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Declaring the Global Economy a *Status Confessionis*?

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Abstract

This article revisits theologian Ulrich Duchrow's three-decade-old use of the Protestant notion of *status confessionis* to denounce the capitalist global economy. Scholars quickly dismissed Duchrow's argument; however, philosopher Thomas Pogge has developed a remarkable "negative duty"—based critique of the current global economic order that might help revitalize Duchrow's position. The article argues that sound reasons exist for the churches to declare the contemporary world economy a—provisionally termed—*status confessionis minor*. After explaining the inadequacy of Duchrow's original position and summarizing Pogge's account, the article develops a twofold argument. First, Pogge's in-depth inquiry into the world economy gives Duchrow's call for a *status confessionis* a strong yet narrowing economic foundation. Second, to declare the world economy a *status confessionis minor* is theological-ethically justifiable if the limited though indispensable "prophetic" significance of doing so is acknowledged. Thus, Duchrow's approach is justified, but only partially.

Keywords

Ulrich Duchrow – global poverty – Thomas Pogge – World Council of Churches

1 Introduction

Three decades ago, German Lutheran theologian Ulrich Duchrow caused a stir within theological and ecumenical circles with his book *Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches?* (1987), in which he proposed that the global economy be declared a *status confessionis*: like Nazism and apartheid

he considered it a matter incompatible with the Christian faith. Duchrow's call culminated a radicalizing critique of capitalism within ecumenical Protestantism and the World Council of Churches (WCC) since the mid-1970s up until the collapse of Soviet socialism (Krueger 1991, 25; Preston 1988, 279; Brown 2004, 151, 191). Addressing the German and other churches in the rich First World, Duchrow argued that global economic injustice—the ever-increasing gap between rich and poor as caused by the Western economic system—had become so unbearable that a theological denunciation was necessary. The world economy was to be condemned “for the death of more than forty million people from starvation each year while a tiny minority of the world's inhabitants in the industrial countries and in the élites of the so-called ‘developing countries’ live in ... luxury” (Duchrow 1987, 141). The capitalist world system was evil, the market satisfying the greed of the rich but ignoring the needs of the poor. The issue, then, had become vital to the Christian faith and the essence of the church. For Duchrow, this meant that otherwise-minded Christians were placing themselves outside the “true church of Jesus Christ” (113–114). He claimed that an economic paradigm was needed based on values such as basic needs, self-reliance, and durability, and an economic system that could satisfy the basic needs of *all* people. The church, therefore, should become an ascetic, counterculture community.

Its influence within the WCC notwithstanding, Duchrow's argument—albeit not his belief that the Gospel includes a preferential option for the poor—was slammed by Christian ethicists as economic-analytically and theological-ethically defective. Thus, David Krueger (1991, 25–27) complained that Duchrow was silent about the moral quality of existing socialist systems (apart from absurdly praising China and Cuba) and vague about his hypothetical alternative regarding political-economic institutions and global transformation processes. John Atherton (1988) criticized as “suspect” Duchrow's “economic analysis which assumes that the poverty of the Third World is caused by the affluence of the First” and his theological-ecclesiological analysis which replaces “the necessary disciplines of Christian social ethics” by an unconstructive creedal viewpoint and advocates small, ineffectively sectarian “discipleship groups” (351–352). Most directly, Ronald Preston (1988) objected that Duchrow's *status confessio* application failed, for this method requires certainty and blocks economic-ethical dispute. Nazism and apartheid (ideology) are condemnable as anti-Christian by appealing to the Bible and the creeds, but the world economy is too complex to be assessed in “black-and-white” terms (Preston 1988, 283). Methodologically, theology must respect the “proper autonomy” of the sciences (282); substantively, economics cannot offer the required, reliable empirical-economic analysis due to differences of

opinion among economists. To Preston (283–284), Duchrow misemployed the (surely unchristian) free market ideology to paint the world economy as black as possible—as “idolatry.” Finally, Preston (286) suggested that Duchrow, a systematic theologian, had done better to leave this area to the moral theologians.

In this article, I re-examine Duchrow’s idea of applying the *status confessionis* to the world economy. For this, I have three reasons. First, after Duchrow published his book and communism collapsed, capitalism has become a truly global economic system. Global inequalities have only increased further, and the ecological limits to growth have become more palpable than ever due to global climate change. Second, not only has Duchrow maintained his own Lutheran view of the world economy as embodying idolatry, but church organizations have followed suit. Thus, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)¹ used the *status confessionis* to reject the globalized economy as an offence to God’s sovereignty (following Calvin) in Kitwe in 1995, Debrecen in 1997, Buenos Aires in 2003, and Accra in 2004. Debrecen initiated a “confessing process” that was applauded by the WCC’s eighth general assembly in Harare in 1998 and joined by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) (Hansen 2005, pars. 1, 20; Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004, 206–223; 2012, 256). Third, and intriguingly, Duchrow’s call might find renewed support in the work of philosopher and fellow German Thomas Pogge, who in the last two decades has criticized the global economy at a high level of empirical-ethical sophistication and strengthened his position in continuous interaction with critics (2008; 2005a; 2014). Pogge writes in a nonreligious prose style yet displays a Duchrow-like indignation: he, too, has not shrunk from comparing global poverty with the Nazi crimes. The following quotations illustrate that both Pogge and Duchrow hold plainly denunciatory views:

What confronts us when we see the systematic “disappearance”, mutilation and torture of human beings, or when we see the machinery of our economic system spewing out year after year millions of victims of starvation or throwing millions of unemployed on to the scrap heap, ... is the twisted face of a “demonic monster.”

DUCHROW 1987, 91

By shaping and enforcing the social conditions that foreseeably and avoidably cause the monumental suffering of global poverty, we are *harming* the global poor—or ... we are active participants in the largest, though not the gravest, crime against humanity ever committed. Adolf

1 Merged in 2010 into the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Hitler and Joseph Stalin were vastly more evil than our political leaders, but in terms of killing and harming people they never came anywhere near causing 18 million deaths per year.

POGGE 2005A, 33

While serious scholarly inquiry into a link between both thinkers seems non-existent, Pogge's thesis sounds like a secularized version of Duchrow's: we, the rich countries' citizens and governments, have violated the morally strongest, "negative" duty not to harm by actively imposing a global institutional order that produces massive poverty. We should stop impoverishing the lives of those affected and compensate them for the harm done (Pogge 2008).

Were the critics actually right to dismiss Duchrow's stance? This article does not dismiss his stance but it does qualify Duchrow by arguing that sound economic-analytical and theological-ethical reasons exist for the churches to declare the present world economy a—what I call, for lack of a better term—*status confessioinis minor*. Thus, I propose a "minor" *status confessioinis* instead of Duchrow's more massive one. My thesis will be that, arguably, the world economy essentially constitutes an alarming situation in which churches must confess the Gospel and protect its integrity but, due to the case's intricacies, should refrain from pretending omniscience and treating dissident Christians as excluding themselves from the "true church." After explaining the inadequacy of Duchrow's original argument in more detail and summarizing Pogge's global-economic analysis, I offer two arguments. First, Pogge's thorough analysis of the world economy is convincing enough to provide Duchrow's *status confessioinis* call with a strong yet narrowing economic foundation. While Duchrow's later economic inquiries have been relatively abstract-narrative and remained one-sided, his critique of the world economy is reinforced by Pogge's more nuanced and concrete economic analysis. Second, to declare the world economy a *status confessioinis minor* is theological-ethically justifiable if the limited but still crucial "prophetic" worth of doing so is acknowledged. Altogether, Duchrow's approach is justified, but, being "overshot," only partially.²

2 One reviewer questioned the meaningfulness of a *status confessioinis minor*, saying that from a Christian perspective, issues can only be either subject to a *status confessioinis* or not. If something is evil, we should oppose it without qualification for the sake of the Gospel. A minor *status confessioinis*, then, would debase the original concept by compromising its theological absoluteness and reduce the church's stance on the global economy to more traditional approaches like Christian realism or middle axioms, which Duchrow rejected. In response, I maintain that, for the purpose of assessing the global economy, my (provisionally termed) *status confessioinis minor* is justified. First, I submit that (something like) a *status confessioinis minor* may be unavoidable if the (ecumenical) churches are to develop a fitting

2 Duchrow's Call for a *Status Confessionis* and Its Shortcomings

Embarking on a theological critique of the global economy, Duchrow adopts a Lutheran confessionalism. This view is not conservative quietist but a more prophetic interpretation of Luther (Chung 2014, 242) that includes references to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Third World liberation theology (Duchrow 1987, 4–56, 188–202). Ethically, Duchrow alludes to WCC-developed notions such as “justice, peace, and the integrity of creation” and “justice, participatory, and sustainable society” (xi–xiii, 71–74, 158–159, 215–226), but without really employing these. His empirical-economic analysis rests on neo-Marxist dependency theory (56), which also explains why his rejection of global capitalism is complete. Apocalyptic formulations imbue this judgement: “Revelation 13 and Revelation 18 with their description of the beasts from the abyss provide an increasingly accurate account of our present experience of ... the economic system” (91). Various institutions contribute to this evil: political bodies (governments, United Nations); economic organizations (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT, the predecessor of the World Trade Organization (WTO)], International Monetary Fund [IMF], World Bank); transnational corporations and banks; small and medium-sized corporations; social organizations (labor unions, churches); science and technology; communication media; and consumers and savers/borrowers (142–148). Western Christians are “active thieves” and “passive profiteers”; poor Christians are “deprived victims” (48).

Duchrow holds that world capitalism has become so abysmal that we must resist it just as resistance against National Socialism in Germany was required. To this end, the Protestant theological notion of *status confessionis* should be actualized: the churches ought to speak up and express an unambiguous “No!” against the current global economic system. A merely ethical debate has become obsolete, and superficial reforms must fail; this “greedy” capitalist system—the cause of global hunger and poverty—conflicts with the creed of the Reformation. In the 1930s, Nazism and Christian faith were to be

response to the global economy. While accepting Duchrow's view that the world economy is Gospel-relevant, I will offer various reasons for moderating his judgment about the evilness of the world economy as a particularly complex case. Second, my world economy—limited application does not exclude that a *status confessionis* applies full-force elsewhere, as in the evil cases of Nazism and apartheid. Third, my “minor” version, I believe, offers a sufficiently distinctive theological-ethical understanding—one that welcomes but does not need Duchrow's approval—by humbly yet explicitly condemning the global economy while seeking its place within a broader Christian ethics.

declared incompatible; Bonhoeffer, who rediscovered the *status confessioinis*, was the first to relate it to a political issue, carrying it beyond its traditional application to intra-ecclesiastical issues such as the justification doctrine and the Lord's Supper. Subsequently, the LWF in Dar-es-Salaam in 1977 and the WARC in Ottawa in 1982 used the term to condemn apartheid in South Africa as sin and heresy (Preston 1988, 279–280; Brown 2004, 188). Now, Duchrow thinks, churches and individual Christians commit sin and heresy when they verbally and actively support a world system that even splits the universal church itself into two—one part affluent, the other part starving. Duchrow, who wants to follow Bonhoeffer's example and rejects the neo-Lutheran distortion of Luther's theology into a two-kingdom doctrine (with a spiritual kingdom of the church distinct from a secular kingdom of economy and politics), observes that the Western countries have become captivated by *economic* idolatry: welfare and power are being worshiped, rather than the God of Israel and Jesus Christ. Thus, in employing the *status confessioinis*, Duchrow puts the full global economy under an absolute critique—God versus idol, and Christ versus anti-Christ, either within the one Body of Christ or outside it (cf. Preston 1988, 280).

Dependency theory, the key economic foundation of Duchrow's harsh judgment, ostensibly offers the best image of the world economy. Duchrow rejects liberal theories, which maintain that the only remedy against further impoverishment of Third World countries is a more complete integration into the so-called free world market:

The facts give the lie to this view ... and indeed demonstrate ... that wherever a country is integrated into the capitalist world market, the result is the impoverishment of the majority of its population, bled white by the economic, political and military power centres, while only the small sections of society which cooperate with these centres benefit. The result is the ... "infamous" scissor movement—within countries and internationally—whereby the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer and more than forty millions die of starvation each year.

DUCHROW 1987, 56

According to Duchrow, dependency theory explains this situation by highlighting a separation between power centers and power peripheries. The centers develop at the cost of the peripheries by making and keeping these fully dependent. This occurred in the colonial period, but still happens in our era of indirect colonialism, since the old colonial powers have managed to create centers in the earlier colonies (the peripheries). These subcenters collaborate with the power centers in the industrial countries for their own benefit, with

burdens for the peripheries in their own countries as consequence (Duchrow 1987, 56).

However, Duchrow's plea does not succeed: his global-economic *status confessionis* application lacks a credible foundation due to its dubious employment of dependency theory. Thus, first, Duchrow accepts dependency theory—a theory highly controversial among economists and affected by anti-Western ideological bias—far too comfortably as a scientific explanation. Duchrow fails to critically inquire into alternative explanations economists have developed. He also overlooks that claims of “specific mechanisms” through which peripheral countries cannot develop for being controlled by the rich ones, notably because “prices of primary commodities (their main export articles) are bound to fall relative to manufactured goods,” carry “a heavy burden of proof”: the many attempts by economists to display such mechanisms have failed (Risse 2005, 367). Second, with its use of dependency theory Duchrow's economic analysis remains stuck at a high level of abstraction. He fails to support his assessment of the global economy with concrete empirical-economic data. It is without solid evidence, then, that Duchrow (1987, 141–148) directly relates the integration of poor countries within the capitalist world market to more than forty million deaths from hunger each year. Insofar as Duchrow relies on sources, he does so in a selectively one-sided and ideologically biased manner, merely referring to neo-Marxist Franz Hinkelammert's work and critical WCC studies of transnational corporations, and tending to dismiss other views as idolatry (cf. Preston 1988, 284–285). Surely, this cannot produce a convincing basis for a *status confessionis*.

Unfortunately, Duchrow has held on to dependency theory without rebutting the above objections. For Duchrow (and co-author Hinkelammert), dependency theory has renewed value under “neoliberal globalization,” albeit with some reformulations. Thus, as post-1989 capitalism no longer needs to look human, the First World has become an omnipresent archipelago—one that is mostly Northern but also includes the Asian tigers (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea) and parts of China and India—surrounded by zones excluded from socioeconomic integration. Within the world market, the centers use and protect themselves against globalized capitalism, to which the periphery is subjected. Earlier dependency theory, in focusing on (socialist) economic growth, ignored the ecological limits to growth besides the exclusion of the population: the growth economy itself and its stress on competitiveness are dubious. Competition is warlike in that one wins and the other loses. To escape dependency, an intrasocietal “new protectionism” is necessary (Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004, 140–155; cf. Chung 2014, xvii, 182, 200). However, while this neo-dependency theory might have relevance

in a post-socialist era facing climate change, a discussion of other economic theories and empirical evidence for and against relevant “mechanisms” of oppression is still lacking. Moreover, Duchrow’s later inquiries, while more detailed, lack “adequacy” (Krueger 1991, 40) for being rather abstract-narrative in their critique of unregulated “absolute property” and “greedy money,” or for remaining partial without (seriously) considering alternative evidence and arguments regarding the causes of poverty (Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004; 2012; Duchrow 1995).³

Even if such deficiencies had been eliminated, it would not have seemed appropriate to invoke the *status confessioinis* if no alternatives to global capitalism were conceivable; but Duchrow insists that viable alternatives are possible. First, surprisingly the new paradigm for the economy he wants should not abandon the market—rather, the market should become truly “free” (Duchrow 1987, 158). However, this proposal of Duchrow’s is unsatisfactory. It is unclear about the meaning of *free* as well as the implications in terms of system, institutions, practices, and change (cf. Krueger 1991, 25–27). Also questionable is whether such a nonrevolutionary, reformist proposal can go together with a radical diagnosis of the global condition. But second, more basic to Duchrow’s project, albeit utopian, are the theological-ecclesiastical implications of rejecting world capitalism (Duchrow 1987, 158–180; 1995, 317). For Duchrow, “God’s new act of liberation and the building of the alternative society begins among the excluded, the impoverished and the oppressed” (1995, 184, emphasis omitted). He stresses how ancient Israel, the Jesus movement, and the early church were already countercultural experiments in resistance against imperial absoluteness (Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004, 13–28; Chung 2014, 242). Needed today, then, is a bottom-up vision of an economy that does serve humans and nature by being embodied in minicommunities that together form networks and facilitate political coalition building (Duchrow 1995). As Paul Chung typifies Duchrow’s proposal and the role of an ascetic church in it:

Setting a good example to the world (Luther) means the church’s responsibility for the economic and political institutions.... This prophetic view leads to creating small-scale networked alternatives and viable economic policies for enhancing life by encouraging the church to be ... congregational ... and missionary.... The church as “city of the hill,” “salt

3 Loathing the “capitalist theology” of Michael Novak, Duchrow (1995, 225; Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004, 135; 2012, 243) ignores Novak’s extensive, regional factors–orientated critique of dependency theory (Novak 1991, 273–286, 299–305).

of the earth” and “light to the peoples” becomes the mission community by attraction as the Pauline communities of Jesus the Messiah did under the Roman Empire.⁴

CHUNG 2014, 250

The churches should forsake economic neoliberalism and speculative capital, and pursue truly life-serving substitutes (Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004, 204–224). This second proposal does match Duchrow’s insistence that today’s global economy is a confessional issue. Nevertheless, despite the shocking character and far-reaching implications of his message, Duchrow offers too little argument and evidence to maintain his *status confessionis* application credibly; the methodological, theoretical, and empirical weaknesses of his economic analysis generate an unduly dogmatic position. We must, then, also doubt whether Duchrow rightly disregards the contributions of Christian social ethics, or moral theology, to the analysis of the world economy.

3 Pogge’s Global-Economic Analysis

Pogge observes that, in our world of great and increasing inequalities, “about half of all human beings live in severe poverty and about a quarter live in extreme or life-threatening poverty” (2011, 21).⁵ “Each year, some 18 million of them die prematurely from poverty-related causes. This is one-third of all human deaths” (Pogge 2008, 2). Pogge adds a particular reading of this “catastrophe” (2008, 4): “There exists a supranational institutional regime that foreseeably and avoidably produces massive human rights deficits. By collaboratively imposing this institutional scheme, we are ... violating the human rights of the world’s poor” (2011, 1). By “we” Pogge means the privileged “citizens of developed countries ... who have sufficient mental maturity, education, and political opportunities to share responsibility for their government’s foreign policy and for its role in designing and imposing supranational institutional arrangements” (2). These citizens and their governments are involved in “a large crime against humanity” that “cause[s] at least half of all severe poverty” (18–19).

4 Cf. Duchrow (1995, 266, 140, 180, 191, 198, 317).

5 My discussion of Pogge occasionally uses Kamminga (2007).

In Pogge's view, the ethical debate about world poverty has wrongly focused on "positive" duties we may have to help needy people. As libertarians are at least right to claim, "need" does not generate a very strong duty to aid (Pogge 2008, 15). But virtually all Western philosophers and other people will accept that we have "negative duties ... not to harm" and thus not to commit "conduct that worsens the situation of others" (ibid.; cf. Pavel 2015, 450). If, then, we as members of the rich countries harm the world's poor by denying them secure access to basic goods, it should be clear, Pogge insists, that we have a compelling, urgent duty to act. Compared to positive duties to aid, such a duty would be insensitive to factors such as community and distance and be indisputably valid across boundaries (Pogge 2008, 136; 2004, 278–279; 2014, 74–76, 83). Thus, Pogge's mission is to show that the rich have violated their negative duty by having caused poverty globally without having provided due compensation. We, governments and citizens of the affluent states, should inactivate our unjust world economic order and create a fairer one that allows the impoverished access to healthy food, clean water, adequate shelter, medical care, and basic education.

When trying to explain world poverty, we will find prevailing economic science unhelpful and must become economic experts ourselves, Pogge (2005a, 29–30) argues. For all their differences, professional economists from Amartya Sen to the Chicago school too easily accept a "purely domestic poverty thesis": the great international variations in poverty development are fully caused by local, country-specific factors such as climate, natural resources, history, culture, social institutions, regime type, and economic policy (Pogge 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2008, 16–18). Pogge concedes that "good methodological reasons" exist for research oriented at domestic factors of poverty, as it is "hard to obtain solid evidence" (2008, 17; 2004, 268) about the contribution of—West-created—global factors. Yet he insists that our not-so-disinterested economists have been focusing too much on differences in economic performance for feeling careerwise more comfortable with analyses that reduce poverty to local factors rather than global institutions we support ourselves. Even if country-specific factors explain economic performance variations—Pogge does not aim to deny this—global factors could still play a key role in explaining the poor countries' performance levels across the board. Thus, we must not be misled by the enormous growth rates of developing countries such as China and India as resulting from domestic factors:

First, the claim that the success of some developing countries shows that supranational rules cannot account for the persistence of poverty where it persists is a *non-sequitur*.... Local factors are crucial to explaining the

persistence of poverty [but] it does not follow that the global factors in each case do not play an important role as well.

POGGE 2013, 89–90

Yet, why must we reject the popular view that economic globalization has greatly benefited the poor? First, Pogge (2013, 73–86; cf. 2010a, 75–92) extensively disputes “Washington-based” World Bank statistics that suggest we will achieve our “lofty” poverty eradication goals. Food and Agriculture Organization statistics show that “the number of chronically undernourished people has risen consistently since about the mid-1990s” and that “there are currently more people chronically undernourished than ever in the history of mankind” (Pogge 2013, 75–76). Furthermore, “884 million lack access to improved drinking water, 2.5 billion ... to improved sanitation, and almost 2 billion ... to essential medicines” (Pogge 2013, 82–83; cf. 2011, 21). Shockingly, since the Cold War almost 400 million people have died from poverty-related causes, which is “a number vastly larger than the count of all of the deaths resulting from government violence—wars, concentration camps, gulags, genocides—in the entire twentieth century” (Pogge 2013, 83). Relatedly, drawing on Amartya Sen’s influential work, Pogge (2010b, 532–533) stresses the strong correlation between poverty and fertility rates, and points out that eradicating poverty—and so stopping our contribution to its persistence—is a highly effective means of controlling population growth in poor countries.

Second, Pogge (2013) criticizes globalization for its contribution to global inequality and intranational inequality in almost all countries, emphasizing the real impact of competition in an unequal world in which power gaps distort and global as well as local factors create poverty. Ideally, competitive systems transform single efforts into the greatest common good; practically, the provisos of transparency and impartiality are violated:

Globalization has meant the emergence of a complex set of supranational laws and regulations which have ever-growing influence on national legislation and national economies. The intergovernmental negotiations through which supranational rules are created and revised are undemocratic and intransparent, excluding the general public and a majority of the weaker governments.... Only an elite group of “players” have the effective bargaining power and specialized knowledge to exert any real influence on the negotiation processes. This group, including governments of the most affluent countries, large multinational corporations and banks, very rich individuals, and the ruling elites of the most powerful developing countries, are also best positioned to engage in cost-effective

lobbying to manipulate the rules in their favor. These already rich and powerful agents are the only ones for whom it is not prohibitively expensive to invest the necessary amount of resources into gaining the requisite expertise, forming political alliances, and lobbying the governments that dominate supranational rulemaking.

POGGE 2013, 87–88

Third, Pogge (2008, 18–26; 2004; 2013, 92) argues that the purely domestic poverty thesis is false empirically due to the actual impact of global factors. We, the rich, demand developing countries to open their borders for our products while making them pay high tariffs for products they want to sell us. Especially the WTO, IMF, and World Bank—institutions created by governments chosen by the rich countries' citizens—disadvantage already impoverished people, Pogge insists. As he explains the WTO's role:

Wealthy countries have used their influence and power in the [WTO] to create international trade rules that work in their favor and prove huge impediments to the economic development in developing countries. The WTO rules allow wealthy countries to protect their markets through tariffs, anti-dumping duties, export credits, and massive subsidies to domestic producers stymieing developing countries particularly in those areas where they would otherwise be most able to compete. For example, the WTO offers loans to developing countries contingent on their dismantling protectionist barriers such as tariffs on foreign imports. At the same time, it allows affluent countries to heavily subsidize their agricultural sectors. The result is that farmers in developing countries cannot viably compete with foreign producers...Unfair regulation of the agricultural sector has been particularly destructive to developing economies, many of which are almost exclusively based in agriculture. This protectionism allows the wealthy countries ... to benefit at the expense of the poor under the guise of free and open markets.

POGGE 2013, 92–93

Thus, the international trade order is harmfully biased against the poorest countries, and rich countries, the United States, and the European Union impose heavy conditions on poor countries, while shielding their own markets and subsidizing their exports (Pogge 2008, 19–23). Pogge (2004, 264, 275; 2005b, 726; 2008, 20–21) notes that the developing countries miss out on about 700 billion dollar of export income annually—more than 10 percent of their GNPs combined—due to the rich countries' protectionism (cf. Duchrow 1995, 14, 81).

Another key global factor, Pogge stresses, is stimulation of dubious regimes:

Affluent countries assist the corrupt regimes of some less developed countries by participating in the embezzlement of public funds ... [and] we confer four international privileges upon any person or group able to gain coercive control over a country regardless of how they exercise that control. These are: the privilege to sell the natural resources of that country, to borrow in the name of the country, to sign treaties on behalf of the country, and to import the weapons necessary to entrench one's power.

POGGE 2013, 93–94

Pogge (2008, 116–121; 2004; 2005a, 47–50; 2005b, 733–741) is particularly critical of the resource and borrowing privileges. These juridically valid privileges to, respectively, dispose freely of the country's natural resources and borrow freely for the country offer villainous (military) people in developing countries a strong incentive to seize power by force. Dictators can become rich through these privileges while subsequent democratic regimes become burdened with enormous debts and often also suffer the loss of valuable natural resources. That many countries have a corrupt regime is because the existing global order allows such thieves their privileges simply due to their effective power. Having such a regime is normal for the many developing countries (e.g., Nigeria) in which the resource sector forms a large part of GNP. This explains why resource-rich developing countries usually experience slower economic growth rates than other (developing) countries.

Fourth, Pogge offers a theoretical explanation for why globalization, even if partially beneficial to particular formerly very poor countries, cannot work to the benefit of all. Pogge (2008, 297) values neo-Marxist world-systems theory (WST), yet eschews a revolutionary “socialist critique” (2008, 31, cf. 4) as a liberal who appreciates the (truly) free market (Williams 2011, 151). Pogge, then, develops a “semi-wst” (my term) critique of the “explanatory nationalism” (2008, 17, 145–151) and “some-all fallacy” (2005b, 733, 734) of those who stress the antipoverty strategies of the Asian tigers and China as example for all other poor countries (cf. Duchrow 1995, 99–100; Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004, 148–149; 2012, 207):

The pathways to riches are sparse.... The Asian tigers ... achieved impressive rates of economic growth and poverty reduction ... through a state-sponsored build-up of industries that mass-produce low-tech consumer products. These industries were globally successful by using their considerable labour-cost advantage to beat competitors in the developed countries and by drawing on greater state support and/or a

better-educated workforce to beat competitors in other developing countries.... But if many other poor countries had adopted this same developmental strategy, competition among them would have rendered it much less profitable.... China has [achieved] phenomenal growth in exports and per capita income.... Exporters in the developing countries compete over the same heavily protected rich-country markets. Thanks to its extraordinary ability to deliver quality products cheaply in large quantities, China has done extremely well in this competition. But this great success has had catastrophic effects in many other developing countries by reducing their exporters' market share and export prices. To be sure, the world economy as presently structured is not a constant-sum game.... Yet outcomes are strongly interdependent.

POGGE 2005B, 733–734

Thus, “poverty persists to an alarming extent ... [largely] due to unjust supranational arrangements shaped by the intense lobbying of the richest corporations, industry associations, banks, and individuals” (Pogge 2013, 100–101).

Pogge (2008, 152–261; 2005b, 744–745) offers specific proposals to meet our duties toward the poor (cf. Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004, 181–188, 197–200). First, we must undermine the privileges for authoritarian plunderers by promoting democracy globally. This will discourage “predators” from overtaking countries. Second, we must create institutionalized funds for education, shelter, and health care in poor countries. The use of resources must be taxed through a Global Resources Dividend (GRD) and the raised money employed to give the poor access to basic provisions. Overall, Pogge insists that “the developed countries could reduce this continuous death toll dramatically at little cost to ourselves” (2004, 280; cf. 2008, 214) “through minor modifications in the global order that would entail at most slight reductions in the incomes of the affluent” (2005b, 722; cf. 2013, 95). “Reform” will do—“not the replacement of the present global order with some alternative system, but piecemeal implementation ... by integrating [reform] into the ordinary business of governments creating and revising supranational agreements” (Pogge 2014, 86). “Modesty” helps the GRD acquire the support necessary to implement it (Pogge 2008, 211): “It is much easier to ... agree on a relatively small institutional reform ... than on an entire alternative global order” (Pogge 2014, 86).

4 *A Status Confessionis Minor* (1): Pogge's Contribution

My first argument is that Pogge's in-depth, negative duty—based inquiry into the world economy offers essential yet limiting economic-analytical support to

Duchrow's *status confessionis* call. Thus, I give various Pogge-based reasons for a *status confessionis* although one that is weaker than Duchrow's.

First, Pogge's more moderate "explanatory globalism" (Pogge 2005a, 49) modifies Duchrow's economic position critically beyond globalist dogmatism through methodological, theoretical, and empirical improvements. Methodologically, while Duchrow refuses to survey traditional explanations as developed by economists, Pogge does attempt to examine economic science and then to establish its purview limitations. It seems fair to question the "proper autonomy" (Preston 1988, 282) of economic science once that appears restricted in scope and thus prevents less liberal but more radical (Brown 2004, 122) viewpoints. Indeed, the position of philosopher and Pogge-critic Mathias Risse (2005, 351, 355–359, 374)—who simply follows social and economic science and consequently, even if provisionally, accepts the "institutional thesis" that growth and prosperity depend on the quality of domestic institutions—seems more dogmatic than Pogge's. Subsequently, Pogge demonstrates awareness that a plausibly positive case for his explanatory globalism remains necessary and that, whereas claims that globalization is global poverty's sole cause should be avoided, it is more plausible to argue that poverty cannot be explained "purely domestically" (against Lippert-Rasmussen 2017, 463). Thus, Pogge focuses on factors for which the rich can be held responsible, but in a way that frees Duchrow's economic analysis from its crude one-sidedness.

Theoretically, Pogge, who, like Duchrow, appreciates Marxism, replaces discredited dependency theory by a more maintainable semi-wst perspective. Avoiding the "heavy burden of proof" attached to dependency theory's claims regarding "specific mechanisms" of global oppression by making no claims regarding such mechanisms, he still highlights factors of global dependency that, even if largely favorable to China and other countries, work against sub-Saharan Africa's and South Asia's poor in particular (Risse 2005, 367; against Lippert-Rasmussen 2017, 463).

Empirically, Pogge supplies strong evidence. Pogge (2005b, 725–727) mentions and clarifies the contemporary economic rules, which privilege the rich countries by allowing them to protect their own markets with quota, tariffs, antidumping tariffs, export credits, and subsidies to domestic producers, in ways not allowed or affordable to poor countries. Also important are the effects of WTO regulations for border-crossing investments and intellectual property rights. Such asymmetrical rules cause the part of global economic growth that goes to the rich countries to rise and the part that goes to the poor countries to fall, in comparison with what these shares would have been under symmetrical rules of free and open competition. This asymmetry increases the inequality that has allowed the governments of rich countries to impose the unevenness in the first place. Remarkably, even theorists who believe that

Pogge still underestimates the contribution of population growth in the world's poorest regions to global inequality, or misjudges the stubbornness of other local causes of poverty, concede that this WTO-based global order seriously harms the global poor (Sonderholm and Lydholm 2016, esp. 532, 538; Jordaan 2010, esp. 245–246). Moreover, Pogge points to the harmfulness of Western banks being allowed to accept funds misappropriated by public officials in poor countries and of (especially) the borrowing and resource privileges as supported by the West, which promote local coups, plundering, corruption, and impoverishment.

Second, relatedly, Pogge avoids criticizing global capitalism in Duchrow's (and much of the ecumenical tradition's; Krueger [1991, 36–37, 40]) ideologically selective and rather abstract manner, yet offers a more focused, specific against-the-current critique of the role of West-led global governance within the world economy. "Capitalism," Pogge holds, "means [a market economy based on] the private ownership of the means of production"; this framework, while requiring regulation, is not incompatible with justice (Musyal and Eiermann 2011; cf. Pogge 2008, 19, 30). Pogge's condemnation of the world economy, then, is less "totalist" than Duchrow's, and plausibly so: what we must reject is not global capitalism essentially, but rather the rich countries' and other rich groups' practice of shaping and structuring world markets. Pogge (2008) stresses the rich countries' arbitrary power to make (unfair) market rules and impose these on the poor ones as one key global contributor to poverty—thereby supporting Duchrow, who also has been highly critical of the GATT/WTO, Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, IMF, and World Bank because of their impact on the global poor (Duchrow 1987; 1995; Duchrow and Hinkelammert 2004)—and adds the international privileges as another global cause. Yet Pogge (2008, 18–19) avoids overburdening his explanatory globalism with an anticapitalist ideology that simplistically disregards the importance of open markets and free trade in the absence of evidently more successful socialist experiments (Krueger 1991, 36); but then, not even Duchrow wants a complete rejection of the market system. Importantly, even though there may now be less severe poverty worldwide than before the globalization period, Pogge's point is that such baseline comparisons overlook that our West-imposed global order does foreseeably and avoidably cause large-scale harm to those impoverished under it (Pogge 2005b, 728–730). Thus, his de-ideologizing and concretizing "outsider-critique" helps the churches to move away from Duchrow's troubling anticapitalism. While Pogge's analysis does not imply that the churches should now theologically support capitalism or see that as morally ideal, it does mean that they may regard capitalism as not intrinsically evil and as morally permissible as long as feasible better alternatives are lacking.

Third, Pogge's analysis is plausibly less grandiose than Duchrow's, yet maintains the latter's sense of urgency regarding the—easily denied—world order's contribution to poverty. As Pogge explains:

It is easy to walk away from this conclusion with the comment that its empirical support has not been established beyond any doubt.... But to live comfortably with the belief that we have only positive assistance duties toward the world's poor, we need more than a slight doubt of my conclusion [as based on a lot of evidence]. This is especially true in light of the amazing lack of serious unbiased inquiry into the effects of existing global institutional arrangements. Are we going to tell the poor majority of our contemporaries that, as we have not carefully examined the causal effects of the institutional arrangements we are (in collaboration with their ruling elites) imposing on the world, we cannot be certain that these arrangements are doing massive avoidable harm—and that we may therefore reject as insufficiently corroborated the claim that we are violating their human rights?... Each of us should ... do enough toward protecting poor people to be confident that one is fully compensating for one's fair share of the human rights deficit that we together cause.

POGGE 2011, 33

Thus, with Pogge's analysis, a firm economic basis for a *status confessionis* results; but, since it cannot claim full certainty and, due to the more limited scope of explanatory globalism, has a narrower application area than Duchrow thinks, a *status confessionis* could only be a *minor* one. However, we cannot move to the next section before noting that Pogge's "minor change at low cost" proposals from the "active participants in the largest ... crime against humanity ever committed" (Pogge 2005a, 33) do not seem credible overall. It is questionable whether "[restructuring] the global institutional order to make it more hospitable to democratic government" (Pogge 2008, 9) could decisively discourage thieves from seizing power and exploiting international privileges. Pogge (*ibid.*, 216–220) does not clarify if and how the United States and the European Union with its member states as major culprits of poverty as well as indispensable sponsors of funds such as the GRD could be practically kept from continuing to powerfully strive for self-interest. Also, Pogge's GRD proposal seems "modest" for the strategic goal of creating sustainable support (Pogge 2008, 211; cf. 2005b, 744) and thus should not pretend to help eliminate global injustice. Monique Deveaux (2015), then, plausibly criticizes Pogge's reliance on eventually active Western actors rather than the poor themselves. While the rich do have serious duties to meet, Pogge's approach risks fatalism about

the huge global power inequalities for appealing to the so far insufficiently responsibility-accepting and motivated rich (actually one major reason for invoking the *status confessioinis*) and not acknowledging the poor as motivated and appropriate “agents of justice,” albeit in need of economic and political empowerment (Deveaux 2015, 137–149). Indeed, Pogge’s analysis confirms the widespread egoism of political and economic groups yet underestimates collective egoism’s typical force as explained by Reinhold Niebuhr (1941, 221–226). Insofar as Duchrow suggests a church-led revolt from below, his overall critique is morally more coherent than Pogge’s, whose “top-down” solutions to reform globalization legitimize as well as challenge the present world order (cf. Brassett and Holmes 2010, 428, 440).

5 *A Status Confessioinis Minor* (2): The Theological-Ethical Value of a Prophetic Voice

Second, I argue that to declare the world economy a *status confessioinis minor* is theological-ethically justifiable provided that the limited though essential “prophetic” significance of doing so is recognized. Like Duchrow, the LWF, and the WARC, I assume that *status confessioinis* is a living, dynamic tradition that, in following Bonhoeffer, does not categorically exclude political and economic issues from its purview. When after the Reformation’s break with Rome its churches began quarreling among themselves, the 1577 Formula of Concord aimed to settle these disputes by distinguishing between *adiaphora*—things not essential to faith—and those things Christian believers must accept or reject. Whereas normally Christians may well have different political and economic views, we should not exclude from the outset that the Reformed Confession forces Christians to reject particular political or economic systems for having become church-oppressive and perverse, being matters of indifference no longer (cf. DeJonge 2017). However, if only because our Pogge-Duchrow economic foundation, although arguably powerful, cannot deliver full certainty, we must, before concluding that a *status confessioinis* in some version is suitable, also examine theological-ethical arguments concerning the application of such a concept to the global order. Still, I will argue that critics—notably Preston (1988) and Guillermo Hansen (2005)—are unduly skeptical and overdemanding about the suitability of *status confessioinis* to the world economy, as we should understand such an application to be “merely” prophetic. In that sense, the churches could regard the world economy as beyond the realm of *adiaphora* but within that of the Gospel for being a threat to the unity of the universal church and the world,

with the West and its countries as its “totalitarian center” (cf. Hansen 2005, par. 29).

So again, why a *status confessionis minor*? Firstly, I should clarify my understanding of *prophetic*, which I take from James Gustafson’s “varieties of moral discourse” model. As Gustafson (1988) argues, the field of Christian social ethics employs multiple modes of moral discourse: prophetic, narrative, ethical, and policy. Gustafson defends both the distinctive importance and the insufficiency of each: they all capture something serious, or express a specific worry, which Christian moral reasoning should accommodate. Thus, the ethical and policy discourses offer Christian social ethics much-needed principles and instruments for action, but, since both tend to accept status-quo, such as the current world order, fundamental criticism of potentially wrong structures or value orientations is also essential. As Gustafson explains, this is what “prophetic discourse” provides, its limitations notwithstanding:

Prophetic moral discourse ... takes two ... forms: indictment shows dramatically and vividly how far human society has fallen from what it ought to be [whereas] utopian discourse proclaims an ideal state of future affairs which functions as an attractive allure and can motivate communities towards its realization. Prophetic indictment usually addresses the roots of moral and social waywardness.... Fundamental values or orientations of social life are the source of the fault. Prophetic indictment ... evokes a sense of crisis or urgency. Utopian discourse ... allures, it appeals to human idealism. Prophetic discourse is legitimate and important, but not sufficient.... By being in focus on the root of the evil it cannot inform incremental choices made by persons and institutions where good and bad are commingled, and where “trade-offs” have to be defended. By being in focus on an ideal future, it ... has little to say about means to shorter range ends in view.

GUSTAFSON 1988, 269

Next, consider Preston’s core critique of Duchrow’s *status confessionis* use:

The method of *status confessionis* is too limited. It works only in extreme instances, as at “the gates of Auschwitz”. It is also questionable whether an apocalyptic tone is a help to moral decision-making except in extreme “boundary situations”. More of the prudence of wisdom is needed.

PRESTON 1988, 286

Here Preston, who does allow for extra-ecclesiastical applications of the *status confessio*nis, suggests a theological-ethically relevant criterion of practical wisdom, one that Duchrow's case ostensibly does not meet—namely, certain extremity. Thus, an apocalyptic *status confessio*nis tone is unsuitable for moral decision-making in global economic matters, since such issues do not represent an obviously extreme, Auschwitz-equal case. Therefore, Preston insists (like Atherton 1988), moral theology, or Christian social ethics, remains necessary.

However, Preston's certain extremity criterion seems overdemanding, at least for a softened *status confessio*nis and from the perspective of prophetic discourse. Although Preston (1988) is right that Duchrow's attack on the capitalist system fails in this regard—Duchrow rightly senses that something is awry about the world economy, but his anticapitalism is simply too controversial—our more limited, “targeted” Pogge-Duchrow condemnation of the West-imposed global institutional order is arguably adequate as such. Admittedly, unjust war, colonialism, genocide, displacement, and slavery are more direct, paradigmatic cases of excessive harm than global political and economic interaction could be (Pavel 2015, 451). However, Pogge explains, rightly even if optimistically, that slavery and severe poverty at least have in common that “when social institutions avoiding these deprivations are reasonably possible, then the imposition of social institutions that perpetuate these deprivations constitutes a violation of the human rights of those” affected (2011, 20). Moreover, recall Pogge's careful reply to critics that to omit such a negative duty—based assessment is to miss something morally essential, even if full certainty about the world order's harmfulness is impossible. Prophetically, then, Pogge plausibly suggests (as with climate change) that we simply cannot afford to wait for full certainty regarding the extremity of global political-economic harm. With globally millions of people dying due to poverty-related causes and with neglected but very serious indications that a substantial part thereof is due to a West-imposed unjust global economic order, it seems warranted to qualify this situation as extreme *and* condemnable, thus as “Auschwitz-like,” and in need of transformation. Pogge's post-communist, empirical-ethical, qualified support to Duchrow's more intuitive approach is so important because, although it does not make the critique of globalization “correct,” it makes it strong enough to tip the balance: something serious has gone wrong, and the Western church should address this rather than persist in a basic attitude of indifference. In addition, Pogge's semi-wst argument has not only a direct economic but also an indirect moral-ecological force. According to the basic principle of universalizability, we need to ask the individual economic growth countries, “What if everybody did that?” (Frankena 1973, 37–38), and answer

that the planet could not sustain a world full of such Western countries, Chinas (China being the world's greatest climate polluter since 2006, and increasingly so), and Asian tigers. Seen as such, "pathways to riches are sparse" indeed (Pogge 2005b, 733). Thus, declaring the world economy a *status confessionis minor*, rather than treating it as an all-too-complex *adiaphoron* comfortable to the conscience of the global rich, seems a justified church response to Preston's certain extremity demand.

Here one may object that one major difference exists between the world economy and "Auschwitz": whereas the Nazi concentration camps were intended to kill people, the global order embodies no such intention. In this sense, the world economy is far less a black-and-white case than Nazism as a form of political governance intended to commit genocide. In response, it must be noted that the imposed global order still "foreseeably and avoidably" contributes to global poverty and even does so on a scale far greater than Hitler's and Stalin's evil killing and harming activities (cf. Pogge 2005a, 33). Admittedly, the certainty of all this is lower in the world economy case, but then that is also why the churches should not go beyond a *status confessionis* that is *minor*.

Hansen (2005) suggests another theological-ethically relevant criterion that supposedly should make us critical of Duchrow's (and the WARC's) application of the *status confessionis* to the world economy; namely, social-strategic usefulness. Hansen thinks that such *status confessionis* employments must fail because of their powerless romanticism: "Romantic prescriptions of 'the small messianistic communities' of what is allegedly 'God's economy' have symbolic value, but result merely in short-term strategies for a select group of people" (2005, par. 26). However, although its force may seem obvious, the uselessness objection against what is basically (as we saw already in section 2) a prophetic, apocalyptic, and utopian assessment of the global economy misses the key point. By applying Gustafson's varieties of moral discourse model, we see that any *status confessionis* application would be limited indeed in its "unrealistic" propheticness, yet in a deliberate and penetrating way that may be particularly indispensable. Its point, then, is not usefulness, but apocalyptically "speaking truth to power," saying no to the current global institutional order, withdrawing from injustice, and setting a positive, appealing example for the world. Employing Niebuhr (1941, 221–226), churches may well call the stubborn (collective) egoism of the rich that disrupt the world economy "sin" and "idolatry"; and Duchrow-like small mission communities are supposed to have symbolic rather than instrumental value and to allure to an attractive ideal future if possible in principle (Duchrow 1995). Moreover, it does not seem the church's *primary* task to speak a more policy-oriented moral discourse (cf. Gustafson

1988, 270) and fight the global order in “effective” and “strategic” ways (against Hansen 2005, pars. 2, 18, 21, 30–32).

Again, even if we accept the general need for usefulness, or effectiveness, we should consider that such a criterion is more appropriate for political action and institutions than for churches, and that a church-declared *status confessio*nis may be consistent with that. Hansen finds the church’s speaking of “idolatry” practically powerless, as that will not move people, and holds that “in a pluralistic and institutionally secularized context, this type of call to *confessio* does not have in itself the power to unleash a praxis that can actually challenge the powers that be” (2005, par. 31). Still, Hansen acknowledges that “idolatry, mammon and rampant selfishness are correctly identified as being ruthless realities in our present context” (*ibid.*), and he concedes that “we may agree that we live in an emergency situation” (par. 33). But more to the point, probably nothing the (socially marginalized) Western church could do will have serious behavioral impact on the ruling powers. Most basically, the question whether something should be declared a *status confessio*nis or not should not be determined by the societal context within which the Christian church finds itself but by more intrinsic theological considerations (cf. DeJonge 2017). Thus, if we want to do justice to a church-based prophetic voice within a broader Christian social-ethical framework (of various discourses) and acknowledge the force of a Pogge-Duchrow analysis of the world economy, a *status confessio*nis may be appropriate theologically. Prophetic and strategic concerns both have their place but should not be confused. But again, a *status confessio*nis should be *minor*, because a church-initiated, full-blown alternative world order is possible in principle yet highly unfeasible—obviously far more so than a Nazism—or apartheid-replacing (local) order. Indeed, whereas a “normal” *status confessio*nis seems legitimate only if Christians could actually live without compromising with the denounced matter—in South Africa, living with apartheid entailed only some temporary compromises until the dismantling of apartheid as a clearly realizable vision—a *status confessio*nis *minor* acknowledges Christians’ particularly great practical difficulty in overcoming compromising with the justice involved.

One last reason for a *status confessio*nis that is *minor* concerns citizens’ responsibility being more collective than straightforwardly individual. Roland Pierik (2013, 604) rejects Pogge’s claim that Western *citizens* (who, Pierik thinks, do have positive duties) violate global negative duties. Thus, Pogge’s “we” is too general; it is too abstract to say that “citizens” uphold an unjust world order. The negative duty rationale requires “precise arguments linking specific actions of specific actors to specific harms,” but to provide these is impossible for individual citizens—there are too many intermediate actors and events

(Pierik 2013, 605). Now if Pierik were right, it would seem wrong to apply the *status confessionis* to citizens. However, the individualism of Pierik's argument, while technical-juridically plausible, is unduly limited moral-prophetically. As with slavery, we may well belong to oppressing historical communities, from which we derive a part of our moral identity (MacIntyre 2007, 220–221). Moreover, as a community, we continuously vote our governments in place, which, in turn, remain responsible for international institutions and so are involved in the persistence of global poverty (cf. Pogge 2011, 30). Thus, there is *some* link, albeit not a very precise one, between Pogge's "we" and poverty, morally as well as causally. Citizens "bear ... a *collective* responsibility for their governments' role in designing and imposing this global order" (Pogge 2008, 179, emphasis added; cf. 2014, 79, 85). To restate Duchrow: insofar as "we" are not "active thieves" individually, "we" are "passive profiteers."

Thus, the churches have right and reason to proclaim a *status confessionis minor*—such a counterview would be founded methodologically, theoretically, and empirically well enough to deserve a fair hearing as a prophetic voice within a more encompassing Christian ethics of global poverty.

6 Conclusion

Its flaws notwithstanding, Duchrow's *status confessionis* approach remains partially defensible. Pogge's economic-ethical analysis, which strongly suggests that the global rich have violated their negative duties towards the global poor, has helped to make this clear. Importantly, it has liberated Duchrow's *status confessionis* application from its "leftist" (Hansen 2005, par. 32) ideological appearance. It is legitimate, then, for Christian churches to condemn the contemporary world economy in strong religious terms and initiate a bottom-up cultural movement against the present global order. Yet the church should not go beyond a *status confessionis minor* and should avoid Duchrow's suggestion that those who think otherwise about so complex a matter are risking their place within the Body of Christ. While (global) capitalism is not arguably fundamentally wrong, poverty also has local causes, and complete certainty about global factors is lacking, our world economy is still theologically condemnable for being shaped and structured by unfair supranational institutions, rules, and practices grounded in (collective) egoism and deep-seated unequal power relationships.

While this article has not purported to offer a comprehensive Christian ethics of the global economy—it has not explored Gustafson's nonprophetic modes of moral discourse—it is important to recognize that its move from

Duchrow's "total" *status confessionis* to a more modest (but pressing) one creates real space for ethical, policy, and narrative (Gustafson) contributions that treat poverty, beyond Pogge's libertarian inclinations, as a moral problem in itself—that is, as an emergency situation of permanent deprivation (Mieth 2008, 23–24). Emphasizing negative duties ethically, or applying a *status confessionis* theologically, is insufficient. Nevertheless, negative duty and *status confessionis* arguments capture the responsibility of citizens and Christians in the West more directly and urgently than any positive duty argument could do. The prophetic *status confessionis minor* defended here should draw the churches' attention to a human-made scandal and should most stringently and convincingly compel them to oppose it.⁶

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