

Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth

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“Resisting neo-liberal economic globalization is essential to Christian faith.” “To create a more just economy is essential to the integrity of Christian faith.” This is what appears again and again in WARC documents on Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth including the recent WARC UPDATE (December 2007). This is a quotation from the Accra Confession adopted by the 24th General Council of the World Alliance (Accra, 2004) which reads, “The General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians.”

“Putting justice in the economy and the earth at the heart of our Christian faith” is, I dare to say, the most significant and unique legacy that Prof. Milan Opočenský left for the ecumenical movement at the threshold of the 21st century. Indeed, the 21st century is overwhelmingly being dominated by the, so called, “neo-liberal economic globalization” discourse. In the face of this imperialistic pressure, Milan challenged the ecumenical movement to take up the issue of justice in the economy and the earth as a matter of faith and to take a faith stance on neo-liberal economic globalization.

Today, we recognize that the struggle for justice in the economy and the earth has become one of the most significant agendas for the ecumenical movement in the 21st century. The 8th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches has welcomed the Alliance’s initiative and encouraged its member churches to join the movement while also launching their own programme which has now come to be known as AGAPE (Alternative Globalization Addressing People and the Earth). Since Harare, WARC and WCC – later joined by the LWF as well - have jointly launched a series of ecumenical responses to economic globalization by holding a series of regional consultations in Bangkok (1999), Budapest (2001), Fiji (2001), Soesterberg (2002), Buenos Aires (2003), and Stony Point (2004). Since Accra, the Council for World Mission has also joined the movement and CWM, WARC and WCC have initiated a covenanting for justice movement called “Oikotree.”² From all these development, one can see that this issue Milan had initiated has now become a really major ecumenical issue for our world today.

Why has Milan taken this issue up as a major ecumenical witness in the 21st century? What led him to commit to the struggle for economic justice? Why has he challenged the church to take this issue as a matter of faith?

A Prophetic Imagination

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² <http://www.oikotree.org>

In April 1997, just before Milan was installed in the office of WARC General Secretary at the 22nd WARC General Council (August 1997, Seoul), I had a privilege of visiting Prague at his invitation. Milan told me that I was the first Korean pastor who visited Czechoslovakia at that time maybe in her history. Milan offered me a guided tour to Prague Castle. Standing in the square located between the St. Vitus Cathedral and the office of the state president Milan said to me, “Seong-Won, this is a kind of irony in human history. How can they (the state presidents) refuse to recognize God while they see the Cathedral from their office every day?”

While we had worked together in the Alliance, Milan introduced Wednesday meditation in the office, which is still continued even today. Whenever he led the meditation, he used to open the meditation by taking daily biblical passages from the very old Book of Prayer of his church. He explained again and again that in the former time, Christians visited every house and shouted the Word of God at the door, taking a biblical passage from the Book of Prayer. From these two stories, we could feel that one of the major theological tasks in Milan’s mind would be to recognize God’s presence in human history and to proclaim God’s Word towards the concrete life of human beings and society.

The demise of the socialist bloc, which he had to face just less than a year since his installation, probably inspired him to see the signs of the time which was opening a new chapter of human history. Reading this sign of the time he made a proposal to the WARC Executive Committee to launch a study process on Faith and Economy from a Reformed perspective. It was probably already in the Executive Committee held in 1992. The WARC Executive Committee decided to launch the process and a series of regional consultations were held in Manila, Kitwe, San Jose, and Edinburgh. Among them, participants in the Kitwe consultation suggested that the Alliance consider a declaration, a *status confessionis*, on economic injustice and ecological destruction.

While we worked together in the Alliance, Milan often challenged the Alliance family with the argument that the ecumenical movement today was faced with at least five issues which might require a *status confessionis*: They were economic injustice, ecological destruction, gender injustice, weapons of mass destruction, and militarism. If he were still alive today, I am sure that he would have added one more issue to this list and that would be the issue of global empire. He probably had a feeling that the global situation at the threshold of the 21st century had put the Church of Christ in the context in which churches are compelled to respond to the world reality in the language of confession. Despite his theological orientation and training in Christian ethics he often said that economic injustice is not an ethical issue but a faith issue.

A Costly Learning Process

The Debrecen General Council of WARC carefully reflected on the proposal from the Kitwe consultation. Instead of a quick movement to *status confessionis*, the Debrecen General Council decided to launch a Confessing movement by calling all member churches at all levels to be engaged in “A Committed Process of Recognition, Education and Confession (*processus confessionis*) regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction.” Later the process was given a more comprehensive title, “Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth”.

With the historical commitment in Debrecen a confessing journey with steps of recognition, education and confession was begun. Just after the Debrecen Call, the world has experienced a domino phenomenon of economic crisis which started in some Asian countries like Thailand, Indonesia and Korea, the so called Asian tigers. After the Mexico crisis in 1994, the Asian crisis has shown a dangerous aspect of neo-liberal economic globalization. The domino game continued in Russia in 1998, and in Argentina in 2000 which clearly demonstrated what it means to be incorporated into neo-liberal economic globalization. Having seen this phenomenon, Milan told me that the Debrecen action seemed to be providential.

As we see the global financial market crisis today such turmoil in global economy has not stopped with those crises in the 1990s. Rather the crisis has been continuing and deepened today. The recent crisis in the United States makes the global financial market upside down. In relation to

recent US economic crisis even George Soros stated that the world might face its worst financial crisis since the Second World War. In the face of increasing volatility in the world financial markets Soros gave a warning at the World Economic Forum in Davos last January by saying, “the current crisis is not only the bust that follows the housing boom. It’s basically the end of a 60-year period of continuing credit expansion.” He went on saying, “A recession in the developed world is now more or less inevitable.” And it was, he concluded, the “end of an era.” His warning was given before the huge losses at Société Générale and the worldwide financial crisis which is being deepened at this moment. The newly sworn President of Korea, who was a former CEO of Hyundai, said on 15 March 2008 that the current economic crisis seems to be the worst one since the oil shock.

“Million faces, One Message, Climate Justice!” was the impressive message printed on a placard that was hanging in the lobby of the plenary hall where the Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Bali in December 2007. Global warming and climate change is one of the most serious life-threatening global problems that the whole creation is facing today. Those who participated in the Accra General Council will remember this from the shocking figure PowerPoint presentation. One of the pictures showed that, according to data by Prof. Joh van Klinken of Groningen University, between 1850 and 1950 one animal species vanished every year; about 1989 one animal species vanished per day; about 2000 one animal species vanishes per hour and within 50 years, 25% of animal and plant species will vanish due to global warming. According to the report of the International Panel on Climate Change, the percentage of vanished species is going to be 30%. Dr Clara Deser, senior scientist of National Centre for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) said in her interview with a Korean paper on 3 March 2008 that global warming process is advancing 10 or 20 years faster than expected. The portion of the glacier in the Polar Regions that had melted down last year was what was expected to happen 10 or 20 years later. The situation is much more serious than we imagine.

In Bali one of the frequent languages spoken was “Climate Injustice”. “Climate injustice is a neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism,” said the NGOs. Vandana Shiva, one of the speakers to WARC General Council in Accra spoke of the Earth Democracy in face with ecological injustice. Arundati Roy, an Indian novel writer said, “If you are religious person, destroying nature is a blasphemy. Today, the language like “eco-spiritualism” is also spoken. What this notion may mean to the church would be that the struggle for ecological justice is again a matter of faith requiring us to take a faith stance on this issue.

A Confessing Journey

When the Debrecen General Council encouraged member churches to start the confessing journey with recognition churches were encouraged not only to clarify the system of injustices but also to read the signs of the time with prophetic imagination. What are the signs of time today? As Jesus was confronted with the worldview of the empire at his time, we are also confronted with the worldview of empire in our time.

Our mind and heart are under threat of mammonism and our life is under severe threat and our community is about to be broken down. As Moses faced cries and groans of the slaves and the Apostle Paul heard the groaning of the whole of creation, the church today is facing the lamentations of God’s people on the globe and the whole creation whose suffering reaches to the heavens.

The participants of the WARC member churches from the South who met in Buenos Aires in April 2003 expressed their clear “Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life” They took a faith stance, because the present moment in the world’s history as a *kairos*, challenges them to decisive action, because the whole of creation faces a crisis of life and an immense suffering. They discovered the dramatic convergence of the sufferings and crises of both people and nature in the countries of the South. They took a faith stance because they recognized that the entire creation is in crisis. They took a faith stance because the very integrity of our faith was in question.

The faith stance analyzed that, “the neoliberal ideology and practice uses a theological and ideological framework to justify its presumed messianic role by claiming: economic sovereignty, absolute power and authority beyond any regulation, the right to act above national and international law, the right to act beyond ethical and moral rules. Neo-liberal ideology claims absolute power, a power which is over and against the sovereignty of God and the claims of the Gospel.” Therefore, they said that, “it is critical, for the integrity of our faith, that we take a faith stance.”

Many people and churches, including sister ecumenical organizations, were curious to see whether WARC would reach a confession. Many member churches were also curious to know how the 24th General Council would conclude the confessing process. Some churches were concerned about the possible disunity of the Reformed family if the Alliance took a *status confessionis*, in effect making a statement against neo-liberal economic globalization a matter of doctrine.

The churches from the South particularly challenged the Alliance, asking how long it would take in confessing faith against economic injustice and ecological destruction. Even though the concerns were different in terms of what form the Alliance might take in response to global economic injustice the churches were already in consensus that the current dominating economic structure is not just and needs changing.

Based on the consensus of the problematic nature of today’s global economy the General Council easily reached a consensus that we need to respond in a confessional manner even though some of the delegates, mainly from the North, were in favour of a declaration or a statement.

However, the General Council hesitated to go for a *status confessionis*. The General Council did not want to divide the Reformed family on confessional lines on this issue. What was of important was that the Reformed family took a faith stance against economic injustice and ecological destruction. The General Council also avoided making any confession in the traditional sense. Instead the path that it followed was to confess that there is a necessity and urgency to respond actively to the economic injustices of our time.

“Faith commitment may be expressed in various ways according to regional and theological traditions: as confession, as confessing together, as faith stance, as being faithful to the covenant of God,” the Accra Confession states. “We choose confession, not meaning a classical doctrinal confession ... but to show the necessity and urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time and the call of Debrecen. We invite member churches to receive and respond to our common witness.”

Throughout a heated debate, the 24th General Council of WARC adopted the famous Accra Confession.³ (see the attached full text of the Accra Confession.)

God or Mammon?

Since Seattle, many global people’s movements have responded to neo-liberal economic globalization regime. What kind of response would or should the church make? What would be a unique response that the church would or should make? Let me raise a set of questions that might provoke us to reflect on this challenge.

First, what is my poor neighbour, theologically? We need to ask, not only who my poor neighbour is, but also what my poor neighbour is. We need to be theologically clear on the issue of poverty. How do we perceive poverty, theologically? We are not talking about what I might call “voluntary poverty” or honest poverty found in the dictionary that is encouraged by some religions like Buddhism and others. We are talking about the victimised and forced poor by others, including ourselves. What is my poor neighbour, theologically? Calvin identified the poor as “receivers of God, or receveurs de Dieu”, “Vicars of Christ, vicaires du Christ”, and “Attorney of God,

³ One can obtain the full text of the Accra Confession from the website of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, <http://warc.jalb.de>

procureurs de Dieu”.⁴ In his preface to William Coats’ book *God in Public*, Richard Shaull identified the poor as bearers of God’s judgment. In other words, existence of the poor as our neighbours is God’s judgement on our society. Existence of poverty in our midst is a theological contradiction if we are serious in witnessing to Christ who came to the world for giving life in fullness to ALL. Could we have this perception in our theological understanding on poverty?

Second, would humanitarian approach be enough in dealing with victims of systematic injustice? Would the confessional approach make a difference? Since Accra, I keep saying that there is a fundamental difference between a humanitarian approach and a confessional approach in theological dealing with the poor. If one takes a humanitarian approach my poor neighbour still remain as the other. If one takes a confessional approach, however, my poor neighbour is no more the other, but part of the same body of mine. The famous biblical statement on what it means to belong to the same body of Christ says, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it.” (I Cor. 12.26) What does this mean to us in the face of systematic injustice by which 80% of God’s people on earth suffer because of global economic injustice and the whole eco-system of God’s creation is groaning for salvation?

Third, what is our priority between church unity and global justice? One of the major concerns for those who were hesitant to go for confessing action in Accra was the worries of possible division of the churches. I still remember our debate between myself and a colleague and friend of mine from Europe on this issue. After two hours debate, we came to the agreement that justice is of a higher priority to unity. Unity with injustice is not authentic unity. We then agreed to go for confession, as long as confession does not imply exclusion of those who have not confessed. I kept saying that this type of confession is an invitational one. For those who reached the stage and readiness to confess they can go ahead while those who have not yet reached that stage may express their solidarity with those who confessed and may join the confession at a later stage.

Fourth, should the ecumenical witness to economic justice be pragmatic or prophetic? One of the major critiques on our analysis was that the churches’ analysis on neo-liberal economic globalization was not scientific, practical and thorough enough. Of course, the churches’ analysis can never be scientific enough. However, what should be the basis for the churches’ witness to economic justice? Should it be practical and pragmatic or prophetic? William Coats said, “Eschatology becomes the central element in social ethics, especially in a time of crisis. It frees us from the necessity to seek solutions to our problems within the given parameters. Deriving its norms from “the end of the time” (eschatological), such an ethical stance exposes the limitations of the options open to us within the established order, stirs our imagination, and forces us into the struggle to give shape to new forms of social, economic, and political organization which move in the direction of greater freedom, equality and justice.”⁵

Fifth, whom do we serve; God or mammon? All the ecumenical documents pointed out many negative consequences of neo-liberal economic globalization, like the growing gap between the rich and the poor, ecological destruction, erosion of democracy, colonization of consciousness, etc. From a theological point of view, one of the most serious problems would be mammonism. Rene Krueger, former president of ISEDET in Buenos Aires, also pointed out that the key issue in our missiological task with regard to neo-liberal economic globalization would be the question of mammon by saying, “As churches today we face a highly theological mission: we can and we must publicly denounce the destructive effects of a totally free market. We can and we must warn humanity, which on one side seems to be more and more united, and on the other is splitting at its sides, that if Mammon is not controlled it only destroys life. We can and we must denounce the idolatry of the market. We can and we must point out that the alternative today is not “capitalism or communism”, “conservative or revolutionary”, “West or East”, “North or South”, rather the alternative today is GOD OR MAMMON.

Way ahead

⁴ Andre Bieler, *L’ humanisme social de Calvin*, Geneve : Labor et Fides, 1961.

⁵ William Coats, *God in Public*, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974, 8.

Where we go from here? For the further ecumenical journey, let me raise two additional questions for reflection. The first question is related to eco-justice. I have the feeling that with regard to global warming and climate change, we are now really in a situation needing *status confessionis*. Of course this issue is included in the Accra Confession. However, the situation is much more serious now. Hans Blix, UN Chief Weapons Inspector, said “I am more worried about global warming than I am of any major military conflict.” According to scientists, unless we don’t take any decisive action by 2013, the earth might cross over the Rubicon River. Ecological watch is now 23:55. As one placard in Bali said, the climate justice is one message for all inhabitants on earth today. If climate justice is not possible, our salvation would really be at stake. Wouldn’t this situation put the churches today in a context where a stronger and more decisive faith action should be made?

In 1989, the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I suggested the Christian churches to observe 1 September as a day “of the protection of the natural environment” and to offer “prayer and supplications to the Maker of all, both in thanksgiving for the great gift of creation and in petition for its protection and salvation.” Ten years later, further proposal was made by European Christian Environmental Network to adopt a Time for Creation stretching from September 1 to the second Sunday in October. At the last meeting in February 2008, the WCC Central Committee decided to encourage all member churches to observe Creation Season along this line.

In his speech scheduled to be addressed in the UN Assembly in April 2008 Pope Benedict XI is supposed to affirm that climate change is a moral issue. We now really need to take the issue of Creation as a matter of faith. We must observe the Creation Season as equally important as those Christo-centric Church calendar like Advent Season, Christmas, Lent, Ester and Pentecost.

This challenge may lead us to shift our theological focus or widen our theological axiom from the Christo-centric to Creator-centric theology. Even though we worship Triune God, the truth is that over last two millenniums, the Christian theology has exclusively focused on the second article of the Trinity. Time has now come to widen or shift our focus to the first article of the Trinity, God, the Creator. By doing so, a spectrum of Christian theology would be much more widen in dealing with many pressing ecumenical issues like eco-justice, inter-faith, wider ecumenical mission etc.

The second question to be tackled would be the question of alternative. Around two world wars, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) prophesized “the decline of the West”(Untergang des Aberdlandes). Not because of circulation of different civilizations, but because of the Western civilization that has been developed along the line of the process of industrialization, urbanization and modernization, the whole creation is now painfully suffering.

In resistance to a tsunami of industrialization and British empire, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi(1869–1948), known as Mahatma Gandhi suggested “Village Swaraj” movement as an alternative. In response to industrialization that may, in his judgment, destroy not only political, social and economic system in India, but also people’s spirituality as well, he strongly promoted a self-reliant, self-supported and self-governed local village as an alternative to be pursued. Wouldn’t all the values, which he not only reflected but also practiced such as non-violence(ahimsa), truth, simplicity, spiritual and practical purity(Brahmacharya), faith(satya) and vegetarianism, be a sort of values that need to be promoted today in the context of neo-liberal economic globalization. Since I myself am now personally engaged in the eco-village movement in my context, we need to get more inspiration from Gandhi for a life-giving alternative vision like “Village Swaraj”.

Let me close my presentation by tabling two questions for reflection together:

1. What kind of transformation of theology should be made to respond to the current economic and ecological catastrophe?
2. What sort of alternative civilization or culture of life should the Christian theology suggest?

<Abstract>

Many global people's movements have responded to neo-liberal economic globalization regime. What kind of response would or should the church make? What would be a unique response that the church would or should make?

First, what is my poor neighbour, theologically? We need to ask, not only who my poor neighbour is, but also what my poor neighbour is. We need to be theologically clear on the issue of poverty. How do we perceive poverty, theologically? We are not talking about what I might call "voluntary poverty" or honest poverty found in the dictionary that is encouraged by some religions like Buddhism and others.

Second, would humanitarian approach be enough in dealing with victims of systematic injustice? Would the confessional approach make a difference? Since Accra, I keep saying that there is a fundamental difference between a humanitarian approach and a confessional approach in theological dealing with the poor. If one takes a humanitarian approach my poor neighbour still remain as the other. What does this mean to us in the face of systematic injustice by which 80% of God's people on earth suffer because of global economic injustice and the whole eco-system of God's creation is groaning for salvation?

Third, what is our priority between church unity and global justice? One of the major concerns for those who were hesitant to go for confessing action in Accra was the worries of possible division of the churches. I still remember our debate between myself and a colleague and friend of mine from Europe on this issue. For those who reached the stage and readiness to confess they can go ahead while those who have not yet reached that stage may express their solidarity with those who confessed and may join the confession at a later stage.

Fourth, should the ecumenical witness to economic justice be pragmatic or prophetic? One of the major critiques on our analysis was that the churches' analysis on neo-liberal economic globalization was not scientific, practical and thorough enough. Of course, the churches' analysis can never be scientific enough. However, what should be the basis for the churches' witness to economic justice? Should it be practical and pragmatic or prophetic?

Fifth, whom do we serve; God or mammon? All the ecumenical documents pointed out many negative consequences of neo-liberal economic globalization, like the growing gap between the rich and the poor, ecological destruction, erosion of democracy, colonization of consciousness, etc. From a theological point of view, one of the most serious problems would be mammonism.

Key Words

Neo-liberal economic globalization, Christian faith, ecumenical movement, mammonism, neoliberal ideology, global justice, eco-justice, interfaith, mission.

Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth

Introduction

1. In response to the urgent call of the Southern African constituency which met in Kitwe in 1995 and in recognition of the increasing urgency of global economic injustice and ecological destruction, the 23rd General Council (Debrecen, Hungary, 1997) invited the member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into a process of “recognition, education, and confession (*processus confessionis*)”. The churches reflected on the text of Isaiah 58.6 “...break the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free,” as they heard the cries of brothers and sisters around the world and witnessed God’s gift of creation under threat.
2. Since then, nine member churches have committed themselves to a faith stance; some are in the process of covenanting; and others have studied the issues and come to a recognition of the depth of the crisis. Further, in partnership with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and regional ecumenical organizations, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has engaged in consultations in all regions of the world, from Seoul/Bangkok (1999) to Stony Point (2004). Additional consultations took place with churches from the South in Buenos Aires (2003) and with churches from South and North in London Colney (2004).
3. Gathered in Accra, Ghana, for the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, we visited the slave dungeons of Elmina and Cape Coast where millions of Africans were commodified, sold and subjected to the horrors of repression and death. The cries of “never again” are put to the lie by the ongoing realities of human trafficking and the oppression of the global economic system.
4. Today we come to take a decision of faith commitment.

Reading the Signs of the Times

5. We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Romans 8.22). We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation.
6. The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death.
7. We live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all. The annual income of the richest 1% is equal to that of the poorest 57%, and 24,000 people die each day from poverty and malnutrition. The debt of poor countries continues to increase despite paying back their original borrowing many times over. Resource-driven wars claim the lives of millions, while millions more die of preventable diseases. The HIV and AIDS global pandemic afflicts life in all parts of the world,

affecting the poorest where generic drugs are not available. The majority of those in poverty are women and children and the number of people living in absolute poverty on less than one US dollar per day continues to increase.

8. The policy of unlimited growth among industrialized countries and the drive for profit of transnational corporations have plundered the earth and severely damaged the environment. In 1989, one species disappeared each day, and by 2000 it was one every hour. Climate change, the depletion of fish stocks, deforestation, soil erosion, and threats to fresh water are among the devastating consequences. Communities are disrupted, livelihoods are lost, coastal regions and Pacific islands are threatened with inundation, and storms increase. High levels of radioactivity threaten health and ecology. Life forms and cultural knowledge are being patented for financial gain.
9. This crisis is directly related to the development of neoliberal economic globalization, which is based on the following beliefs:
 - unrestrained competition, consumerism, and the unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth is the best for the whole world;
 - the ownership of private property has no social obligation;
 - capital speculation, liberalization and deregulation of the market, privatization of public utilities and national resources, unrestricted access for foreign investments and imports, lower taxes, and the unrestricted movement of capital will achieve wealth for all;
 - social obligations, protection of the poor and the weak, trade unions, and relationships between people, are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation.
10. This is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and creation. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through the creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.
11. We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire. 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 own interests.
12. In classical liberal economics, the state exists to protect private property and contracts in the competitive market. Through the struggles of the labour movement, states began to regulate markets and provide for the welfare of people. Since the 1980s, through the transnationalization of capital, neoliberalism has set out to dismantle the welfare functions of the state. Under neoliberalism 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.
13. As markets have become global, so have the political and legal institutions which protect them. The government of the United States of America and its allies, together with international finance and trade institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization) use political, economic, or military alliances to protect and advance the interest of capital owners.

14. We see the dramatic convergence of the economic crisis with the integration of economic globalization and geopolitics backed by neoliberal ideology. This is a global system that defends and protects the interests of the powerful. It affects and captivates us all. Further, in biblical terms such a system of wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor is seen as unfaithful to God and responsible for preventable human suffering and is called Mammon. Jesus has told us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Lk 16.13).

Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction

15. Faith commitment may be expressed in various ways according to regional and theological traditions: as confession, as confessing together, as faith stance, as being faithful to the covenant of God. We choose confession, not meaning a classical doctrinal confession, because the World Alliance of Reformed Churches cannot make such a confession, but to show the necessity and urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time and the call of Debrecen. We invite member churches to receive and respond to our common witness.
16. Speaking from our Reformed tradition and having read the signs of the times, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and therefore **we confess** before God and one another.
17. **We believe** in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (Jn 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world.
18. **We believe** that God is sovereign over all creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24.1).
19. **Therefore, we reject** the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.
20. **We believe** that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Is 55.1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the "least of these" (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos2.18ff).
21. **Therefore we reject** the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system, or any other system, which claims there is no alternative.

22. **We believe** that any economy of the household of life, given to us by God's covenant to sustain life, is accountable to God. We believe the economy exists to serve the dignity and well being of people in community, within the bounds of the sustainability of creation. We believe that human beings are called to choose God over Mammon and that confessing our faith is an act of obedience.
23. **Therefore we reject** the unregulated accumulation of wealth and limitless growth that has already cost the lives of millions and destroyed much of God's creation.
24. **We believe** that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation, and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged, and the abused (Psalm 146.7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation.
25. **Therefore we reject** any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation, and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all. We reject any teaching which justifies those who support, or fail to resist, such an ideology in the name of the gospel.
26. **We believe** that God calls us to stand with those who are victims of injustice. We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God's way (Micah 6.8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, "so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5.24).
27. **Therefore we reject** any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the fault of the poor. We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations – gender, race, class, disability, or caste. We reject any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature.
28. **We believe** that God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (Jn 10.10). Jesus brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind (Lk 4.18); he supports and protects the downtrodden, the stranger, the orphans and the widows.
29. **Therefore we reject** any church practice or teaching which excludes the poor and care for creation, in its mission; giving comfort to those who come to "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn 10.10) rather than following the "Good Shepherd" who has come for life for all (Jn 10.11).
30. **We believe** that God calls men, women and children from every place together, rich and poor, to uphold the unity of the church and its mission, so that the reconciliation to which Christ calls can become visible.
31. **Therefore we reject** any attempt in the life of the church to separate justice and unity.
32. **We believe** that we are called in the Spirit to account for the hope that is within us through Jesus Christ, and believe that justice shall prevail and peace shall reign.
33. **We commit ourselves** to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.
34. **We humbly confess** this hope, knowing that we, too, stand under the judgement of God's justice.
 - We acknowledge the complicity and guilt of those who consciously or unconsciously benefit from the current neoliberal economic global system; we recognize that this includes both churches and members of our own Reformed family and therefore we call for confession of sin.

- We acknowledge that we have become captivated by the culture of consumerism, and the competitive greed and selfishness of the current economic system. This has all too often permeated our very spirituality.
 - We confess our sin in misusing creation and failing to play our role as stewards and companions of nature.
 - We confess our sin that our disunity within the Reformed family has impaired our ability to serve God's mission in fullness.
35. **We believe**, in obedience to Jesus Christ, that the church is called to confess, witness and act, even though the authorities and human law might forbid them, and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Acts 4.18ff). Jesus is Lord.
36. **We join in praise** to God, Creator, Redeemer, Spirit, who has "brought down the mighty from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands" (Lk 1.52f).

Covenanting for Justice

37. By confessing our faith together, we covenant in obedience to God's will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships. This binds us together to work for justice in the economy and the earth both in our common global context as well as our various regional and local settings.
38. On this common journey, some churches have already expressed their commitment in a confession of faith. We urge them to continue to translate this confession into concrete actions both regionally and locally. Other churches have already begun to engage in this process, including taking actions and we urge them to engage further, through education, confession and action. To those other churches, which are still in the process of recognition, we urge them on the basis of our mutual covenanting accountability, to deepen their education and move forward towards confession.
39. The General Council calls upon member churches, on the basis of this covenanting relationship, to undertake the difficult and prophetic task of interpreting this confession to their local congregations.
40. The General Council urges member churches to implement this confession by following up the Public Issues Committee's recommendations on economic justice and ecological issues_
41. The General Council commits the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to work together with other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and people's movements for a just economy and the integrity of creation and calls upon our member churches to do the same.
42. Now we proclaim with passion that we will commit ourselves, our time and our energy to changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants might live (Deuteronomy 30.19).