

Scientists divided on issue of global warming

In the April 12 issue, a book review reprinted from Catholic News Service praised “An Inconvenient Truth,” Al Gore’s book that accompanies his movie of the same name.

A central theme of Gore’s efforts is to assert that we have a moral obligation to take action against carbon dioxide emissions. We read “The final 15 pages at the conclusion of the text are a composite of individual and collective action responses” The connection to morality gets the attention of religious-minded readers; and indeed, “global warming” is becoming something of a secular “religion” all by itself.

One thing: the dogmas of this new religion aren’t necessarily true. Despite the widespread publicity-phrase that “everybody agrees,” the reality is that scientific opinion among professional meteorologists and climatologists is very much divided. The book review states “...steady rise in global temperatures since 1860 are cause for a meltdown among those who would refute Mr. Gore’s claims.” Scientists agree that the globe is warming, but do not agree on the premise that it’s the fault of mankind. Less than 1,000 years ago, the globe was warmer than it is now. Those who dispute Gore’s claims are not “melting down” at all, but are publishing technical papers in high-level refereed scientific journals. The fact that such papers are more difficult to access than the daily newspaper certainly doesn’t make them wrong. The recent new book “Unstoppable Global Warming, every 1500 years” by Singer and Avery contains hundreds of footnotes to the scientific literature. The simple reality is that there are global climate cycles going on all the time.

Catholic readers in America would do well to bear in mind that Cardinal Pell in Australia has vigorously denounced the hype associated with global warming. Down Under, it’s easier to notice that the ice in Antarctica is getting thicker while Greenland’s is diminishing. Just as there is no certainty among scientists, similarly there is no “Catholic” position on the subject of global warming.

Some actions, like conserving energy in everyday life, are good all by themselves

and should be encouraged. But these can stand on their own merits (save energy, save money, etc) and don't need to be sold on the basis of a false doctrine. The alarmism associated with global warming will rapidly lead to a backlash as soon as there is a cool summer, which could easily happen when a major volcano erupts.

Al Gore has implied that sea level is going to rise 20 feet in the coming century, thereby inundating half of New Jersey and Florida (and incidentally Baltimore harbor, Annapolis, etc). The graphics are impressive; but they're just part of the hype. Meanwhile, the latest computer models suggest up to 17 inches in a century. There is enough time to adapt to that, and adaptation is far cheaper than the economic reversals that Gore's cutbacks in carbon dioxide would require.

In the past, false claims of scientific certainty have done real damage to vulnerable people. An example still in recent memory is the banning of DDT, which was imposed on the third world by western environmentalists. Without DDT to kill mosquitoes, malaria made a comeback and caused many deaths in Africa. The enviros shrug this off as a minor miscalculation and inconvenience, but the Africans are dead. We should all remember that when somebody like Al Gore rushes in insisting upon draconian measures to attack a perceived problem.