



Time to Change “Climate Change”

By George Monbiot



What's clear from Copenhagen is that policy-makers have fallen behind the scientists: global warming is already catastrophic.

The more we know, the grimmer it gets.

Presentations by climate scientists at their conference in Copenhagen, March 9-12, 2009, show that we might have underplayed the impacts of global warming in three important respects:

- Partly because the estimates by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) took no account of meltwater from Greenland's glaciers, the rise in sea levels this century could be twice or three times as great as it forecast, with grave implications for coastal cities, farmland and freshwater reserves.

- Two degrees of warming in the Arctic (which is heating up much more quickly than the rest of the planet) could trigger a massive bacterial response in the soils there. As the permafrost melts, bacteria are able to start breaking down organic material that was previously locked up in ice, producing billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide and methane. This could catalyze one of the world's most powerful positive feedback loops: warming causing more warming.

- Four degrees of warming could almost eliminate the Amazon rainforests, with appalling implications for biodiversity and regional weather patterns, and with the result that a massive new pulse of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. Trees are basically sticks of wet carbon. As they rot or burn, the carbon oxidises. This is another way in which

climate feedbacks appear to have been underestimated in the last IPCC report.

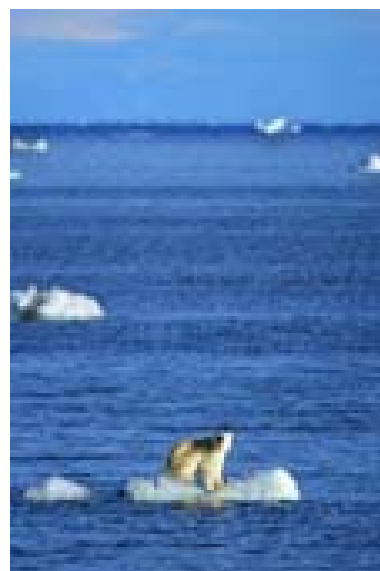
Apart from the sheer animal panic I felt on reading these reports, two things jumped out at me.

The first is that governments are relying on IPCC assessments that are years out of date even before they are published, as a result of the IPCC's extremely careful and laborious review and consensus process. This lends its reports great scientific weight, but it also means that the politicians using them as a guide to the cuts in greenhouse gases required are always well behind the curve. There is surely a strong case for the IPCC to publish interim reports every year, consisting of a summary of the latest science and its implications for global policy.

The second is that we have to stop calling it climate change. Using “climate change” to describe events like this, with their devastating implications for global food security, water supplies and human settlements, is like describing a foreign invasion as an unexpected visit, or bombs as unwanted deliveries. It's a ridiculously neutral term for the biggest potential catastrophe humankind has ever encountered.

I think we should call it “climate breakdown.” Does anyone out there have a better idea?

George Monbiot writes for the Guardian UK, where this article first appeared.



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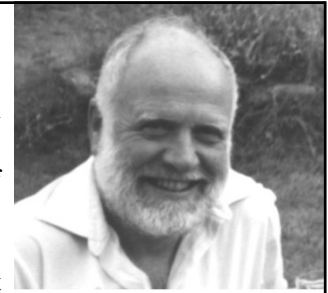
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Youth work for 6th Millennium
...and more.

From the Editor

JUSTnews has a new look. The Editorial Board held a teleconference in November, and decided to make the newsletter easier on the eye and mind. Articles will be shorter and fewer, and the newsletter itself will be only eight instead of twelve pages. There will be more pictures where possible. This issue also contains more material by and about Unitarians, so it is now more truly a CUSJ newsletter, and less a small newssheet. We will maintain this trend so long as sufficient material is available and readers approve. Comments are welcome.

The theme of this issue is climate change, or “climate breakdown” as George Monbiot suggests we call it in the lead article. This theme was chosen to draw attention to the important conference on climate change being held Dec. 7 to 18, 2009, in Copenhagen.

While JUSTnews will continue to concentrate on social justice issues, the ill effects of climate change are bound to impinge on the poor and vulnerable more than on the affluent. The environment and climate change are therefore topics to which we will no doubt return in future issues.



More Letters on Civilization in Crisis

Re the letters from Fred Lautenschlaeger in the Discussion Paper No. 17 of Autumn 2009 on civilization in crisis.

I get the impression that Fred makes some outrageous initial statements just to provoke a response. Fred was commenting on a review of Richard Moore’s classic book, “Escaping the Matrix.” For example Fred suggests that our problems are not due to our elites but rather to basic human nature. Now that is a real catch phrase. Fred next suggests that “the root of elitism is a desire to do the best possible job in the service of the community.” Moore actually concentrates on the role of the banking and financial elites, and their motivation is plain old-fashioned greed.

I found Moore’s text to be one of the most thought-provoking books that I have ever read. He provides: (1) a historical analysis of the dominator society that developed 6,000 years ago (2) some of the major forces that are shaping the present realpolitik and (3) where we should be going in the future.

1. Here Moore explains how hierarchical civilization seems to have arisen as a hybrid between two cultural strains: the partnership strain contributed the civilizing technologies and the slaves to till the soil; and the dominator strain contributed the ruling hierarchy and the dominator culture.

If anyone doubts the power of elite bank institutions just look at the \$12.7 trillion bail-out of these institutions by the US Government.

2. For the present time, some examples that Moore highlights include the Anglo-American alliance of banking and financial institutions. If anyone doubts the power of this elite just look at the \$12.7 trillion bail-out of these institutions by the US Government. Despite the hoopla of change this is being overseen by some in Obama’s Cabinet who created the economic melt-down in the first place. An excellent analysis of the Federal Reserve system’s role is in William Greider’s report in the Autumn 2009 issue of Humanist Perspectives.

Moore shows how the “Project for the New American Century” (PNAC) really explains a great deal. Their two basic objectives are (i) the achievement of global military dominance. Here the Harper Government is playing our vassal-state role in supporting the energy objectives of Fortress America in Afghanistan. (ii) The coming conflict over resources, especially the consequences of “Peak Oil,” generates social unrest which the US Government seeks to control with such measures as the “Patriot Act,” aka “the Paranoid Act.” This has produced a police state on our southern border. Here in Canada we are following with the “Anti-Terrorist Act” and the recently introduced Bills C-46 and C-47 that significantly expand police powers with respect to accessing information about the identity of callers or e-mail correspondents without a warrant. The bills also enhance police powers to monitor the on-line activities of Canadians. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is working to challenge this Big Brother Spying with their “Stop Cyber Surveillance” campaign.

3. For the future, Moore proposes replacing the present dysfunctional system of indirect democracy

with one of direct democracy. Several examples are now being worked on in South America. Moore's description of the role of harmonization suggests the need for facilitators to realize the goal of direct democracy. His comments on this topic are far too lengthy to include here except to say that the role of facilitator would be quite suitable for Unitarians and that should be incentive enough for Unitarians to read his book and to contribute to the debate.

Bob Stevenson is a member of First Ottawa Congregation. He is immediate past president of CUSJ.



Our Salt Spring Island Unitarians' Discussion Group has read with interest the JUSTnews Discussion Paper 14 "Civilization in Crisis," drawn from Richard Moore's book, "Escaping the Matrix." Some questions and comments that this paper provoked follow.

The Impending Doom

Referring to the analogy of the people of Pompeii and considering the world news we are hearing every day, we ask: do we *really* believe that this is going to happen? That it will happen to us—or just to others, far away? How should we escape? How shall we live without all the things we have become used to?

The Demons

Are our corporate and government leaders really such demons? Are they not human beings, too? If, when threatened, they seek to provide for themselves, their families, their nation, their own kind of people, isn't this what all of us do? Is this "us" and "them" thinking really the way to go? Instead of declaring that a world is being intentionally created in which millions, even billions, will have no place, would better words be "ignorantly," "heedlessly," or even "helplessly?"

We the People

Can we deny that most of us reading that Discussion Paper are among the "elite" to whom Richard Moore refers? We enjoy our

corporate benefits, our "elite rulers" draw their millions from us, their enthusiastic customers. Poor people the world over crave the life we have.

Can any civilization under any kind of economic arrangement hope to survive in a world of finite resources and unlimited population growth? Isn't *population growth* the chronic disease that has to be addressed? Why do we hear so little about the problem of population growth, compared to a few years ago? Do we think the problem will solve itself, or is beyond solving?

We the People the Solution?

Mr Moore states, "Unless we want to simply bemoan our fate and watch all this come to pass...we need to face this crisis.... We need to figure out how we can take command of our destinies, end elite rule, and go on to transform our societies and economies."

But then he asks, "Do we really have the capacity for self-governance?"

Here in Canada and the USA we presume to have models of self-governance, with laws and courts, checks and balances, the right to vote for the leaders we want to represent us, and elections not grossly rigged. Yet consider the governments we have!

How do grassroots citizens propose to agree on a way to "take back" our governments, "end" elite rule, and respond "intelligently" to the crises that face us?

So, What Now?

Is it really a problem of us versus them, where we have to get rid of *them* so that we, the *good people*, can do it our way?

How do we do that?

- We tackle ignorance by educating our young people, who are to be the corporate executives, the politicians and the statesmen of tomorrow.
- We challenge the heedless by waging an aggressive awareness campaign so that all of us (including those demons in the corporate board rooms and government caucuses) cannot avoid seeing and feeling what all of us together are doing to the world and to each other.
- We overcome our helplessness by joining together in ever-wider circles of mutual support and encouragement as we struggle to bring about the changes that are necessary.

Mary Toynbee, Salt Spring Island Fellowship (not necessarily expressing the views of all our members)



Grandpa and the Glacier

By James F. Lavers

We stood in the huge basin with the roadway a few yards distant. The remains of a stream from the glacier, now a trickle, were not far away.

Grandfather said, "I spent the coldest night of my life here in 1895."

I must have looked startled, since his sojourn as a teenager looking after a herd of cattle on the open range in winter, living in a tent partly dug down into the ground before it froze in, was one of the legends of the family.

He pointed at the ground. "The ice here, was sixty-five feet thick, and we camped on top of it so triangulations could be made in the morning. The terminal moraine," he swung his arm across the valley, "was where the ice ended."

I didn't know my grandfather and his brother had been part of the Dominion Geological Survey, first as wranglers, then as part of the survey crews. That experience had made words like "triangulation" and terminal moraine" familiar to him.

That remembrance, that visitation occurred fifty years ago, and Angel Glacier is no more, having retreated into nothingness. In one hundred and fifteen years, a mere blip in geological time, a valley of ice, thousands of years old, has vanished, never to return.

James Lavers is a friend and past member of Westwood Unitarian Congregation, Edmonton, Alberta.

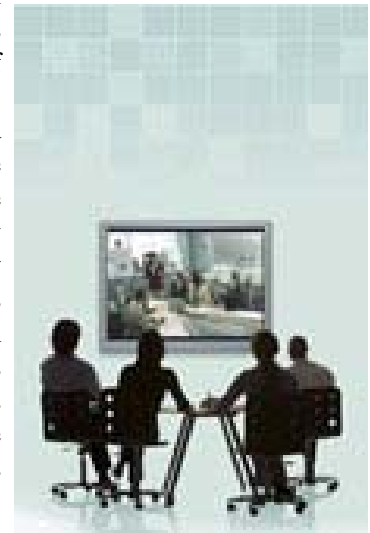
Must we Fly to the Canadian Unitarian Council's Annual Conference and Meeting?

By Jackie MacDonald

Video Conferencing, instead of flying to conferences, is recommended by scientists, the federal Ministry of the Environment (through their Green Conference Checklist) and many others who see greenhouse gases as increasing the suffering of humanity during our lifetime. The U.S. Unitarian Universalist Association is already providing live video of most of their AGM proceedings over the internet. How soon we can put it all into place depends on the money we, the members of Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), are willing to put into it.

The plan for May 2010 is to video the Worship Service, the Ingathering, the Keynote Speaker and the Confluence Lecture. This video would not be live but recorded and available on the CUC website likely within a week. People at home would go to the CUC website and click on a link to watch the proceedings. The ideal situation might be that congregations watch the videos together either at their home church or at a facility like a university where they can access the internet.

The next step would be to film the events live or at least the business part of the meetings so that people could vote on motions by using their keyboard and either type or speak their comments or questions live so that they are included in real time. Whether they would be seen by all meeting participants depends on the cost of the available technology at the time and how much we are willing to pay. The technology exists now and is improving very quickly and the costs are coming down rapidly as well. This is because governments and corporations are increasingly using this technology.



Why avoid flying?

I have found that there are Unitarians who still don't understand the need to fly only for emergencies. The following is some research that the Capital Unitarian Universalist Congregation's Environment Committee is providing our congregation.

From David Suzuki's website: "Aviation presently accounts for 4-9% [this figure seems to be from 2000; in 1992 the figure was 2%, JM] of the total climate change impact of human activity. Since 1990, CO₂ emissions from international aviation have increased 83%. The aviation industry is expanding rapidly in part due to regulatory and taxing policies that do not reflect the true environmental costs of flying. Scientific studies have shown that these high-altitude emissions have a more harmful climate impact than ground-level emissions. The International Panel on Climate Change has estimated that the climate impact of aircraft is *two to four times greater* than the effect of their carbon dioxide emissions alone."

From the UK Tyndall Centre: Aviation is not included in the Kyoto Protocol so "As other sectors decrease their carbon footprint, aviation will take up an increasing percentage of a country's allotted emissions. In Great Britain, an independent study by the UK Tyndall Centre found that, if former Prime Minister Blair's plan for an 80% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions is implemented while 'business-as-usual' growth in aviation continues unconstrained, aviation could consume 'close to 100% of (Britain's) total carbon budget' by 2050. It is not possible for any government to commit seriously to reducing greenhouse gas emissions while also allowing airports to expand and the aviation industry to grow."

Unitarians at the forefront

We need to encourage the CUC to be at the forefront of the movement to reduce the environmental damage from air travel and to actively encourage its members to network and communicate nationally in creative and innovative ways that discourage air travel.

In addition to the vital environmental benefits of reducing air travel, new communication technology offers even greater opportunities for connections among Unitarians across Canada. Imagine when, instead of a few hundred Unitarians gathering for Sunday worship at the CUC ACM, every congregation in Canada walks, bikes, buses or carpools to their home congregation and participates in this national worship service. Imagine them participating in national workshops at their homes and congregational meeting places. The possibilities for the future are truly inspiring.

Jackie MacDonald is a member of Capital Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Victoria, B.C.

Teenager invents £23 solar panel made from human hair

By Daily Mail Reporter

A new type of solar panel using human hair could provide the world with cheap, green electricity, believes its teenage inventor.



Science student Milan Karki holds his innovative solar panel made with human hair while a friend holds a light bulb above his head

Milan Karki, 18, who comes from a village in rural Nepal, believes he has found the solution to the developing world's energy needs. The young inventor says hair is easy to use as a conductor in solar panels and could revolutionize renewable energy. Melanin, a pigment that gives hair its colour, is light sensitive and also acts as a type of conductor. He was originally inspired after reading a book by physicist Stephen Hawking that discussed ways of creating static energy from hair.

Milan and four classmates initially made the solar panel as an experiment. "I'm trying to produce commercially and distribute to the districts. We've already sent a couple out to the districts to test for feasibility," he said.

The solar panel, which produces 9 V (18 W) of energy, costs around £23 to make from raw materials. But if they were mass-produced, Milan says they could be sold for less than half that price, which could make them a quarter of the price of those already on the market.

In Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world, many rural areas lack access to electricity and even in areas connected to power lines, users face shortages of up to 16 hours a day. "First I wanted to provide electricity for my home, then my village. Now I am thinking for the whole world," said Milan, who attends school in the capital, Kathmandu.

Milan, whose hero is the inventor Thomas Edison, describes himself as lucky because his family could afford to give him a proper education while many other villagers are forced to work from an early age. Most of those from his village are illiterate.

Three years after first coming up with the idea, Milan says the idea is more important than ever because of the crucial need for renewable energies in the face of finite power sources and global warming.

“Slowly, natural resources are degrading so it is necessary to think about the future,” he said. “This is an easy solution for the crisis we are having today. We have begun the long walk to save the planet.”

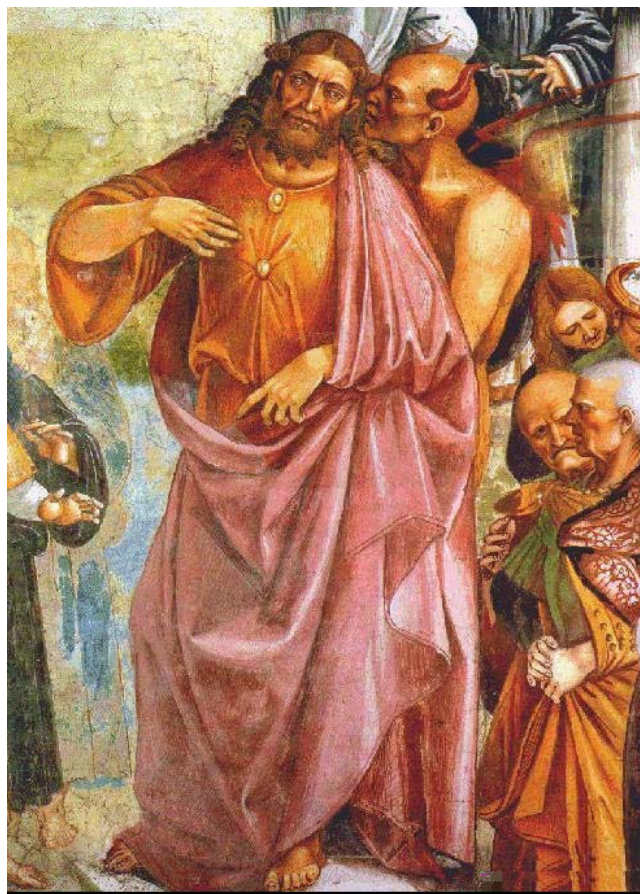
HELL Explained by a Chemistry Student

The following is purportedly a bonus question given on a University of Washington chemistry mid term. The answer by one student was so ‘profound’ that the professor shared it with colleagues, via the internet. The bonus question was: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)? Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle’s Law (gas cools when it expands and heats when it is compressed) or some variant.

One student, however, wrote the following.

First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for how many souls are entering Hell, let’s look at the different religions that exist in the world today.

Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there is more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle’s Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added.



Painting called "The Last Judgement" by Luca Signorelli painted about 1500 A.D in the Fresco Cathedral, Orvieto, Italy.

This gives two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.
2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year that, ‘It will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you,’ and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then number two must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over. The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is therefore, extinct—leaving only Heaven, thereby proving the existence of a divine being which explains why, last night, Teresa kept shouting ‘Oh my God.’

This student received an A+.



Interfaith Youth Core works to achieve 6th Millennium Development Goal

By Erica Spracklin

Growing up in the open-minded, non-creedal group that is the Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon I was open to discover my own religious identity. The Religious Education program began my introduction into every religion and faith out there. We travelled to every house of worship in the city in an effort to experience the beliefs of as many faiths as we could.

My interest in other religions has continued ever since. In my second year of University I had the pleasure of visiting a Muslim Community Centre. We were allowed to sit in the prayer room while a few men conducted their evening prayers. As I watched, I was overcome with amazement at their dedication to enter into such a deep, devoted frame of mind five times a day. I became aware of the comfort and confidence they must have in their beliefs to become that dedicated. I felt a twinge of jealousy that I didn't have that kind of belief myself to lean on for support and comfort. I began to wonder if I could ever feel the comfort in spiritual dedication that these Muslim men appeared to have if I didn't place the same kind of importance on a higher being or God.

I began to delve deep into myself to figure out where I did draw strength from and began to pay close attention to the causes of that flutter of happiness that occurred within me. I began to notice that this feeling of satisfaction, of comfort and of some kind of completeness occurred when I saw other people satisfied and genuinely happy in life. At the same time I would feel the opposite kind of feelings when I saw someone suffering. For me, it's as simple as that. The solution to the world's problems is simply to strive to have the most positive effect on the world possible.

Faiths Act Fellowship

This year I have the honour of being a part of a program created by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation in London and the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago called the Faiths Act Fellowship. I am one of thirty young people from the US, the UK and Canada who took part in six weeks of training to be leaders in the fight against malaria. In twelve cities across the three countries, we are empowering young people of different faiths to put their faith into action. The hope is that by working together we can bridge the gaps between

people with different belief systems and help achieve the 6th Millennium Development Goal: halting and reversing deaths due to malaria.



Malaria is curable

Malaria is the leading cause of death in most African nations. One million people die of malaria every year. The majority of these deaths are children under the age of five. Every 30 seconds a child dies from malaria. Pregnant women are also extremely vulnerable to the disease, which often causes the loss of the baby or the loss of the mother's life.

Yet malaria is a preventable and curable disease. Sleeping under an insecticide treated bed-net can reduce the incidence rate of malaria by up to 50%. Distributing bed-nets, spraying houses with residual insecticides and providing adequate supplies of anti-malarial drugs have an immense impact on reducing the number of deaths due to malaria. We can succeed if we all work together.

This project is a tangible representation of the Unitarian principles drawing upon the same sources as our living tradition. All religions preach love and compassion for one's neighbour. In this globalized world, everyone is your neighbour, including those who have different religious and philosophical beliefs than you or those dying from malaria in Sub-Saharan Africa.

I am proud to represent the Unitarian community in this movement but I would be even more proud to see Unitarians contributing in a big way. Please check out the program at www.faithsactfellows.org/erica or our Facebook page: Faiths Act U of T. If you're not in the Toronto area, check out www.faithsactfellows.org to find a fellow near you or for information on how you can get involved.

I hope to see you as a leader in the fight against malaria.

Erica Spracklin is a member of the Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon, but is currently living in Toronto working as a Faiths Act Fellow.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The CUSJ purposes are:

- to develop and maintain a vibrant network of Unitarian social action in Canada and elsewhere and to proactively represent Unitarian principles and values in matters of social justice and in particular
- to provide opportunities, including through publication of newsletters, for Unitarians and friends to apply their religious, humanistic and spiritual values to social action aimed at the relief of (1) poverty and economic injustice, (2) discrimination based on religious, racial or other grounds, (3) abuses of human rights whether of individuals or peoples, (4) abuses of democratic process, and
- to promote peace and security, environmental protection, education, and literacy in keeping with the spirit of Unitarian values.

These purposes are an integral part of the Constitution of CUSJ, adopted at the CUSJ Annual Meeting in Mississauga, ON, May 19, 1999, and amended at the 2003 AGM.

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