

Evangelicals and Scientists on Global Climate Change

January 23, 2007

The Following Statement was written by A group of leading scientists -- including James Hansen of NASA; E.O. Wilson, Eric Chivian and Jim McCarthy of Harvard; Gus Speth from Yale; Rita Colwell from Johns Hopkins; and Howard Frumkin from the Centers for Disease Control -- joined with some leading evangelicals -- including Rich Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals, Joel Hunter of Northland Church, Cal DeWitt of the University of Wisconsin, David P. Gushee of Union University, and Randy Isaac of the American Scientific Affiliation.

"Evangelical and scientific leaders recently met to search for common ground in the protection of the creation. We happily discovered far more concordance than either of us had expected, quickly moving beyond dialogue to a shared sense of moral purpose.

"Important initiatives were already underway on both sides, and when compared they were found to be broadly overlapping. We clearly share a moral passion and sense of vocation to save the imperiled living world before our damages to it remake it as another kind of planet. We agree not only that reckless human activity has imperiled the Earth -- especially the unsustainable and irresponsible lifestyles and public policies of our own nation -- but also that we share a profound moral obligation to work together to call our nation to the kind of dramatic change urgently required in our day. We pledge our joint commitment to this effort in the unique moment now upon us.

"This meeting was convened by the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School and the National Association of Evangelicals. It was envisioned as a first exploratory conference, based on a shared concern for the creation, to be held among people who were in some ways quite different in their worldviews. It now seems to us to be the beginning point of a major shared effort among scientists and evangelicals to protect life on Earth and the fragile life-support systems that sustain it, drawing on the unique intellectual, spiritual, and moral contributions that each community can bring.

"We agree that our home, the Earth, which comes to us as that inexpressibly beautiful and mysterious gift that sustains our very lives, is seriously imperiled by human behavior. The harm is seen throughout the natural world, including a cascading set of problems such as climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, and species extinctions, as well as the spread of infectious diseases, and other accelerating threats to the health of people and the well-being of societies. Each particular problem could be enumerated, but here it is enough to say that we are gradually destroying the sustaining community of life on which all living things on Earth depend. The costs of this destruction are already manifesting themselves around the world in profound and painful ways. The cost to humanity is already significant and may soon become incalculable. Being irreversible, it would affect all generations to come.

"We believe that the protection of life on Earth is a profound moral imperative. It addresses without discrimination the interests of all humanity as well as the value of the non-human world. It requires a new moral awakening to a compelling demand, clearly articulated in Scripture and supported by science, that we must steward the natural world in order to preserve for ourselves and future generations a beautiful, rich, and healthful environment. For many of us, this is a religious obligation, rooted in our sense of gratitude for Creation and reverence for its Creator.

"One fundamental motivation that we share is concern for the poorest of the poor, well over a billion people, who have little chance to improve their lives in devastated and war-ravaged environments. At the same time, the natural environments in which they live, and where so much of Earth's biodiversity barely hangs on, cannot survive the press of destitute people with nowhere else to go.

"We declare that every sector of our nation's leadership -- religious, scientific, business, political, and educational -- must act now to work toward the fundamental change in values, lifestyles and public policies required to address these worsening problems before it is too late. There is no excuse for further delays. Business as usual cannot continue yet one more day. We pledge to work together at every level to lead our nation toward a responsible care for creation, and we call with one voice to our scientific and evangelical communities, and to all others, to join us in these efforts."