
The papers in this book, which originated at a 2010 symposium in Potsdam, argue that in public discussions about global climate change a crucial piece is often missing. Since religion provides a foundation for the worldviews of the majority of people in the world, to ignore its role in helping people mitigate climate change is a serious error. Moreover, the adaptations that climate change requires will likely have a strong impact, not just on the physical well-being of people, but also on their deeply held religious views.

Gerten and Bergmann open the first section by stating the need for a research focus on the role of religion in climate change discussions. Wolfgang Lucht then argues that our current religious cosmologies, expressed in artifacts such as cars and power plants, have brought the world to the point of collapse. To move towards a more sustainable world we need new narratives of who we are. Michel Reder, in contrast, argues for the inclusion of traditional world religions in the public sphere, given the meaning, moral authority, resources, and community support they bring. Timothy Leduc closes this first section by referencing the rapid development of the huge oil sands deposit in Canada, discussing the conflicting interests of politics and big business versus environmental concerns, and leading us to consider a new religious perspective, such as that presented by ecotheologian Anne Primavesi, in her *Gaia and Climate Change: A Theology of Gift Events* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

The second section of the book focuses on the Christian religion. Markus Vogt discusses justice and peace in the Roman Catholic tradition and suggests how the perceived conflict between climate protection and the fight against poverty might be addressed in the context of Catholic social ethics. Friedrich Lohmann presents a convincing summary of a Christian perspective of stewardship, based on the Judeo-Christian scriptures, but updated with new interpretations on some key texts used in the past to justify the abuse of creation. Michael Roberts and Laurel Kearns, in their two papers, which overlap in large part, document the divided views of American evangelicals on climate change. Although many evangelicals have accepted the evidence for anthropogenic climate change, many others have recently turned against this to become climate skeptics. Martin Schönfeld’s paper ends this section by concluding that when global climate change arrives in full force, there may be severe repercussions for the future and fate of religions.
The final section of the book gives examples of how climate change may impact the religious perspectives of indigenous and regional communities. Susan Crate explores the challenges faced by the Turkic Sakha people in the northwest corner of Siberia, where the increased amount of water not only limits their reaping of hay in their short summers to support their cattle but also affects the important role that cattle play in their spiritual cosmology. Liobo Rossbach de Olmos argues for comprehensive ethnological research with different peoples and regions to help analyze responses to climate change, rather than just depending on scientific predictions. Urte Undine Frömming and Christian Reichel, who work in parts of Indonesia endangered by rising sea levels and increasing typhoons, argue that local cultural and religious ways for coping with natural disasters should be integrated with current technocratic practices. Gulnara Aitpaeva asks whether the traditional notion of jaichlyk, formerly used by the Kyrgyz initiates to change the weather but now almost disappeared, could be brought back to help them deal with the impact of climate change. Finally, Holger Sonnabend looks at how ancient Europeans dealt with environmental changes more by using fatalist religious interpretation (i.e. attributing responsibility to the gods) than by using rational discourse.

The book's papers build a convincing argument that we ignore at our peril the role of religion in climate change discussion and policy. At the same time they present many different views of what this “religion” is or should be in the context of how we might mitigate climate change in the industrialized nations: a new cosmology, traditional world religions, or a new version of the Gaia hypothesis. The middle section of the book balances a discussion of how Roman Catholic social ethics can contribute to a solution, together with an up-to-date exposition of what Christian scripture has to say, against the divided situation among American evangelicals and the activism of religious climate skeptics. There is also a balance between mitigation and adaptation to climate change, in their relationship with religion. While the first two sections of the book mainly deal with how religion should or can help prepare us to make costly sacrifices to mitigate the impacts of climate change, the last section reverses the argument and shows how inevitable climate change will, in turn, impact religion, in the adaptations it forces us to adopt. The diversity found in this final section is fascinating and illustrates the need for much more research along these lines, as we move into the next few decades when the impacts of climate change start accelerating around the world, affecting many isolated and indigenous people, who are least at fault in contributing to the problem in the first place.

The book’s diversity, however, results in a bumpy ride for the reader, who often has to abruptly change gears from thinking through an abstract reflection on new cosmologies and narratives, or taking sides in a conflict played out in the Canadian press, to considering a theological argument based on the Christian scriptures, or reading about a cultural anthropologist’s life-long work with a small indigenous group of people near the Arctic Circle. The nature of the book as a collection of papers presented at a symposium also means that little if any connections are made between topics. I would have liked to read, for example, how a strong Roman Catholic social concern about climate change might help indigenous communities...