**BBC Radio 4 Thought for the Day 22 September 2014**

**Rev Professor David Wilkinson**

Good morning. Yesterday, more than two thousand marches took place demanding further action on climate change. This global protest wanted to send a clear message to world leaders at tomorrow's UN Climate summit, which paves the way to the 2015 negotiations on carbon emissions. Many voices are calling for a commitment to limit global warming to two degrees or less to avoid the mayhem of environmental instability. While public awareness and local initiatives have grown over the past decades, governmental agreements on carbon emissions have been painfully slow. How then do you give renewed momentum to such a cause?

Last week in the journal Science, Dasgupta and Ramanathan, a Cambridge economist and a San Diego climatologist, suggested, perhaps surprisingly, that religion can help. Not only by religious leaders mobilizing their constituencies in practical and political action, but also in what the authors say is the 'need to re-orient our attitude toward nature and thereby toward ourselves'.

How this relationship between human beings and the natural world is understood is crucial to action or inaction on climate change. A selfish worldview of 'I want it all and I want it now' doesn't see the need of any action at all. Naomi Klein in her new book This Changes Everything laments this view in individuals, governments and corporate elites and says 'it is always easier to deny reality'.

Yet religion too has sometimes hindered rather than helped. Certain American evangelicals have so stressed the other-worldliness of personal salvation that this world seems irrelevant. More fundamentally, as the historian Lyn White pointed out, Christianity shares a huge burden of guilt for the environmental crisis by fostering the claim that 'we are superior to nature' and that we are able to do whatever we like. However, he concluded that 'since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must be essentially religious whether we call it that or not'.

I do find my attitude to nature is shaped by my Christian faith. First, I see creation as a gift with its care a responsibility given by God. Second, I see in New Testament pictures that God's purpose is to transform this creation into new creation, rather than simply saving me from it. From that basis I want to join with other faith leaders and indeed many other voices in opposing those who deny the reality of climate change and working towards significant global agreements on carbon emissions. It also gives me hope. As Desmond Tutu has said on this issue, 'When we humans walk together in pursuit of a righteous cause, we become an irresistible force.'

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