Cornwall Alliance
For The Stewardship Of Creation

A Renewed Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor

An Evangelical Examination of the Theology, Science, and Economics of Global Warming

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world is in the grip of an idea: that burning fossil fuels to provide affordable, abundant energy is causing global warming that will be so dangerous that we must stop it by reducing our use of fossil fuels, no matter the cost.

Is that idea true?

We believe not.

We believe that idea—we'll call it "global warming alarmism"—fails the tests of theology, science, and economics. It rests on poor theology, with a worldview of the Earth and its climate system contrary to that taught in the Bible. It rests on poor science that confuses theory with observation, computer models with reality, and model results with evidence, all while ignoring the lessons of climate history. It rests on poor economics, failing to do reasonable cost/benefit analysis, ignoring or underestimating the costs of reducing fossil fuel use while exaggerating the benefits. And it bears fruit in unethical policy that would

- destroy millions of jobs.
- cost trillions of dollars in lost economic production.
- slow, stop, or reverse economic growth.
- reduce the standard of living for all but the elite few who are well positioned to benefit from laws that unfairly advantage them at the expense of most businesses and all consumers.
- endanger liberty by putting vast new powers over private, social, and market life in the hands of national and international governments.
- condemn the world's poor to generations of continued misery characterized by rampant disease and premature death.

In return for all these sacrifices, what will the world get? At most a negligible, undetectable reduction in global average temperature a hundred years from now.

Our examination of theology, worldview, and ethics (Chapter One) finds that global warming alarmism wrongly views the Earth and its ecosystems as the fragile product of chance, not the robust, resilient, self-regulating, and self-correcting product of God's wise design and powerful sustaining. It rests on and promotes a view of human beings as threats to Earth's flourishing rather than the bearers of God's image, crowned with glory and honor, and given a mandate to act as stewards over the Earth—filling, subduing, and ruling it for God's glory and mankind's benefit. It either wrongly assumes that the environment can flourish only if humanity forfeits economic advance and prosperity or ignores economic impacts altogether. And in its rush to impose draconian reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, it ignores the destructive impact of that policy on the world's poor.

Our examination of the science of global warming (Chapter Two) finds that global warming alarmism wrongly claims that recent temperature changes have been greater and more rapid than those of the past and therefore must be manmade, not natural. It exaggerates the influence of manmade greenhouse gases on global temperature and ignores or underestimates the influence of natural cycles. It mistakenly takes the output of computer climate models as evidence when it is only predictions based on hypotheses that must be tested by observation. It falsely claims overwhelming scientific consensus in favor of the hypothesis of dangerous manmade warming (ignoring tens of thousands of scientists who disagree) and then falsely claims that such consensus proves the hypothesis and justifies policies to fight it. It seeks to intimidate or demonize scientific skeptics rather than welcoming their work as of the very essence of scientific inquiry: putting hypotheses to the test rather than blindly embracing them.

Our examination of the economics of global warming alarmism (Chapter Three) finds that it exaggerates the harms from global warming and ignores or underestimates the benefits not only from warming but also from increased atmospheric carbon dioxide. It grossly underestimates the costs and overestimates the benefits of policies meant to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. It exaggerates the technical feasibility and underestimates the costs of alternative fuels to replace fossil fuels in providing the abundant, affordable energy necessary for wealth creation and poverty reduction. It ignores the urgent need to provide cleaner energy to the roughly two billion poor in the world whose use of wood and dung as primary cooking and heating fuels causes millions of premature deaths and hundreds of millions of debilitating respiratory diseases every year. It fails to recognize that the slowed economic development resulting from its own policies will cost many times more human lives than would the warming it is meant to avert.

In light of all these findings, **we conclude** that

- human activity has negligible influence on global temperature,
- the influence is not dangerous,
- there is no need to mandate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and
- environmental and energy policy should remove, not build, obstacles to the abundant, affordable energy necessary to lift the world's poor out of poverty and sustain prosperity for all.

We also gladly join others in embracing *An Evangelical Declaration on Global Warming*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ONE: THEOLOGY, WORLDVIEW, AND ETHICS OF GLOBAL WARMING POLICY

Earth and all its subsystems—of land, sea, and air, living and nonliving—are the good products of the wise design and omnipotent acts of the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Triune God of the Bible. As such they reveal God's glory. Mankind, created in God's image, is the crown of creation. Human beings have the divine mandate to multiply and to fill, subdue, and rule the Earth, transforming it from wilderness into garden. They act as stewards under God to cultivate and guard what they subdue and rule. Calling them to be His vicegerents over the Earth, God requires obedience to His laws—in Scripture and imprinted in the human conscience—in their stewardship. Although sin, universal among mankind, deeply mars this stewardship, God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ's death on the cross and His instructive activity through Scripture, communicating the nature of creation and human responsibility for it, enable people to create wealth and decrease poverty at the same time that they pursue creation stewardship and, even more important, the true spiritual wealth of knowing their Creator through Jesus Christ.

The Biblical worldview contrasts sharply with the environmentalist worldview—whether secular or religious—in many significant ways. Among these, four are particularly germane:

- Environmentalism sees Earth and its systems as the product of chance and therefore fragile, subject to easy and catastrophic disruption. The Biblical worldview sees Earth and its systems as robust, self-regulating, and self-correcting, not immune to harm but durable.
- Environmentalism sees human beings principally as consumers and polluters who are only quantitatively, not qualitatively, different from other species. The Bible sees people as made in God's image, qualitatively different from all other species, and designed to be producers and stewards who, within a just and free social order, can create more resources than they consume and ensure a clean, healthful, and beautiful environment.
- Environmentalism tends to view nature untouched by human hands as optimal, while the Bible teaches that it can be improved by wise and holy human action.
- Environmentalism tends to substitute subjective, humanist standards of environmental stewardship for the objective, transcendent standards of divine morality.

This Biblical vision anticipates the development of environmentally friendly prosperity through the wise application of knowledge and skill to the raw materials of this world and the just ordering of society. That is, it anticipates the achievement of high levels of economic development and the reduction of poverty along with reductions in resource scarcity, pollution, and other environmental hazards.

The providence and promises of God inform a Christian understanding of creation stewardship, helping to avert irrational or exaggerated fears of catastrophes—fears that are rooted, ultimately, in the loss of faith in God. Those who do trust God are able to assess and respond to risks rationally. God's wisdom, power, and faithfulness justify confidence that Earth's ecosystems are robust and will, by God's providence, accomplish the purposes He set for them.

Sound policymaking requires both moral and prudential (cost/benefit) analysis. In this, a high priority for the church should be the welfare of the poor, since environmental policies often adversely affect them. That is the case with policies intended to reduce global warming by reducing the use of fossil fuels. For example, such fuels are currently the most abundant and affordable alternatives to dirty fuels, like wood and dung, which are now used by two billion

people and cause millions of deaths and hundreds of millions of illnesses from respiratory diseases contracted by breathing their smoke. Insisting on the use of more expensive alternative fuels because of global warming fears means depriving the poor of the abundant, affordable energy they need to rise from abject poverty and its attendant miseries. Such policies fail both moral and prudential tests.

Environmental policies the world's poor most need will aim not at reducing global temperature (over which human action has little control) but at reducing specific risks to the poor regardless of temperature: communicable diseases (especially malaria), malnutrition and hunger, and exclusion from worldwide markets by trade restrictions. Money diverted from these goals to fight global warming will be wasted, while the poor will suffer increased and prolonged misery. Overall economic policy toward the poor should focus on promoting economic development, including making low-cost energy available, through which they can lift themselves out of poverty. It should not focus on wealth redistribution, which fosters dependency and slows development. Above all, the poor—and all other persons—need the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO: THE SCIENCE OF GLOBAL WARMING

When people ask, "Do you believe in global warming?" chances are they mean, "Do you believe human beings are causing global warming?" It is unfortunate that global warming has become synonymous with *manmade* global warming, because it obfuscates the real question: To what extent are human beings contributing to changes that are always occurring in nature anyway?

Some people claim repeatedly that melting sea ice, an increase in global-average temperatures, stronger storms, more floods, and more droughts are occurring due to humanity's burning of fossil fuels. But how many of these changes are real versus imagined? And of those that are real, how much, if at all, can they be attributed to human activities?

Indeed, there have been some significant climatic changes in recent decades. For instance, the normal summer melt-back of Arctic sea ice has increased in the 30 years during which we have had satellites to monitor this remote region of the Earth. There has also been a slow and irregular warming trend of global-average temperatures over the last 50 to 100 years—the same period of time the carbon dioxide (CO_2) content of the atmosphere has increased.

But correlation does not mean causation, and there has been a tendency in the media to overlook research suggesting that these recent changes are, in fact, related to natural cycles in the climate system rather than to atmospheric CO_2 increases from fossil fuel use. That changes occur does not mean human beings are responsible. There is good evidence that most of the warming of the past 150 years is due to natural causes. The belief that climate change is anthropogenic (human-caused) and will have catastrophic consequences is highly speculative.

Recent progress in climate research suggests that:

1. Observed warming and purported dangerous effects have been overstated.
2. Earth's climate is less sensitive to the addition of CO_2 than the alleged scientific consensus claims it to be, which means that climate model predictions of future warming are exaggerated.

3. Those climate changes that have occurred are consistent with natural cycles driven by internal changes in the climate system itself, external changes in solar activity, or both.

In fact, given that CO_2 in the atmosphere is necessary for life on Earth to exist, it is likely that more CO_2 will be beneficial. This possibility is rarely discussed because many environmental activists share the quasi-religious belief that everything mankind does hurts the environment. Yet, if we objectively analyze the scientific evidence, we find good evidence that more CO_2 could lead to greater abundance and diversity of life on Earth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE: THE ECONOMICS OF GLOBAL WARMING POLICY

Many economists who have published articles on the subject consider the science of climate change a settled matter—that human beings are responsible for greenhouse gas emissions that cause dangerous global warming. We are aware of no economic models that take into account the possibility that human influence on climate is negligible. If this argument is correct—and we believe it is (see the science chapter)—then the justification for governments' pursuing greenhouse gas reductions in the name of climate control collapse.

While we believe that human influence on climate is negligible, our task is to assess the economic prudence of policy options offered on the contrary assumption.

Although some sector-level economic studies in agriculture and forestry indicate that warming might enhance well-being, most models find that human well-being improves because of economic growth with or without warming but improves less with significant warming. Even so, economists conclude that an optimal climate policy, assuming there should be one, would avoid locking into a particular technology. Nonetheless, most energy legislation does just that. Economists also recommend against stopping climate change entirely, favoring a policy ramp whereby carbon taxes or emission reduction targets slowly increase as and if average global temperatures rise. But the optimal policy recommendations are based on projected future temperatures from climate models rather than observed temperatures, on the basis of which less warming might be expected.

On the assumption that politicians will seek to force reductions in carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions, economists generally favor taxes over cap and trade as the means. Carbon taxes are (1) transparent so that citizens can recognize them, (2) flexible so they can be adjusted as needed (e.g., tied to average global temperatures), and (3) widely applicable (including across countries). Their revenues can be used to reduce other taxes, thereby possibly providing a double dividend (reduced CO_2 emissions and economic growth due to removal of other taxes). In contrast, cap and trade leaves room for unjustified credits because of government and business corruption and dubious activities such as forest conservation and tree planting; it gives large emitters huge windfalls in the form of free permits early in the regime unless all emission permits are auctioned by the government; and it yields no double dividend. Both large industrial emitters and financial institutions, unsurprisingly, lobby hard for cap and trade—the former benefiting from the windfall at the start, the latter from transaction fees in a commodity market that could be worth $3 trillion annually. Their support for climate policies must not be mistaken, however, for conviction either that dangerous manmade warming is real or that the policies are the best way to respond. It is rent seeking: lobbying for legislation to profit from potentially massive, policy-created windfalls.

Finally, many supporters of mandated emission reductions assume that price-competitive renewable energy sources will soon displace fossil fuels. However, large technical obstacles need to be overcome before renewable energy will become price competitive on global or national scales—a process that might take 50 to 100 years or more.

In light of these considerations and those of the other two chapters of this document, we recommend against mandated reductions on CO_2 emissions—whether through cap and trade (the worst kind of emissions reduction policy) or a carbon tax (the least bad emissions reduction policy, but still not good)—and for the promotion of economic development and targeted problem solving (e.g., disease reduction and nutrition enhancement) as a means to fortify people the world over—especially the poor—against material threats to their well-being, whether from climate change or anything else.