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What has Accra to do with New York? An analysis of moral discourse in the Accra Confession

ABSTRACT

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches adopted the Accra Confession at its General Council in 2004. This essay is a close reading of the Confession in the light of James Gustafson's four varieties of moral discourse. It is found that the Confession is strong on the prophetic and narrative discourse, weaker on the ethical discourse, and not convincing on the level of policy discourse. To enhance policy discourse, the relation between theology and economics needs to be explored. The essay ends with an illustration of such relation by drawing on the views of economist, Joseph Stiglitz, as basis for illustrative policy recommendations.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE ACCRA CONFESSION

The Accra Confession (AC) was adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches during its 24th General Council held in Ghana, Africa. This confession was the final outcome of a long consultation process that followed the Debrecen (Hungary) meeting in 1997 where churches were invited to enter a process of recognition, education and confession (*processus confessionis*) on their way to covenant for justice in the economy and the earth (see sub-title of the confession).

This confession is itself not the result of purely internal WARC initiatives, and must be read in the context of the important focus emanating from of the World Council of Churches Vancouver assembly in 1983. This assembly urged member churches to engage "in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation," subsequently leading to the well-known "JPIC" studies and reflections.[1] The world convocation in Seoul, Korea in 1990 made strong affirmations on JPIC, and the concrete issue of a just economic order and liberation from the bondage of foreign debt was firmly put on the agenda of the following WCC assemblies at Canberra (1991) and Harare.

From a South African perspective, it is interesting to note that the Accra Confession has its direct antecedent in a Southern African constituency meeting of WARC at Kitwe in 1995. But further back in history, the Belhar Confession of 1986 also played a significant role in the final formulations on justice in the Accra Confession.[2]

Apart from the introduction (AC 1-4), the Accra Confession is developed in three sub-sections: reading the signs of the time (a form of contextual analysis in AC 5- 14), a confession of faith in the face of economic justice and ecological destruction (AC 15 – 36 with 17-35 normally seen as the actual core of the confession) and covenanting for justice (AC 37-42) on the commitment of the churches in the future.

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1 See the successive contributions by D Preman Niles 1989, 1992, 1994.

2 See the close relation between AC 24-26, 31, 34-35 and Belhar's statement on justice (section 4) and obedience (section 5). For the Belhar text, see Cloete and Smit 1984.

2. THE NATURE OF THE ACCRA CONFESSION

Before we analyze the value and limitations of the AC as a moral argument with respect to economic justice, we need to clarify the exact nature of the document. This is not a trivial or marginal issue, and council members were clearly divided on whether to include a *status confessionis* in the declaration. Although the strong religious condemnations of the current economic system as "idolatry" and "Mammon" point in the direction of announcing a state of confession, two considerations seem to have prevented this:

The WARC itself is of the view that an assembly of churches cannot adopt a confession in the classical doctrinal sense of the word. That is the task of local and regional churches. By nevertheless calling the statement a confession, the assembly had in mind "a faith stance" that expresses the necessity and urgency of the situation (AC 15). If one takes the "covenanting" notion into account, one could also speak of a "common recommitment of faith" in the OT-sense of a covenant renewal between God and God's people (see Niles dictionary art).

The second consideration relates to the 20th century history of *status confessionis*:[3] In both the situation of National-Socialism and apartheid, we were confronted with an exclusive relation between truth and lie, light and darkness. It was impossible to support either system on the basis of the gospel, and a line was drawn in the sand to distinguish the false church from the true church.

The complexity of the global capitalist system does not make such a clear line possible. The AC admits openly: "We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers" (11). The relations of inter-dependence and complicity imply that the churches themselves "consciously or unconsciously benefit from the current neoliberal economic global system". This situation calls for a confession of sin, but does apparently not allow a *status confessionis* in the strict sense of the word.

To call the AC a "confession" in the tradition of Barmen and Belhar, may therefore be misleading and confusing: Accra is a powerful "stance in faith", an urgent "faith response" to the signs of our time, a "covenantal recommitment" to live in a right relationship with God, our covenant partner, for the sake of the poor and the earth. But it is not a confession in the doctrinal sense, emerging spontaneously[4] from the knife-edge of a *status confessionis* (see Barth art).

3. THE ACCRA CONFESSION IN THE LIGHT OF JAMES GUSTAFON'S VARIETIES OF MORAL DISCOURSE

If one accepts the genre of AC as "faith commitment", the question arises whether it persuades as a moral argument. To evaluate the AC, I recall the well-known typology of moral discourses developed by James Gustafson (see Gustafson 1988, 1996).[5] He suggests a fourfold variety of moral discourse – prophetic, narrative, ethical and policy – and is of the opinion that a full moral argument should do justice to each of these discourses. He suggests that "if too exclusive

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3 For a more elaborate history and conceptual clarification of *status confessionis*, there is hardly a better exposition than the one by Dirk Smit, already written in 1984 (see Smit 1984).

4 Karl Barth reminds us that the "spontaneous" nature of a Reformed confession is a fundamental theological and not a psychological description. See Barth 1961:77-80 and Naude 2007 for a more extensive discussion of Barth's view on the nature of church confessions in relation to the Belhar Confession.

5 For an interesting contextualization of Gustafson's typology in South Africa at the time of our transition to democracy, read De Villiers and Smit 1994.

attention if given to any of the types, significant issues of concern to morally sensitive persons and communities are left unattended" (1996:37). In other words: for a morally persuasive argument you need due attention to each of the discourses.

Let us embark on a close reading of the Accra Confession in the light of this typology.

3.1 Prophetic discourse

It is clear that the AC understands itself as a prophetic critique and condemnation of an unjust economic system (see AC 39).[6] This is an important form of moral discourse steeped in many biblical traditions. As we learn from Gustafson's analysis, the strength of prophetic discourse is its emotive and radical exposure of the roots of what is perceived to be fundamentally and systematically wrong in a particular situation. It calls for repentance and a turn from unfaithfulness to faithfulness.

There is little doubt that Accra considers the global unjust economic system as the root cause of massive threats to both human and ecological life (AC 6). This economic system is then called a policy of unlimited or limitless growth (8, 23); neo-liberal economic globalization (9, 12, 16); a neo-liberal ideology (14) that claims sovereignty over life and therefore amounts to idolatry (10); it carries the character of Mammon (14); it is a system of rampant consumerism and competitive greed and selfishness (21) that is equated with the wolves who come to steal kill and destroy (John 10:10, AC 29). This is an "immoral economic system" that is defended by strong nations with all their might (AC 11).

Who are the agents driving this unjust system? Against whom specifically is the prophecy directed? The answer is clear: "The United States of America and its allies, together with international finance and trade institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization)…" Although the confession later attempts to generalize its focus to "any other economic system, including absolute planned economies" (19, see also 21), the overwhelming critique is on global capitalism as root cause of death and injustice, creating "a scandalous world that denies God's call to life for all" (7).

A complementary dimension of prophetic discourse is its utopian vision of the future that raises human aspirations. This is exactly what the AC does as it enables a vision of "changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants might live" (AC 42).

3.2 Narrative discourse

One can also detect elements in the AC of what Gustafson calls narrative ethical discourse. This refers to the fact that moral communities are shaped by formative narratives that determine their identity, ethos and values (1999:49). Narratives are interpreted descriptions of the past that serve as argument for moral stances in the present, although such argument may be cast in the form of illuminating stories, and not necessarily in a rigorous casuistic form (1988:269).

In the AC, narrative discourse is exhibited in four ways: The first "story" is that of the WARC itself. In fact, the first two paragraphs of the AC relates the road that WARC has walked to reach Accra, based on a previous commitment to engage economic injustice through a process of recognition, education and confession, and wide consultation all over the world. The second "story" is the slave history of particularly West-Africa, vividly recalled by delegates' visits to the slave dungeons of Elimina and Cape Coast. Solidarity with this oppression is then directly used as argument against "the ongoing realities of human trafficking and the oppression of the global

6 De Villiers and Smit (1994:232-234) considers the *Kairos Document* of 1985 as a predominantly prophetic discourse, whereas *The Road to Damascus* (1989) is written in a more narrative style.

economic system (AC 3).[7]

The third "story" is that of the poor and the earth in our current situation as told in the AC's reading of the signs of the time. The groaning of creation and the cries of people destined to poverty and death, are combined to serve as argumentative base in exposing the ideological nature of the current economic system. Look, for example, at how AC 5 – 7 moves from description of a situation to exposing the oppressive nature of that very situation in the paragraphs that follow.

Narratives are the building blocks of the Christian faith as well. One would therefore expect a fourth "story" in the confession: The story of God as told in Scripture and tradition. The AC draws on powerful biblical traditions to explicate God for the specific context it addresses: This is especially evident in the more directly confessional or theological section of AC, namely paragraphs 17- 36, where the identity of God is revealed as creator, sustainer, initiator of a covenant with the earth, and as defender of justice. Jesus is – in the theme of the Accra assembly- remembered as the good shepherd who lay down his life so that we might have abundant life; and as the One who chooses for the marginalized (AC 20, 28-29). The Spirit is God who calls us to account for the hope that is within us (AC 32), and – in line with the structure of Nicea[8] and the Apostolicum – the identity of the church and its task (AC 29, 31, 33) is drawn from the preceding theology.

The blending of these narrative strands renders an immanent persuasive power to the Accra Confession, and gives further credence to the prophetic critique. The question is whether the AC – read as moral argument – includes what Gustafson called "ethical" and "policy" discourse?

3.3 Ethical discourse

Whereas prophecy moves on a macro-level ("the neo-liberal economic system") ethical discourse moves on the micro-level as it provides modes of appropriate reasoning through conceptual clarification and by making important distinctions "which lead to greater precisions and stronger backing for what Christians… think is the right thing to do" (Gustafson 1988:33). Whereas narrative discourse calls forth symbols and ethos-shaping stories, ethical discourse lies closer to moral philosophy with a more "logical-argumentative" approach.

There are at least three overt attempts at conceptual clarification or "ethical" discourse in the AC:

- Paragraph 15 is an example of healthy self-reflection as the WARC explains what it means with "confession" and – by implication – why *status confessionis* is absent from the final text. This has been discussed earlier in this paper.
- A very emotive term like "empire" is used as a description of the current global situation, and is – in my view – convincingly explained with greater precision: "In using the term empire we mean the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their interests" (AC 11).
- The core focus of the AC is on the economy. One would therefore expect to find a description or more precise outline of what precisely is meant by "neo-liberal economic globalization".

7 See Berger's interview with German theologian, Ulrich Duchrow, who considers the visit to slave castles and dungeons as "the transformative moment" where delegates from the North understood some of the anguish of their Southern brothers and sisters (Berger 2005).

8 See the many ethical passages in the WCC interpretation of the Nicene creed (WCC 1991). For ecology, read paragraphs 84-89, and for economic justice, read paragraphs 225-6, 238, and 277.

This is indeed set out in paragraph 9 where the beliefs or core assumptions of the current global system is enumerated. The description ranges from unlimited economic growth and deregulation of the market to unrestricted movement of capital and a subordination of social obligations to capital accumulation. Classical liberal economies were in the course of the 20th century re-shaped to include protection of workers and where crucial welfare functions were accorded to the state. We now have neo-liberalism where "the purpose of the economy is to increase profits and return for the owners of production and financial capital, while excluding the majority of the people and treating nature as a commodity" (AC 12).

One may differ from AC regarding these conceptual clarifications, and could ask for more and greater precisions. But this would indeed invite rational debate, and would confirm the argumentative dimension of the confession at the level of "ethics" discourse.

A specific critique could, for instance, be levelled at AC for its overtly biased analysis of the effects of global capitalism. There is enough empirical evidence to show the Janus-face or ambiguity of the current economic system,[9] and the AC would have gained in persuasive power if it signalled these ambiguities in its reading of the signs of the time. Although AC recognizes "the enormity and complexity of the situation" and the confessors "do not seek simple answers", there is the danger of fighting ideology with equally ideological language, and loosing respectability along the way.

It is not enough to just indicate that even churches benefit consciously or unconsciously from the current system – there are many other achievements of the system that have benefited and are benefiting even the poor, ranging from the communication revolution to preferential trade agreements and development of generic drugs. Every dollar of aid or debt write-off has been earned in the system. That does not exonerate the system of its weak features like skew distributive patterns[10] and asymmetrical power relations, but it is one thing to denounce a system in its entirety and quite another to make suggestions for radical reform.

The confession of sin in paragraph 34 is quite appropriate (and reminds of Belhar!). What is missing from this confession is the complicity of poor nations' leaders (specifically in Africa) in misusing the system to enrich themselves, clinging to power through war on their own people and intensifying human misery to the point where a reform of the economic system might not even benefit the poor. A prerequisite for escaping the trap of poverty is to empower the poor to take their future in their own hands and negotiate their place in the world from at least a position of equality, if not preference.[11] How this could happen, is the question facing us in the transition to Gustafson' policy discourse.

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9 See for example the very well written analytical work on globalization by Held and colleagues (1999) and the more defensive stance of Bhagwati, 2004 - especially sections I and II.

10 For theories of distributive justice, read the informative overview by Roemer, 1998, and for a more specialised version of justice as fairness, see Rawls 1971 and 1999.

11 See the interesting observation by Bedford-Strohm (1994:169, 308) that "fehlende Teilnahme" is often the source of remaining in poverty. This echoes Rawls' view that burdened societies need sound political institutions to realise the potential of development. "What must be realized is that merely dispensing funds will not rectify basic political and social injustices (though money is often essential)." A focus on human rights and establishment of a democratic political culture is more important (1999:108-109). Rawls takes his cue *inter alia* from Sen's case studies of famine that shows the political and economic factors are mostly more important than "natural" factors such as droughts. This reinforces Rawls' view that assistance amongst peoples must carry political consequences, i.e. the creation of just institutions.

3.4 Policy discourse

Gustafson succinctly describes policy discourse as determining "what is desirable within the constraints of what is possible" (1988:270). This links closely to an ethics of responsibility because the persons involved in actual policy decisions are – unlike prophetic theologians or theory-driven economists! – accountable for the action and outcomes of their policy decisions (1988:46). Agents of policy development are in the difficult position that they need to connect with centres of political power to ensure their policies are executed, and they have the task of translating prophecy, narrative and ethical analyses into concrete realities.

As a stance of faith, the AC is weakest on the policy level. Prophetic discourse is notoriously weak on finer analysis and may itself show strands of ideological language. Narrative discourse may suffer from one-sidedness, depending on whose story is told and by whom, or suffer from lack of intellectual rigor insofar as it calls on metaphors and symbols not always accessible to outsiders. Ethical discourse may get entangled in conceptual analysis, but end up with totally impractical suggestions on the way forward. That is why Gustafson's warning is to be heeded: One type of discourse is not sufficient in itself. If – for the moment - we understand ethics also as the translation of theology into achievable social goals (the so-called middle axioms of a responsible society), we as theologians cannot rest in denouncement and narratives and leave the messy work of implementation to others in the real world.

One may argue that a "faith stance" does not aim at policy. The counter-argument may run as follows: It is understandable that a confession in the classical sense (Barmen, Belhar) does not include an overt policy dimension, although they give strong clues about action and discipleship. These confessions were spontaneously borne in the *kairos* of a specific situation with little time for reflection on policy.

However, a faith stance or covenanting for justice that is the result of many years of reflection and consultation, owes the world a fuller moral argument. It is indeed important to show the ideological nature of the current economic system and call people to see its devastating effect on the poor and the environment. A confession can bring insight and guilt, but unless further work is done to move from prophecy, narrative and ethics to policy, millions of Christians (and others of goodwill) in the system are left with no clarity on what they could/should actually do. The situation is compounded if the critique is systemic – as it should indeed be. But how to change and dismantle a system on which you also rely, is - as the AC rightly states - a complicated matter and normally beyond the immediate expertise of the institutional church and theologians.[12]

An inclusion of the some guidelines from the Public Issues Committee of WARC (referred to in paragraph 40) in the actual text of the AC, would have significantly heightened its persuasive moral argument. If you witness against an economic system, and if you convince others of that system's pervasive power, you need to make some suggestions on economic policy and practice that are not blue-sky visions, but – as Gustafson reminds - "within the constraints of what is possible."

That is why the relation between theology and economics is of such importance in the 21st century.[13] If the current global economic system is the key source of the threat to social

12 The transition from apartheid to democracy is an interesting case in point. The liberation struggle was led by church leaders. But once negotiations started, we needed political and constitutional experts to give flesh to the preceding prophetic critique. Following Gustafson's wisdom, one should however be careful not to isolate policy from the other discourses.

13 As far as I know, the essays edited by AJ van der Walt (2005), is one of the rare occasions where theologians in South Africa participate in a discussion on theories of economic justice.

stability and our actual survival on this planet, then debates about restructuring this system require that theologians and ethicists take the work of leading economists seriously. The same energy that we spent through the ages to learn the language of philosophers (from Plato to Habermas), sociologists (from Comte to Luhmann), psychologists (from Wundt to Freud) and linguists (from Socrates to De Saussure) in order to construct our theologies and hermeneutics, is now required to make theological sense of our radically "economized" context (from Adam Smith to Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz).

The question therefore is whether we can move Accra forward from prophecy to policy by listening to one voice that attempts to reform the economic system from within?[14] What follows in the next section is for illustration purposes only. It is neither a full exposition of the work done by Joseph Stiglitz, nor an evaluation of his policy proposals. The aim is merely to demonstrate how important a broader interaction beyond the boundaries of theology is, to make intelligent suggestion on policy discourse.[15]

4. JOSEPH STIGLITZ: A DIFFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

It has to be said up front: Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics and chief economist of the World Bank until January 2001, does not assume an ideological anti-globalization position. He would - I assume - not be comfortable with some of the prophetic critique against globalization expressed in the AC. He is committed to a market position and understands that economic globalization is a complex phenomenon with both positive and negative consequences (Stiglitz 2006:22-23). His critique of economic globalization, eloquently detailed in best-seller, *Globalization and its discontents* (2002), is fierce, but his ultimate aim is "to make it work", the subject of his subsequent book.

Stiglitz commences his book *Making globalization work* (2006) with his interpretation of "Another world is possible", the motto of the World Social Forum, a gathering of hundred thousand people in Mumbai, January 2004. One could isolate a number of important convictions that underpin his argument for a differential economic treatment of poorer nations. In arguing for such differential trade system, he challenges a number of traditional, conservative economic views on market fundamentalism:

Stiglitz rejects the separation of efficiency and equity considerations in a market economy. The belief that markets and the pursuit of self-interest would - via an invisible hand - lead to economic efficiency is only partially true, and if markets by themselves lead to socially unacceptable income distributions, questions around equity arise. And to address equity, economic policy will have to include appropriate government intervention and regulation (see his reference to Keynes, 2006:xvii). He argues that economic efficiency should not be isolated as the sole criterion of economic performance, but that so-called non-economic values like

14 The choice for Joseph Stiglitz was initially quite arbitrary and was more the result of his status and best-selling books than actual insight into his views. Looking back, I am satisfied that this choice did yield the required results I aim at in this essay. The work of Amartya Sen – specifically his focus on the link between ethics and economics (Sen 1988) - is equally influential and should provide a fertile base for policy reflection. There are more radical choices like Ulrich Duchrow, but also authors that would broadly support the tenets of Stiglitz, like Australian economist, Graham Dunkley (2004).

15 In my view, successful examples of faith stances on the economy that include policy discourse are the Catholic Social Doctrine on economic life issued by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004:177-203) as well as the influential study guide, *Gerechte Teilhabe*, by the EKD in Germany (EKD:2006). In fairness it must be stated that these two examples are more study documents than confessions.

"social justice, the environment, cultural diversity, universal access to health care, and consumer protection" should be co-determinants of economic success (Stiglitz 2006: xvii, see xiv , 17, 22).

Stiglitz further rejects two long-standing premises of trade liberalization: First, that liberalization of trade automatically leads to more trade and higher economic growth. Second, that such growth will inevitable "trickle-down" to benefit all (Stiglitz 2006: 99, 23; see also Stiglitz 2006a:18-21). Apart form his own research in information economics, he argues that neither economic history nor current economic theory support these two premises. There are consequently no grounds to believe that the best way to help the poor is simply to strive for more liberalization of trade and higher growth. Opening up the markets **by itself** will not solve the problem of poverty – it may even make it worse (Stiglitz 2006:14).

In his only reference to political philosopher, John Rawls, (p. 296, footnote 15) Stiglitz does intimate that a fairer and more equitable trade system would "entail putting ourselves in others' shoes: what would we think is fair or right if we were in their position?" (Stiglitz 2006: 22). What type of international trade regime would we, in Ralwsian terms, choose behind the veil of ignorance? (see Rawls 1971, 1999). It is in this context that Stiglitz argues for his **differential option for the poor** and – reminiscent of Rawls - the judgment of trade regimes by the criterion whether it does not make the poorest countries actually worse off (Stiglitz 2006: 58).

When trade agreements are made among the advanced industrial nations (like under GATT) the principles of non-discrimination, equality and reciprocity are upheld: countries would not discriminate against other members of GATT and each country would treat all others the same – all would be the most favoured. This system of multinational trade is founded on strict reciprocity: Each country agrees to lower tariffs and to open up markets if others reciprocate (Stiglitz 2006: 75). Coupled to these arrangements, went the principle of national treatment: foreign producers would be subject to the same regulations as domestic ones.

When GATT was replace by the WTO in 1995, these principles were carried over into the new, much more expanded trade regime. There are numerous hard, empirical evidence (listed by Stiglitz 2006: 77-78; 85-97) to show that an asymmetric system with grossly uneven playing fields and uneven implementation evolved that actually made the developing countries worse off (Stiglitz 2006:58). What is needed, is a global trade regime "that promotes the well-being of the poorest countries and that is, at the same time, good for the advanced industrial counties as a whole," though current special corporate interest groups might suffer and loose some of their unfair advantages (Stiglitz 2006: 82; on special interests see also pp. 13, 24).

In what he calls "fair trade for the poor" he suggests a reform of international trade. This reform entails that the principle of "reciprocity for and among all countries – regardless of circumstances" should be replaced by the principle of "**reciprocity among equals, but differentiation between those in markedly different circumstances**" (Stiglitz 2006: 83, my emphasis; see Stiglitz and Charlton 2005:94).

In practice, Stiglitz (in collaboration with Charlton) proposes a three tier system of rich, middle-income and poor countries - a classification based on agreed empirical norms. The rich countries opens up their markets to others in their own group, but also to the middle-income and poor countries without reciprocity or political conditionality expected from the latter two groups. The middle-income group opens trade to all in its own group and to the poor countries without conditionality, but is not required to extend such preferences to the rich countries. In such a system, developing nations will receive "special and differential treatment", as has already happened in some bilateral trade agreements (see the EU in 2001; Stiglitz 2006:83). Such preferential treatment should, however, not be voluntary, but become part and parcel of WTO negotiations and enforcement in fields such as agriculture, tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

On what grounds would this proposal be accepted? Stiglitz consistently argues for two grounds: conscience/morality and self-interest. (The latter would not easily fit into a theological framework!)

Concerning self-interest, he notes that greater stability and security in the poor and developing nations, will contribute to stability and security in the developed world (59). The flood of immigration from poor to rich might be slowed down if the circumstance compelling people to leave, are improved. Obviously there are responsibilities on poor countries with regard to governance too (58). A fairer trade regime would in the long run diminish the need for development aid and debt write-offs – mainly sponsored by developed countries. In fact, rich countries have cost poor countries three times more in trade restrictions that they give in total development aid (78). The growth attained under a differential system has a far greater chance of actually benefiting everyone (excluding special interest groups).

The emphasis on morality must be seen in the context of Stiglitz' introduction of non-economical values as well as the retention of equity with efficiency. He does not argue his case at length, and no reference is made to religion at all. He simply states that to create a trade regime with differential and special treatment is a moral issue and a demand of conscience (Stiglitz 2006: 100-101; 59). The empirical and social realities of poverty amongst and inside countries are socially unacceptable and in themselves moral appeals. "It appears that is better to be a cow in Europe than a poor person in a developing country", he writes (Stiglitz 2006:85), referring to agricultural subsidies in the EU that equals the poverty line of 2$ a day in poor countries.

6. FROM ACCRA TO NEW YORK? A FEW POLICY SUGGESTIONS

I am quire aware that there is a degree of incommensurability between AC and Stiglitz on their respective basic orientations to the current global economic system. But there are also common sentiments like the moral unacceptability of skew distributive justice and a serious questioning of neo-liberal doctrines about economic growth, market liberalization and the welfare role of the state. There are also many aspects of the current trading system that Stiglitz addresses that are not directly on the agenda of the AC. We must nevertheless accept the challenge to outline some policy implications when one reads the AC in conjunction with ideas suggested by Stiglitz:

For illustrative purposes, one could list the following ideas that might have been included in the AC's last section on covenanting for justice or could be part of practical implementation guidelines:[16]

We, the participants of the WARC, commit ourselves, and call on all Christians and persons of good faith, to commit themselves to the following policy guidelines:

- In stead of vigorously pursuing free trade as goal in itself, we join hands with the fair trade movement to ensure the empowerment of groups excluded from the current economic system.
- All trade agreements should be assessed to ensure that the net incidence of benefits accrues to developing and poor countries.
- The WTO should exercise extreme care to ensure that the principle of special and differential treatment – already accepted by all members - informs both its procedures and the outcomes of its activities.
- Where current under-development is the result of past oppression like colonialism or discrimination against indigenous peoples, equity demands that a greater share of benefits

16 See for example the guidelines for implementing the AC by the Council for World Mission, 2008.

of trade agreements should flow to countries/peoples affected in this way.

- Trade liberalization, if agreed to, should be preceded by a general equilibrium incident analysis and phased in according to the adjustment capacity of the country or region concerned, with some compensation for transition costs and the greater risk associated with deregulated markets.
- The state should retain an important social welfare function and privatization only implemented if there are guaranteed service delivery at optimal costs and protection of the poorest segment of the population.
- The Millenium Development Goals embody a global commitment to seriously address poverty and under-development. Progress to achieve these goals should be assessed each year and public commitments that are enforceable by the WTO must ensure that we half poverty by 2015.

In this manner one can proceed to address the most urgent policy areas in a responsible and practical manner. These are merely suggestions and an illustration of the interplay between theology and economics. These statements are obviously built on the assumption that the neo-liberal system can be reformed and its excessive negative effects stemmed. If, however, that assumption is not shared, more drastic policy suggestions will have to be formulated to ensure the dismantling of the global economic system and its replacement with another more just and humane system.

7. CONCLUSION

The Accra Confession is an important stance of faith. From the perspective of moral argumentation, it succeeds at the levels of prophetic and narrative discourses. There may be questions about the fairness of its ethical analysis – though clarification of core concepts is satisfactory. As the document reads now, it fails to provide a moral argument that could be classified as policy discourse. This is a deficit in a document that was carefully drafted over many years and via many consultations. Such policy directives should be developed in multi-disciplinary consultation with economists and become an integral part of the church's mission and ongoing prophetic critique.

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