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Climate Justice: Ethics, Energy, and Public Policy

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Climate Justice: Ethics, Energy, and Public Policy

by James Martin-Schramm

Fortress, Minneapolis, 2010

232 pages, \$20, ISBN 978-0-8006-6362-9

The topic of climate change seems nearly ubiquitous these days. From news reports that the general public is skeptical of climate change to scientific evidence of its negative environmental effects, the topic seems to be everywhere. While there are many recent books on climate change, only a few address this issue in any depth from a Christian perspective. For example, *Christianity, Climate Change, and Sustainable Living*, by Spencer, White and Vrobesky is admirable for its clear presentation of the science and in-depth attention to the biblical and theological issues, but it doesn't dive very deep into the nitty-gritty of policy.

Detailed analysis of energy and climate policy informed by a clear Christian ethical framework is the signal contribution of James Martin-Schramm's new book. Its focus is on conventional and alternative energy options (chs. 2-3) and international and US climate policy (chs. 4-5). These sections of the book are framed by a succinct yet informed discussion of ethics (ch. 1) and an illuminating case study of greenhouse gas reductions at the author's own academic institution (ch. 6). Martin-Schramm's main argument is that an ethic of ecological justice--involving the 4 moral norms of sustainability, sufficiency, participation, and solidarity—"addresses human-caused problems that threaten both human and natural communities and considers both human and natural communities to be ethically important." (p. 26)

Climate Justice is a very fine book. It is well-written and clear, with many helpful charts, graphs, and figures. It is extensively footnoted and includes a helpful glossary of terms. The book offers thorough and fair assessments of the various energy and climate options, with reasoned arguments for why some

policies are better than others. It shows detailed familiarity with the specific issues and gives explicit attention to various ethical criteria and guidelines. Indeed, one of the strengths of the book is that the 4 moral norms are fleshed out into 12 energy policy guidelines for assessing various energy policy options and 14 ethical criteria for evaluating climate policy proposals. Many authors writing on this issue stay in the realm of general ethical principles. Martin-Schramm self-consciously follows the path laid down by the Eco-Justice Program of the US National Council of Churches to develop the middle-level moral maxims needed to apply his ethical norms to the concrete issues of energy and climate change policy. In short, this is a most helpful book on understanding and evaluating climate justice.

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