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## **SOCIAL ISSUES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE IN SOCIAL THOUGHT OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH: PROBLEM STATEMENT**

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*The paper presents a statement of the present-day theoretical foundations for the social teaching of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, its social policy and practical social work amid economic transformations in today's Ukraine.*

In the context of social changes and amidst multifaceted processes of globalization, the weight of the Orthodox Church's social thought in formulating theological responses to challenges of the contemporary world increases. This is particularly evident at the time of socio-political transformations, economic changes and search for spiritual ideas relating to development of the country, when, undoubtedly, the role of the Orthodox clergy in the humanitarian area grows. Development of the Orthodox Christian social teaching directly influence the formation of public opinion and the inner world of the individual, civil society development and spiritual culture of the country. The purpose of the Church's social theological thought, first of all, of the social teaching of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church consists just in learning social interests of the individual and society, forming a certain motivation, spiritual values and resolving political, national and social conflicts [18–20].

Theological interpretation of economics [26, 89–105] and study of challenges of the contemporary processes of globalization [1; 3] are important for both the social doctrine of the Orthodox Church, political theology, political science, and further scientific-theoretical study [2; 5; 24] of socio-political relations in Ukraine. Given the commitment of the entire people to democratic values of Europe, drawing on the Orthodox Christian social teaching, we must emphasize that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church gives special priority to issues of not only spiritual and moral perfection but also of social development of society [7, 249].

The entire history of Orthodox Christian social thought represents a history of the quest for spiritual vectors of building life of society on the principles of Christian ethics [6, 8]. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church pays much attention to development of relations with the state, science, education, society in general feeling its aspirations, pain, interests and concerns. Development of a social doctrine of

the Orthodox Church and a specific practical concept of social work of church parishes [2; 5; 22] assume ever-increasing significance. Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church His Beatitude Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine Volodymyr (Sabodan) constantly reminded of it emphasizing that “a social teaching represents answers of the Church to the most vital questions of today’s man” [11, 369].

It should be pointed out that not only scientific, sociological but also ordinary human ideas, beliefs, notions, and values can be only social since they result from joint spiritual activities of mankind [4, 24]. Formation of an individual, his spiritual development, perfection occurs not only in the world of his own fantasies and private spiritual interests but primarily “in specific social conditions” [17, 302] – Professor M. I. Yenikeev notes.

Even in a society dominated by secular values, the Church indirectly influences formation of the spiritual world of man, political ideology, geopolitics, social policy of the state and humanizes the world in general. The Church, revealing to the Christian his own rich spiritual world, giving reasons for his social, spiritual and political activity, largely protects man from various social and political conflicts, manipulations, and ideological fallacies. There is no doubt, therefore, that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in its preaching and social ministry [18; 27] shapes the field of contemporary Ukrainian humanitarian policy. It should be emphasized that genuine democratic development of society is determined to some extent by the content and constructive meaning of interaction between the Church and the state, multifarious activities of religious institutions in relationships with society. It is no surprise therefore that the social issues of mankind are constantly in the scientific field of both theological and Christian apologetic studies.

Among the studies of the first group that consider the Orthodox Christian social doctrine and inner life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, one should remember theological works by metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko), archimandrite Kyrylo (Hovorun), archpriest Vitaliy Kosovskiy, archpriest Nestor (Somenko), archpriest Gheorghiy Mytrofanov, archpriest Gheorghiy Kovalenko, archpriest Andriy Dudchenko, archpriest Petro Zuev, archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, archpriest Mykola Sapiha, archpriest Bohdan Ohulchanskyi, priest Pavlo Bochkov, and priest Ioann Rametov.

Issues of the social existence of mankind in the context of religious self-consciousness are studied by leading Ukrainian scholars P. P. Tolochko, A. M. Kolodnyi, P. L. Yarotskyi, G. V. Schokin, A. L. Derkach, Y. P. Chornomorets, V. V. Bureha, L. O. Fylypovych, V. Y. Yelenskyi, M. F. Holovatyi, M. I. Piren, S. H. Riabov, H. M. Sahach and other scholars.

Numerous works by L. Lukianenko, M. Marynovych, Y. Sverstiuk, I. Dziuba, V. Anisimov, Y. Hrytsak, M. Senchenko, and B. Chohey are a significant achievement in the field of social thought of Christianity and political opinion journalism.

It is worth emphasizing that in the current context the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, keeping pace with society toward maximum democratization of life, social relations, is destined not only to be a spiritual leader but also to be concerned about modernization of the political, economic and social spheres of society. An effective system of interaction of the Church and the state, a stable economic pro-

gram of the country's development is not only the most important, key area for reforming Ukrainian society but also the key pillar for constructive development of the future of mankind at large. Consequently, the social teaching of the Orthodox Church represents a theological interpretation of modern social/public life. The Church's social doctrine considers within its framework a wide range of issues concerning the nature of and reason for existence of man on earth, relationship of the Church and society, nature and orientation of social changes in society, and interaction of social institutions.

Socialization of man in the context of the Church's social teaching is not only a process of the individual's entering society but also learning social experience enshrined in theological knowledge, traditions of the Orthodox Church, in the complex system of social relations. The Church's paramount task in this regard is to develop a special pattern of Christian activities, education of a Christian capable of creative work, incessant cognition of the Supreme Lord's Will, constructive creation, change of the world in God's love, self-perfection and self-fulfillment in the light of the Law of God. Considering that society is a social reality subject to constant changes and has its functions, objectives, and opportunities to make necessary decisions [25, 101], the Church must have its own methodology and basic principles and methods of interaction with modern society.

Over the past few decades, the Church has certainly attempted to create its own social policy and organize professional social work but private initiatives of some parishes, eparches, priesthood, active non-indifferent laypeople, non-recurrent, occasional assistance to children's homes, orphanages and almshouses are obviously not enough to develop genuine social policy of the Church. Descriptions of certain aspects of the Church's social work will be incorrect if they are taken out of context, of the general field of global transformation of the post-soviet area. We will cite a passage from a book by well-known Russian philosopher and opinion journalist Sergei Georgievich Kara-Murza: "Endless reforms, increasing poverty, growth of unemployment, deepening social inequalities and weakening of social control mechanisms inevitably lead to degradation of labor and family values, decay of moral standards, break-up of social ties and disintegration of the society system" [15, 133].

Due to their insensibility in social policy, society, authorities and Christians as well create all preconditions for emergence of a structural crisis in all spheres of human activity. Negative, overpowering processes of total corruption, manifestations of lawlessness, vulnerability, aggravation of many socioeconomic, political and spiritual processes, crisis of spiritual values, loss of ideals and moral bearings in many Ukrainian citizens have increased the need to develop and carry out fundamentally new social work of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The principle of integrity of the spiritual and material nature of man, that is, unity of the natural biological and spiritual aspects of society's life should become one of the main methodological principles of formation and development of Orthodox Christian social policy, social work of the Church [13, 240]. The Church not only preaches personality spiritual and moral perfection but also shows real ways to turn the social body of life in the light of the Evangelical Revelation. The

Church of Christ will become socially significant for contemporary man only when he is able “to exert influence upon the course of events in society” [25, 195].

Exactly this is the main stimulus in external social activities of the Church. From the perspective of the Orthodox Church’s social teaching, not only power, strength, capital, and prosperity can be modi of social significance but also holiness, humaneness, wisdom, spirituality, professionalism, mercy, in other words, high moral values. According to the Orthodox Church’s social teaching, “social, cultural, economic, and political activities of society are in sight of the entire church organism” [26, 6].

The Orthodox Christian cares about who, when, and on what terms is provided with modi of social significance. According to today’s scholars, further human development depends just on whether contemporary society will succeed in solving the major problem – to ensure people’s desire for social significance without undermining at the same time, based on predatory laws of natural selection and morals of “social Darwinism” [21, 273–274], the conditions of their own existence and development [25, 210]. Currently, the weight of the Church’s social thought increases. This is particularly reflected in the political and economic spheres of society development. Let us emphasize that the intended purpose of the Church’s social thought and of its social policy lies exactly in learning spiritual and social interests of the human personality, their accommodation within a holistic Christian teaching, prevention and resolution of conflicts between spiritual and material aspirations of man [5, 33].

In our opinion, the main obstacles on the way toward creating constructive social policy of the Church are as follows:

- lack of consolidating unity in church life [1];
- inconsistency between the general educational level, professional training of the clergy, laypeople and the real needs of social development;
- scarcity in church and parochial life of appropriate socioeconomic resources that could be used by parishioners to solve challenges of contemporary society;
- steady decline in living standards of parishes, unsettled state of young priests, specialists, teachers, which causes pessimism, apathy, and loss of faith in prospects for development of church life;
- weakening authority of the Church, church hierarchy, church associations, Christian movements and church organizations in Ukrainian society; and
- geopolitical, ethnic and political contradictions [3, 340].

The point to be emphasized is that the main purpose of social policy traditionally comes down in scholarly literature and political practice to the competence of the state, namely “satisfaction of diverse interests and needs of citizens in such areas as labor, education, culture, health care, provision of housing, rest etc.” [8, 7]. Instead, the Church puts a lot of efforts towards social integration of society – conciliation of spiritual and material interests of large swaths of the population, resolution of spiritual, social contradictions of the Christian’s life on earth, that is to say, ensuring genuine integrity of Christian life in the light of the Gospel.

For this very reason, social policy of the Church and social work of parishes should pursue the goal of creating conditions that would promote social orientation and self-fulfillment of man in his own interests, as well as in the interests of the Church and society. Note that in substance social work of the Church has two direction and movement vectors. The first one consists in social care, provision of various types of social assistance to certain vulnerable categories of the population. The second vector represents social activities aimed entirely at unlocking the creative potential of personality and developing in him “immunity” to various negative phenomena of human life.

Social services [2; 16] set up under parishes for poor, disabled persons and, most importantly, for the rising generation — children and youth — are designed to render a wide range of practical social assistance to people. Parishes should recruit educated priests, professional educators, psychologists, social workers, sociologists, lawyers, consulting physicians and other specialists in the area of social psychology, law, education and sports.

It is our opinion that a new type of relations of the Church and society forms the basis of the Church’s social work. The following should constitute the key points of such relations:

- policy of real trust in personality, assistance to the Christian in comprehending God and unlocking his own potential rather than purely educational influence on the individual, lecturing from outdated moral theology textbooks and intimidating parishioners with sins read out of brochures of doubtful provenance;
- creation of proper conditions in order for the Christian to become a direct participant in parish life (divine services, lectures, rest, and joint activities);
- indispensable focus of parishes on youth, consideration of their needs, interests and requirements when developing and implementing any social programs in the Church.

The Church’s social policy is a peculiar, specific, priority area of activity of the whole Church. Such policy is intended to create certain conditions and social guarantees for formation and development of man in society in the light of the Gospel and Law of God. It is possible to shape such policy only under the following conditions:

- sound knowledge of the real problems of entire contemporary society and man in particular;
- clear understanding of the real challenges of the present-day world, its contradictions, pragmatism, spirit of unbelief and skepticism.

Overall, with due regard to some experience and the problems existing in Ukrainian society, one may state that today not only it is necessary to update forms and methods of the Church’s social work but also there is an urgent need for new social and cultural policies of the church institutions.

It is worth emphasizing that it is important for Christians to consider the processes of globalization and elaborate a new life style that would meet challenges of today remaining rooted in theology of the Orthodox Church. Lit up with charity, beauty, grace and mercy, glory of the Church of Christ, politics, economics, philosophy, family values, thoughts of the Church’s Holy Fathers, Christian phi-

losophy of history and problems of contemporary society find their place in social thought of Orthodox Christianity. According to His Beatitude Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), just dynamism of beauty, charity, grace, care, transfiguration, the spirit of creation and creativity are inherent in Christian Ministry and Orthodox theology [10, 30–31]. He constantly insisted on the indissoluble unity of Eucharistic ethics and the social function of the Orthodox Church [11, 129]. Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko) stresses that “the Church is not only a sociological reality but also a reality of a mystical nature: the Body of Christ incarnated in space and time” [7, 70]. That is why liturgical thinking of the Orthodox Christian, according to Orthodox theologians, constructively influences the development of culture, economy, economic activity and civil activity. The Gospel of Christ (Good News) and Eucharist (Thanksgiving) are eternal guide marks for the Christian social function (diaconia, acts of charity and mercy). Metropolitan Volodymyr insists on the need for not only positive establishment of Christian theology in the world and society but also positive criticism of the social realities and phenomena of contemporary culture in the light of the Orthodox Church’s theology [11, 84–85].

Analyzing social thought of Orthodox Christianity, note that the issues of geopolitics, international cooperation, multiculturalism [1; 3] and civilizational identities worry today not only political scientists and image-makers. These problems are of utmost importance for the Church’s social doctrine and political theology. The Christian community, being aware of the severe challenges of the secular world, globalization, politics, financial dependence, begins to reflect increasingly more on their own social teaching and attitude towards the state, society, economy, politics, and world at large. The realization that the future of all mankind depends on the voice of the Orthodox Church in these issues is no less important [11, 80–81].

It is worthwhile noting that the Church’s social teaching represents Christian theological knowledge about the essence, structure and development of human society [26, 6]. Studying thousand-year experience of mankind, religious beliefs of people, history of the Church’s influence on culture, political life, advancement of science, one may state that the Church’s social teaching is a connecting link between politics, social philosophy and theology of the Church. This is precisely why, in our judgment, the crucial task of the Orthodox Church’s social teaching and political theology in Ukraine consists in theological interpretation of dialog between the Church and the state, in creating civil society processes, in developing a strategy to defeat totalitarian ideologies and in fighting for civil rights and freedoms.

According to renowned Orthodox theologian, archimandrite Kyrylo (Hovorun), the Church can help, through political theology, society to treat not only seeds but also symptoms of sociopolitical diseases. He mentions among such symptoms, first of all, lack of common sense, when people sink into an illusory world of ideological distortions and perversions, political manipulation of social consciousness and total politicization of human life [9].

Ukrainian scholar, professor Y. P. Chornomorets notes in his paper “The Ideal of Christian Ukraine as a Requirement of the Social Teaching of the Christian

Churches,” reflecting on the national purpose of Ukraine, that its components represent the very simple principles of Christian life — holiness of legal justice; holiness of human rights; solidarity, which is the soul of society. Everyone can agree with such democratic principles even without being a Christian or a believer [27].

It is known that universal religions are those institutions that are designed to preserve moral standards, protect religious identities and educate worthy citizens on the principles of morality. The Church’s social teaching, closely cooperating with political science, can offer its unique model for modernization of Ukraine’s political culture to Ukrainian society, political forces, parties and civic associations. The mission of the Church in this respect is to suggest also limits and insufficiency of politics and ideology on the way toward salvation of mankind. The purpose of human life, according to the Church teaching, consists in soul salvation, union with God rather than building “a glorious future.”

Modern social thought of the Church proceeds from the assumption that man created in God’s image and likeness is at the top of the value pyramid of politics and economics rather than financial interests, the state and ideological constructs. Politics and economics exist only to enable everyone to be his own self and enjoy his freedom given by the Creator. In view of this, Orthodox Christians, upholding common democratic values, have in mind in the first place blessings of democracy: participation of all citizens in power exercising, exerting influence on authorities, development of civil liberties, initiatives, complete freedom of religious beliefs, and freedom of expression. Only being concerned with democracy values, it is possible to become genuinely free citizens.

To be an Orthodox Christian in the contemporary world means not only study of the Scriptures, theological works of the Holy Fathers of the Church, church attendance but also resolute political actions in implementing Orthodox values in the realities of today’s life and in overcoming global problems of mankind.

True human spirituality is following the path of charity, forgiveness, mercy and building a communication platform for giving evidence to the entire world of the union of all nations and continents in God. In the judgment of a church hierarch, if contemporary man wants to be a true child of God, devoted disciple of the Most High, he must overcome, despite strong criticism in his address from different sides, ideological differences, peanut politics, information manipulation, national enmity, affirming genuine life in unity and charity [12].

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church believes it necessary to develop cooperation with the state in the processes of modernizing the political and economic systems of Ukraine. For centuries, the Church has addressed issues of state-building, economy, social justice, culture, education, science and training. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church welcomes cooperation between the Church and the state, religious communities and civic associations, particularly in the cause of strengthening social justice, democracy, social modernization and preservation of Ukrainian culture and history.

So then, summarizing the issue studied above, let us note the following.

Today, the whole Ukrainian Orthodox Church faces an enormous task of proclaiming the apostolic preaching about Christ to the present-day world, celebrat-

ing the Eucharist with due regard to the cultural and historical features of life of the Ukrainian people and social service to society amid internal socio-political instability, as well as a global crisis on the planet.

Orthodox theology develops social thought for the sake of massive Christian presence in all spheres of human activity, for the sake of theological reflection, updating the church social doctrine in the area of contemporary politics, economics, science, for establishment of the basic Christian principles in Ukrainian society's life and adequate and meaningful witnessing for Christ in the face of the global world.

Today's church and social life needs major restructuring of the society's social sphere, accelerated implementation of spiritual and social orientation associated with formation and development of a social welfare, law-governed and democratic state. The idea of social justice, theory of the Church's social policy are consistent with Gospel, Orthodox Christian social teaching, Europe's democratic values, aspirations of human personality for integrity of life, justice, freedom, spiritual self-perfection and self-fulfillment.

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*It shows relationship of Orthodox Christian social thought with political, economic, cultural changes in the country's life, problems in implementation and possible ways of spiritual renewal of some streams of the Church's social thought.*

*Розкрито взаємозв'язок соціальної думки Православ'я з політичними, економічними, культурними змінами у житті країни, проблеми в реалізації та можливі шляхи духовного оновлення окремих напрямів соціальної думки Церкви.*

*Раскрыта взаимосвязь социальной мысли Православия с политическими, экономическими, культурными изменениями в жизни страны, проблемы в реализации и возможные пути духовного обновления отдельных направлений социальной мысли Церкви.*

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