‘Let There Be Light! Nuclear Energy: A Christian Case’


There is an open examination of the pros and cons of the nuclear power industry.

The author spent almost all his working life within the nuclear power industry; at times, this text reads as a public relations document for that industry.

However, this would be unfair as a great deal of space is devoted to the arguments against and the associated risks within the industry.

After his scientific work in nuclear power, Dutch was course administrator and tutor in New Testament Greek at Bristol Baptist College. Hence, his desire to present a Christian case for nuclear energy.

Dutch
emphasises the positive, acknowledges the negative and advocates the key role of a nuclear source of electricity in the fight against anthropogenic climate change.

There is a detailed exploration of our nuclear universe, the risks and benefits of nuclear energy, and the concerns and questions raised by the public.

He notes the key questions involve safety, radioactive waste management, the impact of radioactive discharges on people and the environment, and security of the plants and radioactive materials.

Dutch quotes from a survey conducted in 2015 by the Institute for Mechanical Engineers, which revealed that 56% of those questioned supported nuclear power generation.

He believes we need both nuclear and renewables in our attempt to avoid catastrophic climate change.

We can observe that while nuclear power produces no CO2 emissions, it does waste huge amounts of heat energy and carries the environmental concerns of radioactive leakage and waste disposal.
As many of the United Kingdom’s nuclear power stations reach the end of their lives, the U.K. government has given the go-ahead for the first new power station, Hinkley Point C in Somerset.

There has been a great deal of discussion over the cost and, therefore, value of this power station, which will come on line in 2023 or shortly after.

Dutch observes the U.K. justification for nuclear power involves securing energy supplies, meeting low carbon objectives and economic benefits in terms of jobs.

While there are risks of exposure to radioactive materials, leaks, the cost of decommissioning and the removal of waste, the author notes the benefits are said to outweigh the risks.

In 2018, 19% of U.K. electricity is produced by nuclear power stations, which represent 48% of low carbon sources of electricity.

It is calculated that to meet the U.K. commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 80% below 1990 levels some 20 to 38 GW of nuclear power electricity will be needed.
Hinkley Point C
is designed to produce 3.2GW, a mere 10% of this figure.

Dutch notes there
is qualified cross-party support for nuclear energy, which also comes from the Trades
Union Congress (TUC) and even from some leading environment commentators, such as Mark
Lynas
and George Monbiot.

In addition, he
states that Sir John Houghton, former chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scientific working party, has
suggested that nuclear power is important for the reduction of CO2 emissions and believes that the new generation of reactors address the concerns of waste disposal and accidents.

Dutch concludes
his discussion with a Christian approach to nuclear power.

He believes the
earth is important to God and that human beings are part of the community of creation.

A nuclear
universe with radioactive elements is part of God’s creation, and nuclear
energy production has an important role in the reduction of greenhouse gases.

He notes that while the church is clear in its support of a low carbon economy, it is largely silent of the issue of nuclear power.

He believes this is because church leaders are not equipped to guide their congregations about nuclear energy.

This is an immediate and easy-to-read introduction to the subject, which will greatly help Christian leaders to engage with the debate.

A flier about the book is available here. The book is available for purchase via Wipf and Stock Publishers (here) and Amazon (here).

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