

The Global Warming Gospel

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The Lausanne Movement was founded by evangelist Billy Graham, starting with the Berlin Congress on Evangelism in 1966, to host periodic mass gatherings of global evangelical leaders. The next one, scheduled for Cape Town, South Africa in 2010, evidently will **highlight** the urgency of Global Warming.

"Climate change is the biggest threat on the planet – it's bigger than global terrorism," claimed Lindsay Brown, international director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. He was speaking at a recent organizational meeting for evangelicals in Sydney, Australia who are preparing for Cape Town. Brown is British and formerly headed an international group for evangelical students.

Typically these Lausanne gatherings have attracted thousands of evangelicals to deliberate over strategies for evangelism. Four thousand are expected in Cape Town. Evidently Brown said that climate change, urbanization and the moral failures of evangelicals will rank as top topics for the jamboree. Most of the attendees will come from the Global South, where they struggle with extreme poverty, epidemics, child mortality, and lack of clean drinking water, not to mention persecution by socialist or Islamist regimes. For these preachers representing hundreds of millions of evangelicals in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Global Warming is probably not the major issue.

But for wealthy and sometimes self-absorbed evangelicals in the West, climate change is a convenient issue with which to showcase global empathy and compassion at minimal cost to themselves. For most in the materially comfortable West, the activist Global Warming agenda calls for reduced consumption and ostensibly "sustainable" living. They envision such sacrifices as more bike riding, avoiding Styrofoam and paying a little more for electricity generated by earth friendly renewables rather than sinister carbon producing fossil fuels.

A thoroughly enacted Global Warming agenda for the impoverished billions of the Global South would carry a more dramatically severe cost. It would preclude any hope of electricity, refrigeration, central heating, air conditioning, or personal vehicles. So that wealthy Westerners could feel smug in their climate consciousness, hundreds of millions of Asians and Africans and Latins would have continue to live primitively in huts and shacks, with dung as their fuel source for heat and cooking, with mules and carts as their primary transportation, and with uninhibited exposure to the raw elements, virtually unimproved from a hundred generations before.

Such a grim future is hardly appealing for most of the world's population. This miserly message could hardly be successful for evangelicals aiming to share their Gospel with several billion people who have not yet heard it. Historically, evangelicals have proclaimed a message of economic and political progress. They traditionally saw Western Civilization as a product of Christianity, and they believed that technology and economic prosperity, if founded upon virtue and law, were the rightful companions of true religion. In other words, they offered hope.

The grim Malthusians who dominate the Global Warming movement, which now includes the Evangelical Left, believe that Western Civilization is a blight upon the planet. Its industries and engines for wealth creation are causes for remorse, not celebration. Atonement for the West's sins shall include sparing the rest of the world the benefits of Western, carbon-producing prosperity and technology. The world's poor would prefer to remain in their ostensible natural habitats, living organically, uncorrupted by the ease of running water or the nuisance of long life spans.

Global Warming's fervent adherents base all their demands on "science." A leading voice for persuading British and American evangelicals has been John Theodore Houghton, who has served with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and who teaches atmospheric physics at the University of Oxford. Himself a Christian, he spoke to the National Association of Evangelicals in the U.S. in 2005, where he preached the usual apocalyptic demand that the West must repent of its carbon producing sins.

"We, in the developed countries, have already benefited over many generations from abundant fossil fuel energy," Houghton told the American evangelicals. "There is already a strong tendency in the world for the rich to get even richer while the poor get poorer. The impacts of human induced climate change will tend to further bolster that trend." Global Warming alarmists like to broadcast concern for poor nations by claiming that Western fuel extravagance will precipitate famine, flood and disease in the Global South. Such alarmists never explain that their agenda demands that the world's poor largely abandon any hope of economic betterment, which the planet's atmosphere ostensibly cannot afford. Houghton naturally talked of transitioning to energy generated by tides, the sun, rivers and the wind, all very exciting prospects for Western environmentalists. But wind farms and solar panels, so appealing to green suburbanites in Colorado or Connecticut, probably will not meaningfully help many energy starved Congolese, Brazilians, Bangladeshis, or Chinese.

One of Houghton's chief disciples is Richard Cizik, chief lobbyist for the National Association of Evangelicals, who recently told a Council on Foreign Relations conference **call** that climate change is possibly a "love letter" from God to awaken wicked humanity from the consequences of its "greed."

"I sort of think it's [climate change is] a love letter from God that says that if you're going to continue to live this way—pride, apathy, and greed—then you're going to have consequences," he discerned, prophetically. Enthusiastic about evangelicals embracing the Global Warming agenda, Cizik claimed: "[W]hat's happening in the religious community is nothing less than a renaissance; a spiritual transformation, I think, of significant proportions that's cutting across all faiths and denominations."

Cizik, like other true believers, sees Global Warming activism as a panacea. It "connects with everything else... Even the crash on Wall Street—I don't see how to solve some of these problems, economic and otherwise, without also bringing in the green issue. One of the ways saving the financial system is to... restore the climate and expand the green industry."

For the Evangelical Left, what used to be good news has become grim news. Perhaps at the 2010 gathering in Cape Town, more realistic Global South evangelicals will let their Western colleagues know about more pressing human concerns than the environmental hobbies of wealthy environmentalists in America and Europe.