

# Climate Change - Point & Counterpoint

David W. Golding CBE PhD DSc HonDCL

Visiting Fellow in Marine Science & Technology,  
and Honorary Chaplain, Newcastle University;  
Development Coordinator, Make Poverty History North East

**Author's Preface:** I can't quite work out what it is about climate change! Most people wouldn't dream of supposing they had anything worthwhile to contribute to an assessment of the HIV theory of the causation of AIDS, but would accept (at least provisionally) the consensus of those with technical expertise in this area. Similarly, few people would imagine they could work out whether or not a 'hole' is developing in the earth's ozone layer, let alone unravel the intricacies of the photochemical reactions responsible for the action of CFCs. Yet when it comes to climate change, every 'Tom, Dick and Sally' has something to say! Furthermore, it's difficult to switch on the media without hearing a retired politician, who left office under a cloud, pontificating on the subject. And if it's not him, it's Lord Whatsit, a Classics graduate, or some talk-show host, neither of whom could tell a peer-reviewed scientific paper from a pot-boiler in the Daily Mail! It's bizarre!

Of course, the answer relates in part to the sustained barrage of disinformation lavishly financed by the fossil fuel lobby, who, like the tobacco companies before them, have a strong vested interest in undermining any science that threatens their profits. However, I think there's more to it than that. Global warming is indeed, a very 'inconvenient truth', with very uncomfortable moral implications. Jonathan Edwards, the great New England pastor and theologian, wrote that, "Sin is deceitful because... it sways and biases our judgement. Lust biases the mind to approve the lust... and prejudices us to think it is right". In other words, sinful desires lead us to think up reasons which justify the attitudes (and lifestyles) involved. Hence, perhaps, the desperation to discredit current mainstream science.

What follows is a fuller version of the Feature Article commissioned by the Baptist Times, which was published on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2009 and entitled "Copenhagen, and all that".

## Introduction

It came like a bolt from the blue when, after campaigning on global poverty for nearly ten years, I had the chance to read up on climate science. I read that global warming, "largely caused by a rise in greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, may already – note, may already - be responsible for an increase in drought and famine, in Ethiopia and neighbouring countries since 1996" (Lord Robert May, then President of the Royal Society). In other words, the burning of fossil fuels – oil, gas, coal - by the rich countries is already doing terrible damage to the world's poor.

I was and am just staggered at the scale of the problem, the urgency of the matter, and the dread consequences should we fail to rise to the challenge.

Furthermore, I realized that I myself, this 'self-appointed, tin-pot champion of the world's poor' had been party to a life-style more damaging to them than unfair trade, debt and denial of aid, all rolled into one. I now had no option but to regard my life-style, though modest by the standards of my community, as gluttonous in its attitude to energy consumption, and involving gross environmental vandalism.

But even that wasn't the worst of it! No, the worst of it was how to deal with this matter in my public life, as a regional campaign spokesperson. If I speak about these things candidly, will I be accused of that really unforgivable sin, of 'making people feel guilty'? "Don't people have enough on their plates?", I asked myself. On the other hand, what about the number of times I've sung that signature tune for Christian campaigners, "I will speak out for those who have no voices"? What about the millions of poor children now, and the hundreds of millions of them in the future? Isn't my first responsibility towards them? I believe it is, and that's the reason I now try to address some of the issues encountered by climate campaigners.

### **1. There have been warmer and colder periods before, and recent temperature rises are part of a natural cycle.**

Underlying this objection is the idea that human beings *cannot possibly* have a significant impact on the planet. It says, "Climatic changes can occur quite naturally" – this is true – "therefore human activity is irrelevant". But the latter is illogical – for example, the fact that cancer occurs 'naturally' doesn't mean that, say, smoking has no effect on its occurrence. This position is also demonstrably false – ice cores from glaciers going back a thousand years show that the level of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere remained almost constant from until we started to burn fossil fuels during the industrial revolution, since when it has increased by nearly 40%. We *have* changed the globe and cannot *airily assume* we've done it no harm.

And we've had this argument before! The 'hole' in the ozone layer was discovered by the British Antarctic Survey scientists, Joseph Farman, Brian Gardiner and Jonathan Shanklin, in 1985, and its causation by CFCs (then used in aerosol spray cans) was proposed by the Americans, Frank Rowland and Mario Molina. This caused real alarm in the scientific community, but was ridiculed by parts of the popular press and by vested interests alike – the chairman of a leading chemical company stating that the theory was "a science fiction tale...a load of rubbish...utter nonsense". But not nonsensical enough to prevent the international community from agreeing to phase out CFCs in the Montreal Protocol in 1987, nor to prevent the award of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry to Rowland and Molina in 1995! [Incidentally, as a result of concerted global action, the ozone layer is now showing signs of recovery.]

There have indeed been changes in the global temperature throughout history - and the various factors involved (particularly solar and volcanic activities, and

variations in the earth's orbit) have been studied by climate scientists in exquisite detail. For example, scientists believe that part of the warming which occurred during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was due to increased solar activity. However, natural factors alone would, since the middle of the century, have led to a stable temperature, or even a slight decline. We can only account for the extraordinary rise recorded during the last 50 years by factoring in the increased levels of greenhouse gases.

**2) There is no real consensus that the climate is changing or that humans are in part responsible; scientists are just following the crowd.**

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the science of climate change knows that the latter assertion is a travesty of the truth. Ever since NASA's leading climate scientist, Professor James Hansen, appeared before the US Congress in 1988, scientists have led the way by presenting increasingly compelling evidence. And there hasn't been a 'crowd to follow' – political leaders and the general public alike have had to be dragged kicking and screaming to take the matter seriously!

Active, reputable, climate scientists who deny the evidence for man-made climate change have become as rare as hen's teeth. When a spokesperson for the (US) National Science Foundation was asked about the state of the 'ongoing debate' on the subject in 2005, he responded crisply, "The debate's over, it's time for action!" [Incidentally some of the lists of scientists cited as dissenting from the current position date back to the 1990s, since when the evidence has become much clearer; other lists include many who indignantly repudiate the deniers' position! (See "The climate denial industry is out to dupe the public. And it's working", below.) In any case, my assertion about the consensus relates to *active, reputable, climate* scientists!]

**The Scientific Literature:** In 2004, the science historian, Dr Naomi Oreskes, published an article in *Science* (this and *Nature* are the top two scientific journals in the world and their standards are therefore extremely demanding). She wrote that, "Politicians, economists, journalists and others may have the impression of confusion, disagreement or discord among climate scientists, but that impression is incorrect".

Incorrect, but hardly surprising, since one survey found that over 50% of articles in the popular media cast strong doubt on the anthropogenic (i.e., human) causation of global warming. In contrast, Dr Oreskes looked at a random sample of 928 *bona fide* ('peer reviewed') scientific articles on the subject, published between 1993 and 2003, and failed to find a single example taking such a position. Of course, there may be some, since she only looked at 10% of the total, but her study establishes that the consensus was overwhelming.

**National Science Academies:** The strength of the scientific consensus on climate change was demonstrated most clearly on 7th June 2005, when the

Royal Society (the oldest national academy of science in the world), and the National Academy of Sciences of the USA (by far the most prestigious academy), and the national academies of science of all the other G8 countries, and those of China, India and Brazil, put out a joint statement on the reality and causation of global warming – such a joint statement is without precedent in the history of science. It stated that, “There is now strong evidence that significant global warming is occurring” and continued: “It is likely that most of the recent warming... can be attributed to human activities.” “The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear... It is vital that all nations... contribute to substantial reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions.” “We urge all nations... to take prompt action to reduce the causes of climate change...” It is *unthinkable* that the Presidents would have put their names to the statement, and put the prestige of their academies behind it, had it not been supported by all, or almost all, their most able climate scientists.

**Mr Justice Burton:** The judgement of Mr Justice Burton in the case brought before the High Court to prevent the dissemination in schools of Al Gore’s film, ‘An Inconvenient Truth’, is also worthy of note. Having heard the evidence, *pro* and *con*, he concluded that “The central scientific theme of the film [i.e., climate change and its causation by human beings] is now accepted by the overwhelming majority of the world’s scientific community. That consensus is reflected in the recent report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). The role of the IPCC is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the... the scientific basis of human-induced climate change... Hundreds of experts from all over the world contribute to the preparation of IPCC reports.”

**All the President’s Men:** At a public event I organised, I put up the following statement on the screen: “There is widespread agreement on certain basics, and one of the most important is that we are producing far more CO<sub>2</sub> from fossil fuels than we ought to be. The carbon dioxide just accumulates in the atmosphere and there’s no end point, it just gets hotter and hotter, and so at some point [the earth] becomes unliveable.”

I then projected the following names and asked who the audience thought was most likely to have said it: the Director of Greenpeace, the Development Coordinator of Make Poverty History NE (that’s me), or Professor John Marburger, President Bush’s chief science advisor and the Director of the US Office of Science and Technology Policy. [I’m sure you’ve guessed by now - his boss wouldn’t speak to him for months!]

Similarly, we know from leaked emails that vested interests in the oil industry took a dislike to Professor Bob Hoskins, the British-born Chair of the IPCC, on account of his forthright approach, and suggested to President Bush that he be replaced. Naturally he obliged and the Indian scientist, Dr Rajendra Pachauri, was appointed in his place. And what stance did the latter adopt, once he had

had a good chance to look at the evidence? “We have just a small window of opportunity and it is closing rapidly. There is not a moment to lose... We are risking the ability of the human race to survive”.

[You just can't get the staff these days... ☺]

### **3. It's all a conspiracy (by scientists/government/communists)**

Some people seem to believe that climate scientists - many thousands of them, in almost every country in the world, are involved in a conspiracy – one which they have maintained for the past twenty years. Oh yes? And I suppose Princess Di was assassinated by MI5, and the HIV virus is an invention of the drugs industry! These conspiracy theories are just plain daft. University staff are an 'awkward' bunch (I should know) and getting them to follow any 'party line' is like 'trying to marshal a cupboard full of cats'!

And the idea that this is a government conspiracy to put up taxes is equally crazy. Governments – democratic ones in particular – want to be popular and for that they need to give their electorates lots of goodies. The idea that they would dream up recent developments in climate science, with all the expense involved, is about as likely as turkeys voting for Christmas! Paranoia descended into farce when, after I was interviewed on BBC Radio Newcastle on Monday 7th December, someone called the programme to say that I only say such things because I'm paid by the Government to do so. [Ha, ha - if only!]

And as for communist/anti-capitalist conspiracy theorists, words fail me!

Anyone wanting a 'con' need look no further than the vested interests of the fossil fuel companies, who formed a pressure group, the Climate Change Coalition, in the 1990s to lobby against action to curb climate change. Even their own scientists told them that “the scientific basis for... the potential impact of human emissions of greenhouse gases such as CO<sub>2</sub> on climate is well established and cannot be denied” (my emphasis). On the contrary, some of the companies involved continue to this day to do just that, spending millions of pounds on 'denial' - on programmes of wilful deception. Wicked people, whose god is mammon, concerned only with 'the bottom line'.

### **4. Scientists have moved into the political arena, and lost their scientific detachment; they've hitched their wagon to a cause rather than being led by the evidence.**

If we scientists fail to point out threats posed to human life and welfare revealed by our research, we are criticised for 'living in ivory towers', but if we try to exercise social responsibility and alert people to the dangers, that's wrong too – we've “moved into the political arena”. In other words, we just can't win!

Personally, I think we have erred in engaging with the public too little and too late. Thus Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, climate change advisor to Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, denies he is an 'activist', saying (February 2009) that "This is about providing evidence. What we can do is to say – given certain political goals – what you need to do to reach them... I can tell the Chancellor what the world will look like... if global warming exceeds two degrees... But I never tell anyone we *must* stick to the two degrees. That's society's decision." [Hmm... But Herr Professor, what about your son, whom you describe as "the light of your life"?!]

The strength of the evidence was referred to by the Joint Science Academies statement in 2005 (see above) and a good example of scientists being "led by the evidence" is provided by the way the stance of the American Geophysical Union has developed. [The AGU is the largest society of earth and space scientists in the world with 50,000 members in 137 countries.] In 2003, it acknowledged the strength of evidence for human-induced climate change, but called for further, worldwide study. By January 2008, it has revised its position as a result of a study by "a panel of experts, who created drafts which underwent extensive critical review, before it was formally approved by its elected Council in December". "Rather than the AGU saying that this is important and should be looked at, this is a call that we need to do something about it" (Professor Tim Killeen, AGU President). With "fewer caveats" than previously, it stated that the world's climate is "clearly out of balance and is warming", that these changes are "not natural", and that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions need to be drastically reduced.

Last year, 61 Nobel Prize winners, including about 20 physicists, welcomed Barack Obama's acceptance of current climate science and deplored the obscurantism of President Bush in this regard. Similarly, the integrity of the science was endorsed by 20 Nobel Prize winners (including winners in Chemistry and Physics) at the St James's Palace Symposium (26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> May, 2009). These are some of the world's greatest scientific minds and, after looking at the evidence and conferring together, they concluded that "The robust scientific process, by which this evidence has been gathered, should be used as a clear mandate to accelerate the actions that need to be taken. Political leaders cannot possibly ask for a more robust, evidence-based call for action." [My emphasis.]

**5. The mechanism by which emissions contribute to climate change is not clearly understood, and we shouldn't take such costly steps until we're sure of what we're doing.**

On the contrary, according to Sir John Houghton, "No other scientific topic has been so thoroughly researched and reviewed." (Sir John is a Fellow of the Royal Society, a former Professor of Atmospheric Physics at Oxford University, and a former Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

The 'greenhouse effect' of CO<sub>2</sub>, etc., has been known for over a hundred years and can be readily demonstrated in the laboratory. As the Joint Science

Academies statement (2005) put it, “The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear (my emphasis)... It is vital that all nations... contribute to substantial reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions.” Similarly, the Nobel Prize winners stated that “Political leaders cannot possibly ask for a more robust, evidence-based call for action” (May '09).

And the evidence calls for action of the utmost urgency! “Never before have we faced such a global threat. The longer we prevaricate, the more difficult the task becomes” (Lord Robert May, President of the Royal Society, 2005); “The Earth today stands in imminent peril... ..and nothing short of a planetary rescue will save it from the environmental cataclysm” (Professor James Hansen, 2007). As the Nobel Laureates put it in May, “We know what needs to be done. We cannot wait until it is too late. We cannot wait until what we value most is lost”.

Action which “matches the scale and urgency of the human, ecological and economic crises facing the world today” (Nobel Prize winners, May '09) will indeed cost a great deal of money, but this cost pales into insignificance compared with the cost of inaction! Furthermore, “the good news is that we can achieve these goals with an input of one of two percent of GDP” (Professor Schellnhuber, Feb '09) – not nearly as much as we've thrown at the banks, or spend on arms.

## **6. The climate is naturally stable, and will self-compensate for fluctuations like the ones observed in recent years.**

To imagine that we can trash the environment with impunity, because ‘nature will sort it out for us’ is just than wishful thinking, without basis in earth history and climate science. On the contrary, “We are getting almost to the point of irreversible meltdown, and will pass it soon if we are not careful” (Sir John Houghton FRS, 2006).

What worries scientists is that we will reach ‘tipping points’, where global warming becomes irreversible and self-accelerating, and ‘runaway’ climate change takes hold. For example, as the area occupied by polar ice declines, more heat will *inevitably* be absorbed by the sea instead of being reflected back out to space, leading to further warming, more melting, and so on. Similarly, as increasing amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> dissolve in the oceans, the rate of uptake may well decline, resulting in more rapid increases in the atmosphere – there is evidence that this process has already begun. A number of such points have been identified.

## **7. Even if human activity is having an effect on the climate, reducing emissions will have a minimal impact compared with the cost of doing so – volcanoes emit more CO<sub>2</sub> than we do**

This claim was made at a ‘Question Time’ for local schools, to which I contributed last year. However, the study of bubbles of air trapped in the ice of glaciers

shows that the level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere showed no change from about AD 1,000... until? Until we started to use coal, oil and gas in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, after which it rose steadily! Are we to believe the volcanoes just happened to wake up at that particular time? [Anyone can see the relevant graph for themselves in the book, “Sustainable energy – Without the Hot Air”, by David MacKay, a Physics Professor at Cambridge University’s Cavendish Laboratory. This book is, remarkably, available without charge at [www.withouthotair.com](http://www.withouthotair.com).]

In fact, “emissions from fossil fuel burning, etc, are estimated to be around 100 times greater than emissions from volcanoes and any scientist found to have falsified data [in the manner of the argument being countered here] would be guilty of serious professional misconduct” (British Antarctic Survey, National Environment Research Council).

Nothing illustrates the staggering incompetence of much climate denial better than the recent debate between Ian Plimer, an Australian professor of geology and a climate change denier, and George Monbiot, the British environmental campaigner. It was hosted by Tony Jones on the Australian television network ABC. [What follows is an extract from The Guardian’s website - put “Ian Plimer’s volcano claims vaporise under questioning on Australian TV” into your browser for a fuller account.]

Monbiot charged Plimer with continuing to restate facts after they have been shown to be wrong. For example, Plimer maintains that volcanoes produce more CO<sub>2</sub> than human activity, whereas the US Geological Survey (USGS) reports that human beings produce 130 times as much CO<sub>2</sub> as volcanoes. Plimer tried to argue that this only applied to terrestrial volcanoes, but the chairman, Tony Jones, had done his homework and pointed out that the USGS had been asked whether or not submarine volcanoes were included in its calculations, and they were.

What distressed me about the local schools incident described above was not that the man concerned didn’t know the facts, but that I was pretty sure that he would, like Plimer, spout the same nonsense the next time he had an audience of young people in front of him. I just do not understand such people.

## **8. Temperature rises can easily be accounted for by sunspot activity.**

On the contrary, “change in solar activity... cannot, on its own, account for all the changes in global average temperature we have seen in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century... Measurements from satellites show that there has been very little change in underlying solar activity in the last 30 years – there is even evidence of a detectable decline – and so this cannot account for the recent rises we have seen in global temperatures” (The Royal Society’s Climate Change Advisory Group, 2007).

Furthermore, research published in May this year by Jeffrey Pierce and Peter Adams of Carnegie Mellon University, in *Geophysical Research Letters*, demonstrated that the effect of sunspot activity on cosmic rays is too weak to affect cloud cover (and hence warming) by a factor of one hundred.

### **9. Efforts to combat climate change will hit poor people hardest because energy will become less affordable**

This argument fails to take in the enormity of the threat posed by climate change to humanity, and to the world's poor in particular, and it is for this reason that British relief agencies are so prominent in the climate campaign. Lord Nicholas Stern, the government's former chief advisor on climate change, states that without radical action we would be facing "massive rises in sea level, whole areas devastated by hurricanes and others turned into uninhabitable desert, forcing billions of [the poorest and most vulnerable] people to leave their homelands." "I find it almost impossible to imagine how the poor of Bangladesh will cope", says Veena Khaleque, of Practical Action, given that sea level rise will push tens of millions of them from their land.

Sir John Houghton FRS and Bishop James Jones have got it just right. They say, in effect, that "There is *not only* an inescapable moral imperative for rich countries to avoid further damage by rapidly reducing their carbon emissions, *but also* to share their wealth and skills with developing countries to enable them to adapt to climate change and to build their economies sustainably." Just so – not either/or, but both/and! And this is the position of the entire Stop Climate Chaos Coalition.

### **10. The hacked emails from East Anglia University's Climatic Research Unit are evidence of a cover-up**

I have been too busy organising 'Coaches from every city, town and village in the North East' to the national climate march in London, on 5<sup>th</sup> December, to follow this as closely as I would have liked! But note that, first, the incident took place in 1999 and climate science has come a long way since then. Second, the temperature records reported by the UEA are very similar to those produced independently by NASA and NCDC in the US and other centres round the world.

Third, the warming trend reported is beyond reasonable doubt! NASA's Cynthia Rosenzweig (and a list of co-authors as long as your arm!) published a major paper in the top science journal, *Nature*, on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2008, relating to evidence of climate change in the natural world. They reported that "95% of the 829 physical changes have been in directions consistent with warming, such as glacier wastage and an earlier peak in river discharge." Similarly, "90% of the approx. 28,800 [28,800!] documented changes in plants and animals are responding consistently to temperature changes... for example by earlier blooming, geographical distribution, etc." Dr Rosenzweig commented that "When

we look at these impacts together, it is clear they are across continents and endemic. We're getting a sense that climate change is already changing the way the world works... It's real and it's happening now".

I don't underestimate the damage done by the hacked emails, by giving ammunition to those looking for any excuse to deflect the thrust of current science, but anyone who thinks they make even the smallest possible dent in the vast body of evidence for human-induced climate change is living in a fantasy world. At worst, it's a case of individual professional misconduct, but I'll be very surprised if the independent enquiry now underway reveals even that. More likely, they just involved some very foolish, intemperate expressions of frustration to trusted confidantes, in what was thought to be a private correspondence. [And what would people think of me, if everything I ever said in anger or haste during my university career were to be held up to public scrutiny?!!]

Finally, as George Monbiot has said, "Nothing exposed by these emails is one tenth as bad as the least of the revelations, recently published, about the propaganda planted by the fossil fuel companies", and that's been going on for 20 years and continues to this day.

## **11. Concern for the environment sound awfully like a 'New Morality'**

The suspicion and hostility with which environmental concern is viewed by many Christians is unjustified. On the contrary, the teaching is found in the Bible from the beginning to the end! What we are dealing with here is not a new morality, but the application of the old, God-given morality to a new situation, which we have brought about by our carelessness and greed.

Genesis 2, v. 15, says that "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it", and John Calvin (1509-1564) commented that, "We possess the things that God has committed to our hands, on condition of our being content with a frugal and moderate use of them... Let him who possesses a field... endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated... Let every one regard himself as the steward of God in all things he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved."

The verse and comment show that a responsibility to care for God's good creation is foundational to human responsibilities – it is a 'creation ordinance' (as also is marriage). We may not possess many fields, but will the climate we hand down to posterity be as good or better than we received it? Are we regarding ourselves as "God's stewards in all things"? Or is our treatment of the environment "dissolute, corrupt and abusive"?

As a leading, contemporary, evangelical theologian, Chris Wright (formerly Principal of All Nations College), puts it: "Creation care is an urgent issue in today's world... Only a wilful blindness worse than any proverbial ostrich's head in the sand can ignore the facts of environmental destruction." After listing some of these facts, including "the increase of greenhouse gases and consequent global warming", he concludes that "All this is a vast and interrelated impending catastrophe of loss and destruction affecting the whole planet and all its human and nonhuman inhabitants. To be unconcerned about it is to be either desperately ignorant or irresponsibly callous." [My emphasis.]

## **12. Belief that human-induced cataclysmic global warming runs counter to God's promise that 'seed-time and harvest shall not fail'**

It is grossly irreligious to take this wonderful promise of God's faithfulness to imply that He will invariably shield us from harm if we wantonly pillage his creation. Indeed, the Bible clearly teaches otherwise: "Her rich men are violent, her people are liars... Therefore I have begun to destroy you... you will plant but not harvest" (Micah 6, vs 12-15, see also Ezekiel 14, v. 13, etc.). Is God to blame that Easter Island, a once verdant paradise, is now largely barren? Is He responsible for the fact that cod are now virtually extinct on the Newfoundland Cod Banks, which once provided the richest 'harvest' of fish in the world?

I most certainly do believe that, as the report, "Hope in God's Future, Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change", recently published by the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, states: "Most importantly, followers of Christ must hope in these days and not despair... God's creatures do not have the power ultimately to frustrate the purposes of the almighty God we worship." However, we must combine the promises of God's Word with its warnings: Revelation 11, v. 18 teaches that a time will come "for judging the dead; for rewarding those who reverence your name and for destroying those who destroy [damage, pillage] the earth", a most explicit reference to environmental sin.

## **Concluding Comments**

What I have written will doubtless fall on many deaf ears. However, to anyone who's unsure about climate change, one way or the other, I'd say this:

"Surely it's 'better to be safe than sorry'! That's just common sense. Would you take your grandchildren on a plane if you knew it had a one-in-two chance of crashing? But think of what we'd be putting at risk if we ignore scientific advice! We'd be gambling on the welfare of the whole of humanity - risking bequeathing to our children and grandchildren a veritable hell on earth. And, as I've said, it's not a one-in-two chance - most of the most able scientists say the evidence is overwhelming."

A joint editorial by 56 newspapers in 45 countries on 7th December lay out the stark choice we face. We can be the generation "that saw a challenge and rose to it, or one so stupid that we saw calamity coming but did nothing to avert it." "Stupid" is one way of putting it - "immoral" is another. (Or do I mean just plain "evil"?)

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows", says Galations 6, v. 7, and what haunts me is the thought that we (I include myself) have been "sowing the wind", and that the world's poor – and my grandchildren – will "reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 6, v. 7). Please Lord, forgive us and grant us true repentance!

Contact: [d.w.golding@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:d.w.golding@ncl.ac.uk)

For further reading, put the following into your browser:

"Climate Change, A brief outline of the strength of the scientific consensus" (by David Golding)

"The climate denial industry is out to dupe the public. And it's working" (by George Monbiot)

"St James's Palace Nobel Laureate Symposium"

"Joint Science Academies' Statement: Global Response to Climate Change"

"Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change"