

Remarks for launch of Nine Facts about Climate Change

Parliament House, Canberra

Feb 28th, 2007

Ray Evans

There is a view around the corridors of power in Australia that this current hysteria about anthropogenic carbon dioxide and global warming, a belief I have called anthropogenism, is a passing phase which will dissipate when the drought gives way to good rains, and the water supply crisis in town and country passes.

Certainly our Environmentalists have gone public with their concerns at the political consequences (for them) of the breaking of the drought.

But the drought is a particularly Australian problem. North America's east coast has been hit with severe blizzards and California's central valley has recently suffered economically ruinous snow and ice. But the global warming debate in Australia is driven from the US and the UK, as Al Gore's repeated visits here, and the forthcoming visit by Nicholas Stern, demonstrate. In Europe faith in anthropogenism is the sine qua non of political and moral respectability, manifest in the decision by Tory leader David Cameron to install a windmill on the roof of his home in Notting Hill.

I share Nigel Lawson's far deeper concern about this phenomenon. In his 1 November 2006 Lecture to the Centre for Policy Studies entitled "The Economics and Politics of Climate Change - An Appeal to Reason" he concluded with these words:

"But the third danger is even more profound. Today we are very conscious of the threat we face from the supreme intolerance of Islamic fundamentalism. It could not be a worse time to abandon our traditions of reason and tolerance, and to embrace the irrationality and intolerance of eco-fundamentalism, where reasoned questioning of its mantras is regarded as a form of blasphemy. There is no greater threat to the people of this planet than the retreat from reason we see all around us today."

It is a commonplace observation that belief in a global warming caused by man's use of fossil fuels, what I have called anthropogenism, is a religious

phenomenon. Cardinal Pell said the following in his episcopal newsletter of Feb 18 last,

“What we were seeing from the doomsdayers was an induced dose of mild hysteria, semi-religious if you like, but dangerously close to superstition.”

Al Gores' film “An Inconvenient Truth” follows in the American tradition of itinerant bible-belt preaching, and the former Vice President, with his private jet and his imperial life style, reminds me of Elmer Gantry, the fictional American preacher of the 1950s who was vehemently against fornication and other sins of the flesh, but whose frailty in these matters matched the vigour of his preaching.

It's one thing to note, as many have done, the underlying religious basis for this contagion; a contagion which now seems to have infected senior members of the cabinet, but it does not lead us to an understanding of where it has come from, or how we can respond to it.

I have found the speech given by Pope Benedict at Regensburg, on 14 September last, extremely valuable in this regard. Early in his remarks the Pope commented on part of the

“dialogue carried on-- perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara-- by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both.”

You will recall that this speech caused outrage within the Islamic world; many acts of violence were committed including murders, thus ironically reinforcing the very point which the Pope made about faith and reason. Many critics from within the West and indeed from within the Christian churches generally, attacked the Pope for generating such indignation.

His theme was the necessary fusion of faith and reason which is the foundation of Christianity and his key message, in the context of the current global warming debate, was this

“This inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry was an event of decisive importance not only from the standpoint of the history of religions, but also from that of world history— it is an event which concerns us even today. Given this convergence, it is not surprising that Christianity, despite its origins and some significant developments in the East, finally took on its historically decisive character in Europe. We can also express this the other way around: this convergence, with the

subsequent addition of the Roman heritage, created Europe and remains the foundation of what can rightly be called Europe”.

“Modern scientific reason quite simply has to accept the rational structure of matter and the correspondence between our spirit and the prevailing rational structures of nature as a given, on which its methodology has to be based. Yet the question why this has to be so is a real question, and one which has to be remanded by the natural sciences to other modes and planes of thought: to philosophy and theology”.

Al Gore’s film “An Inconvenient Truth” demonstrates very powerfully the consequences of faith unconstrained by reason. His message is a very simple one; a message with a long tradition in American religious life; and that is that man is sinful and should repent and seek salvation; or to use the environmentalists’ synonym of salvation, “sustainability”.

For Al Gore the road to sustainability is the decarbonisation road. The Ten Commandments have been superseded by the incommensurability of decarbonisation. And in particular the prohibition on bearing false witness, as his film shows time and time again, has to give way to the propaganda requirements of a campaign which seeks to impose salvation - sustainability - upon an indifferent or reluctant, but invariably sinful people. People who drive big cars, turn up their air-conditioners, and use tungsten filament light bulbs instead of the new, compact, fluorescent bulbs.

And it is faith, not works, which count, because Al Gore himself is a big user of fossil fuels with his private jet and his three large, well-equipped houses and any number of motor cars.

“An Inconvenient Truth” is, in its own mendacious way, a type of miracle play. For example, the Vostok ice cores show an extraordinary correlation between global temperatures over the last 500,000 years and atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane. What is miraculous in Al Gore’s description is that the carbon dioxide is able to cause global warming 800 years or so before the CO₂ appeared in the atmosphere.

But immediately the question arises - Why should decarbonisation bring salvation or even sustainability? Faith is one thing, but our Western tradition, as the Pope described, requires that faith should be sustained by reason. And the trouble with decarbonisation as the road to salvation is that it is based wholly on

superstition - not on science. Faith alone sustains the decarbonisation crusade; faith which is completely indifferent to evidence or argument.

Czech President Vaclav Klaus put it so well,

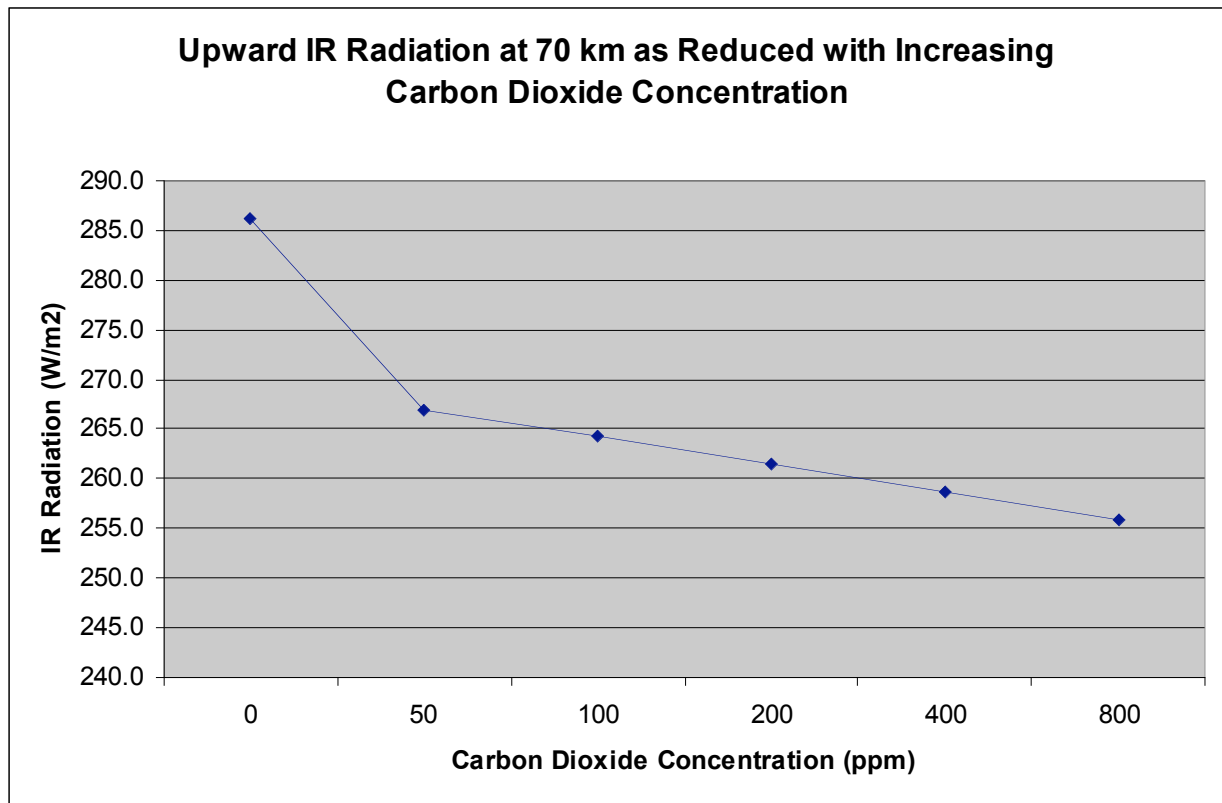
“Global warming is a false myth and every serious person and scientist says so. It is not fair to refer to the U.N. panel. The IPCC is not a scientific institution: it's a political body, a sort of non-government organization of green flavour.”

I have copies of a series of newspaper articles by Lawrence Solomon of the Canadian National Post. They come together to form an outstanding analysis of ten eminent scientists whom Solomon calls the Global Warming Deniers, and there is in these 24 pages an excellent summary of the state of the scientific debate.

The climate sceptics, or “deniers” to use the term which Solomon has embraced, are divided into two camps. In the first camp are those who accept the basic hypothesis of the IPCC which is that solar influence on changes to the world’s climate is negligible. The sun’s energy input to the earth varies very little and so natural variability, brought about by the complex interplay of atmosphere and oceans, is sufficient to account for our climate history. These sceptics, arguing within this climate framework, maintain that anthropogenic carbon dioxide cannot account for the temperature changes we have experienced in recent centuries, let alone over past millennia.

In the second camp we have those who argue that it is the sun which is the dominant influence on our climate and that the climate history of the recent millennia is best explained by solar eruptions manifest in particular as sunspots.

One of the consequences which follow from accepting the first model as the basis for understanding the climate system is what I have called the saturation effect of carbon dioxide. CO₂ does behave in a “greenhouse” fashion in that as concentrations increase from zero to 50 ppmv, outward radiation from the stratosphere is reduced as shown in the graph below.



Most of the greenhouse effect of CO₂ occurs in the first 50 ppmv. Thereafter, each successive doubling of CO₂ concentration yields only a 3 watt per sq. m reduction in outward radiation, an increase in radiation forcing giving a direct warming of less than 1 degree C for each doubling of CO₂ concentration.

This saturation effect was discussed in the IPCC's first assessment report of 1990, but has not been mentioned since. It is also mentioned in the Stern Report.

What is the explanation of this?

In the stratosphere, where this outward radiation is generated, carbon dioxide is the dominant greenhouse gas. Water vapour cannot exist at stratospheric temperatures of -50 deg C. Because the resonance effect on CO₂ is specific to a narrow bandwidth centred on 15 microns, and because the stratospheric temperatures are so cold, once atmospheric concentrations exceed 200 ppmv (they are currently 380 ppmv) the effect of the additional CO₂ contribution to the radiation balance simply declines exponentially.

The saturation effect, **on its own**, makes the decarbonisation road to salvation a completely futile and irrational exercise in faith, a faith which sets its face obdurately against all reason.

What is of very great importance to us now is to look for explanations as to why institutions such as the CSIRO so easily and carelessly abandoned reason, and decided to go with the faith alone crowd - the *sola fidei* bandwagon.

The other great cause of the Reformation was *sola scriptura*. The great reformers championed faith over works, and the authority of scripture over the edicts of Rome. But in our situation the Environmentalists, whilst demanding obedience to their edicts of faith, have no canon of scripture to wrestle with. So they make up their scriptures as they go along. An Inconvenient Truth is an example. And we have seen in the hostile criticism with which the hardline anthropogenists have greeted the Policy Makers' Summary of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, that disputes over the various catastrophes which the anthropogenists have manufactured, in order to generate an irreversible rush to the Gadarene slopes, will now help us slow down this contagion.

We have quite a way to go before reason can overcome hysteria in this debate. But we should not despair about the outcome. We have 2000 years of history of faith informed and tempered by reason behind us. There are many examples we can point to where the abandonment of reason led quickly to terrible catastrophe.

Within the next six to ten years the predictions of a new Dalton Minimum or even a Maunder Minimum will be put to the test. The Dalton Minimum was 1800 -1820; the time of the Napoleonic Wars. The Maunder Minimum was from 1660 to 1690, both periods of very low temperatures and high precipitation. This will become one of the great experiments in the history of Western science. If we are indeed about to enter into a 20-30 year period of unusually low temperatures and heavy rains, driven by very low sun spot activity, we will look back nostalgically at the global warming hysteria of the early 21st century, and wish it had been fulfilled.