

Michael S. Northcott
A Moral Climate
the ethics of global warming
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Tucked away on page 236-7 of this erudite and extended essay on climate change we find:-

'The prospect that humanity will find it harder to grow enough food for the 9 billion humans who are likely to be alive in fifty years' time ought perhaps more than any other prediction to cause developed and developing countries alike to seek strenuously to reduce their production of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate the likelihood of dangerous climate change.'

Northcott's overall purpose in the book is to persuade us to change that 'ought to', into 'will'.

If that 'us' is to include the whole human race, it needs to include the voices of the voiceless who, as it happens, are the poor of the south - south east Asia, central and southern America, sub Saharan Africa - who are reminded by the pangs of hunger that climate change is already at work in their lives. Their interests in the matter are under-represented, and drowned out by the international energy giants - so that international and national efforts are compelled to limit action to the pathetic prescriptions of Kyoto, and, no doubt, Copenhagen.

Northcott argues from history, economics, geophysics, international politics - and includes critiques of transport, house building, diet, waste - really our whole way of life in the industrial world. Perhaps most compellingly for people of faith, for Christians, for Franciscan Christians indeed, he turns to scripture as witness to his case. The Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah), the New Testament (gospels, Paul, Revelation) are all invoked in a way which gives us new eyes for our study.

I'm left with the feeling that I must switch off the light, fill the dishwasher, go by train (if at all), eat local food, write to my MP, go to local meetings, demonstrate.

And with the feeling that I must not simply wait and see.

Anselm SSF