

28/09/2019

## **The Ecumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Uppsala signed joint Op-Ed on Climate Justice**



Sweden is visited by one of the leading lights of the Christian world: the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, head of the second-largest Church community in the world: the Eastern Orthodox Church. His constant work for the wellbeing of the creation, the environment and the climate has resulted in him being known as the Green Patriarch. About ten years ago, he was among Time Magazine's list of the world's 100 most influential people. He has always insisted that ecological issues are basically also existential and spiritual issues, which is an insight that the western world has been slow to take on board.

Patriarch Bartholomew is visiting the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Sweden and all Scandinavia. He will also speak at the Church of Sweden's General Synod. He co-signed together with Archbishop Antje Jackelén a joint "opposite the editorial page" on Climate Justice published in the famous newspaper [Dagens Nyheter](#) on 24

September 2019:

*The church is a global network. It has a presence around the world that is almost unsurpassed by any other organisation or movement. The church has contact with other religions at all levels, and cooperates with a wide range of humanitarian organisations. It is in dialogue with world leaders, not least via the UN system. The church has a presence in many places around the world that are not readily accessible. During crises and disasters, the church is often there before they happen, while they are happening and long after the immediate relief work has been phased out. This is an obligation in an era in which the world must learn to live with the climate crisis and its consequences.*

*We know that those people who have contributed least to global warming are often those most severely affected by climate change. We know that social challenges such as poverty, migration and the global health situation are directly linked to environmental and climate issues. There is a need for climate justice. The issue is how we humans interact with the natural environment, of which we are a part. We therefore have to take action based on what feels most meaningful in our lives. We must therefore talk about the sacrifices that we can make together, so that our children and the children of others can have a future.*

*The climate crisis is exacerbated by lifestyles that make greed seem like a virtue. Resolving it will be difficult for as long as people and nature are viewed only from the perspective of economics and technology. Only when we actually distinguish between our needs and our desires can we achieve fair and just climate goals. When will we learn to say, "Enough is enough!"?*

*What we think about and feel about nature really matters. Is it a mechanism that simply keeps on rolling? An unlimited source of raw materials? Our recreation area? Our enemy? A place of endless harmony and balance? A system involving a constant battle for survival? How we relate to nature as creation reveals how we relate to the very basis of existence – which we call God.*

*The churches in the east and the west have developed somewhat differing points of focus with regard to humankind and creation. Put in simple terms, Western tradition has developed a deep trust in rationality and science. This has contributed to a demystifying of nature and humankind's role in creation. Its secrets were dissolved in measurability. Humans came to understand themselves to be rulers of nature, rather than stewards who are responsible for and have to care for something that they do not actually own. The emphasis was put on humankind's function. Theologians in the east have talked more about nature as a mystery that cannot be fully described, not even with the most excellent measuring instruments available in the world of science. Nature meets us and shows itself to us, but never fully. As humans, we are part of this mystery. Each human being is itself a*

*miniature cosmos, a microcosm. Here, the relationships are at the forefront. The western view has a tendency to see too little concreteness, and something romantic, in this approach. But the fact is that a full understanding of our role as human beings requires both perspectives: function and relationship, doing and being.*

*It is a characteristic of being human that we can have an in-depth understanding of ourselves based on the relationships in which we are involved: to ourselves, to each other, to the entire creation and to the ground of being itself. We can also gain a deep understanding of our mission as human beings, our function: why are we actually here?*

*As we face the climate crisis, we need to focus on rational action inspired by the best science available, while also needing to have an existential understanding of how and why we feel and act as we do. Destroying biodiversity, wrecking forests and wetlands, poisoning water, soil and air – all these are violations of our mission as human beings. Theology calls it a sin. This sin arises from our inability to see the earth as our home, a sacrament of community. Our natural environment unites all the people on earth with every living thing, in a way that transcends any differences in faiths and convictions that may exist between us humans. Experiencing the beauty of nature means a lot to us. But we are also created for another type of beauty: that people have quality of life, live in harmony with nature, meet in peace and help each other.*

*If we want to have an ecologically, socially, economically and spiritually sustainable approach to the world – which we must have – individual or commercial solutions will never be sufficient. This is why spiritual maturity is now required. Such maturity means being able to see the difference between what I want and what the world needs. It can understand that the climate crisis is rooted in human greed and selfishness. It can elevate us above fear, greed and fundamentally unhealthy ties.*

*If we want technological development, fair and just economic systems, ecological balance and social cohesion to work together to create a sustainable future on our earth, we also need a conversion, a new state of mind. A renewal of our humanity (in the dual sense of the word). It is not sufficient for us to only address the symptoms if we really want healing and wholeness.*

*Like Pope Francis, we are of the opinion that we are in urgent need of a humanism that is able to bring together different areas of knowledge, including economics, to form a more integrated and integrating vision. Science, politics, business, culture and religion – everything that is an expression of humankind's dignity – need to work together to put our earthly home on a more stable footing. Real stature among leaders and rulers of various kinds becomes apparent when we in difficult times can maintain high moral principles and focus on the long-term common*

*good. In these days, the bishops of the Church of Sweden will be issuing a bishops' letter about the climate that highlights these issues in more detail.*

*The climate deadline is coming ever closer. Indecision and negligence are the language of death. We must choose life. Give the earth the opportunity to heal, so that it can continue to provide for us and so that people can live in a world characterised by fairness, justice and freedom.*

*Antje Jackelén, Archbishop of the Church of Sweden*

*Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, and Ecumenical Patriarch*

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- Source: [ecupatria.org](https://ecupatria.org)