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Justice at Heart of Our Faith

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Today, our world is standing at a critical moment. We are facing two massive challenges that will shape the future of life on our planet. The first is the climate emergency. The second is the advent of artificial intelligence age.

These are not distant concerns. They are matters of life and death for the future of both the earth and human communities. As a Reformed Christians, we cannot be in silence. We are called to take a prophetic stand, and to act with urgency.

The climate crisis is no longer something we talk about in the future tense. It is already here. Tipping points have been crossed, crops are failing, and creation itself is groaning under the weight of our neglect.

At the same time, the future of humanity is being reshaped by artificial intelligence. This new reality is not only transforming our economies and societies. It is beginning to challenge what it even means to be human.

If you allow me, let me put my conclusion on the table right away: I believe this General Council must seriously consider declaring a *status confessionis* in response to the climate catastrophe, and a *processus confessionis* as we face the age of artificial intelligence.

We have done this before. In 1982, the Ottawa General Council declared a *status confessionis* on racial injustice. In 1997, in Debrecen, we launched a *processus confessionis* on economic injustice and ecological destruction. That journey led, in 2004, to the historic Accra Confession. These examples remind us: when the gospel itself is at stake, we do not remain silent. We confess.

That is why I want to speak with you today about why these two issues demand a confessional stance. Since much has already been said about the urgency of the climate crisis, I want to focus now on the challenge of artificial intelligence.

Advent of the AI Age and Singularity is at hand!

Less than ten years ago, at the 2016 Davos Forum, Klaus Schwab , the founder and president of WEF, tabled the issue of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, saying "It is not only changing the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of doing things, but also ‘who’ we are.”[1]

Since then, AI industry has completely reshaped how we work, communicate, live, and

[1]https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-12-12/fourth-industrial-revolution

even how we understand truth, media, politics, society and so on.

Back in 2005, Ray Kurzweil of Google predicted that the Technological Singularity would come by 2045. But nowadays some people think it could happen in just five years, or even earlier.

On the way to Singularity, there are five stages:

1. Chatbots - advisor level,
2. Reasoners - Ph.D. assistant level,
3. Agents - an Expert level,
4. Innovators - Work by itself level,
5. Organizations - Work without humans level.

Right now, it seems that today we are close to Agents stage.

On May 2025, Google DeepMind introduced AlphaEvolve, an AI that can improve its own algorithms without human intervention. Some people say that with the AlphaEvolve, we are already getting into Innovators' stage. By the end of 2025, AI might be used on a personal computer.

AI is evolving so fast that it is about to take over computers. Instead of digging through files, an AI-powered system, through Contextual Interface, could just give us what we need.

And with Multimodal AI, it will read video, images, and audio, beyond texts, almost like a human. This algorithm might be built into glasses and act as a real-time AI partner. It will guide you, checking surrounding, suggesting restaurants/café, alarming you of risks etc. Traveling in a foreign country? Reading a book in a language you don't know? It could instantly translate for you in real time.

Generative AI isn't not just fun anymore. Students, professors, and even clergy are genuinely grateful for how useful it is.

AI Utopia

There are basically two ways people react to this revolution: positive and critical/ concerned. The AI era is unstoppable, and those who do not adapt will get left behind. Future will be depend on AI literacy. Therefore, we have to embrace it. This is positive view.

Big tech companies say that AI will bring us to a Utopia. It will bring a revolutionary changes in all aspect of our future life from caring services to medical, legal, educational, cultural and even spiritual services.

Some people think that technology is going to change our very nature, even our biology.

They believe biological evolution has reached its peak. Like glasses, cars etc., we've always used tools to improve ourselves. Now technology can take that to a whole new level.

This is the idea of going from transhuman to posthuman, where people become "*homo roboticus*" by merging with machines, while machines become more like humans, turning into "*robo sapiens*." Homo sapiens would be enhanced to become a 'Super Human'—a *'Homo Deus'*—perhaps even overcoming death and reaching immortality.

AI Dystopia

But there is also a critical or concerned one. Many like Francis Fukuyama, Henry Kissinger, Yuval Harari, Stephen Hawking, even Elon Musk warn that the AI era could be disastrous and it would bring us to dystopia.[2]

The most serious warnings come from inside the AI industry itself. Having watched the rapid progress of ChatGPT, with which a de facto AI revolution starts, Google's top expert, Geoffrey Hinton[3], a Nobel prize winner for AI development, decided to leave Google to speak out about the risks, saying we shouldn't be heading toward AGI.[4]

When asked if the threat is real, Hinton said, "Yes, it is", saying humanity has "never faced anything like this before." Regarding the certainty of danger, he said, "I often say there's a 10 to 20 percent chance it will wipe us out."[5]

Hinton identifies two types of risks. The first is "the danger that comes from humans misusing AI." Harmful individuals or groups could use AI to cause massive destruction.[6]

Apart from mass unemployment, AI might be creating new societal threats like cyberattacks, manipulating public opinion, election interference, fake news, and

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[2] Francis Fukuyama calls transhumanism "the most dangerous idea in the world," Kissinger says AI could mean "the end of human history," and Harari worries that we could end up split between a tiny class of superhumans and a mass of useless people. Stephen Hawking said "It could spell the end of the human race. Elon Musk have once warned that AI could be catastrophic, with Musk even comparing it to "summoning the demon", imagining "an immortal dictator from which we can never escape.

[3] a Nobel prize winner for AI research in 2024

[4] His colleague at Google, Ilya Sutskever, also recognized the risks and left the company to start one focused on AI safety.

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giT0ytynSqg

[6] He stresses that such individuals become especially dangerous when their influence is combined with ideologies like neo-patriotism or fascism.

sophisticated scams. AI-powered fraud, like faking faces, voices, or entire scenarios. Between 2023 and 2024 this has jumped 1,200%.

AI is also changing warfare dramatically. Cyber war has already started from the Yugoslav wars in early 1990s. However, AI combat tools like drones are heavily involved in both the Ukraine war and Gaza war.

A shocking example is Israel's AI-driven combat program "*Habsora*"(הבשורה), meaning "the Gospel" which tracks and targets Hamas members. When the AI identifies Hamas members entering a building like apartment or hospital, it can direct strikes that building, killing innocent people.[7] That is why it claimed so many civilian lives. A media called "*Habsora* " a "mass assassination factory" in the battlefield.[8]

Real fear comes with Artificial Super Intelligence(ASI) - AI that is far smarter than humans and act on its own. Hinton warns that ASI could even decide to wipe humans out. Things could spiral out of control if chatbots develop their own language.

On top of that, AI could design new viruses. You don't need to be a top molecular biologist to create viruses. AI can analyze cellular structures and design proteins that threaten life and ecosystems.

There's a lot of secrecy around these risks. Steven Bartlett, a famous podcast host revealed a behind-the-scene story that a friend connected in Big Tech warned him that CEOs of major AI companies privately acknowledge that they're heading toward a dystopian future.[9] But they say differently in public. They are lying.

When a machine is just a tool, it only does what we tell it. But if our tools have AGI, they can act on their own without human commands, and the ASI, instead of obeying humans, could try to control and give orders to humans. AI experts all agree that this would cause serious problems.

Inequality deepened

The IMF has expressed serious concerns that generative AI could lead to massive labor disruptions and increased inequality.

Yuval Harari has warned that AI could split humanity into "a very few superhumans and

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[7] ttps://theowp.org/israels-habsora-ai-system-makes-war-less-human/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[8] https://www.972mag.com/mass-assassination-factory-israel-calculated-bombing-gaza/

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giT0ytynSqg

the useless masses."[10] The "useless class" will not merely be unemployed, it will be unemployable. This could lead to social and political divides, with wealth and power concentrated in the hands of the most powerful algorithms.

Since AI is developing in an already unequal world, it's likely to amplify existing divides. Think about something like AI glasses—those who can afford them could get massive advantages, while everyone else falls behind.

Rapid job losses will cause severe feelings of relative deprivation, erode social trust, fuel political and social instability, and spark a rise in hatred and deep loss.

Looking at the Gini coefficient, as inequality grows, social unrest tends to rise. If "AI illiteracy" or mass unemployment continues, it could trigger sharp spikes in hatred, polarization, and violence. Inequality is one of the fuels for far-right phenomenon to rise, which we experience seriously today.

Democracy – Digital Empire

Power in the AI era is concentrated in the hands of a few unelected super-elites, tech giants. These companies manipulate people for profit, pushing their own agendas. Take Elon Musk, for example. We have witnessed to how seriously he, as unelected person, undermine democracy.

Herbert Simon's concept of the Attention Economy[11] is applied in today's algorithm economy. Algorithms and engagement metrics - *likes*, *clicks*, *shares* - constantly pull on users' attention, influencing what they buy and how they behave.

Professor Shoshana Zuboff of Harvard University calls collected data behavioral surplus—all the data we leave behind online gets turned into "prediction products." Companies then use this data to nudge and manipulate our habits, shaping what we think, want, and buy. They use this insight to colonize users' consciousness.

A recent example is the globally popular game Pokémon Go, launched in 2016.[12] This is a clear case of algorithmic colonization of consciousness[13] and a prime example of the Attention Economy in action.

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[10] see his book "Homo Deus", and his article " Are we about to witness the most unequal societies in history?" May 24, 2017 Guardian.

[11] Herbert Simon suggested the concept of the Attention Economy in 1971.

[12] Using smartphone location-based and augmented reality (AR) technology, its algorithms direct users' attention to the real world in ways that link directly to consumption.

[13] This is exactly "colonization of consciousness" which in 1990s, the WCRC named as one of the features of neoliberal economic globalization.

Zuboff calls the power of algorithms the "Big Other," arguing it's a more serious threat than George Orwell's "Big Brother." She describes this system as Surveillance Capitalism, where huge Big Techs manipulate users' consciousness to seize control. This is why in its communique, the participants in the NEFEA consultation on the Fourth Industrial Revolution named them a Digital Empire.

What's striking is that we are manipulated to voluntarily offer our power to their altar. It works by leading users to unknowingly hand over massive power to Big Tech entities they never elected, bypassing our awareness completely. Zuboff calls this an "Epistemological Coup".[14]

Even though AGI and ASI, smarter than humans, are still in the future, we're already dealing with serious risks today. So how do we handle this?

To reduce potential dangers, discussions are ongoing, including developing ethical guidelines and regulations. Former Google CEO, Eric Schmidt suggests AI should always disclose that it's AI, if we can't tell the difference, democracy itself could be at risk. Harari says, "We need regulation before AI starts regulating us." We need a strict verification system for releasing AI technologies as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration(FDA) inspects drugs before they are released in the market.

Just like nuclear weapons were controlled through international agreements, AI should have international rules. Europe has it ahead of the U.S. While this is a positive step, however, European regulations don't cover all the risks. For instance, none of EU regulations apply to military uses of AI. Moreover, unlike nuclear issue, it will be more difficult to get international agreement since the AGI covers all areas.

Moreover, we are not sure whether the promises could be kept. "If we don't build it, someone else will" mentality would make voluntary binding agreements impossible. The situation could get worse if unpredictable political leaders like Trump disregard international agreements.

Additionally, developing larger, more powerful AI models has a serious environmental impact. The Large Models consume enormous amounts of electricity and water. For US AI revolution, you need 92 Gigawatts. For reference, onr nuclear power plan produces one Gigawat. This massive energy use means AI's growth may fundamentally clash with efforts for environmental sustainability. Big risks are definitely at hand.

Theological Reflection

This raises a question about the role of the Church and theology. Humans is about to be changed. This challenges the Church to reflect on humanity's identity in this new

[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIXhnWUmMvw

technological era seriously.

As a new century was approaching at the threshold of the 21st century, people were divided on new century and new millenium: some were optimistic, and others were cautious. Unfortunately, the critical warnings seem accurate today, given climate change, pandemics, wars, and the rise of far-right extremism.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, I often reflected on the biblical story of 'the Tree in the Garden' in Genesis 3. The humans was tempted by the serpent, who promises that eating the fruit will make them like God, "eyes opened, gaining wisdom." It seems good, desirable, and empowering, but the result is the opposite: fractured relationships with God, each other, and nature.

The current tech age mirrors that temptation. AI and human augmentation promise godlike powers, even immortality, but the question is: Will it truly lead us to Utopia? We have heard alarming warnings from the insiders.

The fundamental outcome of the Genesis' Tree story was the destruction of relations; between Creator and creation, among humans themselves, and between humanity and the natural world.

The key lesson? Just like the forbidden fruit didn't lead to true empowerment but to a broken relationships, unreflective pursuit of technological "godlike" power risks fracturing our human unity, our moral grounding, and our relationship with the natural world, echoing the lessons of Babel and the dangers of overreaching ambition.

While technology has brought us many benefits and we should be open to that, it's really important to listen carefully to the warnings of AI experts themselves.

In 2017, when I became president of Gyeongan Graduate University in Andong - a city known as Korea's "Spiritual and Cultural Capital" - I started to reflect on the spiritual and cultural impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, in response to Klaus Schwab's remark made at Davos 2016. With the support from Andong city, I initiated a five-year research project, "Humanity and Spirituality in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

From 2017 to 2021, we reflected on "Humanity" first, and then "Mind and Heart of Humans, and then "Formation", and then, Analysis on social, cultural, political, and economic impacts, and finally the research was culminated in reflection on "Cosmic Spirituality".

Human cognition extends beyond mere intelligence. On top of intelligence, humans possess intellect, mind and heart, and spirituality. These dimensions do not function in isolation; rather, they interact dynamically with the intelligence, intellect, heart, and spirituality of others. Moreover, this interaction is not confined to human relationships

alone—it reaches outward to encompass nature, the cosmos, and the divine, shaping both thought and action in profound ways. Because of this spiritual dimension, the Church has a unique role in the AI era.

Role of the Church

What role the Church can play? In my view, the Church faces a threefold challenge. First, Subjective Identity, Second, Humanity Literacy and Third, Nurturance.

Subjective Identity : In engaging with AI, I often think about humans and horses relationship in speed. If you try to race a horse, you'll always lose, but if you ride the horse properly, you can use its strength to your advantage. Engaging AI in our life is similar. We need to hold the reins, set the goals, and use it as a tool. If we let AI dominate, we risk losing our own identity. We need to keep Subjective Identity.

This time, I tried to see how ChatGPT work. Honestly I regard it as a useful encyclopedia, a comprehensive library, or a brilliant assistant tool that can support human work effectively. Yet, humans remain the creative agents. Intelligence alone isn't enough—we need intellect, heart, wisdom and spirituality to stay in control.

Humanity Literacy: We need to develop AI literacy, but at the same time, Ethical Literacy, Social Literacy and Mind/Heart Literacy and Cosmic Spiritual Literacy must be developed.

Nurturance : Klaus Schwab asks what it really means to be human in an age of AGI. For me, there's a cautionary note: even as machines get smarter, humans have not got smarter. After all, one of the ways for proper preparation the AI age would to shape humanity to be much smarter than even the smartest technology. This is a unique role the Church can play.

Speaking at the Ai4 Conference in Las Vegas in August 2025, Hinton suggested 'embedding "maternal instincts" into AI systems so that it could help guide their behavior toward protecting and caring for humans[15], for mothers generally don't harm and usually protect their children.'[16] Instead, however, we must rekindle our genuine human instincts of protecting and caring for one another grounded in love, compassion, solidarity, and the pursuit of life, justice, and peace. These values, largely diminished in modern times, face even greater risk of being further eroded in the age of AI

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[15] https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/technology/tech-news/godfather-of-ai-geoffrey-hinton-warns-ai-could-wipe-out-humanity-and-the-only-way-for-survival-is/articleshow/123317898.cms?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[16] https://www.techradar.com/ai-platforms-assistants/godfather-of-ai-says-chatbots-need-maternal-instincts-but-what-they-really-need-is-to-understand-humanity?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Practically, the Church and theological institutions need to actively shape how we interact with AI. That could include fostering ethical literacy, critical thinking, and spiritual formation. Churches can be spaces for dialogue about AI's moral, social, and ecological impacts, showing how technology can serve humans rather than control them. Theological education should include AI, digital culture, and ethics, emphasizing wisdom, discernment, and relationality.

By grounding humanity in intellect, mind and heart, and cosmic spirituality, the Church can help ensure that even in an era dominated by artificial intelligence, humans retain their agency, moral compass, and capacity to flourish in communion with each other, creation, and God.

Ecumenical Response - Suggestion

I dare to suggest that this General Council seriously consider declaring a *status confessionis* in response to the climate catastrophe, and a *processus confessionis* as we face the age of artificial intelligence.