

CONFSSIONAL STATEMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental catastrophes are no longer a future threat but a present reality, a reality caused by us, human beings. This is one of the reasons why various church bodies and/or their leaders have come up with statements defining the role of Christians in environmental care.

Below you will find short excerpts from some of these statements. They are being sent to you for reflection as we prepare for the Round Table which has the theme: "The Climate Crisis: the Role of Christians in Environmental Care." It will take place on the 26th of May.

1. GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Excerpts from speeches of The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Environmental Symposium, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Santa Barbara, California, 8/11/1997

People of all faith traditions praise the Divine, for they seek to understand their relationship to the cosmos. The entire universe participates in a celebration of life, which St. Maximos the Confessor described as a "cosmic liturgy." As human beings, created "in the image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1:26), we are called to recognize this interdependence between our environment and ourselves. In the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, as priests standing before the altar of the world, we offer the creation back to the creator in relationship to Him and to each other. Indeed, in our liturgical life, we realize by anticipation, the final state of the cosmos in the Kingdom of Heaven. ...There is also an ascetic element in our responsibility toward God's creation. This asceticism requires from us a voluntary restraint, in order for us to live in harmony with our environment

By reducing our consumption ... we come to ensure that resources are also left for others in the world.... We are called to work in humble harmony with creation and not in arrogant supremacy against it. Asceticism provides an example whereby we may live simply. ... Asceticism is not a flight from society and the world, but a communal attitude of mind and way of life that leads to the respectful use, and not the abuse of material goods.... Excessive consumption leaves us emptied, out-of-touch with our deepest self. Asceticism is a corrective practice, a vision of repentance.

We are of the deeply held belief, that many human beings have come to behave as materialistic tyrants. Those that tyrannize the earth are themselves, sadly, tyrannized. We have been called by God, to "be fruitful, increase and have dominion in the earth" (Gen 1:28)..... Dominion is not domination, ... We must be spokespeople for an ecological ethic that reminds the world that it is not ours to use for our own convenience. It is God's gift of love to us. See <https://acton.org/public-policy/environmental-stewardship/theology-e/orthodox-churches-statement-environment> for the complete speech.

For further reading on the Orthodox view of on the environment, see *The Orthodox Church and the Environmental Movement* by Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-orthodox-church-and-the-environmental-movement> .

2. THE ACCRA CONFESSION: WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The Accra Confession was adopted by the delegates of the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Accra, Ghana (2004), a predecessor body of the WCRC.

(<http://wcrch.ch/accra>)

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.

10. This crisis is directly related to the development of neoliberal economic globalization, which is based [among others] on the following beliefs: • unrestrained competition, consumerism and ... unlimited economic growth • the ownership of private property has no social obligation * relationships between people are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation.

25. 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).

Why does the church need the Accra Confession? (Taken from

http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/1777/ACCRA-Confession.pdf?1418425285)

1. ***Justice is a matter of faith.*** The Accra Confession states that matters of economic and environmental justice are not only social, political, and moral issues: they are integral to faith in Jesus Christ and affect the integrity of the church. Being faithful to God's covenant requires that individual Christians and the churches take a stand against current economic and environmental injustices.

2. ***The unity of the church is critical.*** Unity is concerned with togetherness, however divisive the issues confronting the confessing body may be. While the complex realities of globalization have not led to a full consensus, the global Reformed family addresses the problematic nature of today's global economy in the Accra Confession.

3. ***The church stands in solidarity with persons who are suffering and struggling.*** Following the justice traditions of the biblical prophets and of Jesus in the Gospel narratives, the Accra Confession views the current world (dis)order by "looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people." It calls the churches and society to hear the cries of the people who suffer and the woundedness of creation itself.

3. POPE FRANCIS. LAUDATO SI (A FEW EXCERPTS)

48. The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.

161. Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes...

217. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they

all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.

The full text of *Laudato si* can be accessed at [papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf](#)