

# Patriarch Laments Lack of Wisdom in Caring for Creation

## Addresses Religion, Science and Environment Symposium

MEMPHIS, Tennessee, OCT. 23, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Society may have more knowledge in the 21st century, but not necessarily more wisdom, according to the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople.

Bartholomew I said this Wednesday at the Eighth International Symposium on Religion, Science and the Environment titled "Restoring Balance: The Great Mississippi River."

The symposium, organized under the patronage of the patriarch, is under way through Sunday in Memphis, Tennessee. The five-day conference is gathering theologians, scientists, policy makers, environmentalists and businessmen to discuss the effects of almost 200 years of industrialization on the Mississippi River.

"The technological advances of the last half century have created the illusion of us being in control of our destiny as never before," the patriarch noted in the opening address of the conference. "We have cracked the code of DNA, we can create life in test tubes, we can genetically modify crops, we can put men upon the moon -- but we have lost our balance, externally and within.

"Wealth generated in the developed world has not put an end to suffering. [...] The explosion of knowledge has not been accompanied by an increase in wisdom.

"Only wisdom could make us realize that the Creation is an interdependent, undivided whole, not an assemblage of isolated, unrelated parts that can be eliminated, replaced or modified as we see fit."

### Destruction

"We have expanded our dominion over Nature to the point where absolute limits to our survival are being reached," he continued. "We have lost half of the great forests of the world to the demand for timber and for conversion to agriculture, without thinking that these giant wet sponges are responsible for the delivery of much of the fresh water.

"Irrigation for agriculture takes 70% of global demand for water, and -- almost unimaginably -- some of the world's greatest rivers are so depleted by the influence of humans that they no longer flow to the sea; and those that do, carry in their waters all the chemical fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides and waste materials they have collected along their course.

"Desertification is increasing on land at the same time that the fish stocks of the oceans are depleted by over exploitation; and those that remain are being poisoned by toxic materials dumped carelessly in their habitat.

"Instead of living on income, or the available surplus of the earth, we are consuming environmental capital and destroying its sources as if there is no tomorrow."

Bartholomew I pointed out that the ecological problems society faces today have been "created by human beings."

### Balance

The patriarch noted that society not only needs to restore a balance between human activity and the environment, but

also that society needs to "find balance within ourselves, reassessing our values as well as what is valuable.

He added that everyone has a part to play, and a responsibility in conserving creation: "Our successes or failures, personal and collective, determine the lives of billions. Our decisions, personal and collective, determine the future of the planet."

Bartholomew I is in the United states for a 15-day Apostolic and Patriarchal Visit.

Today he is visiting the lower 9th Ward in New Orleans to survey the recovery and restoration efforts that followed the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Following the Symposium, the patriarch will travel to New York City, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

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On the Net:

Religion, Science and Environment symposium: <http://www.rsesymposia.org>