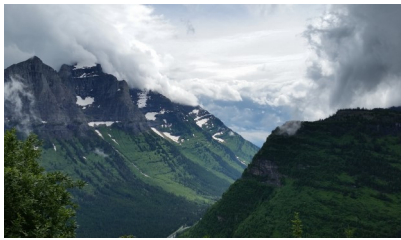


## CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CONFLICT



It is the global talk. Naturally so! Climate change affects us all, for it raises the question of our future. We may assume, then, that the matter would be unifying and cause us to return to God. Not so. Climate change is pretty much agreed, but the rift as to whether humanity is responsible, and whether we are on course for extinction runs very deep, and we remain too proud to return to God.

### A CONFLICT OF SCIENTISTS

Those indicting human activity claim an overwhelming consensus—97-98 percent of researchers according to the 2010 Anderegg study. They claim also the support of a higher order of scientists. Those countering this view note that, in the same year, Climate Depot featured 1,000 plus scientists, several of them former members of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, denying that humans are primarily responsible. The Cook review of 11,944 peer-reviewed studies found 66.4 percent of the studies had no stated position on anthropogenic global warming. Only 65 papers (0.5%) explicitly stated “that humans are the primary cause of recent global warming.”

### A CONFLICT OF “FACTS”

The securer path might be to assume that we *are* culpable. Yet, with tight competition for public money, climate change deniers oppose the funding levels activists propose and the amount of hysteria they generate.

The disagreement over human activity revolves around carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels. Climate change activists consider the rate and type of CO<sub>2</sub> attributable to the industrial use of fossil fuels (coal and oil), resulting, they claim, in greenhouse gases, global warming, devastating flooding (via melting polar ice caps) and raging fires.

Opponents argue that global warming preceded the rise in

CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and that much CO<sub>2</sub> from human activity is absorbed by forests, oceans, and other “carbon sinks” (natural reservoirs). On this understanding, global warming is due to cyclical variations in the heat of the sun, receding in recent decades even as CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen. Likewise, rising water and acidity levels in the oceans are within historic variations.

For more, visit [climatechange.procon.org/](http://climatechange.procon.org/). Suffice it to say, that if ever there was evidence that science is not gospel truth but an interpretation of data, climate change is it.

### A CONFLICT OF GENERATIONS

Mainstream media sides with climate change activists. Contrast the treatment of botanist and environmentalist David Bellamy OBE (1933–2019), with that of schoolgirl Greta Thunberg, (born 2003), descendant of Svante Arrhenius, 1903 Nobel Prize winner in chemistry, who discovered that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide raise earth’s surface temperature.

Bellamy was an early victim of “cancel culture,” having his TV career shelved by the BBC and ITV for challenging the theory of climate activists. Inspired by an unparalleled heatwave, Thunberg, armed with passion, savvy social media skills, and the support of global media, has risen in 18 months from local activist to global climate change icon, forming a children’s movement of 1.4 million people in 2,000 cities in 128 countries. Qualified or not, Thunberg regularly addresses (and dresses down!) politicians, the U. N. Climate Summit, and sports stars alike.

Thunberg illustrates how the younger generation is turning on the older. Theirs, they reason, is the first generation to bear the effects of climate change and the last to be able to address them. “Leave us a livable planet,” they plead. Ultimately, only God can do that—yes, the God scientists have spent the modern and postmodern eras seeking to eradicate from our thoughts and our hopes.

(Photo: Glacier Mountain Park, Montana, United States, which recently removed signs stating that the glaciers will be gone by 2020.)

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SUNDAY WORSHIP TIMES



## CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CRISIS

When we take God out of the equation of life, and then encounter what natural historian Sir David Attenborough calls the biggest threat to our existence in a millennium, panic or denial becomes inevitable. After all the scientific progress, protests, and environmental reforms, humankind has little assurance that climate change is soluble.

### THE PANICKED RESPONSE

Activists say we are well into a planetary emergency. They point to biodiversity loss, rising sea levels, desertification, wildfires, water shortage, crop failure, and extreme weather as evidence. Terrestrial destabilization coming, promising mass displacements, disease, increased risks of war, and threats to human rights.

On this reading, human extinction is in sight. Activists believe that by the year 2050 earth will be uninhabitable. That is why Greta Thunberg calls climate change “an existential threat.” British climate activists agree, titling protest for environmental reform *Extinction Rebellion*: “We are facing an unprecedented global emergency. Life on Earth is in crisis: scientists agree we have entered a period of abrupt climate breakdown, and we are in the midst of a mass extinction of our own making” ([rebellion.earth/](http://rebellion.earth/)).

While a belated postindustrial care for the environment has got to be a good thing, what climate activists don't seem to realize or to admit is the extent to which their panic, justified they would argue, is actually a commentary on their spiritual state—one of confused insecurity.

*On the one hand*, their belief that man-made climate change is leading to our extinction, flies in the face of the existence of a sovereign God and of his revelation that he, and not man, will be the one to end history as we know it. While God shall use means to bring this age to an end, he has already revealed that chief among them is Jesus Christ who has promised to return to inaugurate a new earth.

Climate activists may pooh-pooh belief in God and trust in the Holy Bible as a revelation from God, but the panic now on public show is both the cost and the hopelessness of their unbelief. If Thunberg were alone in the present hysteria, we could pass it off as a side effect of her regrettable Asperger's Syndrome. She admits it causes her to see the world a little differently. More intensively, we may say. But what of the professionals in the *Extinction Rebellion*?

*On the other hand*, the unbelief of the climate activist does not explain his or her sense of moral outrage. As Thunberg told *Time*: “I thought that nothing is happening and no one is doing anything—it is my moral duty to do what I can.” How come? Since activists typically ignore God's

existence and his indelible etching of his law on the human constitution (Romans 2:14-15), believing man to be but a material being, where does this moral sense come from? And what of the fear of nonexistence? Could it be that we were not made for that? God has, says the Bible, placed within our hearts a sense of eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The activist's protest, then, testifies to God's creation of man, but the present panic arises from the impact of sin on man's levels of security.



### THE PLACID RESPONSE

Climate change denial can be as much a commentary on our spiritual state as its activist counterpart. Whereas the activist looks to man to save the race, the denier, who may be a theist or atheist, assumes our race needs no saving.

Interestingly, the three countries with the highest proportion of deniers also have a large number of monotheists: America (13%), Saudi Arabia (16%), and Indonesia (18%), says YouGov Cambridge Globalism Project. How so? Well, theism believes God is sovereign over his creation. Yet, a theist, falling short of a relationship with God, is, typically, more likely than the Christian to be satisfied by industry's ulterior turning of a blind eye to climate change. Atheists, however, may share this vested interest, but may also, like the theist, deny climate change simply because of a variant interpretation of the available data.

Additionally, there is dissociation. Whether theist or atheist, “dissociationists” highlight the responsibilities of China, India, Russia, and select countries of Africa wherein are the ten rivers carrying 95 percent of the plastic waste into the oceans of the world. Since much dissociation is found in America, it is possibly explained, in part, by western individualism, geographical isolation, and a carnal appropriation of the idea of manifest destiny. Whether American or not, “dissociationists” acknowledge that climate change and environmental disasters are real, but deem them not their problem. Indeed, their disparagement of preliminary moves to change human behavior and to challenge damage to marine life can be breathtaking.

Whereas, then, the activist speaks surprisingly of morality, the denier may believe in it but be content to live in a self-centered and self-serving bubble, aloof from the rest of the race. He or she rightly understands that climate change will not lead to human extinction, but can be careless about our responsibilities to God, to the environment, and to our children. Yet, since, as we shall see, man is going to survive, we have every reason to care for our environment.

## CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CONTRAST

The global conversation is well overdue the factoring in of God and his Word (the Holy Bible). Try as man might, he cannot get rid of either. Why should he try? It is God speaking through his Word who helps us to weave between the panic and denial of our day. He offers us hope, affirming that while history is coming to an end, there is to be no extinction of man. He places on us a responsibility for the environment, but declares that it is he and not man who will end history as we know it.

### THE PRESERVATION OF HUMANKIND

Since the Bible nowhere attempts to prove God's existence, we shall forgo the endeavor here. In Holy Scripture, atheism is a folly wherein man contradicts with his heart what he knows in his head of God's existence (Psalm 14:1, 53:1, Romans 1:18-20). Rather, the Bible launches into how God created, then furnished, the universe in readiness for man. We were created last—the climax of creation. Then God beheld his creation. It was *"very good"* (Genesis 1:31).

Yet, man fell and he and his environment came under God's judgment. Death entered man's experience, and remains both inevitable and insoluble. God, though, continued to uphold his universe, and having reset the corrupted creation through the flood of Noah's day, has promised never again to curse the earth (Genesis 8:21-22).

God's promise, still trustworthy these millennia later, is reason enough to rethink humanism's attempt to bury God.

*First*, because God is not the problem. It is man who activists deem culpable for climate change. If we had not been so arrogant in this scientific age, and humbly carried with us through the agrarian, industrial, and technological revolutions the wisdom of the ages, activists wouldn't now be panicking or in need of a *volte-face*.

Note the way that David Attenborough has deified "mother nature": "We . . . depend upon the natural world for every breath of air we take and every mouthful of food that we eat." Now contrast the apostle Paul's quoting of the poet, Epimenedes of Crete, to the intelligentsia of Athens: It is *"in [God] we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28). Until we trust the God who created nature and has promised to sustain it, man's panic or denial will be commonplace. (Rafaello Santi, Sermon of Saint Paul in Athens.)



*Second*, we ought to rethink the attempted burial of God because science, as a religion, has failed. Still worshiped, it

cannot be trusted for life and for death. Its god, the natural world, is, says Attenborough (opposite), at "a moment of crisis." Its Bible, rationalism and progress, is not guaranteeing either the redemption or resurrection of man. Its high priests serving in the temples of science are divided and make few prophecies of hope. Having failed to abolish death, they now forewarn of extinction. Grounded in the hubris of man and his claim to sovereignty, science as a religion is tottering. (Photo: [www.bing.com/images/].)



### THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Is God, then, backing the blasé and reckless treatment of the environment? Hardly! He gifted man the earth not for its destruction but for its stewardship and investigation. God has enabled scientists to scope earth's resources, intending, though, neither the worship of nature nor the erection of science as a religion. He opposes, then, both the deniers' ungrateful and impudent disregard for creation and the elevation of nature by the high priests of science and their followers to an object of worship.

What then is the purpose of climate change in the plan of God if it does not signal our extinction? Since God is sovereign and has promised never again to curse the earth, why does he allow it? The Bible admits some conjecture.

*First*, to show us our smallness. We have gotten above ourselves, thinking "We can do it! Yes we can!" Periodically, God, the everlasting God, reminds us of our finitude and brevity, saying to us in effect, "You can't do it! No you can't!" Since God dismissed Adam and Eve from his presence for thinking they could rival him, and tore down the tower of Babel, shattering the allusion of those who thought they could reach heaven by their own efforts, why would he not topple the idolatry of science and at the same time permit our chastened race to cleanup the earth given us?

*Second*, to show us our sins. The path to experiencing God's love and grace goes through the cesspit of our personal and communal sin. The idolizing of science is but one idolatry. We've made our entertainment heroes icons of the Divine. Public discourse is rife with profanities. We have robbed the Lord's Day from the Lord, and dishonor the authority structures which God designed for our peace and stability. We claim the dismembering of the unborn to be our right (some healthcare!), disregarding and redefining marriage, thinking nothing of theft, lying, or coveting.

*Third*, to lovingly command our return to him. If, then, you are party to man's resolute rebellion against God, know that he graciously calls to you through the crises of earth to find your security in him. Read on to learn more.

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## CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CALL


Here are three of the numerous reasons to return to God.

*First*, God has granted you this day of grace. It won't last forever, but will end when Christ returns. Wrote the apostle Peter, *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9).

*Second*, God tells us that it is not extinction we have to worry about, for our souls are eternal and our bodies are promised resurrection. We are to fear, rather, ending our lives impenitent, facing the God who offered us grace, but who shall then, by requirement of his just character, penalize our every breakage of his moral law. We are to fixate less, then, about being on the wrong side of history, and more about being on the wrong side of God.

While God uses fear of his justice to break the shackles of our rebellion—notifying us that Christ will return to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:30-31)—we turn to God, *third*, because Christ, the embodiment of God's love, has promised us that those turning unto God from their sins and resting in his atonement will be admitted to the "*new world*" he is going to inaugurate on his return (Matthew 19:28).

Literally, Jesus spoke of "*the regeneration*," indicating that the world will be born again, cleansed of its sin and rid of its insecurities. The current groans of creation, then, are not the throes of death, but, writes the apostle Paul, the labor pains of a woman awaiting to give birth (Romans 8:22). God grant you, then, through your own new birth (John 1:12-13, 3:1-8), the repentance and faith in Christ, needed to enter the new world.



Forgiveness

Next Issue Due Out: June 1

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