LSI Journal

Christian Stewardship and Global Warming: The Controversy
Part 2: Human-Caused Global Warming Slight - (September-October, 2007)

Editorial note: This is part 2 of a two part series. One essay on each side of the global warming issue.

The essay below is a summary by LSI Editor Warren Krug, of Michael Oard's article.
Michael Oard's article along with full documentation can be found at
http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v1/n2/human-caused-global-warming

Human-Caused Global Warming Slight So Far

In an article published in September of 2006, Michael Oard points out that there is a sizeable minority of scientists who disagree with the dire predictions of the global warming community.

A petition sponsored by the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine has been signed by over 20,000 scientists, about 2,700 of whom are physicists, geophysicists, climatologists, meteorologists, oceanographers, or environment scientists. The statement says:
There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the Earth. **1**

Oard advocates further reasoned research and a forum for stating the views of both the advocates and the dissenters of the extreme human-caused global warming scenario.

Reasons for Caution
Christians are urged to (1) evaluate the assumptions and goals of not just those advocating urgent action on global warming now but also the entire environmental movement, (2) checking the data, and then (3) evaluating any proposed courses of action to mitigate global warming. He quotes 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good." (NASB)

Oard fears that some people in the environmental movement may want to change our way of life and, in particular, the Christian worldview that has guided the Western Hemisphere.

He does mention the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI) which was endorsed by 86 prominent Christian leaders and which supports taking action on confronting global warming. But he also mentions the Evangelical Interfaith Stewardship Alliance which he says took the ECI to task for "poor analysis" and for the likelihood that the poor would be harmed by "draconian government regulations."

Examples of Hysteria
Examples of misinformation and hysteria are not hard to find, Oard writes. The April 3, 2006 issue of Time magazine stated without any qualifications, "The climate is crashing, and global warming is to blame." The same magazine in a January 22, 1996 article even blamed global warming for blizzards, such as the powerful January, 1996 East Coast northeaster.

A video produced in 1990 claimed world temperatures would rise 55 degrees F by the year 2050.
Oard mentions Al Gore's contention that some opponents of his global warming position are working for the oil companies, but Oard says the agendas of the environmentalists should also be examined because some are benefiting economically.

The Data
What does the data actually show? Oard says the apparent average degree of surface warming in the Northern Hemisphere since 1880 has been only 1.2 degrees F. However, he does say analysis of such data is complex because over the years measurement techniques have changed, instrument shelters have changed locations, the type of thermometers used has changed, there has been a change in the time of observation, and the microclimate around the shelters has changed.

Oard admits that even most critics of the current global warming movement agree that global warming over the past 100 years is undeniable. However, there are other possible causes for this warming in addition to an increase of carbon dioxide. An example is the increased irrigation in the San Joaquin Valley which has caused warmer nighttime and cooler daytime temperatures.

Another key observation is that carbon dioxide has been increasing in the atmosphere, probably since the 1850s due to the industrial revolution and the destruction of tropical rainforests. However, carbon dioxide is only a minor greenhouse gas, providing less than 5% of the greenhouse warmth that makes our planet livable. It is water vapor that actually stabilizes our climate. If it gets too hot, evaporation will increase and clouds will cool the climate by reflecting sunlight.

Both advocates and skeptics of runaway greenhouse warming use the same data but their interpretations differ, just like in the creation/evolution controversy, says Oard.

Natural vs. Man-Made Global Warming
Recent global warming is partly due to natural fluctuations, such as effects of the sun2 and volcanoes. Fewer sunspots and more volcanism can result in cooler temperatures. Fewer sunspots results in less solar radiation. These were probably major factors in causing the Little Ice Age from about 1400 to 1880. However, preceding the Little Ice Age was the Medieval Warm Period. Scientists though are not sure how much global warming is caused by natural fluctuations. One has stated:
The mechanisms driving natural climate variations are too poorly understood to be included accurately in computer climate models. Hence, the models risk overstating human influences. **3**

Oard also mentions some of the gloomy climate predictions of the early and mid-1970s—when it was thought a new ice age was on its way. A cooling trend at that time was leading to an increase in sea ice, at a time when the buildup of carbon dioxide should have been increasing the temperature.

At the present time, while the North Pole seems to be warming up, the South Pole may actually be cooling down.

How Much Warming after Carbon Dioxide Doubles

Climate specialists run computer simulations to predict how much global warming will occur if carbon dioxide (CO2) continues increasing in the atmosphere. Many climate models have been proposed with a wide variety of responses. Simulations that assume a doubling of CO2 have predicted temperature increases ranging from 3 to 11 degrees.

Oard provides data that shows a 60% increase in CO2 since 1880 but only a 0.6OF temperature rise (that can be blamed on human activity). This means, if CO2 doubles, the actual rise in temperature should be closer to 1%. The differences in these projections may be due to difficulties in estimating global variables. Clouds, precipitation, radiation, ocean processes, and snow and ice reflectivities all are difficult to predict.

Will There be a Net Harm To Man and the Environment?

Advocates of dealing with global warming now point out the potential dangers: more and worse hurricanes, melting ice sheets, rising sea levels, droughts, increased death rates from heat, and even a surge in the growth of poison ivy.

But there are potential benefits. While it is true more people may die from severe heat, fewer will die from severe cold. Nearly ten times as many people die from severe cold as from excess heat.**4**

More warmth will also result in an increased growing season and more area for agriculture. Furthermore, since global precipitation increased 1% per decade during the 20th century, global warming may lead to a wetter planet causing more plant growth. More plants also could mean more of the carbon dioxide could be absorbed by the vegetation. There appears to be no long- term increase in droughts because of global warming, though some experts dispute this.

What about action by governments to deal with a perceived increase in hurricanes and carbon dioxide levels? One study says that the cost to fight global warming could be in excess of a trillion dollars per year. The economic hardship, especially on the poor, would be substantial.

What about the predictions of rising sea levels due to global warming, the degree of which is under dispute? People could move inland or build higher dikes. A beneficial result of rising sea levels would be more shipping in the Arctic Ocean.

More Research is Needed

Oard's closing comments restate his contention that more research is needed. Arguments on both sides of the issue should be heard and evaluated. Potential negatives should be considered along with possible benefits of global warming. If more research shows that those scientists who are in the minority on this issue are in error, that we need to invest in new, cost-effective technologies that will reduce global warming. *LSI*

Notes:

1. Oregon Petition Project, http://www.oism.org/pproject/s33p37.htm

2. Recent reports indicate that the planet Mars is also undergoing global warming at a similar rate to that of Earth. Visit "http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/02/070228-mars-warming.html" or type "Mars+global warming" in a search engine.

3. http://www.cornwallalliance.org/docs/Call_to_Truth.pdf

4. A new book titled *Cool It* predicts that if the temperature rises 3.6OF in Britain, there will be an estimated 2,000 more deaths from heat during the next century but more than 20,000 fewer deaths from the cold.