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# How Should You Think About Global Warming?



HANK HANEGRAFF  
CHRISTIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

## FOUR DISTINCT QUESTIONS:

*Is the earth warming?*

*If it is warming, is human activity causing it?*

*If it is warming, is that actually bad overall?*

*Suppose it is warming, we're causing it, and it's bad: would implementing any of the policies around today make a difference, or would their cost exceed their benefit?*

The **Christian Research Institute** (CRI) exists to provide Christians worldwide with carefully researched information and well-reasoned answers that encourage them in their faith and equip them to intelligently represent it to people influenced by ideas and teachings that assault or undermine orthodox, biblical Christianity. In carrying out this mission, CRI's strategy is expressed by the acronym *E-Q-U-I-P*:

The “E” in EQUIP represents the word *essentials*. CRI is committed to the maxim: “In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things charity.”

The “Q” in the acronym EQUIP represents the word *questions*. In addition to focusing on essentials, CRI answers people's questions regarding cults, culture, and Christianity.

The “U” in the word EQUIP represents the word *user-friendly*. As much as possible, CRI is committed to taking complex issues and making them understandable and accessible to the lay Christian.

This brings us to the “I” in EQUIP, which stands for *integrity*. Recall Paul's admonition: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

Finally, the “P” in the acronym EQUIP represents the word *para-church*. CRI is deeply committed to the local church as the God-ordained vehicle for equipping, evangelism, and education.

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# Introduction

One of the critical issues of concern at the Christian Research Institute is discernment. Put another way, I am concerned that Christians have the discernment skills to separate wheat from chaff and heat from light. In this vein, I put together this booklet on global warming not just to give you my perspective, but to provide you with a basis for thinking rightly for yourself about such issues.

First, it is crucial to ask the right questions and ask them in the right order. Furthermore, we need to carefully consider the cost of having our eyes on the wrong ball. Finally, we must be mindful that, whether or not global warming is the catastrophe it is popularly characterized as being, we are called as Christians to be stewards of God's creation.

What I attempt to do in this booklet is to boil global warming down to its irreducible minimum. In other words, I have chiseled my impromptu answers on global warming until only the gem emerges. Additionally, this booklet provides you with an interview I did with Dr. Jay W. Richards on our *Bible Answer Man* broadcast.

It is my prayer that when you have finished reading this material, you will be able to cut through the fog and clearly understand the essence of a highly controversial and politicized issue.

Hank Hanegraaff  
Charlotte, North Carolina

# How Should You Think About Global Warming?

*“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:28)*

**G**lobal warming is hot, hot, hot! This morning I opened *USA Today* and encountered a full-page ad that begins as follows: *“Rising temperatures. Disastrous droughts. Melting glaciers and polar ice sheets. Polar bears headed to extinction. The climate crisis isn’t on the way. It’s here.”*<sup>1</sup> CNN founder Ted Turner is similarly pessimistic: *“We will be eight degrees hotter in 30 to 40 years and basically none of the crops will grow.”* As a result, says Turner, *“most of the people will have died and the rest of us will be cannibals.”*<sup>2</sup> Former Vice President Al Gore is equally emphatic. In his view, global warming is the

single greatest threat facing our planet.<sup>3</sup> Ellen Goodman of *The Boston Globe* puts global warming deniers on par with Holocaust deniers.<sup>4</sup> And prominent Baptist pastor Oliver “Buzz” Thomas has gone so far as to castigate spiritual leaders for failing to urge followers to have smaller families in light of this global catastrophe. Says Thomas, *“We must stop having so many children. Clergy should consider voicing the difficult truth that having more than two children during such a time is selfish. Dare we say sinful?”*<sup>5</sup> As global warming rhetoric continues to boil over, what is a Christian to do?

First, as Dr. Jay W. Richards, who holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and theology, points out, we should learn to ask the right questions and to ask them in the right order.<sup>6</sup> Our initial question should be: *Is global warming a reality?* The answer is a qualified “yes.” If we appropriate accurate averages over 150 years and carefully consider current satellite data, it appears

likely that we are experiencing a slight warming trend. We must, however, exercise extreme caution in the extrapolation of trends. It is instructive to note that the first Earth Day (April 22, 1970) was observed amid the specter of a looming ice age. Indeed, four years later *Time* pontificated that the “telltale signs” of an ice age were evident “everywhere.”<sup>77</sup>

The second question is this: *If the globe is warming, is human activity causing it?* According to Dr. William M. Gray, a Ph.D. in the geophysical sciences and a pioneer in the science of forecasting hurricanes, “The human impact on the atmosphere is simply too small to have a major effect on global temperatures.”<sup>78</sup> And Gray is not alone. A quick Google search is sufficient to demonstrate that global warming is far from settled science.

Third, we should ask: *Is global warming necessarily bad?* In response, Dr. Richards notes that a thousand years ago during a medieval warming period, European agriculture experienced an increase in productivity. Moreover, more deaths result from cold winters than hot summers. While common sense might lead us to conclude that a warming trend is far less dangerous than a new ice age, reality is that there hasn’t been sufficient study to be sure.

One thing is certain, however: sensationalism, sophistry, and sloppy journalism have done little to advance the ball. One need only think back a few years to Al Gore’s dire warnings of global catastrophe as a

result of the “millennium bug.” And Gore does not stand alone. Media, magazines, and ministers collectively rode the millennium bug hard. Indeed, when my primary source research project—published as *The Millennium Bug Debugged*<sup>79</sup>—revealed that Y2K would not even be a top-10 news story in the year 2000, I became the object of controversy and contempt. One well-known Christian broadcaster went as far as to suggest that I would have the blood of millions on my hands for causing complacency within the body of Christ. Truth is, the real danger is in the *ready-fire-aim* syndrome.

Furthermore, as Christians we should carefully consider the cost of having our eyes on the wrong ball. If we participate in promoting political policies involving trillions of dollars, there should be convincing evidence that global warming is, as Gore contends, the most pressing problem facing the planet. As Richards points out, the Kyoto Protocol (a legally binding agreement under which industrialized countries would reduce their collective emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide to about 5 percent below 1990 levels) would cost the global economy tens of trillions of dollars. By comparison, providing clean water for areas of the world that currently have contaminated water could be accomplished for around 200 billion. It is a genuine tragedy that while Christian leaders were hyping Y2K in

America, millions of God's children were dying from malaria in Africa. And malaria is but one of the prevalent planetary problems. A whole range of issues from toxic waste to the war on terrorism could be addressed for a fraction of the cost. Point is: We dare not be wrong this time around!

Finally, what is incontrovertible is that Christians are called to be caretakers or stewards of God's creation. As such, we are not only called to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), but we are commissioned to carry out the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28). In the words of cultural apologist Nancy Pearcey, we are to "develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws" as well as "plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music."<sup>10</sup> In other words, as crowning jewels of God's creation, we are to care for the created order. The tragedy is that those who approach the prediction of catastrophic human-induced global warming with a healthy dose of skepticism are routinely castigated as environmental enemies. Moral judgments are meted out with breathless abandon on everything from the size of one's family to the size of one's family car. The aforementioned Baptist preacher, Buzz Thomas, goes so far as to judge those who have more than two children as "selfish" and "sinful." In like fashion, leaders of the Evangelical Environmental Network have taken it upon themselves to posit that Jesus

wouldn't drive an SUV.<sup>11</sup> They seem blithely unaware that their idiosyncratic fundamentalism often flies in the face of the facts. As should be obvious, there are myriad factors to be considered with respect to family size. Whether one has two or twelve children is less important than whether those children grow up to be selfless producers as opposed to merely selfish consumers. Likewise, fuel savings do not necessarily dwarf such factors as family size or family safety. As Richards has well said, "Fuel economy doesn't trump other factors, especially since some cars (such as hybrids) have better than average fuel economy but require more energy both to construct and to recycle than do other, less fuel efficient cars. So an outside observer is in no position to make a moral judgment just by observing that you drive an SUV."

In an age in which Christians are all too often characterized as "poor, undereducated, and easily led," we should avoid lending credence to the stereotype. Instead, we should commit ourselves to care for Christ's creation with tender hearts as well as with tenacious minds.

—*Hank Hanegraaff*



# Hank Hanegraaff

## Interviews Jay W. Richards

**HANK HANEGRAAFF:** Today I feel as though I'm in much the same position I was when I first tackled the "millennium bug" or what was popularly referred to as Y2K. I was called "blind to truth" or "downright uninformed," like an ostrich with my head in the sand. When I suggested on the *Bible Answer Man* broadcast that Y2K would not even be a top-10 news story in the year 2000, I was accused of causing complacency within the body of Christ. One broadcaster went so far as to say that I would have the blood of millions of Christians on my hands because I was causing complacency within the body of Christ. What I suggested in my book, *The Millennium Bug Debugged*,<sup>2</sup> which was released in 1999, was that the real problem was sophistry, sloppy journalism, sensationalism, and selling. I experienced the wrath of gate keepers, who were selling freeze-dried food and survival kits, as well as of people in the pews, who were absolutely certain that Christian leaders—particularly those who were

politically connected—could not possibly be wrong on such an important matter.

As with Y2K, the theory of global warming has drawn the support of celebrities and scientists of the highest magnitude. It has even been promoted by the man who was once the second most powerful person in the free world. But not everyone agrees. Eminent professor of atmospheric science at M.I.T., Richard Lindzen, writes, "Al Gore is wrong. There is no 'consensus' on global warming." Lindzen goes on to explain, "A general characteristic of Mr. Gore's approach is to assiduously ignore the fact that the earth and its climate are dynamic; they are always changing even without any external forcing. To treat all change as something to fear is bad enough; to do so in order to exploit that fear is much worse. Regardless, these items are clearly not issues over which debate is ended—at least not in terms of the actual science."<sup>3</sup>

Eminent meteorologist Dr. William Gray called the theory that resulted in Gore's share of the Nobel Prize "ridiculous." He said, "We're brainwashing our children...They're going to the Gore movie (*An Inconvenient Truth*) and being fed all this. It's ridiculous....The human impact on the atmosphere is simply too small to have a major effect on global temperatures."<sup>4</sup> And Dr. Gray was particularly critical of fellow scientists who failed to speak up because they'd lose funding and intellectual prestige.

Well, today, as with Y2K, legislative initiatives and social schemes abound, and once again I'm in danger of losing a lot of support for questioning, this time, the human impact on global warming. Despite the danger, it is my contention that a forthright discussion is necessary. As I put it in my book, *The Millennium Bug Debugged*, those who are currently making life-decisions based on sloppy journalism, sophistry, and "scriptorture" (the torture of Scripture) must commit themselves to developing the necessary skills to discern wheat from chaff and heat from light, not only on the issue of global warming, but on a lot of other discernment issues as well. If we will do that, the next time we face the selling and subjectivism of Christian sensationalists, as we surely will in the future, Christians will unify around truth rather than divide over error.

In short, I tackle these issues because truth matters. Could it be that our credibility as Christian

leaders is once again at stake? Was the Evangelical Climate Initiative—which was signed by 86 evangelical leaders—misguided? Could evangelicals have their eye on the wrong ball? Could a real concern be focused on human health hazards like insufficient sanitation or nuclear waste around the world? Is global warming settled science or is it just another expression of politicized science? And what is global warming anyway?

Well, we're going to be talking about all of this as well as taking your questions on today's edition of the *Bible Answer Man* broadcast with my special guest, Dr. Jay Wesley Richards. Jay holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and theology with honors from Princeton Theological Seminary, where he was formerly a Teaching Fellow. Currently he is a Research Fellow and Director of Media at the Acton Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There's much, much more that I could say about Jay Richards, but one thing that I should emphasize is the fact that he's been on this broadcast to discuss one of the most popular products ever in our history: A video documentary titled *The Privileged Planet: The Search for Purpose in the Universe*. This DVD was based on the book by the same title that he co-authored with astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez, and both the DVD and the book are available through the Christian Research Institute.<sup>5</sup>

Welcome to the show, now, Dr. Jay Richards. Always great to have you here.

**DR. JAY W. RICHARDS:** Great to be with you.

**HANK:** It seems to me that if we're going to have a strongly held belief, it stands to reason that we'd be able to express that belief accurately. Yet a lot of people are talking about global warming and simply can't define what they're talking about. Let's start at the very beginning. *What is global warming?*

**JAY:** We have to think of global warming as several different claims. Initially, it's just the claim that over time the average temperature of the globe is warming. That's a basic claim, and it could be true or false. The thing that's controversial, however, is the additional claim that humans are causing warming. We've really got to keep those two claims separate because in principle we could determine that over some period of time the average global temperature increased, but that's not going to tell us what caused it. Yet it's the idea that the warming is caused by human beings that is the major source of controversy.

**HANK:** One of the things that you've pointed out is that we have to ask the right questions, and we should ask the right questions in the right order. There are four such questions that you think have to be asked.

The first question is, *Is the earth warming?* You started to address that.

**JAY:** That's right. That's an empirical question. That's a question of fact about what's actually happening out there in the world; and if we want to know if the globe is warming, we are presumably going to use something like thermometers. We want to ask the question: "Is it warming over time, on average?" Of course, there are going to be some spots that are getting cooler or warmer all the time, but we want to know on average. So, you can determine this in two ways: with measuring stations distributed accurately over the surface of the earth, or with satellites. Now, we haven't had satellites that could do this kind of measuring until recently, so satellite measurements will cover a much shorter span of time but with much more accurate measuring than the thermometers.

It's also important to pick a baseline. You could ask, "Is it warming since last year?" Well, it looks at the moment that there's actually a cooling trend over the last year. But most people count from about the year 1850 or 1870 because that's the point at which we started putting a lot of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

The question of whether or not the globe is warming is an empirical question that ideally we should be able to determine. So, are we in a warming trend since 1850? I happen to think that we probably are. The evidence looks pretty good that at the moment, over the last 150 years, we are in a slight warming trend. But that's only one question and one

answer, and there's a lot more important stuff to ask and answer than that.

**HANK:** Okay, so when we ask whether or not the planet is warming, you can answer that question with a qualified “yes.”

The second question that frames this issue, then, is, *If the planet is warming, is human activity causing that warming?*

**JAY:** And that's a completely different question. It's quite possible that there is some cause other than human activity for the global warming. The fact that this particular question is so rarely discussed or debated in the mainstream media is evidence itself that a lot of folks don't want an ordinary American to understand the issue.

On the one hand, it's possible that global warming is human-induced in the sense that we're increasing the amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide and methane, which capture heat from the sun in the atmosphere and, so the argument goes, cause the globe to warm. That's a logical possibility, and there is some kind of scientific reasoning behind that.

It's also possible, however, that the current global warming trend is the result of solar cycles, such that there is a variation in the output of energy from the sun, or some third or fourth possibility that we don't

fully understand. So, even if we say that the evidence for the warming trend is pretty good, that doesn't tell us that human beings are the cause of it—and that's where, frankly, almost all the controversy is.

**HANK:** So, number one, there *is* global warming. Number two, you're not so convinced that human beings play a significant role in that global warming.

**JAY:** Right. The primary issue, in my mind, is to get people just to ask and think about the question. I, myself, am of the opinion that we don't have solid evidence that humans are causing the warming. Rather, we're relying on theoretical assumptions that are plugged into computer models at the beginning. Of course, then, those models predict warming because they assume it in the first place as being caused by carbon dioxide emissions. But that's not direct evidence of us causing it. So, I think the evidence for the idea that human activity is causing global warming is fairly flimsy compared to the evidence that the warming itself is real. And so I would say that at the moment we are, at best, uncertain of that answer, and I think probably humans are not the primary cause of it.

**HANK:** The third critical issue that has to be addressed when we talk about global warming is an issue that you codify by asking, *If global warming is a reality, is it actually harmful or bad?*

**JAY:** That's right. When I've asked this question before audiences, I sometimes hear gasps. The reason is that no one normally even imagines that global warming could be good. The whole premise of the public debate is: "Of course it's bad. In fact, not only is it bad, not only are we causing it, but it's catastrophic and we've got to do something about it." Common sense itself, however, will tell you that in general a little bit of warming is usually better than cooling. There are 10 times more deaths from cold-related accidents and problems that you have in the winter than there are from heat-related accidents and problems in the summer.

Large portions of the earth, moreover, have more fertile climate, longer growing seasons, and things like this when there's a warming trend than when there's a cooling trend. A thousand years ago there was a medieval warming period in which European agriculture was much more productive. And so to really say that a warming trend is bad, you'd have to be able to answer the question, "Is it bad on balance?" Suppose we calculate all the costs and all the benefits of an increase of global temperature of, say, three degrees and then conclude, "No, the costs outweigh the benefits." Then we could say it's bad. At the moment, however, nobody has done a serious study to determine that the costs outweigh the benefits, and I think that common sense is that at least moderate warming probably would be, on balance, good rather than bad.

**HANK:** You are saying that we have to ask the right questions, and we have to ask the right questions in the right order. The first question is, *Is the earth warming?* The second question is, *If it's warming, are human beings the cause of the warming?* The third question is, *If it's warming, is it really bad?*

And then there's a fourth question: *Suppose it is warming, we're causing it, and it's bad: would implementing any of the policies around today make a difference, or would their cost exceed their benefit?*

**JAY:** That's really the moral question for Christians, because the thing we haven't talked about yet is the fact that, yes, as Christians we should be concerned about these issues because God has made us stewards of His created order and of the environment. But if we're going to be good stewards we have to enact policies and do things that will actually help the situation. Yet if you look closely at the popular proposals for doing something about global warming, even the official advocates usually will admit that most of the policies would do very little, if anything. So you have to say, "Okay, if we're going to enact a policy and it's going to do nothing, but it's going to cost billions or trillions of dollars, why are we doing it in the first place?"

**HANK:** One of those popular policies is the Kyoto Protocol. We throw that term around, but a lot of people need to know what it is to begin with.

**JAY:** Kyoto refers initially to a Japanese city. It was essentially a United Nations-sponsored meeting in which participating nations agreed to restrict their carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions by about five percent below 1990 levels. In other words, by some set date, say 2010, they said, “We will take whatever our emissions were back in 1990 and we’ll get five percent below that.” And so a lot of participating nations signed on to this, especially a lot of European nations. There were exceptions to it, like China and India, which were excepted because they were still developing. Famously, however, the United States did not sign on to the treaty. When the vote was brought before the U.S. senate during the Clinton administration, the decision was something like 95 to 1 against ratifying the treaty. So it was very unpopular. The United States still gets badgered about not signing on to the so-called Kyoto Protocol.

But what’s funny is that the people who actually developed the Protocol admitted that even if it were fully implemented—if all the countries that signed on to it actually abide by its restrictions—out to about the year 2050 it would make virtually no difference in the rate of the warming. Their estimate is that it would reduce the rate of warming by .07 degrees Celsius. That would essentially be an undetectable amount of reduction just in the rate of the increase of the warming. Moreover, this is based on the assumed-

truth of the theoretical models in the first place. So, fully implementing the Kyoto Protocol would make virtually no difference.

But then you’re forced to ask another question: “Okay, that was the benefit—virtually nothing. What was the cost?” Well, if we actually implemented the Kyoto Protocol worldwide, it would cost the international economy somewhere between 10 and 50 trillion dollars, and that’s serious money that could be spent on a lot of other things. If you’re doing a cost-benefit analysis, there is virtually no benefit and there’s a huge cost. So, quite apart from the question of global warming and whether we’re causing it, we ought to take serious economic reality, face it squarely, and say, “Look, the Kyoto Protocol makes absolutely no sense.”

**HANK:** I mentioned earlier the fact that an initiative—the Evangelical Climate Initiative—was signed by 86 evangelical leaders, and I posed the question, “Was this misguided?” I see today that we have the Southern Baptists issuing a surprising call to fight climate change. Are we placing our focus on the wrong ball? In other words, are there more human health hazards with greater significance that we ought to pay economic attention to as opposed to global warming?

**JAY:** Absolutely. A lot of people, including many concerned Christians, are focusing on an issue that

I think is really a distraction, a decoy. For about 200 billion dollars we could provide clean water to those areas of the world that presently have contaminated water. We ought to be concerned about the probably million or so deaths per year from malaria in Africa, and thus provide pesticides and vaccines to reduce the incidence of malaria. Any money spent on one thing is money not spent on another thing. That's just a simple lesson of trade-offs and opportunity costs. So if we allocate billions of dollars to try to reduce the emissions in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, that is money that is not going to get spent on developing technology for clean water for remote villages in Africa or reducing malaria in Africa. There are lots of very basic environmental problems, health problems, and poverty problems that we ought to be focusing on. Yet virtually all of our moral and psychic energy is focused on this catastrophic prediction that we're going to destroy the planet because we're driving cars and flying in airplanes. The most serious problem with global warming is that it's a huge distraction from more important issues.

**HANK:** I suppose we cannot emphasize enough that if we have our eye on the wrong ball, there will be radical economic consequences as a result. There will be a great cost to humanity worldwide if we make the wrong choice here.

**JAY:** Most evangelical groups that have talked about this have said that the problem with climate change is that warming will disproportionately affect the poor. The reality is, however, that any change is going to disproportionately affect the poor because the poor have the least means to adapt to change. One thing we know is that if you increase energy costs worldwide, the people that are going to be the most adversely affected are those on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. For most of us, middle-class and upper middle-class Americans, energy costs are not a huge percentage of our overall budget. But if you're at the very bottom of the economic ladder and you're just getting by, and you double the cost of heating oil, gasoline, and electricity, then that can be absolutely catastrophic. That's why I'm really concerned about this. It's not just because I'm going to be paying a little bit more at the gas pump. It's because the reality is that when you increase the cost of energy, you increase the cost of living for millions of people. It's just that simple.

**HANK:** One of the things you hear, if you pay attention to this debate at all, is that global warming is settled science. Allegedly, the vast preponderance of people who have studied these issues conclude that global warming is a huge threat and warn that if we don't tackle it now, we're all going to be in a world of hurt. The question then becomes, Is this in fact true? Is this settled science or is this politicized science? Are

there qualified people like your self who are saying, “Not so fast”?

**JAY:** I consider myself a shameless generalist on this. I’ve written a book related to planetary science.<sup>6</sup> The truth of the matter is that when you get beyond trivial questions such as, “Well, are we in a warming trend?” on which there is general agreement within the scientific community, you get into questions about how much human beings are contributing to it and whether or not the warming is catastrophic, over which there is tremendous debate within the scientific community.

We’re talking here about predictions of what is going to happen in the future based on theoretical models, so by definition our statements about this subject should be tentative. When you hear pronouncements from the media that global warming is settled science—that it’s based on an iron-clad consensus—the fact that we’re talking about future predictions ought to give the game away right there. How can there be an absolute consensus on something that is based solely on predictions grounded in a theoretical model? That doesn’t make any sense. What would be surprising is the existence of a real consensus. Indeed, if there were a real consensus, I’d be frightened because I’d wonder how that happened. But it doesn’t take but 20 minutes of Googling on the Internet to discover a very robust debate on this

subject. It’s simply not true that there’s a consensus on any of the controversial subjects like whether we’re causing it or how bad it’s going to be.

**HANK:** One of the interesting things about this issue is that when we jump on board, as many evangelical Christian leaders are doing right now, we’re aligning ourselves with people who have worldviews that cannot be harmonized with a biblical worldview. There are a lot of issues, such as pro-life issues, on which we can stand toe-to-toe with, say, unorthodox believers, but that’s not the case here. When we jump on the global warming band wagon, we’re standing toe-to-toe with people who have a diametrically different view of the world than evangelical Christians do.

**JAY:** That’s right. This is the problem with environmental science in general. Christians, as a theological principle, should be concerned about environmental stewardship. When you get into the debate over environmental issues, however, what you find is that a lot of this stuff is governed and driven by very anti-Christian presuppositions that are brought to the scientific evidence. It doesn’t take any time in reading the literature to discover a very deep anti-human strain in a lot of the environmental literature. They treat human beings as if we’re basically parasites on this planet, as if we’re a virus or cancer, as if we’re locusts that just consume, rather than also create and



produce. If you assume that human beings are, at bottom, just consumers and despoilers, then that's going to have an outcome in how you view solutions. If you think we're basically the problem, then the solution to the problem is either to get rid of or to reduce the number of humans, and that's unfortunately what we often find in the debate.

**HANK:** I know that you strongly advocate for a fair and balanced treatment of this subject. As such, you argue that we must carefully and consistently distinguish the theological principle that human beings are stewards over the created order from prudential judgments that require careful analysis of the scientific, economic, and political aspects of this issue.

**JAY:** Absolutely. This is my problem with the Evangelical Climate Initiative back in 2006 that you referred to. It started with a discussion about things that all Christians believe, or should believe, namely, that human beings, as image bearers of God, are placed as stewards over the created order and so we are responsible for what we do with and to the environment. It very quickly, however, got into policy prescriptions and the Kyoto Protocol, calling for federal restrictions on carbon emissions and these kinds of things. Frankly, to be able to make a judgment like that requires a whole lot of study and careful discernment on a whole lot of issues. And so I think

they should have been much more hesitant to make those policy prescriptions as Christian leaders. Their core competence was to speak as Christian leaders about the theological principles, and they might just have admitted that either they were not qualified to adjudicate the specific scientific and economic aspects of this complex issue or they understand and accept that Christians might differ on these complicated prudential judgments. But they didn't. They basically treated our responsibility as stewards as if that led directly to something like federal restrictions on carbon emissions, and that just doesn't follow.

**HANK:** I want to talk about an alliance—the Cornwall Alliance. What is the Cornwall Alliance and do you believe that Christians ought to align themselves with this perspective on the environment?

**JAY:** The Cornwall Alliance grew out of a meeting of Christian leaders in the late 1990s essentially to create a statement articulating a solid environmental ethic and theology of environmental stewardship that would be grounded broadly in the Judeo-Christian tradition. So there were Catholics, Protestants, and Jews that came together and asked, "What are the kinds of biblical basics that we need to hold as people of the Book?" They went on to articulate those basics in what came to be called the Cornwall Declaration. It essentially does what ought to be done, which is to

separate out theological principles from these complicated prudential judgments about economics and climate science. It also asserted, furthermore, what I think is a non-negotiable for Christians, namely, that human beings are, in some sense, God's crowning achievement. God created a universe with all sorts of wonders, and human beings aren't its only purpose, but we are, nevertheless, the only ones made in God's image. So, any environmental ethics that removes human beings from the biblical place appointed to us is not going to be a biblical environmental ethic.

I was one of the original signers of the Cornwall Declaration. I've always advocated what I think is a truly balanced position that walks the razor's edge on this issue. So it doesn't, on the one hand, say, "We don't need to be concerned about the environment because Jesus will come back next week." That would be one extreme. The other extreme is simply to take whatever the current fashion is in environmental hysteria and baptize it in Christian theology. We, as Christians, need to be discerning and that's why I love the application and the policies advocated in the Cornwall Declaration.<sup>7</sup>

The Cornwall Alliance is a more recent organization that really brings together people—mostly evangelical Christians, but also some Catholics and Jews—around these questions and essentially advocates and argues that we need to be careful to keep separate issues separate.

**HANK:** The cover of *Time* magazine a few years ago stated, "Special Report: Global Warming. Be Worried. Be *Very* Worried. Climate change isn't some vague future problem. It's already damaging the planet at an alarming pace. Here's how it affects you, your kids and their kids as well. Earth at the tipping point."<sup>8</sup> So, the *Time* magazine article tells us that we ought to be "*very* worried" that climate change is human-induced, and that it's going to be catastrophic, affecting all of our lives in a very dramatic fashion. How difficult is it for you to go against the grain, and how often do you chuckle about the fact that it wasn't a long time ago that people were talking about a new ice age?

**JAY:** It was in the 1970s that the media was worried about an impending ice age. In fact, during just the decade of the 1970s the covers of *Newsweek* reported a cooling and then a warming and then a cooling again. Moreover, in about the last 115 years there's actually been four media cycles on this. Each time it was claimed to be a virtual consensus. And then starting in the late 1980s we started hearing about the global warming scare. It's strange because if you actually look at the news cycles on these things there's rarely a time period in which the media treats it as if there's a live debate going on. Almost as soon as you hear about it there's a claim to consensus. That is the problem with a lot of big science claims because,

frankly, the purpose of such claims is to prevent the ordinary person from questioning it. People think, “Gosh, this is a complicated scientific issue. Who am I to say? I should just trust the experts.”

As I mentioned earlier, if you actually just take some time and look at it, you can discover quickly that in fact there’s not a consensus on this. There’s a serious debate about the issue. Unfortunately, the media counts on most people to not bother even to scratch the surface. That’s how I think we got ourselves in this situation, and as Christians in particular we’re called to love the Lord not only with our hearts, but with our minds, and that means we’ve got to be discerning. When you’re talking about something this significant that will affect our lives—what light bulbs we put in, what cars we drive, and, ultimately, how we will collectively spend trillions of dollars—this is the sort of thing we have to apply our discernment to before we make up our minds.

**HANK:** My wife and I go to church with 11 kids. A lot of people will say that if you drive an SUV, you’re wasting planetary resources, but it’s either that for me or driving three cars.

**JAY:** That’s right! And some people would say you shouldn’t have that many children; that you should really restrict yourself to one or none because they’re just going to use up all the resources. Of course, they’re

forgetting that all those children will grow up to be producers as well as consumers and will produce more than they consume. All of these issues—what we are as human beings, what is our proper role with respect to the earth—all those things come into play when you’re talking about environmental issues in general and global warming in particular.

**HANK:** A lot of people want to talk to you right now, Jay. Let’s go to Wing, listening on KFAQ in San Ramone, California.

**WING (caller):** If you look at the scientific data and you look back in Siberia, you see the frozen mastodon, and that was part of the ice age I would think. I’m just trying to point out that things go through cycles. It’s a matter of not whether it will get hot or cold, but it’s a matter of to what degree it will get cold or hot.

**JAY:** That’s a wonderful point. We know historically from geological records that the earth varies dramatically in its climate. Sometimes it’s much cooler on average and sometimes it’s much warmer. Just a thousand years ago, during the medieval warming period, it was warmer than it is now, and of course it was much colder during the last ice age. We’re in a period that’s called an inter-glacial period. It basically means we’re in a period between ice ages. So, in principle, it’s been getting a little warmer since

the last ice age and sea levels have been rising slowly since the last ice age. So it's not as though a warming trend, by definition, is unnatural or is, by definition, bad. The question is whether the warming trend we're in right now is human-induced and bad. The fact that there's climate change shouldn't be news because the climate is always changing. That's what the climate does. The only question is whether we're causing it and whether it's bad.

**HANK:** One of the things I think we ought to recognize about earth is that it's an immensely resilient planet.

**JAY:** Absolutely. This may be the sort of thing that Christians have an easier time getting a hold of than atheists, but we believe that God created the world and the universe "god." That doesn't mean it is in the state it was intended to be, because of the fall, and so things are not as they should be. But I think we should have at least some expectation that God has created a world with some sort of resilience and we know empirically that the output of the energy of the sun changes over time. The earth, in some ways, is like a living organism in this sense: It's like it has a metabolism that can adjust to changing conditions. So it can change the amount of cloud cover it has, the amount of ice cover it has, either to absorb or to reflect energy from the sun, in the same way that I can change my diet in various ways. I have to

have a minimal number of calories but I can change my diet and eat all sorts of different things and my body will adjust and adapt to that. The earth is in many ways like that. It has different kinds of feedback mechanisms that allow it to adjust so that it's not as if it's sort of sitting on a razor's edge and if one thing changes slightly, the whole thing is going to collapse. If the earth were like that, it would have collapsed a long time ago because there have been much more drastic climate changes in the past than we're experiencing right now.

**HANK:** You've already underscored this but I think it bears repeating: you are not against the notion that we should be stewards of our environment.

**JAY:** Absolutely not. I think that to be good stewards, what we want to do is focus on things that we have some chance of doing something about. If you want to exercise good stewardship over the earth, you're much better off looking in your local environment or your local city to see the kinds of things that your actions might do something about.

The ironic thing about the global warming controversy is that it gets people focused on this kind of grand narrative that's claimed to have catastrophic consequences, but it's not clear what any individual person could do to affect that. But you might have a river right next door that you're dumping sludge into that, with some simple changes, could be cleaned up.

That's the kind of thing that I encourage Christians concerned about these issues to focus on—things that you can do something about.

**HANK:** We'll talk next to Robert, listening on KQCV in Edmund, Oklahoma.

**ROBERT (caller):** I watched a program about the same topic, and one of the things that they stressed was that there was this major change in the glaciers in Greenland, that they were falling away much more quickly than they were expected to. Is there any validity to their claims?

**JAY:** The basic claim is that certain glaciers in Greenland are melting more quickly than had been estimated beforehand. I can't address that specific claim at this point because with claims like that I always wait about a year since that's how long it takes for people to be able to assess it properly. About a year ago we were being told that the Arctic ice sheets were melting at an unprecedented rate, and as of spring at the end of winter in 2008, the ice shelf at the North Pole is enormous simply from one cold winter. You have to take a longer-term perspective on these things.

What's important to realize is that there's always glaciers melting somewhere, and there are always glaciers growing and increasing somewhere. At the South Pole we often see news footage of glaciers

splitting off into the ocean. What you're often not told is you're usually looking at footage from the so-called Antarctic Peninsula, which is a little part of the Antarctic continent that sticks out into the ocean pointing north. The Antarctic Peninsula is warming and a lot of the ice there is melting, but what you're often not told is that the large Antarctic continent is actually getting colder and the ice is getting thicker there. That's important to realize.

Remember when you're looking at news footage and stories on video of ice melting someplace, you have to ask if that's representing some worldwide trend over time, because there's always ice melting someplace. It's summer in the South Pole when it's winter in the North Pole, for instance. So that's important to realize and I would be willing to bet that the claims of this unprecedented melting in Greenland will be qualified or rebutted a year from now.

**HANK:** Ellen Goodman, *Boston Globe*, not all that long ago said, "I would like to say we're at a point where global warming is impossible to deny. Let's just say that global warming and its deniers are now on a par with Holocaust deniers." How do you respond to that?

**JAY:** Well, I call that the *argument ad Hitlerum*. It's when someone accuses you of being a Nazi. At that point you know that they're out of arguments. Note that Goodman referred to people who are skeptical

about *some claim* having to do with the global warming argument as global warming deniers. She didn't even give them the dignity of calling them skeptics. This has been happening now for about a year. People that doubt some claim of the official party line on this are called deniers because the only time you hear that word is with respect to Holocaust deniers—people who claim that the Holocaust didn't happen. This is not fair game. These are not the right rules of fair debate on any subject—especially a scientific subject—to accuse someone who disagrees with you of being, essentially, a Holocaust denier. When I see that happen, my bologna detector goes off because when you have good arguments you lead with those. You don't compare people to Nazis. That, unfortunately, is what we see happening across the board. The treatment of people that just doubt some aspect of the official party line from the United Nations and the mainstream media are treated not just as if they're wrong, but as if they're evil. And I think that's distorting the debate.

**HANK:** Another huge obstacle that you have to overcome is analogous to the evolutionary ape-man icon where the icon itself becomes the argument. Look at the covers of major magazines, such as the April 3, 2006, issue of *Time* magazine where you see the cutest polar bear on the planet about to fall off into the ocean because the last piece of ice has just melted.

**JAY:** Because the headline on the cover itself tells you to “be worried—be very worried,” it sort of supplies the official interpretation of the picture for you. Let me say also concerning that picture of the polar bear looking into the water, he might just as well be waiting for a seal to come up for air, because polar bears can swim. But the image does all the work for you because they have supplied the interpretation, and that's the same effect as seeing a piece of a glacier break off into a bay. The most that shows you is that some glacier is melting somewhere. That might be a general indicator of warming trends globally, but even if it were, it wouldn't tell us about what the cause is. This is the problem: those photographs and video images do a great deal of the work, unfortunately.

**HANK:** Now, Jay, you are a very smart guy. You are a research fellow, you're director of Acton Media, and you have a Ph.D. in philosophy and theology. I respect you, but, come on, former Vice President Al Gore, himself a Nobel Prize winner, and several other Nobel Prize winners all say you're wrong.

**JAY:** When people point this out, they say, “How can you doubt the consensus? What gives you the credentials?” I always point out in response that the job of every thinking Christian is to figure out what the intellectual orthodoxy is at the moment. We always recognize the intellectual orthodoxies of a

few years ago. Everyone agrees with you now, Hank, about Y2K, now that it is over. The tough work is to realize that Y2K wasn't going to be what people said it was in 1998 or 1999. That's the hard work because you have to be discerning and go against powerful social fashion and that's what I think we're dealing with here. Official parties, media, and politicians are always going to articulate the intellectual orthodoxy of the time, and so if we're not going to be led about by every wind of fashion, we're going to have to be discerning. Just the fact that lots of prestigious people with lots of important titles might believe something can't be sufficient reason for us believing it. We need to be convinced by sound reason and evidence ourselves.

**HANK:** As you say, we only have to think back to a few years ago. Eight years ago, Y2K, we had people from prestigious universities, we had people who were getting awards and prizes, and we had foundations funding hysteria on Y2K. In fact, a vast preponderance of evangelical Christian leaders jumped on that bandwagon as well.

**JAY:** That's right. Being a Christian does not give us special knowledge about computer codes. The truth of the matter is that we as Christians believe certain things that are true about the universe that atheists don't believe, and we think they're wrong. On the

other hand, if the debate is about something that's in computer codes, we've got to find out the details. We can't just jump on the bandwagon, and that's the problem with global warming.

As stated earlier, we must distinguish between clear theological principles and complicated prudential judgments. There are climate science claims being made, economic science claims being made, and social claims being made. So, although we might have our theology straight, we are still required, if we're going to love God with our minds, to look carefully at the details. As a French philosopher once said, "Piety is no substitute for technique." We might be genuine Christians and have all the correct doctrines, but that doesn't mean that we have some kind of special pass when it comes to opinions about complex questions of science or economics. We've got to do the study and make up our minds based on sound reasoning and not simply follow whatever the current fashion is.

**HANK:** It's fair to say that the same principles apply to the issue of global warming that applied in the case of Y2K. With Y2K the bandwagon promoted sensationalism, selling, sophistry, sloppy journalism, and the torture of Scripture. Ironically, if we're not on the politically correct side of this issue, which is the side that says global warming is going to be a catastrophe, we are accused of being sensationalists.

**JAY:** That's what's so strange about it. The claim is not just, "You're wrong on this"; it's, "You're evil for even saying this." A fellow Christian faculty member at a California university where I spoke on this a few months ago asked me, "You're actually willing to put the survival of the planet on the line for your opinion?" I responded by saying that, no, I want to look at what the evidence is because I happen to think that the evidence for a predicted catastrophic warming is not very good and yet the proposed actions we are supposed to attempt to stave off warming, futilely, exact huge costs. So, I don't want us to waste trillions of dollars on something that we can't affect when that money could have been spent much more effectively someplace else.

**HANK:** Let's go back to the phone lines and talk with Dave listening on KSIV in St. Louis, Missouri.

**DAVE (caller):** Have you personally looked at the rate of current warming that is observed and compared it against the rate of warming predicted by the latest models from the IPCC?

**JAY:** I've followed the general debate. You refer to the IPCC—that's the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This is sort of the official assessment that the UN releases every few years and they released one just last year, which is called The Fourth Report. There was

one previously in 2001. In the 2001 report there was a figure based on a published paper—referred to as "Mann et al."—by a scientist named Mann and his co-authors, which claimed that the rate of current warming was going up much more quickly than we had observed in the historical past, in the last 2,000 years. It was not just that we were in a warming trend, but that we were in a very quick, almost extrapolating warming trend. It came to be called the hockey stick diagram because it was like a hockey stick where the trend line goes up sort of off the chart at the end.

It turns out that some Canadian scientists named McKittrick and McIntyre looked at this and asked the scientists for their data because they thought it was fishy. These scientists took the model that Mann et al. had used and ran random data through the model. It turns out it produced the same patterns. What that meant was that the pattern was jerry-rigged from the beginning to produce the results. So, in this most recent IPCC report from the UN released last year, the Mann et al. hockey stick report is unceremoniously removed.

In other words, in 2001 we were told that the temperature trend was catastrophically increasing. It turns out that the paper on which that data was claimed was false and it has since been removed and it's not in the most recent report. So I don't think there's any evidence that we're undergoing at the moment any unprecedented warming. I think we're in



a kind of rough warming trend. How that's going to look from 1998 to the present is undecided; and while I'd say that from the 1970s we're in a general warming trend, it more or less matches things we've seen even in the last thousand years. During the medieval warming trend a thousand years ago, for instance, it was warmer then than it is now. But it is important to keep these issues separate. There's the question of warming in general, and then there is the rate of warming. A lot of the debate is over whether or not the rate of warming is unprecedented.

**HANK:** Let's go next to Mike, listening on XM Radio, Midland, Texas.

**MIKE (caller):** Have either one of you had an opportunity to read the report from NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration? It refutes all the claims that Gore had in his movie and also explained the polar bear on the ice cube.

**JAY:** NOAA is another federal agency which has, in many cases, given a solid, scientific response to some of the things in Al Gore's movie. People who watched *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore may remember the claim that drastic warming in the Arctic regions is leading to a lot of dying off of polar bears. It turns out, however, that the polar bears he was referring to were actually killed in a storm. It had nothing to do with

warming, and there were about four that were dying and it doesn't look like polar bear populations are decreasing at any particular rate. In fact, they seem to be doing fine at the moment. As soon as the polar bear became an icon, the scientific basis for that claim got knocked out from under Al Gore.

**HANK:** Let's now go to Wyatt, calling in from North Hampton, Maine.

**WYATT (caller):** How would recycling help in global warming?

**HANK:** Before Dr. Richards answers that question, how old are you, Wyatt?

**WYATT (caller):** I'm 10.

**JAY:** Great question. I would keep the issue of recycling separate because recycling is sometimes a good thing and sometimes not. Recycling is justified and reasonable anytime the benefits exceed the costs. The truth of the matter is that sometimes recycling doesn't make sense. Sometimes the cost of reusing recycled materials exceeds the costing of planting trees and producing paper from the beginning again. So anytime the benefits exceed the costs, we should recycle. The problem is that it varies from situation to situation. I think when the benefits exceed the costs,

people will recycle voluntarily without being forced to do so by the government. If the government is forcing you to do it, that usually means that the benefits don't exceed the costs.

I don't think that recycling in general would make much difference to global warming policy or the effects of global warming. Let's say we're causing global warming. The truth of the matter is that we're going to emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in the recycling process because we have to have some kind of energy-using process to recycle materials.

The best policy is to think of environmental issues in general, and I would say that Christians need to be concerned and interested in environmental issues. We shouldn't ignore them and say they are distracting, but we need to be discerning and take issues one at a time. When it comes to recycling, we should ask, "Do I have any reason to think the benefits outweigh the costs?" And if they do, then you should recycle.

**HANK:** This broadcast is about sharpening discernment skills. Talk for a moment, Jay, about how as believers we need to be discerning in the twenty-first century.

**JAY:** Absolutely. There is always some intellectual fashion that Christians have had to deal with, whether it's in first-century Rome or twenty-first century America. The tough job that we have before us is to

recognize what thing that is currently fashionable is actually false, when I should resist rather than going along. You don't want to be a crank that just disagrees with the majority all the time. A lot of the time most things that people believe are true. But to figure out what that is requires discernment and, frankly, I think it's both an intellectual skill and a spiritual gift that some people have. But I think we, as Christians, need to be praying for that spiritual gift and also sharpening ourselves intellectually. I think the first and best way to do that is on any particular issue say, "Okay, what is the best argument in favor of human-induced global warming? And what's the best argument against it?" And if you can't name the argument for and against the position, then that's an indication that you need to go do some studying before you make up your mind on the subject.

**HANK:** How would you answer the question, which is really asking a wrong question, "What would Jesus drive?"

**JAY:** I think it's the wrong question on several levels not least because it implies this simple moral calculus in which the only thing that Jesus would really be concerned about, or that we, as Christians, should be concerned about, is something like fuel efficiency. If you look at the environmentalist campaign, it implies that people who drive SUVs or

Suburbans are essentially committing some kind of moral evil because they are destroying the environment by using more than their fair share of gasoline. The problem is we have all sorts of perfectly legitimate moral reasons for making decisions with respect to transportation, and it's going to vary from person to person.

So some mother may have five children and need to drive over rough terrain and she might need a four-wheel drive, large SUV and it makes sense for her to drive that. Another person might live in Washington, DC and get some kind of credit on the highway for driving a hybrid and they need fuel efficiency and so that would be more important. But if you have 10 or 15 or 20 different moral considerations and you have to weigh one against the other, then there's no reason to think that fuel efficiency is some kind of absolute moral good and that nothing could compete with it. It's not that our transportation choices don't have moral implications—they do—but we need to apply the truth of the Gospel to our transportation choices as much as to anything else. The problem is that fuel efficiency is only one of many legitimate considerations that we would have to consider when we're talking about transportation.

**HANK:** I think it was R. C. Sproul who said the wrong question to ask is “What would Jesus do?” The right question to ask is “What would Jesus have me do?”

**JAY:** Yes, what would Jesus have me do in my situation, considering all the various specifics of my situation. What Jesus is going to have me do in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with two children is different from what He would have someone else with 10 children, or someone else living in a rural area, do.

**HANK:** One of the things that you have pointed out, and I think correctly, is that predictions of environmental disaster are almost always wrong. It wasn't all that long ago that we were talking about the population bomb.

**JAY RICHARDS:** That's right, and we're still talking about that. Thomas Malthus in the 1850s predicted that very quickly human population growth would overtake the production of food worldwide and that we would have massive worldwide famines. It turned out he was wrong. He himself realized he was wrong later in his life, but there have been Malthus wannabees ever since then. Paul Ehrlich has been talking about population explosions or population bombs since the early 1970s and he just keeps moving the date forward as to the impending worldwide famines.

I used to say that they're almost always wrong, but I've taken to saying that these predictions of impending global catastrophes are always wrong because they're always based on huge extrapolations of current trends that never actually pan out. That's

what's so unfortunate about this issue of global warming. We're talking about things that are predicted to happen 50 years from now. I don't even know if it's going to snow tonight. The meteorologist doesn't know if it's going to snow tonight in Grand Rapids and yet we would believe that there could be a scientific consensus on something as speculative as what the global temperature would be 50 years from now. It just begs common sense.

**HANK:** Let's take another call. Tom, listening on WFIL, in Pennsylvania.

**TOM (caller):** It's my understanding that a lot of the temperature readings are done over major metropolitan areas where it would be naturally warmer and it doesn't necessarily show the temperature of outlying areas.

**JAY RICHARDS:** There's a Web site right now that is trying to collect photos of all these temperature reading stations worldwide, and you can see this now on the internet. It is certainly true that a lot of these 15 years ago might have been in rural areas and are now in urban areas, so you're obviously going to get warmer readings because of this urban heat effect, but most of these estimates try to take that into account. There's a debate about whether they do that well or not, but everyone

recognizes that if a thermometer was once in a forest and is suddenly in a parking lot in the middle of the city, it's going to give inaccurate readings, and so you have to calculate those variations in to get a global temperature.

A more serious problem is that with the collapse of the Soviet Union we actually lost thousands of these global measuring stations because they couldn't be maintained anymore. That created a spike in the data right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I do think that all those things in general are more or less recognized and we can place some degree of certainty and confidence in these ground-based readings, especially now that they seem to be confirmed by satellite readings. But I myself now trust the satellite readings over the ground-based readings for these very reasons. Yes, there's contamination but the hope is that the scientists involved are taking into account, for the most part, those real contaminations.

**HANK:** As I mentioned at the beginning, one of the things I appreciated about you and Guillermo Gonzalez was *The Privileged Planet*. Give us a quick capsule of the central idea of your project.

**JAY:** We basically argue that you've got to get a lot of stuff right at a planetary level in order to have a single so-called habitable planet where life can exist. So, it's not just a simple thing where you've got a star

and a planet and everything will be fine. You've got to get everything from the atmosphere and the materials and the size of the planet and the location; and myriad other details have to go right to get a habitable planet.

Our argument is not just what is necessary for a habitable planet, however, because it turns out that once you get a planet where life can exist you also get the best set of conditions overall for doing scientific discovery. We find ourselves perched on the surface of the earth in the best place overall for doing science, so that observers find themselves in the best places for observing. We think that suggests the universe is not just designed for life, but designed for discovery itself.

**HANK:** Let's take one more caller. Max, listening on KSIV in St. Louis, Missouri.

**MAX (caller):** Your voice of reason is very refreshing. Every day I get chain e-mails from someone about something everyone thinks is true and 99 percent of the time it's completely fabricated and people do not take the time to see if it's true. I see the same thing is happening with global warming. What if the rise of CO<sub>2</sub> is part of the ongoing restoration of the planet, since God is sovereign over all and trees use it as food?

**JAY:** That's an interesting idea and I wouldn't reject it outright. We need to be careful not to read too

much theological meaning into some of these things, but the overall point is correct. Carbon dioxide is part of the life cycle on this planet. Human beings and animals breathe it out every time we breathe out and plants use it for food. The growth of those plants increases when you increase the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>. We put CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, but it doesn't just sit there for a billion years. Plants use it for food and it actually encourages plant growth. So, if CO<sub>2</sub> goes up in the atmosphere, plant growth goes up (in some plants faster than others), and then the plants sequester that CO<sub>2</sub>. So there is an interesting aspect to that and I think that God, in His sovereignty, knew that and intended to set it up. I would go so far as to argue that, concerning carbon elements down on the surface of the earth that we have discovered, God anticipated that precisely so that we could develop new kinds of energy. God knew what was going to happen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that progress has allowed hundreds of millions of more people to live and to survive and to prosper than in previous centuries. A few decades from now we'll probably be in a different type of energy from what we are now, but we'll replace oil not because we have run out of it, but because human ingenuity will find a better way to extract energy.

**HANK:** As we close the broadcast there are three things I want to underscore. First, you are of the opinion that

you have to ask the right questions and you have to ask the right questions in the right order. It's your view that if you can just get people to keep separate questions separate you've done a lot to encourage critical thinking on the issue. We've discussed four questions. I need a quick summary. The questions are, *Is the earth warming? If it's warming, are human beings causing the warming? If it's warming, is the warming bad? And, Suppose it's warming, we're causing it, and it's bad, would any of the popular policies like the Kyoto Protocol make a difference?*

**JAY:** Those are all separate questions and if I could get people to ask those questions, I'm less interested in letting them know what my opinions on the answers are. My opinion is that the evidence is that we are in a moderate warming trend since about 1850, that we don't know how much human activities are contributing to that warming, that moderate warming is probably on balance good rather than bad, and that none of the proposed policies currently being debated would make any difference but they would cost a whole lot of money.

**HANK:** So, if the popular view about global warming is wrong and we push to implement one of these costly policies, the poorest worldwide are going to pay the biggest price.

**JAY:** Certainly the poor in the United States will feel it, initially, if we push through the federal laws. But

restrictions on energy in general are going to harm the poor everywhere that those policies are enacted and this can't be underscored enough. Energy cost is one of the most basic human needs. We need energy to live and if you increase the cost of energy the people with the less means to adapt are going to be the ones that suffer the most, and that's going to be the poor. That's why this isn't just an intellectual exercise or a debate. There are real stakes and real human lives involved here. Everyone in the debate says that but I think it's very important to realize it—and that is precisely why I'm so exercised about this issue. If it was just some silly thing people were believing in but no one was doing anything about it, I probably wouldn't be talking about it.

**HANK:** One final thing I want you to underscore as we close today's broadcast is your complete commitment to being a good steward of the environment in which God has placed us.

**JAY:** Absolutely. It's very important, and I always lead with that when I talk about this issue. Christians should be in the forefront of concern and responsibility for this world because we believe it's not just here as some kind of random output of a purposeless universe. It was created by a good God who has declared it to be good, and so we are placed as vice-regents. We are stewards over it and we have a

responsibility before God to use it and to transform it, but to do so properly for proper human ends. As Christians we are going to be held accountable by God as to how we treat the world—so that’s a non-negotiable. These clear theological principles, however, do not directly tell us how to think about the very specific and, I think, overweening claims about human-induced global warming.

**HANK:** I want to thank you so much for the work that you are doing, Jay, not only on behalf of the ministry of the Christian Research Institute but particularly the Acton Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan. You guys are doing a marvelous thing. May God continue to richly bless and use you for His glory and for the extension of His kingdom.

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- 7 See "Another Ice Age," *Time*, June 24, 1974, online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,944914,00.html>, retrieved June 19, 2008.
- 8 Quoted in Steve Lyttle, "Nature, not man, is to blame, Gore critic insists," *Seattle Times*, October 13, 2007, online at [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2003946751\\_nobelgray13.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2003946751_nobelgray13.html), retrieved June 19, 2008.
- 9 Hank Hanegraaff, *The Millennium Bug Debugged* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1999).
- 10 Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 47.
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- 1 Adapted with modification from the *Bible Answer Man* broadcast, March 18 and 19, 2008.
- 2 Hanegraaff, *The Millennium Bug Debugged*.
- 3 Richard S. Lindzen, "Don't Believe the Hype," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2006, Opinion, online at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110008597>, retrieved June 19, 2008.
- 4 Quoted in Lyttle, "Nature, not man, is to blame, Gore critic insists."
- 5 The book by Jay W. Richards and Guillermo Gonzalez is titled *The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004). The DVD, *The Privileged Planet: The Search for Purpose in the Universe* (Illustra Media, 2004), and the book are available through CRI. To order call toll-free 888.7000.CRI or log onto [www.equip.org](http://www.equip.org).
- 6 See Gonzalez and Richards, *The Privileged Planet*.
- 7 Editor's note: Although the Christian Research Institute does not endorse some elements of the Cornwall Declaration (specifically, inclusive aspects of the subsection "Our Beliefs"), the document nonetheless constitutes a sound statement on environmental stewardship in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Access the Cornwall Declaration via the Acton Institute's Web site at [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org).
- 8 *Time*, April 3, 2006, emphasis in original, online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601060403,00.html>, retrieved June 19, 2008.
- 9 Goodman, "No Change in Political Climate."



