

**Stewards of Creation: A Hope-Filled Ecology**

**The Canterbury Statement**

**Agreed by the International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue**

**2020**

## **Preface by the Co-Chairs**

### **Introduction**

#### **Psalm 24 ‘The Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.’**

1. Anglicans and Orthodox proclaim that creation is a divine gift that expresses God’s love. We proclaim the giftedness of creation in an uncertain and precarious time, as the ecological and environmental crisis deepens, threatening humanity and all living things upon the earth.
2. We note that human beings have achieved unparalleled advances in science, technology, and medicine over the past two centuries. While many of the world’s population continue to live in extreme poverty, these advances have resulted in significant improvements in human well-being: lower infant mortality; increased life expectancy; lower incidence of disease; increased levels of education. The result has been a rapid growth in population and, for many, an increased standard of living, yet with an insatiable desire for more. This is at the cost of a dramatic increase in the use of natural resources and a detrimental impact on the earth’s ecosystems. Human beings have made the gift of creation into a resource to exploit, rather than an impetus for worship and thanksgiving. For Anglicans and Orthodox, the present crisis is a theological, spiritual, and ethical one. Destructive beliefs, actions, and lifestyles threaten life on earth and the integrity of creation.
3. We ask ourselves, what then should be humankind’s response? How do human beings renew their wonder and awe at the God-given nature of creation as pure gift? Anglicans

and Orthodox recognize that as fellow workers with God (Gen 2.4–7) we have a duty, vocation, and capacity for conscious cooperation with God. When we view creation as an object to be exploited and not as a divine gift to be cherished and honoured we sin and need to repent. As we said in *The Church of the Triune God*, ‘the glory of God’s own life of giving and sharing is manifest in and to the creation’.<sup>1</sup> God requires our ethical response to this gift to be one that seeks ‘to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God’ (Mic 6.8). Holiness of life includes promoting and protecting the dignity of all life, caring for the created order, and using our capacity for freedom responsibly. As Anglicans and Orthodox have already said to each other:

We are called to heal, restore, and reconcile that which is fallen through our disobedience. We may be called stewards of creation, and this rightly emphasizes that the creation is not our private property but belongs to God (Ps 24.1). At the same time, this stewardship is not to be interpreted as implying that the created order is merely an asset to be exploited, to be treated as an *it* rather than a *thou*. Human beings have, therefore, a responsibility to care for the whole created order and to foster ecological justice.<sup>2</sup>

4. From our common tradition, and from our unique perspectives, the International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue seeks to address the spiritual and ethical crisis facing the environment with insights from cosmology and,

---

<sup>1</sup> Anglican–Orthodox Dialogue, *The Church of the Triune God*, The Cyprus Statement (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2006), §II.44.

<sup>2</sup> International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*, The Buffalo Agreed Statement (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 2015), §16.

more especially, from theological anthropology. Here we build upon *In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*, where we said,

Orthodox and Anglicans, relying on Scripture and the common Christian tradition, understand the fundamental determining reality of the human person to be our relationship with the triune God. Creation, including humankind, is a gift of God, expressing his love and revealing the divine intention. In creation, God brings into existence human beings with the freedom to love both God and their fellow creatures. To be human is to know, love, and delight in God and to share in God's life as far as created beings may.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §1.

## Chapter 1: 'And it was good'

5. The proper response of humanity to creation and the created order is celebration, in praise, thanksgiving, and blessing.<sup>4</sup> This was a theme explored by the seventeenth-century Anglican divine Lancelot Andrewes in his *Preces privatae* or *Private Prayers*, where he drew a thanksgiving for nature into his reflections about each day of creation,

'Blessed are you, Lord,  
who by drawing the water into the sea,  
caused dry land to appear  
and let the earth produce growth of plants  
and fruit bearing trees.

From the abyss came

the depths

the sea

lakes, rivers, springs

as in a bottle.

From that which was without form came

earth, continents, islands,

mountains, hills, valleys,

farmland, meadowland, woods.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §16.

From the void came  
green things,  
corn for bread, grass,  
herbs and flowers;  
for food,  
pleasure,  
healing,  
trees  
yielding fruit  
fruits, wine,  
oil,  
spices  
for wood;  
things under the earth, stones,  
metals  
and minerals,  
coal,  
blood and fire and a turmoil of smoke.

...Blessed are you who brought forth from the waters  
moving creatures with living souls,

whales,  
and birds that fly.’<sup>5</sup>

The refrain in the Genesis narrative, ‘And God saw that it was good ... and it was so’ (Gen 1.9-11), may be thought of as an ‘antiphon’ of worship. Hence, we are summoned together with all creatures to begin our response to the Creator by blessing the one who has blessed us all. These words from the book Genesis also offer us a practical approach to our relationship towards creation. The antiphon of this liturgy of life is no different for the creation of the deep space—the light, the stars, the wider universe—than for the ‘living creatures’. It includes the creation of human beings, even with the differentiation of being according to the ‘image’ (*tselem, eikon*) and likeness, and the task of sharing in God’s unique dominion.

6. The triune God created from nothing the heavens and the earth, all that is. The Father created by his Word, in the Spirit. Creation culminates in God’s rest (Gen 2.2ff.). Here is the first practical consequence of the love of the triune God for creation: to rest and contemplate the goodness of God’s whole creation.<sup>6</sup>
7. On the connection between divine revelation and the created order, we have said in our agreed statement which refers to divine energies (*logoi*) of the Logos:

The created order may be understood as imbued with God’s dynamic presence in the form of the divine *logoi*: in the words of St Maximus the Confessor, ‘all created

---

<sup>5</sup> Lancelot Andrewes, *The Private Prayers*, SPCK, London 2002, pp51, 52, 69

<sup>6</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §3.

things are defined, in their essence and in their way of developing, by their own *logoi*. The *logoi* express the creative will of God, the divine intention in relation to each created being. All the divine *logoi* have their source in the one Logos of God and find their true end in him. In this way, the created order is to be understood as logical, dynamically structured, open, meaningful, and alive ... The human mind, free yet fallen, can be attuned to the world around us in a fruitful way, yet it can also be used sinfully for destruction. As co-workers with God we participate in the ongoing, dynamic process of divine revelation and creation.<sup>7</sup>

8. Today human beings face many urgent and perplexing questions about the environment, sustainability, and responsibility for the world around them. In considering such questions some Anglican and Orthodox theologians have explored ideas of the 'sacramental universe' and the 'world as sacrament'.<sup>8</sup> The Scriptures affirm that 'the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it' (Ps 24.1). Creation therefore is truly sacramental because 'the whole earth is full of his [God's] glory' (Isa 6.3). The environment is one aspect of God's glorious and beloved creation.
9. *In the Image and Likeness of God* referred to Romans 1.19–20, 'For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.' However, what should have been plain to human beings has not been recognized because, of their alienation from God. Further, Romans anticipates that 'creation itself will be set free from its bondage to

---

<sup>7</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §18.

<sup>8</sup> William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (The Gifford Lectures) (London: Macmillan & Co., 1956); and John Chryssavgis, *Creation as Sacrament* (London: T&T Clark, 2019).

decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Rom 8.21). This happens through Christ in whom God offers forgiveness and the renewal of all creation (Jn 3.16). In Christ, 'God gives himself to be known in creation' and 'the glory of God's own life of giving and sharing is manifest in and to the creation'.<sup>9</sup> *The Dublin Agreed Statement* said, 'God bears witness to himself by his revelation in creation (Rom 1.19–20; Acts 14.17)' as well as 'through the patriarchs and prophets'.<sup>10</sup> God's revelation is fulfilled in and through his Son Jesus Christ. *The Moscow Agreed Statement* affirmed that '[The Scriptures] bear authoritative witness to God's revelation of himself in creation.'<sup>11</sup>

10. Recognizing that the created order raises puzzling questions for many, Anglicans and Orthodox affirm that we can speak of the 'sacramental universe' (a term used by Archbishop William Temple and by Fr Alexander Schmemmann, Metropolitan John of Pergamon) and contend that in nature we find God. In *In the Image and Likeness of God* we affirmed our belief that 'creation continues to reveal the divine intention, and through Christ God offers forgiveness and the renewal of all creation (Rom 1.20; 8.18–21)'.<sup>12</sup> This reflects earlier statements in *The Church of the Triune God* where we said that

---

<sup>9</sup> *The Church of the Triune God*, §I.30, 44.

<sup>10</sup> International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984* (London: SPCK, 1984), §31, [www.anglicancommunion.org/media/103812/the\\_dublin\\_statement.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/103812/the_dublin_statement.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> *The Moscow Agreed Statement 1976*, §4, [www.anglicancommunion.org/media/103815/the\\_moscow\\_statement.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/103815/the_moscow_statement.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 8.

‘God gives himself to be known in creation’,<sup>13</sup> and ‘the glory of God’s own life of giving and sharing is manifest in and to the creation’<sup>14</sup>, in the *Dublin Agreed Statement*, ‘God bears witness to himself by his revelation in creation (Rom 1.19–20; Acts 14.17), through the patriarchs and prophets and finally through his Son Jesus Christ’,<sup>15</sup> and in the *Moscow Agreed Statement*, ‘[The Scriptures] bear authoritative witness to God’s revelation of himself in creation.’<sup>16</sup> Each of these statements reflects the idea of creation as divine self-expression so prevalent in the writing of the seventeenth-century Anglican theologian Thomas Traherne: ‘Of hills and mountains, rain and hail, and snows, clouds, meteors etc. how apparently the Wisdom, and Goodness, and Power of God do shine in these’ and in the natural elements of the weather ‘God is in all these visibly to be Seen and reverently to be Adored.’<sup>17</sup>

11. ‘Creation is a divine work of art, a reflection of the glory of God’,<sup>18</sup> and therefore, Anglicans and Orthodox affirm together that we must recover reverence for the earth and its resources, treating it no longer as a commodity to be exploited, but as the

---

<sup>13</sup> *The Church of the Triune God*, §I.30.

<sup>14</sup> *The Church of the Triune God*, §II.44.

<sup>15</sup> *The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984*, §31,

<sup>16</sup> *The Moscow Agreed Statement 1976*, §II.4.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Traherne, *The Kingdom of God*, chapter 27, in *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, ed. Jan Ross, i (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 400 and 404.

<sup>18</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §3.

repository of divine gift on which we depend. As St Athanasius said at the very outset of

*On the Incarnation*:

We will begin, then, with the creation of the world and with God as its Maker, for the first fact that you must grasp is this: the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word Who made it in the beginning. There is no inconsistency between creation and salvation; for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it in the first place.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> St Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 1.1 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Press, 1982), p. 26.

## Chapter 2: From Dominion to Stewardship

12. The biblical narrative reveals that God has committed the stewardship of creation to humankind (Gen 1.28–29) to keep and care for it (Gen 2.15), just as God keeps and cares for us (Ps 121.7–8). We acknowledge, however, that at times human beings, including Christians, have failed to exercise dominion in the way God wills (Gen 1.26) and consequently have been care-less (Jer 2.7) rather than realizing that we are invited to act in synergy with God (cf. the naming of living creatures, Gen 2.19) in the continuing care of creation. As we are well aware, ‘Whole ecological systems have been destroyed through human agency, and climate change on a global scale now appears all but irreversible.’<sup>20</sup> Within this context of crisis, Anglicans and Orthodox continue to say together:

In the Genesis account, the creation of humankind according to the image and likeness involves ‘dominion’ (Gen 1.28). However, this dominion is not to be understood as arbitrary and tyrannical domination. It is precisely a dominion according to the image of God himself, who is loving and compassionate. Thus the dominion with which we humans are entrusted signifies humility in self-giving service.<sup>21</sup>

13. We lament that human beings have exploited the world’s resources, that its gifts are unequally distributed, and that the presence of hunger and food insecurity in large parts of the world violates the standards of Christian belief and behaviour. Human exploitation of the created order carries even larger implications. It requires that all of us

---

<sup>20</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §16.

<sup>21</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §16.

should acknowledge our complicity in the harming of creation, and demands of us both our urgent attention and our effective action.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the Flood narrative, God's renewed commandment is to be fruitful and multiply, rather than having 'dominion'. From this, a diaconal responsibility of service towards creation may be derived (Gen 9.1–2).

14. The Scriptures remind us that we have a communal responsibility (Heb 10.24) to safeguard creation for future generations (Gen 2.15), as those who serve (Lk 22.26) and have special care for the poor (Deut 15.7). The relentless exploitation of the natural resources of the earth, together with climate change, affects disproportionately the poorest affected by climate change, contributing to hunger, disease, salination, forced migration, and war. As we have said to each other:

Protecting the dignity of all life, caring for the created order, and aspiring to holiness are essential manifestations of the true response of humankind to God's calling. Human capacity for freedom implies responsibility. We are called to view the created order as our fragile 'other', a subject rather than an object, in need of protection and creative and imaginative nurture. Approaching creation in love, as a gift to ourselves and others, both individuals and societies are challenged to actions of generous self-giving, frugality, and self-restraint.

As we come to understand our being as gift, and all creation as sustained by God, we also recognize our intrinsic limitations and fragility. This awareness calls us to forge stronger relationships with God and with one another. It is our task as human beings to ensure that the blessings of creation are distributed with justice

---

<sup>22</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §16.

among the nations. The struggle against poverty is both a material and a spiritual imperative.<sup>23</sup>

**15.** The narrative of sin and the Fall (Gen 3) portrays humanity's wilful disobedience and failure to be true to our vocation and our responsibility. Human weakness, negligence, and corruption consequently damage the rest of creation as well as ourselves (Rom 8.20-21; cf. Gen 3.18). The Fall is ultimately the cause of the environmental crisis. Yet we know that 'creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Rom 8.21) and that it has never ceased to be affirmed that 'heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it' (Deut 10.14). Care for the environment is Gospel work within a world that is God's ordered creation. Consequently, in our agreed statement, as people of hope, we proposed that 'As we come to understand our being as a gift, and all creation as sustained by God, we also recognize our intrinsic limitations and fragility.' We now reaffirm together that 'we are fallen yet not forlorn' and that 'To be human is to work with hope and self-criticism for truth and justice.'<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §9.

<sup>24</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §14.

### Chapter 3: *From Stewardship to Priesthood*

16. It is Christ in whom the fullness of godhead was pleased to dwell, whose kingdom and dominion are the fulfilment of God's will for humankind. It is Christ in whom all creation is held together and has been reconciled (Col 1.15–20), is lovingly redeemed, and is being and will be restored (Rom 8.18–25; cf. Jn 3.16), when everyone and everything will be made new (2 Cor 5.17, Rev 21.5). It is through Christ that 'God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross' (Col 1.20). As Jesus said, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14.9). As we said in our agreed statement,

The full potential of the human person is revealed in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. In Christ we are brought face to face with the Father (Jn 14.9). In Christ, we are also enabled to face ourselves and one another as we truly are. God has become human not only that we may share in the divine life, but also that we may become fully human.<sup>25</sup>

17. We affirmed also that through the life of Christ, and the sacramental life, 'all humanity, together with the whole of creation, is called to participate in God's saving action'.<sup>26</sup> Anglicans and Orthodox proclaim this priestly vocation liturgically. During the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, at the preparation of the Gifts, prayers similar to the following often appear in many Anglican rites:

---

<sup>25</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §2.

<sup>26</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §2.

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all Creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to set before you, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will be for us the bread of life. *Blessed be God for ever.*

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all Creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to set before you, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will be for us the cup of salvation. *Blessed be God for ever.*

This sense of the sacredness and giftedness of creation permeates the Orthodox liturgy. At the 'Great Blessing of the Waters' on the Feast of the Theophany, the priest prays:

Great art thou, O Lord, and marvellous are thy works, and speech sufficeth not to sing the praises of thy wonders (*thrice*).

For thou, by thy will, from nothingness hast brought all things into being; by thy majesty thou dost uphold all creation, and by thy providence thou dost direct the world. When thou hast framed the universe out of four elements, thou didst crown the circle of the year with four seasons. All reason-endowed powers tremble before thee. The Sun singeth thy praises, and the Moon glorifieth thee: the Stars, also, stand before thy presence. The Light obeyeth thee. The deeps shudder with awe before thee; the water-springs do thy bidding. Thou hast spread out the heavens like a curtain. Thou hast established the earth upon the waters. With sand, thou hast walled in the sea. Thou hast shed abroad the air for breathing...<sup>27</sup>

**18.** As we have said previously to each other in the *Dublin Agreed Statement*: 'Through the liturgical life of the Church creation comes to share in [the] saving reality',<sup>28</sup> and we see specifically, as agreed in *The Church of the Triune God*, 'In the eucharistic prayer, the

---

<sup>27</sup> Isabel Florence Hapgood, trans., *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church* (fifth edn, Englewood, NJ: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, 1975), p. 194.

<sup>28</sup> *The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984*, §53.

offering of praise and thanksgiving for the mighty deeds of God, culminating in the sacrifice of the paschal mystery, is offered for all creation.<sup>29</sup> We said in *In the Image and Likeness of God* that humans are ‘priests of the creation’, a demanding responsibility for all who take part in the eucharistic life, and we have previously said to each other that ‘It is the essence of priesthood to offer, and so we fulfil our true vocation as persons created according to the divine image when, exercising our royal priesthood (1 Pet 2.9), we offer the creation back to the Creator in joyful thanksgiving.’<sup>30</sup>

#### **Chapter 4: *Creation and Ecology in the Patristic Age and Church History***

19. Theologians of the early Church preserved the biblical understanding against the influence of a Gnosticism that opposed a good and pure uncreated spiritual realm to what it deemed to be an evil and impure material created order. Moreover, as is argued in a representative way by many, especially St Maximus the Confessor,<sup>31</sup> the disorder which is observed in creation, with all that it entails—pain, suffering, loss and waste—is not due to an intrinsic characteristic of creation itself but, eminently, to human sin, introduced by disobedience to the divine intention of the Creator. All these early theologians affirm God as Creator, all his creation as intimately linked to him, and his human creation as charged with the mission of revealing and restoring that relationship.

---

<sup>29</sup> *The Church of the Triune God*, §VI.19.

<sup>30</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §16.

<sup>31</sup> See *St Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life, The Four Centuries on Charity*, trans. P. Sherwood, ed. J. Quasten and J. Plumpe, Ancient Christian Writers 21 (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1955).

20. The Fathers were deeply concerned with greed, regarding it as a grave spiritual sickness, though they considered this to be an individual concern rather than taking the institutionalized attitudes that prevail in modern society. They were also concerned about how creation could be made into a god to be worshipped, with Symeon the New Theologian seeing this as the ultimate pollution of the earth because the Creator is excluded.

21. The theologians of the early Church saw nature as a mirror of the Creator and a convincing witness to the existence of the One who is in 'sheer silence' (1 Kings 19.12). St Paul said, 'Ever since the creation of the world his [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made' (Rom 1.20). In St Maximus and others, creation is capable of communion with God because the world is permeated by the divine energies (*logoi*) of the Logos, who sustains the created order by the Spirit's irradiation of the life-giving divine energies. Therefore, creation should be preserved and protected by humankind working in cooperation with God the Creator. As *In the Image and Likeness of God* has said:

Jesus Christ calls us to heal and restore creation as a whole, working together with God (2 Cor 6.1). When Jesus prayed that we might be taken up into the unity that exists between himself and the Father (Jn 17.21–23), this should be understood as implying the inclusion of the whole of creation. Hope for creation is to be regarded in cosmic terms: 'creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Rom 8.21).<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §9.

22. St Gregory of Nyssa understood that each human being is a microcosm, a 'small world', a unity of the spiritual and material realms.<sup>33</sup> The holy saints experienced moments in which peace was regained with God, and humankind and nature were also at peace. In such moments, paradise and earth are united and the created world is returned to its Creator through human beings being justified by the grace of God.<sup>34</sup> As the Creator is tender and loving towards his creation, so should we be its tender and loving stewards and gardeners.

23. In regaining peace with God, the great ascetics experienced a return to paradise where humankind and nature were at peace. Animals would approach an ascetic 'as to their master, and wag their heads and tails, and lick his hands and feet, for they smell coming from him that same scent that exhaled from Adam before the Fall, when they were gathered together before him and he gave them names in paradise'.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, as we have noted before, our relation to animals belongs to our care for the whole of creation. Although animals are not self-conscious beings, they are alive and sentient, displaying the creative word and wisdom of God in their own ways. They have a beauty, playfulness, and value of their own. Nevertheless, human beings have destroyed and endangered many species of living creatures and their habitats. Animals have learned to fear humans. Yet animals may also sense human goodness when it is present. The holy

---

<sup>33</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection*.

<sup>34</sup> See St Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, Commentary on St Gregory the Theologian, homily XXXIX.

<sup>35</sup> St Isaac the Syrian, Ascetical Homily 77, in *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, ed. D. Miller (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984), p. 383.

fathers and mothers of the Church mirror the selfless way of Christ's humble love for all beings. Such closeness to nature is to be a sign of holiness.<sup>36</sup>

24. Far from negating the material world, the saints and ascetics, who struggled against the sins of human nature, interceded for creation as it suffered under those sins. In doing so, they united their prayer with the prayer of all created things, as the nineteenth-century Russian pilgrim testifies: 'I prayed with all my heart; everything around me seemed delightful and marvellous. The trees, the grass, the birds, the earth, the air, the light, seemed to be telling me that ... all things prayed to God and sang his praise. Thus it was that I came to understand what the *Philokalia* calls "the knowledge of the speech of all creatures".'<sup>37</sup> Or, as Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew,

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. (Mt 6.25–26)

---

<sup>36</sup> See *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §17.

<sup>37</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim* (London, SPCK, 1954), pp. 31–2.

## Chapter 5: *Creation, Ecology, and the Churches' Engagement Today*

25. Both Orthodox and Anglicans have in recent decades engaged ever more deeply with issues of the environment and ecology. Our agreed statement said:

The tradition of the Church teaches us that we govern the created order properly only if we are able and willing to render it service in God's name. In this we follow the example of Christ, subjecting ourselves to the will of God.

Jesus Christ calls us to heal and restore creation as a whole, working together with God (2 Cor 6.1).<sup>38</sup>

26. Our ecumenical common commitment in the World Council of Churches' programme on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, launched at the Vancouver Assembly of 1983, moves us into loving action to preserve the integrity of the whole created order.

27. Since the 1980s, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has led thinking about environmental issues. The late Ecumenical Patriarch Demitrios in 1989 instituted the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, celebrated on 1 September at the beginning of the Orthodox ecclesiastical year. Responding to increasing perception of an environmental crisis, Patriarch Demitrios said:

It should not be fear of impending disaster with regard to global change that obliges us to change our ways with regard to the natural environment. Rather, it should be a recognition of the cosmic harmony and original beauty that exists in the world. We must learn to make our communities more sensitive and to render our behaviour towards nature more respectful. We must acquire a compassionate

---

<sup>38</sup> *In the Image and Likeness of God*, §17.

heart: what St Isaac of Syria ... once called a heart that burns with love for the whole of creation; for humans, for birds and beasts, for all God's creatures.<sup>39</sup>

28. Under the guidance of the 'Green Patriarch' His All-Holiness Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has continued to take a leading role at interdisciplinary and interreligious symposia and initiatives seeking to highlight the spiritual aspects of the ecological crisis. These meetings called for a new attitude towards creation and the collaboration of all Christians and those of other faiths, including political, social, economic, and business leaders. In 1992, Patriarch Bartholomew called an unprecedented meeting of all Orthodox Patriarchs and Primate at the Phanar, the headquarters of the Patriarchate in Constantinople, submitting a historical expression of unity and inviting all Orthodox leaders to inform their churches about the critical significance of this issue for our times. The Primate endorsed 1 September as a day of pan-Orthodox prayer for the environment. Patriarch Bartholomew's teaching on the environment has been summarized in four points:

*Ecological Sin:* We have traditionally regarded sin as merely what people do to other people. Yet, for human beings to destroy the biological diversity in God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by contributing to climate change, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, land and air – all of these are sins. (Santa Barbara, California, 8 November 1997)<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> [www.patriarchate.org/-/message-by-h-a-h-ecumenical-patriarch-dimitrios-upon-the-day-of-prayer-for-the-protection-of-creation-01-09-1989-](http://www.patriarchate.org/-/message-by-h-a-h-ecumenical-patriarch-dimitrios-upon-the-day-of-prayer-for-the-protection-of-creation-01-09-1989-)

<sup>40</sup> See *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, ed. John Chryssavgis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), p. 99.

*The Ecological Crisis as a Spiritual Challenge:* The fundamental criterion for an ecological ethos is not individualistic or commercial. It is deeply spiritual. For, the root of the environmental crisis lies in human greed and selfishness. What is asked of us is not increased technological skill, but sincere repentance for our wrongful and wasteful ways. What is demanded of us is a sense of sacrifice, which comes with cost but brings fulfilment. Only through such self-denial—only through our willingness to say ‘no’ or ‘enough’—will we rediscover our true place in the universe. (Utstein Monastery, 23 June 2003)<sup>41</sup>

*Ecology and the Poor:* Today, more than ever before, we recognize the effects of environmental degradation on other people, especially the poor. The way we relate to the world around us directly reflects the way we pray to ‘our Father in heaven’. God is praised by the sun and moon, worshipped by the trees and birds. (Psalm 18.2) If we are guilty of pollution in our world, it may be because we have lost the spirit of liturgy and the spirituality of compassion. (Interview, Yale University, spring 2007)<sup>42</sup>

*Caring for People and Planet:* Preserving and protecting the natural environment, as well as respecting and serving our fellow human beings, are two sides of one and the same coin. The consequences of the ecological crisis—which affect, first and foremost, the socially and economically vulnerable—are a serious threat for social cohesion and integration. The identity of every society and measure of every culture are not judged by the degree of technological development, economic growth or public infrastructure. Our civil life and civilization are defined and judged primarily

---

<sup>41</sup>*On Earth as in Heaven*, p. 202.

<sup>42</sup> Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, ‘Everything that Breathes Praises God’, *Reflections* (Spring 2007), <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/gods-green-earth/everything-breathes-praises-god>

by our respect for the dignity of humanity and integrity of nature. (Keynote Address, Toward a Greener Attica Symposium, June 2018)<sup>43</sup>

29. The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, meeting in Crete in 2016, declared:

It is clear that the present-day ecological crisis is due to spiritual and moral causes. Its roots are connected with greed, avarice, and egoism, which lead to the thoughtless use of natural resources, the filling of the atmosphere with damaging pollutants, and to climate change. The Christian response to the problem demands repentance for the abuses, an ascetic frame of mind as an antidote to overconsumption, and at the same time a cultivation of the consciousness that man is a 'steward' and not a possessor of creation. The Church never ceases to emphasize that future generations also have a right to the natural resources that the Creator has given us. For this reason the Orthodox Church takes an active part in the various international ecological initiatives and has ordained 1 September as a day of prayer for the protection of the natural environment.<sup>44</sup>

30. Recent Lambeth Conferences—the global gatherings of Anglican bishops under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury—have reflected on matters of the environment. At its meeting in 1968, the Lambeth Conference urged all Christians to take seriously their responsibility for nature, including their relationship with animals, the conservation of the soil, the safeguarding of the deep seabed, and the prevention of pollution.<sup>45</sup> In 1978, the bishops acknowledged limited resources in nature and called

---

<sup>43</sup> [www.patriarchate.org/-/keynote-address-by-his-all-holiness-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-at-the-opening-of-the-ecological-symposium-athens-acropolis-museum-june-5-2018-](http://www.patriarchate.org/-/keynote-address-by-his-all-holiness-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-at-the-opening-of-the-ecological-symposium-athens-acropolis-museum-june-5-2018-)

<sup>44</sup> Message of the Holy and Great Synod, §8, [www.holycouncil.org/-/message](http://www.holycouncil.org/-/message)

<sup>45</sup> Lambeth Conference 1968, Resolutions 6 and 7, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127743/1968.pdf>

for an end to waste, improvements in recycling, the safe disposal of nuclear waste, and the need to seek alternative sources of energy.<sup>46</sup> The bishops also commended living more simply.<sup>47</sup>

31. In 1988, the bishops said that ‘wholeness of living requires a right relationship with God, one’s neighbour, and creation’.<sup>48</sup> Building on this theme, the 1998 Lambeth Conference described humans as ‘co-partners with the rest of creation’ and talked of ‘personal and corporate sacrifices for the common good of all creation’. The bishops declared that the ‘redemptive purpose of God in Jesus Christ extends to the whole of Creation’ and affirmed the sacramental quality of creation as demanding ‘reverence, respect, and gratitude’. The bishops remarked that

... sacramental theology does not divinize nature but affirms the Trinitarian presence of God within creation and points to the natural world and matter itself as an effective medium of divine revelation, a means of communion with God. Nature is ‘sacred by association’. ... creation is endowed with sacred value and dignity. It is to be cared for and loved as a vehicle of God’s own presence and revelation.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Lambeth Conference 1978, Resolution 1, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127746/1978.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Lambeth Conference 1978, Resolution 2.

<sup>48</sup> Lambeth Conference 1988, Resolution 40, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127749/1988.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> ‘Called to Full Humanity’, quoted in *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), p. 90; the phrase ‘sacred by association’ is attributed to James Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991). The report led to Lambeth 1998 Resolutions I.8 and I.9, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/76650/1998.pdf>

32. In 1990, the Anglican Consultative Council amended the 'Four Marks of Mission'<sup>50</sup> by adding a fifth: 'To strive to safeguard the *integrity of creation*, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. Of particular significance for our dialogue is how many provinces within the Anglican Communion have begun to use of the 'Season of Creation' from 1 September to 4 October 'as an integral part of the church's yearly pattern of worship and teaching' about the environment. At the 2008 Lambeth Conference, the fifth Mark of Mission inspired the sharing of stories about the impact of climate change as small groups of bishops met in international *indaba* discussion groups. These stories contributed to a theological reflection built upon an understanding of creation as gift and so, the bishops suggested, our response to creation is a spiritual issue that leads to certain positive, and negative, ethical behaviours. They concluded that human sinfulness, and especially an inaccurate understanding about what it means to have dominion, has led to many of our current problems. The reflections also included a missiological approach, expecting that others will be drawn in to be followers of Jesus Christ through ecological engagement as 'the Good News of Jesus Christ [is]

---

<sup>50</sup> The Five Marks of Mission: 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers; 3. To respond to human need by loving service; 4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth. See [www.anglicancommunion.org/marks-of-mission.aspx](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/marks-of-mission.aspx)

proclaimed in action’,<sup>51</sup> and called for education, empowerment, advocacy, liturgical resources, and action.

33. In 2008, the Lambeth Conference gave extensive consideration to ways in which this fifth Mark of Mission could find expression among Anglicans, and in partnership with others. Anglicans are reminded that:

So far this is the mark of mission least universally owned by the churches of the communion. If we say that ‘The earth is the Lord’s ...’, we must be prepared to live as if that is true! We can not misuse a gift from the Lord. If we are to call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ, we must be prepared for radical discipleship by ‘living simply, so that others may simply live.’ Safeguarding creation is a spiritual issue. Climate change is posing questions freshly for us about our attitudes toward creation, technology, sustainability for a future, and justice for all people. This is a discipleship issue not something we might possibly do. When others see that we Anglicans take the issue of environment seriously, they may be drawn to work alongside us, and in so doing they may see the Good News of Jesus Christ proclaimed in action.<sup>52</sup>

34. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Justin Welby, has noted that ‘climatic change is an existential danger to the planet and its human occupants; it is therefore of pre-eminent importance to incorporate it into the application of our

---

<sup>51</sup> *Lambeth Indaba: Capturing Conversations and Reflections from the Lambeth Conference 2008*, section D: Environment, §59, [www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/2008/section-d-environment?tag=Lambeth+Conference](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/2008/section-d-environment?tag=Lambeth+Conference)

<sup>52</sup> Section D: Environment, §59.

values'.<sup>53</sup> Concerned about the effects of climate change that he has witnessed as he has toured provinces of the Anglican Communion, he has said:

The moral crisis of climate change is an opportunity to find purpose and joy, and to respond to our creator's charge. Reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith. It is a way to love our neighbor and to steward the gift of creation.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Justin Welby, *Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), p. 215.

<sup>54</sup> In the *New York Times* (3 November 2017); see [www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/our-moral-opportunity-climate-change](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/our-moral-opportunity-climate-change)

## Chapter 6: *How Then Should We Live?*

35. As the people of the living God, the Church is called to promote a new covenant of compassion and respect in favour of the life and integrity of creation. This commitment is a matter of both faith and praxis. Therefore Anglicans and Orthodox ask their Churches, all Christians, members of other faith communities, and all people of good will to adopt attitudes of Wonder, Gratitude, and Restraint in order individually and corporately to:

- be filled with wonder at the beauty of God's creation so that we might be motivated to
  - protect and conserve diverse land, air, and sea ecosystems;
  - press for national and international legislative frameworks that promote the preservation of our planet;
  - prevent pollution, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and the use of plastics, and lower the dangerous risk and unholy terror of nuclear disaster;
- be overcome with gratitude to God for the rich diversity of resources so that we might be motivated to
  - appreciate and treasure the gift of creation to us and future generations;
  - know ourselves to be 'priests of creation', in the liturgy of life as much as in the liturgy of the Eucharist;
  - hear the voices and the righteous indignation of the world's poorest people, specially loved by God yet most affected by climate change, pollution, and the loss of biodiversity;

- be compelled to have a sense of restraint under God so that we might be motivated to
  - recover the insights of asceticism as a healing of the human soul in the face of crude consumerism and unsustainable consumption;
  - witness to how care for the environment is part of God's work and ministry of reconciliation and restoration of all things to himself through Christ;
  - work for the revision of economic systems so that they reflect the finite nature of our world and its resources, and promote sustainability and the just flourishing of all.

In such a way, through our prayer, lament, repentance, and action before God, Anglicans and Orthodox seek to know 'how manifold are your works; in wisdom you have made them all: the earth is full of your possessions' so that, with the whole of creation, we might 'bless the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever'.

Threats and scourges and destruction hang over us, Lord, because of the multitude of our transgressions; for we have sinned and transgressed and gone far from you, and we are affected and afflicted by dire perils; but deliver us, Lord, from dangers that beset us, and keep the whole structure of the earth unharmed, granting equable breaths of wind and ever-flowing springs of water for our safe-keeping and salvation, O Lover of humankind.<sup>55</sup>

Go out into the world rejoicing, and encounter the Creator who waits to meet you there; rejoice in its richness and diversity and live as those who praise God for its bounty; and the blessing of the Creator God, the Eternal Father, the Risen Son and the Promised Holy Spirit bless you that you might be a blessing to others today and always. Amen<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Greek Orthodox Church of America, Vespers for 1 September, Feast for the Protection of the Environment.

<sup>56</sup> Anglican Church of Southern Africa, Blessing for use in the Season of Creation.

- O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
- O ye angels of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye heavens, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye waters that be above the firmament, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O all ye powers of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye sun and moon, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye stars of heaven, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye showers and dew, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye winds of God, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye fire and heat, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye winter and summer, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye dews and frosts, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye frost and cold, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye ice and snow, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye nights and days, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye light and darkness bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye lightnings and clouds, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O let the earth bless the Lord: yea, let it praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye mountains and hills, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O all ye green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye wells, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.
- O ye seas and floods, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O ye whales, and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O all ye fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O all ye beasts and cattle, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O ye children of men, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O let Israel bless the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O ye priests of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O ye servants of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

O ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

Benedicite, Morning Prayer, Book of Common Prayer

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, you are very great: you are clothed with honour and majesty.

Who cover yourself with light as with a garment: who stretch out the heaven like a curtain.

He lays the beams of his upper chambers in the waters: who makes the clouds his chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind.

Who makes his angels spirits: his ministers a flame of fire.

You who laid the foundations of the earth: so that it should not be moved for ever.

You covered it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

At your rebuke they fled: at the voice of your thunder they hastened away.

They went up over the mountains: they went down into the valleys, to the place which you founded for them.

You have set a boundary that they may not pass over: that they may not return to cover the earth.

He sends his springs into the valleys: they flow among the hills.

They give drink to every beast in the field: the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

By them the birds of the heaven have their home: they sing among the branches.

He waters the hills from their upper chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your works.

He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth.

And wine that makes glad the heart of man: oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart.

The trees of the Lord are full of sap: the cedars of Lebanon which he planted.

Where the birds make their nests: the stork has her home in the fir trees.

The high hills are for the wild goats: the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers.

He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knows his going down.

You make darkness and it is night: in which all the beasts of the forest creep about.

The young lions roar after their prey: and seek their food from God.

When the sun rises they gather together: and lie down in their dens.

Man goes out to his work: and to his labour until the evening.

O Lord, how manifold are your works; in wisdom you have made them all: the earth is full of your possessions.

This great and wide sea in which are innumerable teeming things: living things both small and great.

There the ships sail about: there is that great Leviathan which you have made to play there.

These all wait for you: that you may give them their food in due season.

What you give them they gather in: you open your hand, they are filled with good.

You hide your face, they are troubled: you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

You send forth their spirit, they are created: and you renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever: may the Lord rejoice in his works.

He looks on the earth and it trembles: he touches the hills and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

May my meditation be sweet to him: I will be glad in the Lord.

May sinners be consumed from the earth: and the wicked be no more.

Bless the Lord, O my soul: praise the Lord.

Psalm 104 [103], Prooimiakos, Vespers

Membership of the International Commission 2016–20

Representatives of the Orthodox Church

Ecumenical Patriarchate

Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium (Co-Chairman) 2017–20

Patriarchate of Alexandria

Metropolitan Seraphim of Johannesburg (Acting Co-Chairman 2016)

Patriarchate of Antioch

The Revd Fr Alexander Haig 2016

The Revd Fr Jonathan A. Hemmings 2017–20

Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Protopresbyter Prof. Dr George Dion Dragas

Patriarchate of Moscow

The Revd Dr Valentin Vassechko

Patriarchate of Serbia

Prof. Dr Bogdan Lubardic

Patriarchate of Romania

Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște

Patriarchate of Georgia

The Very Revd Protopresbyter Prof. Dr Giorgi Zviadadze

Church of Cyprus

Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Kition

Church of Greece

Professor Dr Miltiadis Konstantinou

Church of Albania

Bishop Ilia of Philomelion 2016 Professor Nathan Hoppe 2017-20

The Revd Dr Christos B. Christakis (Co-Secretary)

Archdeacon Philadelphos Kafalis (staff)

Representatives of the Anglican Communion

The Rt Revd Dr Richard Clarke

(The Church of Ireland) (Co-Chairman)

The Most Revd Dr Phillip Aspinall

(The Anglican Church of Australia) 2017–20

The Rt Revd John Stroyan

(The Church of England) 2016

The Rt Revd Graham Usher 2017–20 (The Church of England)

The Revd Gcebile Phumzile Gina 2017–20 (The Anglican Church of Southern Africa)

The Revd Marc Billimoria (The Church of Ceylon)

The Rt Revd Humberto Maiztegu Gonçalves (The Anglican Church of Brazil)

The Rt Revd Michael Lewis

(The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & the Middle East)

The Revd Canon Philip Hobson OGS (The Anglican Church of Canada)

The Revd Canon Dr Sarah Rowland Jones (The Church in Wales)

The Revd Canon Dr Alison Joyce (The Church of England)

The Very Revd Hosam Naoum

(The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & the Middle East)

The Revd Canon Dr John Gibaut (Co-Secretary) 2016-19

The Revd Neil Vigers (Co-Secretary 2019-20) (Staff—Anglican Communion Office)