

A Cool Appraisal Of Global Warming

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We have all heard the stories. Over the next century, mean temperatures all over the world will rise as much as six degrees Celsius, causing massive environmental damage. The planet's polar ice caps will melt, and billions of gallons of the now-liquid water will raise global sea levels, inundating coastlines—in some places for miles.

This is only the beginning of the planet's problems. Ecologically valuable estuaries—even now in delicate balance—will be wiped out, and thousands, if not millions, of species of plants and animals will become extinct. Coastal forests will die with their roots under saltwater, disturbing the earth's ability to recycle carbon dioxide into oxygen, thus leaving more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and priming the cycle of planetary heating. Some have even theorized that the massive flow of water from the poles toward the equator could put stress on the earth's tectonics—increasing earthquakes and volcanoes—and perhaps shift the earth's axis several degrees.

Of course, if these things occur, humanity will certainly suffer. Tropical diseases will spread more easily. Arable land will decrease—either becoming desert or seabed—straining the nations' ability to feed earth's billions. Decreased ozone in the upper atmosphere will boost the risk of terrible skin cancers, while increased heat will make life miserable as desertification occurs. Weather patterns will change dramatically, resulting in unprecedented numbers and intensity of natural disasters. This is a future none of us want to live into.

But is any of it true?

Warming? Cooling?

It was only thirty years ago that the concern among environmental types was global *cooling*. A "New Ice Age" was predicted to fall upon us within the next century, and woolly mammoths would make a comeback. Drastic government intervention would be needed to stave off this threat to all life on the planet. Billions of people would starve due to shrinking arable lands. Shorelines would recede, destroying pristine estuaries and other wetlands.

Alas, this histrionic movement melted under overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary. Therefore, environmentalists decided to use this proof to their advantage and did a one-eighty. Since science showed that the trend in mean temperatures was upward (ever so slightly), they figured they could reach the same ends by promoting global *warming*.

And they have nearly pulled it off.

The environmental movement has never been about truth or facts—some would go so far as to say that it has never even been about the environment! Environmentalism has always focused on political results: restrictions on free enterprise (business and industry), government oversight and regulation [one-third of federal laws published since 1970—mostly Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations—concern the environment¹], massive funding of environmental causes and studies, and implementation of liberal social policies (like animal rights, diversity, multiculturalism, etc.). As a

result, coupled with a "the end justifies the means" mentality, the "science" that undergirds the global warming myth is junk.

With all we hear in the news to the contrary, this sounds like an overstatement. An objective look at the cold, hard facts of global climate change, however, shows it to be true.

That the Bush administration flip-flopped on the matter in early June confirms that this is really not a scientific issue but a political one. The presentation to the United Nations of an EPA report on climate—in which human activity is partially blamed for rising temperatures—seems to have been an administration trial balloon to see if Bush's base would back him on the issue. The clear answer was, "No way!"

Since environmentalists call it *global* warming, it is not just an American political issue. Truly, it gets far better play abroad than here. The 1997 UN Kyoto Treaty on Climate Control is supported by a majority of nations, while the U.S.—notwithstanding a last-minute end-around attempt by former President Bill Clinton to implement its protocols without Senate ratification—refuses to sign on.

Beyond the fact that the climate projection models that undergird the agreement are questionable, the American refusal is based on its heavy-handed treatment of U.S. industry and commerce, as well as its exemption of worse polluting nations like China and India. At least this administration is unwilling to sacrifice America's prosperity and productivity on the environmentalist altar.

The Facts

While a few scientists speak of global warming as a fact, many more—especially those who are directly involved in climate science—say the data do not support it. To date, 19,700 scientists, including 2,660 physicists, geophysicists, climatologists, meteorologists, oceanographers, and environmental scientists, have signed a petition sponsored by the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine that discounts global warming. Its accompanying report concludes:

There are no experimental data to support the hypothesis that increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are causing or can be expected to cause catastrophic changes in global temperatures or weather. To the contrary, during the 20 years with the highest carbon dioxide levels, atmospheric temperatures have decreased.²

A competing, pro-global-warming petition circulated by the Union of Concerned Scientists in 1997 garnered only 1,559 signatures of scientists.

In May, a team of international scientists met in Washington, DC, to expose the absence of real proof that global warming exists. These scientists challenged the UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projections—that the earth would warm up between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees Celsius in the next century—on several fronts.

First, Hartwig Volz, a German geophysicist, dismissed the projections as "fairy tales." S. Fred Singer, an atmospheric physicist from the University of Virginia, added that the IPCC assumes "extreme scenarios of population growth and fossil fuel consumption" in its projections. In other words, the IPCC inflates its numbers to get the results it wants.

Second, Dr. Ulrich Berner, a German geologist, cited global temperature variations in the past as evidence that human activity is unrelated to climate change. A study of surface temperatures in the Sargasso Sea over the past 3,000 years (determined by isotope ratios of marine organism remains in sediment), showed an average temperature of 23°C. The present average temperature is *below* the 3,000-year average by a few tenths of a degree.³ The earth is still "recovering" from what is known as the "Little Ice Age" that occurred about 300 years ago.

Dr. Berner also explained that extensive analysis of carbon dioxide concentrations show that elevated CO₂ levels do not necessarily lead to climate change. He said, "There are numerous temperature changes which are not mimicked by the CO₂ concentration." In fact, according to MIT meteorologist Richard S. Lindzen, worldwide CO₂ concentrations over the past century have increased from 0.028% to 0.036%, an insignificant percentage.⁴

Third, temperature readings from the last sixty years show "no appreciable warming since 1940," said Singer. "This would indicate that the human effects on climate must be quite small." He suggested that the primary influence on climate change is—of all things!—the sun. The sun has been shown to go through long-term changes in activity, varying the amount of radiation aimed at the earth and causing the mean temperature to rise or fall. These shifts have a far greater effect on climate than greenhouse gases.⁵

Patrick J. Michaels, a professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia and a senior fellow in environmental studies at the Cato Institute, estimates that even if nations enacted every point of the Kyoto treaty, the world's average temperature would not decrease by a half degree over the next fifty years.⁶ Without it, the earth has warmed only about one degree over the past hundred years, and most of that increase took place before 1940.⁷

Arctic and Antarctic

Earth's polar ice caps have been the subject of intense study in proving or disproving global warming. Shrinking or thinning of the ice caps would seem to be signs of higher temperatures and indicate that environmentalists' alarms of impending catastrophe are valid. However, scientific data are currently invalidating these claims.

The West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) is of particular concern to environmentalists, as they estimate that if it collapses, sea levels could rise by as much as five meters. As late as June 2002, two U.S. scientists reported in the journal *Science* that the floating fringes of the WAIS are melting faster than previously suggested because the surrounding seawater is warming.⁸ However, their findings have drawn criticism because they used satellite radar interferometry rather than on-location samples.

Other research, however, has found that the WAIS is actually thickening, not thinning. A January 2002 article in *Science* found evidence that not only is the "retreat" of the WAIS coming to an end, but the ice sheet is actually growing by 26.8 gigatons each year.⁹ This concurs with studies that say Antarctica is cooling, not warming. One University of Illinois at Chicago study found that temperatures had cooled as much as 0.7°C per decade between 1986 and 2000.¹⁰

Another environmental scare is that the Arctic ice is thinning—to the point that by 2100, there could be open water there during the summers. Upward sonar readings from submarines taken between the

1960s and 1990s seem to show that the ice pack has thinned about 40%. However, new research by Dr. Greg Holloway of the Institute of Ocean Sciences in Sidney, British Columbia, suggests that the ice is still there—just piled up in areas where researchers have not surveyed! He holds that most of the ice has shifted from the central Arctic into Canadian waters where U.S. submarines were not allowed to go in the 1990s. In addition, the ice over the North Pole has begun to thicken.¹¹

If nothing else, a person should come away from conflicting reports like these with a healthy appreciation for the complexity of climate science. Just because the earth seems to be doing something that may give cause for concern does not mean it will not balance itself either in another place or in a short time.

Biblical Perspective

God uses weather, climate, and natural disasters as means to bless or curse people for obedience or disobedience to His law (for example, Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28; Amos 7:6-13). Satan, as "the god of this age" (II Corinthians 4:4; see Ephesians 2:2), uses "a great wind" to kill Job's children (Job 1:19). Similarly, God causes "a strong east wind" to divide the Red Sea so that His people can escape the Egyptians (Exodus 14:21).

Of the seven trumpet plagues in Revelation, the first three could be called "ecological disasters," as could a few of the seven last plagues (Revelation 8:7-11; 16:1-21). Ultimately, the whole earth will be remade as a fitting abode for God the Father (Revelation 21:1-4). From a biblical perspective, then, the minimal fluctuations of temperature readings in various parts of the earth are petty in comparison with what is to come.

This is not to say we should not be concerned about pollution and man's poor stewardship of earth's resources. We certainly have a responsibility to dress and keep what God has given us (Genesis 2:15). Ultimately, God warns those who would harm the earth that He will avenge the earth for man's abuses (Revelation 11:18). However, our concern for our environment should be based on truth, pure motives, and respect for God's creation, not on selfish, political aims.

Endnotes

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