2015). Retrieved from <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/treatment/spirituality>.

<sup>19</sup> Oji, V. U., Hung, L. C., Abbasgholizadeh, R., Terrell Hamilton, F., Essien, E. J., & Nwulia, E. (2017). Spiritual care may impact mental health and medication adherence in HIV+ populations. *HIV/AIDS - Research and Palliative Care*, 9, 101–109. <https://doi.org/10.2147/HIV.S126309>.

<sup>20</sup> Harold G. Koenig, "Religion, spirituality, and health: The research and clinical implications." *International Scholarly Research Notices* 2012, no. 1 (2012): 278730, <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730>. pp. 18-22.

<sup>21</sup> VanderWeele, T. J. (2017). "On the Promotion of Human Flourishing." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(31), 8148-8156, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1702996114>, pp. 8150-8152.



Spirituality contributes to a healthy lifestyle by fostering ethical, moral, and religious values, ultimately enhancing an individual's mental health and social well-being.<sup>22</sup> By alleviating stressful feelings and promoting healing, one's spirituality can positively influence immune, cardiovascular (heart and blood vessels), hormonal, and nervous systems.<sup>23</sup> An example of a religion that promotes a healthy lifestyle is Seventh Day Adventists. Those who follow this religion, a particularly healthy population, are instructed by their Church not to consume alcohol, eat pork, or smoke tobacco.<sup>24</sup> Researchers found that in a 10-year study of Seventh Day Adventists in the Netherlands, Adventist men lived 8.9 years longer than the national average, and Adventist women lived 3.6 years longer. For both men and women, the chance of dying from cancer or heart disease was 60 - 66% less, respectively, than the national average.<sup>25</sup>

When a society lacks spiritual grounding, it becomes susceptible to social evils such as injustice, inequality, favoritism, bribery, and violence, which hinder both spiritual and socio-economic progress. The current social landscape resembles a "threshing-mill," where individuals are caught in cycles of oppression and moral decline. Political structures, rather than being instruments of justice and equality, often become arenas of ideological conflicts and power struggles. Politics has the potential to shape the future of society, but when it fails to fulfill this role, the very foundation of the social order is at risk.

While technology and politics can contribute to human well-being, Roger E. Hedlund warns that they can also become forces of dehumanization if not guided by moral and ethical principles.<sup>26</sup> Spirituality serves as a guiding force that can harmonize these elements, ensuring that they work toward the betterment of society rather than its deterioration. A spiritually aware society prioritizes justice, equality, and human dignity, thereby neutralizing the effects of corruption and moral decay.

In essence, spirituality acts as the foundation for a just and healthy society, offering a moral compass that ensures political and technological advancements align with human values rather than becoming tools of exploitation and division. Figure 1 illustrates how a Christ-centered spirituality unites the body, soul, and spirit, fosters healthcare, and contributes to the development of a healthy society.

### Christ-Centered Role of Spirituality

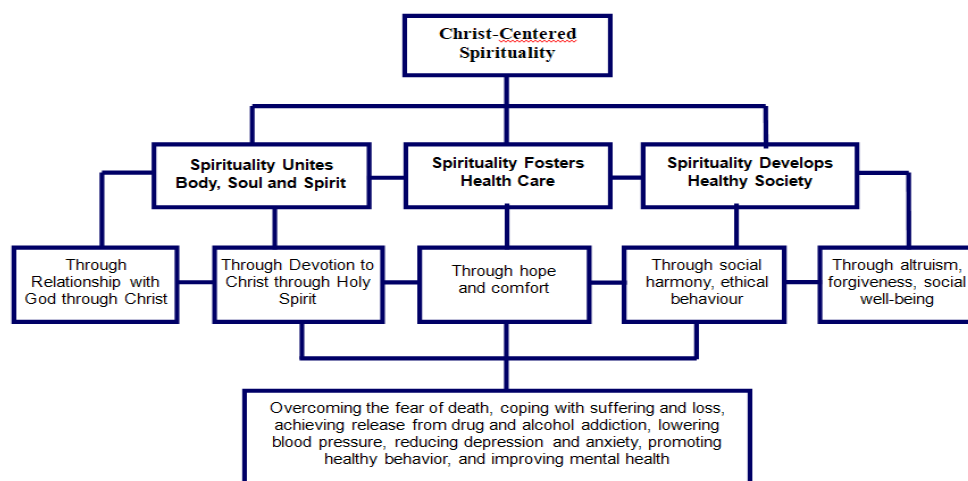


Figure – 1: Christ-Centered Spirituality

<sup>22</sup> Bryndin E and Bryndina I, Natural and spiritual aspects of health and social infrastructure of public health care on base of health lifestyle. *MOJ Gerontol Ger.* 2018;3(6):404-408. <https://doi.org/10.15406/mojgg.2018.03.00155>.

<sup>23</sup> See, S. G. Dalmida, (2006). Spirituality, Mental Health, Physical Health, and Health-Related Quality of Life Among Women with HIV/AIDS: Integrating Spirituality into Mental Health Care. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 27(2), 185–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840500436958>.

<sup>24</sup> Steven D. Ehrlich, "Spirituality: What is Spirituality?" *Mount Sinai*, (November 6, 2015). Retrieved from <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/treatment/spirituality>.

<sup>25</sup> Guy R. Nicastrì, "Spirituality in Medicine: A Surgeon's Perspective," *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, (March 2014:24). Retrieved from <http://www.rimed.org/rimedicaljournal/2014/03/2014-03-23-spirituality-nicastrì.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Roger E. Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission: Mission in historical and theological Perspective* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1993), 367.

Christ-centered spirituality plays a vital role in fostering a healthy society by promoting ethical behavior, social harmony, and overall well-being. Through devotion to Christ and guidance from the Holy Spirit, individuals cultivate altruism, forgiveness, and a deepened sense of purpose. Spirituality unites the body, soul, and spirit, offering hope and comfort while strengthening one's relationship with God through Christ. It provides the strength to overcome fear, cope with suffering and loss, and achieve freedom from addictions. Additionally, spirituality contributes to better mental and physical health by lowering blood pressure, reducing depression and anxiety, and encouraging positive behaviors that enhance overall quality of life.

### Biblical Model of Collective Social Responsibility (CSR)

In this session, it is helpful to distinguish spirituality in relation to the social responsibility of the Church. The Church's responsibility, both historically and in the present, is to participate in God's mission for a lost world—specifically, a world without Christ. The Evangelical Confederation of Brazil (CEB), an interdenominational cooperation comprising the six principal historical evangelical churches in Brazil, was designated as the “Sector of Social Responsibility of the Church.”<sup>27</sup> However, scholars such as Lesslie Newbigin, N.T. Wright, and Christopher Wright emphasize the Church's mission as participation in God's work of reconciling all things to Himself, encompassing humanity as well as the spiritual and material realms. David Bosch encapsulates this idea, stating, “It is like the whole church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.”<sup>28</sup>

Researchers have produced numerous scholarly articles and dissertations examining the relationship between spirituality and social responsibility.<sup>29</sup> Some discuss the concept of Corporate Spiritual Responsibility (CSR), while others explore Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).<sup>30</sup> A biblically grounded spirituality of the Church is inherently linked to Collective Social Responsibility (CSR) as an integral part of its service to society. The paradigm for Collective Social Responsibility (CSR) is the ethical implication of Jesus' teaching of true discipleship.

### Social Responsibility as the Salt of the Earth

The Gospel according to Matthew 5:13-15, emphasizes Jesus Christ as an authoritative teacher and underscores the ethical implications of discipleship.<sup>31</sup> Jesus employs two metaphors, τὸ ἅλας (“the salt”) and τὸ φῶς (“the light”), to illustrate the importance of integrating faith and works. He instructs His followers on how to demonstrate their influence on the world by being τὸ ἅλας (“the salt”) and τὸ φῶς (“the light”) (Matt. 5:13-16). The pronoun Ὑμεῖς (“you”) refers to the disciples. Durken notes, “The first word, Ὑμεῖς (‘you’), is emphatic in both verses, contrasting Matthean Christians with their counterparts in the synagogue.”<sup>32</sup> The disciples of Christ are called to embody the ethical teachings of Jesus in their daily lives as a manifestation of their faith and obedience to the Lord. Walvoord aptly observes, “It is also possible that salt means these people serve as a preservative against the evils of society.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, τὸ ἅλας (“the salt”) must retain its essential properties; otherwise, it becomes useless and its purpose is forfeited.

<sup>27</sup>Nantawan Boonprasat Lewis (ed.), *Revolution of Spirit: Ecumenical Theology in Global Context* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 135.

<sup>28</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 1991), 13.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, Jonothan Ridenour (2007), Loi Teck Hui (2008), Sandra Leonara Obregon, Luis Felipe Dias Lopes, Wesley Vieira da Silva, Deoclécio Junior Cardoso da Silva, Bratriz Leite Gustmann de Castro, Nuvea Kuhn, Maria Emilia Camargo, Claudimar Pereira da Veiga (2024), Subhash Sharma (2020).

<sup>30</sup> Teck Hui, L. (2008). Combining Faith and CSR: A Paradigm of Corporate Sustainability. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 35(6), 449-465, <https://doi.org/10.1108/03068290810873429>; Subhash Sharma, Corporate Spiritual Responsibility: Towards A New Paradigm for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (January 31, 2020). 3D... IBA Journal of Management & Leadership Vol:11, Issue:2, January-June, 2020, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3529168>.

<sup>31</sup>Daniel Durken, *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.aaron.swbts.edu/lib/swbts/reader.action?docID=4837474&pgg=20>, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup>Durken, *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.aaron.swbts.edu/lib/swbts/reader.action?docID=4837474&pgg=20>, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup>John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:29

## Social Responsibility as the Light of the World

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus equates τὸ φῶς (“the light”) with τὰ καλὰ ἔργα (“the good works”). Here, the καλῶν ἔργων (“good works”) are actions that ἄνθρωπον (“others” or “other human beings”) will ἰδῶσιν (“see”) because they represent an act of performance, not merely a proclamation.<sup>34</sup> This reflects the demonstration of “faith in action,” which is also an act of obedience to the ethical teachings of the Master. People do not praise the disciples for their good works; rather, they glorify their Father in heaven by ἰδῶσιν (“seeing their good works”) (Matt. 5:16). Thus, our “good works” have an evangelistic effect, drawing people to Christ and His kingdom. The disciples are called to influence society through their “acts of faith” in obedience to Christ’s call, with the understanding that faith must result in works (Matt. 25:42-46). Under the supervision of the lead pastor, Brady Lock, Oak Grove Baptist Church in Burleson (Texas) intensively engaged with its neighborhood after the Sunday worship service, emphasizing ‘Faith in Action’ as a demonstration of Christ’s love for the world. This act of faith extends beyond the four walls of the church building, as reflected in the message printed on a T-shirt: ‘Oak Grove Church Has Left the Building.’

## Social Responsibility as a Means to Promote Charity in the World

In Ephesians 2:10, Friberg, Barbara, and Miller explain that the term καλῶν ἔργων (“good works”) is complementary to faith, serving as a practical demonstration or proof of it—ἔργον (“work(s),” “deed(s)").<sup>35</sup> They further elaborate, “As God’s activity in the world, ἔργον denotes work(s), deed(s), act(s); and as human duties and occupations, it refers to work or task (Acts 14:26).”<sup>36</sup> Believers are created in Christ to perform καλῶν ἔργων (“good works”) (v. 10). Similarly, Howard Marshall and Philip Towner argue that this concept is more concerned with the creation of a new people characterized by good deeds.<sup>37</sup> Robert Hughes and Carl Laney affirm that our καλῶν ἔργων (“good works”) “always accompany salvation and are the result and evidence of genuine faith.”<sup>38</sup>

In Titus 2:14, Paul exhorts Christians to be “eager to do what is good.” The word καλός appears 102 times in the New Testament and is translated as “good” 83 times.<sup>39</sup> Paul discusses a λυτρώμαι (“redeemed”) community, emphasizing that the purpose for which God has λυτρώμαι (“redeemed”) us is clearly stated in Titus 2:14: God has redeemed λυτρώμαι us for Himself so that we might be ζηλωτὴν (“zealous”) for καλῶν ἔργων (“good works”). Christians are therefore called to be zealous in performing good works—ζηλωτὴν καλῶν ἔργων. Walter Lock contends that “The Christian Church must have an eager enthusiasm and take the lead in all that is excellent.”<sup>40</sup> The motivation to δράω (“do”) καλῶν ἔργων (“good works”) in this present age is our future ἐλπίδα (“hope”) in the Second Coming of Christ (2:13).

According to James 2:14-26, particularly in verse 14, the word πίστις (“faith”) appears once, whereas ἡ πίστις (“the faith”) is used eight times. The πίστις (“faith”) without the article ἡ (“the”) introduces a new concept.<sup>41</sup> James strongly argues that ἡ πίστις (“the faith”) that is not accompanied by ἔργα (“charity” or

<sup>34</sup>Our “good works” can serve as a preparatory to attract people to the gospel of Christ because “the good works” will eventually take an evangelistic effect in preparing people for the gospel of Christ.

<sup>35</sup>Friberg, Timothy; Friberg, Barbara; Miller, Neva F.: *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000 (Baker's Greek New Testament Library 4), S. 171.

<sup>36</sup>Friberg, Timothy; Friberg, Barbara; Miller, Neva F.: *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 171.

<sup>37</sup>Marshall, I. Howard; Towner, Philip H.: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004, S. 285.

<sup>38</sup>Hughes, Robert B.; Laney, J. Carl: *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001 (The Tyndale Reference Library), S. 593.

<sup>39</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. G2570.

<sup>40</sup>Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy and Titus)*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924, S. 147.

<sup>41</sup>James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1916, S. 203.

“good deeds”) is not a “saving faith.” This is evident in his rhetorical question: *μη δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν* (“Can such faith save him?”). When James posed this question, he anticipated a negative response; the implied answer is “no.” Such a person is merely a professing (λέγει) Christian. In other words, ἡ πίστις (“the faith”) without the evidence of ἔργα (“charity”) is not a “saving faith.” James contrasts “such faith” with “saving faith” (v. 14a and 14b). He asserts that πίστις (“saving faith”) is always accompanied by ἔργα (“charity”). Martin contends that “The faith of v.14 is useless for salvation, and the πίστις of 14b refers to the workless faith of v.14a.”<sup>42</sup> Martin further adds, “There is no salvation for anyone who possesses the type of faith described in vv.15-16a.”<sup>43</sup> However, James does not argue that works are a requirement for salvation but rather a demonstration of faith in action.

Like Jesus, James speaks as an authoritative teacher, challenging believers to harmonize or reconcile their πίστις (“faith”) and ἔργα (“works”). James’ ethical teachings were intended not for individualistic interpretation but for the community of believers (James 1:1). According to Durken, James’ voice represents “the voice of the poor and the marginalized in society.”<sup>44</sup> James insists that Christians must be doers of the word, not merely hearers of it. James argues that if the disciples of Christ cannot demonstrate their faith through acts of compassion, then their religion is flawed and untrue. (James 1:27).

### Social Responsibility as a Demonstration of Love for Neighbors

Love for neighbors is a core principle of Jesus’ teaching and second greatest commandment, alongside loving God (Mt 5: 42-48; 12: 19; 19: 22, 39-40; 22:35-40; Jn 13: 34-35; 15). Jesus’ teaching, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” embodies both psychological and moral altruism,<sup>45</sup> fostering a reciprocal culture of kindness while upholding dignity, acceptance, and compassion. Such selfless love contributes to a culture of kindness, thereby enhancing individuals’ sense of belonging and overall well-being. The Parable of the Good Samaritan exemplifies this teaching by illustrating the importance of showing mercy and kindness to others, regardless of societal boundaries. It advocates for selfless love toward others, even at the expense of one’s own life, driven by empathy and compassion and deeply rooted in ethical or religious beliefs that promote selflessness. A study on “Altruism and love of neighbor” identifies that “service to others deepens one’s inner spiritual life, as a form of spiritual practice, care for creation, or worship in action, yielding greater spiritual understanding, which in turn brings an added degree of resilience against depression.”<sup>46</sup>

Jesus’ teaching, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” is rooted in Leviticus 19:18, following the directive to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind. This precept emphasizes the intrinsic value of every individual and advocates for a selfless, compassionate attitude toward others. It implies a moral obligation to treat others with the same care, respect, and dignity that one accords to oneself.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ralph P. Martin, “James: Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 48 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 80.

<sup>43</sup> Martin, “James: Word Biblical Commentary, 80.

<sup>44</sup> Durken, *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.aaron.swbts.edu/lib/swbts/reader.action?docID=4837474&ppg=20>, p. 622.

<sup>45</sup> Altruism is the selfless concern for the well-being of others. It involves acting out of a genuine desire to help others, even at a personal cost. Altruistic behavior can be seen in acts of kindness, charity, or helping someone in need without expecting anything in return.

<sup>46</sup> Lisa Miller, Priya Wickramaratne, Xuejun Hao, Clayton H. McClintock, Lifang Pan, Connie Svob, Myrna M. Weissman, “Altruism and “love of neighbor” offer neuroanatomical protection against depression,”

Volume 315, 2021:7, *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2021.111326>.

<sup>47</sup> The following scholars provide theological, historical, and ethical discussions on Jesus’ commandment to love one’s neighbor. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Fortress Press, 1996;

Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, and New Creation*. Harper San Francisco, 1996; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. Yale University Press, 1991–2016; William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.



## Biblical Model of Collective Social Responsibility (CSR)

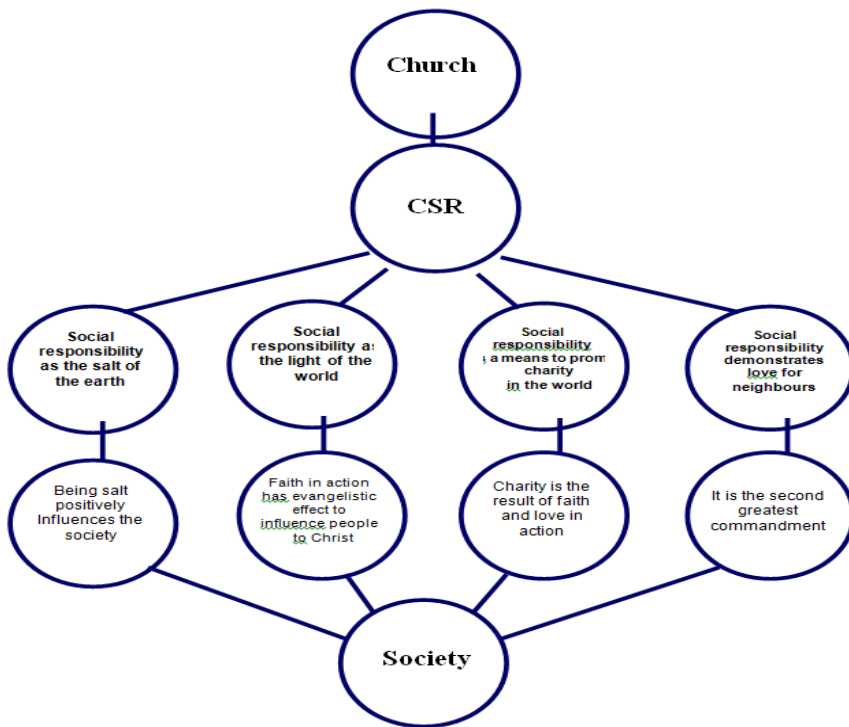


Figure – 2: Biblical Model of Collective Social Responsibility (CSR)

Social responsibility is essential for positively impacting society, likened to being the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” It promotes charity, demonstrates love for others, and influences communities for the better. Acting in faith has an evangelistic effect, drawing people to Christ. Charity is a natural outcome of faith and love in action, aligning with the second greatest commandment—to love one’s neighbor.

### Implications to the Church for Collective Social Responsibility (CSR)

Spirituality fosters a sense of collective social responsibility, encouraging individuals and communities to care for those in need. By embracing these values, spirituality inspires compassionate action for a just and equitable society. It emphasizes Care for the Poor – Providing support and resources to uplift disadvantaged individuals, Concern for the Marginalized – Advocating for the rights and inclusion of those excluded from society, Feeding the Hungry – Addressing food insecurity through charitable and systemic efforts, Release the Oppressed – Working towards justice and liberation for those facing oppression, and Eliminating Poverty – Striving for sustainable solutions to eradicate economic disparity.

#### Care for the Poor

The Scriptures strongly emphasize concern for the poor within the social structure of human life (Ex. 22:25; 23:3; Lev. 14:21; 19:15; 25:39; Deut. 15:4; 15:11). God calls His people to demonstrate compassion toward those in need. When giving the Law through Moses, Israel’s greatest leader, God placed particular emphasis on caring for the poor. The underprivileged and marginalized in society require our engagement with deep care and compassion. As Bryant L. Myers aptly states, “Christ was deeply involved in the society of his times and with the poor. His mission was to transform society and its members for a better future.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, we must not turn a blind eye when God places a person in need along our spiritual journey, especially in the context of the well-being of the poor (Deut. 15:11).

God commands His people to actively express concern for the poor. Strangers and those in need within the land must have their basic necessities met, including food (Lev. 25:6). The ministry of Jesus was consistently

<sup>48</sup> Bryant L. Myers, “Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development”, in the *Journal of Mission Today* Vol. 15:1, ISSN 0772-1223 (2013), 93.

intertwined with the plight of the poor, underscoring the significance of this concern in both spiritual and socio-economic dimensions. In the society of Jesus' time, the poor could be categorized into two groups: those who, lacking property, had to work with their hands for daily sustenance, and those who were entirely dependent on begging or the generosity of others. Notably, the term "poor" in the four Gospels primarily refers to the latter category. Young-Kwon highlights that the New Testament uses the term "poor" in this context 34 times, reinforcing the biblical emphasis on aiding the most destitute members of society.<sup>49</sup>

### Concern for the Marginalized

The divine plan for a redeemed community has always been central to God's purpose. To achieve this, the God of the Bible consistently demonstrates concern for marginalized and minority groups in human societies. Factors such as caste, clan, color, customs, culture, and community background often determine an individual's social standing. In the contemporary world, these factors are further shaped by the socio-religious and political structures that define identity. In our country, marginalized communities face systemic discrimination across various sectors, including employment, education, urbanization, migration, politics, property ownership, and socio-economic development, among other structural disparities.

Hindutva ideologies and the underlying forces of religious fanaticism threaten the identity of minorities within India's religiously pluralistic and democratic framework at all levels. The existence of minority groups is inherently linked to structural inequalities. As L. Shimray observes, "The existence of a minority in a society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group with higher social status and greater privileges."<sup>50</sup>

### Feeding the Hungry

The necessity of feeding the hungry is clearly established in the Old Testament, reflecting God's deep concern for those in need (Neh. 9:15; Ps. 34:10; 146:7; Prov. 6:30; 10:3; Is. 49:10). Scripture explicitly acknowledges that even when a thief steals to satisfy his hunger, his act, while unlawful, is met with a degree of understanding (Prov. 6:30). The biblical mandate to care for the hungry is both theologically significant and morally imperative.

In Matthew 25:35-36, Jesus emphasizes the importance of compassionate service, stating that those who provide for the needs of others—feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the destitute, caring for the sick, and visiting the imprisoned—are, in essence, serving Him. He declares that such acts of mercy will distinguish those who will inherit the kingdom of God. This passage underscores the profound spiritual and ethical responsibility of addressing hunger and human suffering.

### Release the Oppressed

The Scripture says, "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he." (Deut. 32:4). The Lord defines and defends the standard of His righteousness and justice. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you." (Psalm 89:14). The God of the Bible is not the God of oppressors; rather, He is the God of the oppressed. Christianity is not an oppressive religion; rather, it offers the way to abundant life through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross for all who trust in Him for salvation. On an international level, the Israelites endured slavery under the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans.<sup>51</sup> On a national level, the rich oppressed the poor (Ezek. 22:29; Amos 4:1), dehumanized the destitute (Deut. 23:2; Ps. 89:11; Isa. 53:10), and exploited the vulnerable (Exod. 22:20, 26; Ps. 82:3; Isa. 1:17) through unjust policies and regulations (Isa. 10:1-3; Jer. 22:3). Additionally, oppressors exploited laborers (Lev. 19:13-16; Mal. 3:5). John Coffey argues that "Jesus inaugurated his ministry by announcing that he had come 'to release the oppressed'. Scripture teaches that Christ brings redemption from slavery to sin, but it also depicts

<sup>49</sup> Young-Kwon Ahn, "A Biblical Perspective for Ministry for Poor" *Acts Theological Journal* Vol.5 (1994), 273.

<sup>50</sup> Shimrengam L. Shimray, *Introducing Theological Ethics: Concept and Issues* (Ukhrul: Phungyo Baptist Church, 2011), 175.

<sup>51</sup> Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*, (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell p. 35. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?id=kYdLAWAAQBAJ&lpg=PA1&ots=8NiZwpb6yc&dq=scholarly%20articles%20on%20biblical%20oppression&lr&pg=PR5#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

deliverance from material forms of oppression.”<sup>52</sup> The ultimate goal of biblical justice is to lead people to God, fostering the eternal transformation of their lives.

The present form of oppression can be observed in many areas of life, affecting individuals and groups based on their race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and more. According to Emerson and Smith racism is socially constructed and associated with physical characteristics.<sup>53</sup> The beginning of human history, according to the Scriptures, Eve is called to be the “mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20), which “embraces the idea of equality and fraternity among all people regardless of race.”<sup>54</sup>

## Eliminating Poverty

Most people think of poverty from an economic perspective.<sup>55</sup> According to Townsend, poverty is defined “not only as a lack of money or material possessions but also as a lack of access to resources, which makes it extremely difficult for people to participate in and be accepted by larger social groups.”<sup>56</sup>

The gospel extends beyond soteriological deliverance; it also encompasses the fundamental necessities of human life, including clothing, food, education, employment, shelter, and medical care. These essential needs are inherent human rights, divinely ordained by God. Roger E. Hedlund asserts that poverty, oppression, and injustice are dehumanizing forces that undermine social life. In response, it is imperative for Christians today to unite in the effort to eradicate spiritual, social, and economic poverty, working toward a more just and compassionate society.<sup>57</sup> John Stott identifies, Christians should approach to the problem of poverty in three ways in the contemporary world: First, rationally; second, emotionally; and third, biblically.<sup>58</sup>

Many countries, including South Africa, Latin America, Arab states, Kenya, Burma, and China, continue to struggle with poverty. According to World Bank data, India's poverty rate has decreased from 60.9% to 46.5%. Additionally, the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reports that India's multidimensional poverty rate declined from 24.85% in 2016 to 14.99% in 2023.<sup>59</sup>

However, the credibility of these poverty statistics has been challenged by recent research conducted by Avinash and Kearnin from James Cook University. They argue that such data requires careful scrutiny, as concerns regarding data reliability, skewed wealth distribution, social inequity, and systemic injustices undermine the accuracy of these figures and the country's true poverty status.<sup>60</sup> Their study further highlights that even if World Bank data is accurate, approximately 651 million Indians still live below the lower-middle-income poverty line, while 166 million experience multidimensional poverty.<sup>61</sup> India's poverty is not solely a result of insufficient wealth but is also driven by socio-economic and political discrimination, exclusion, and exploitation.

<sup>52</sup> John Coffey, “‘To release the oppressed’ Reclaiming a biblical theology of liberation,” Cambridge Papers Towards A Biblical Mind, Volume 18, Number 4 December 2009:1, ISSN 1361-7710. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridgepapers.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/18-4-To-release-the-oppressed.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Michael O Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by faith: Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America*. Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 7-8. Retrieved from [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=17886839633987291738&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0,44&as\\_vis=1](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=17886839633987291738&hl=en&as_sdt=0,44&as_vis=1).

<sup>54</sup> McKenzie, Steven L. *All God's children: a biblical critique of racism*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. Retrieved from [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=16110231561948029089&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0,44&as\\_vis=1](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=16110231561948029089&hl=en&as_sdt=0,44&as_vis=1).

<sup>55</sup> Dodeye U. Williams, “‘Prosperity theology’: Poverty and implications for socio-economic development in Africa.” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 1 (2022). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i1.7818>.

<sup>56</sup> P. Townsend, “Poverty in the United Kingdom: A survey of household resources and standards of living,” (Penguin Books: Middlesex, 1979. Cited in Dodeye U. Williams, “‘Prosperity theology’: Poverty and implications for socio-economic development in Africa.” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 1 (2022). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i1.7818>.

<sup>57</sup> Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission: Mission in historical and theological Perspective*, 366.

<sup>58</sup> Stott, *Authentic Christianity*, 364.

<sup>59</sup> National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), *National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review*, July 18, 2023. Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/SATHEESH/Downloads/india-national-multidimensional-poverty-index-2023\\_16\\_aug.pdf](file:///C:/Users/SATHEESH/Downloads/india-national-multidimensional-poverty-index-2023_16_aug.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Avinash Chennuri and Kearnin Sims, *Political narratives on poverty that mislead*, (East Asia Forum, June 1, 2024). <https://doi.org/10.59425/eabc.1717236000>.

<sup>61</sup> Chennuri and Sims, *Political narratives on poverty that mislead*, (East Asia Forum, June 1, 2024). <https://doi.org/10.59425/eabc.1717236000>.

Jesus was deeply committed to the necessity of social transformation and earnestly sought to address the needs of the poor and hungry. His Messianic vision encompassed a society characterized by abundance and sufficiency (Matt. 14:15–24; Luke 6:20), one that included the outcast, the marginalized, the ceremonially unclean, the poor, and the oppressed. J. Verkuyl asserts, "When we join the war against poverty and hunger, we are working within the halo of Jesus' Messianic light."<sup>62</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Christ-centered Spirituality, when grounded in biblical principles, serves as a powerful force for fostering Collective Social Responsibility (CSR). It challenges individuals and communities to transcend self-interest and engage in meaningful social action, ensuring that faith is not merely a personal pursuit but a transformative influence on society. The biblical model of CSR emphasizes justice, compassion, and holistic well-being, calling believers to care for the poor, uplift the marginalized, feed the hungry, release the oppressed, and work toward eliminating poverty. The Church's role extends beyond spiritual guidance to active participation in socio-economic development, advocating for equity and human dignity. Jesus' teachings and ministry exemplify a faith that is deeply intertwined with social justice, reinforcing that true discipleship requires engagement in the world's struggles. By integrating spirituality with social responsibility, communities can cultivate sustainable change, fostering a society where justice and compassion prevail.

In application, Jesus' teaching has profound implications for Christian ethics, influencing discussions on humanitarian efforts, social responsibility, and interpersonal conduct. It challenges individuals and societies to transcend self-interest and embrace a model of ethical engagement that fosters unity, equity, and reconciliation. In a world plagued by inequality, systemic oppression, and economic disparity, biblical spirituality offers a transformative vision—one that not only nurtures individual faith but also inspires collective action for the common good. As believers embrace this calling, they fulfill the divine mandate to be salt and light in the world, ensuring that faith is expressed through love, service, and the pursuit of justice for all.

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<sup>62</sup> J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 202.



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