

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS ENTER THE CLIMATE DEBATE

The current debate over man-made global warming has, unfortunately, like too many other current issues, become political. It is dividing our country, largely along party lines, with most Democrats believing global warming to be a significant threat to our planet, most Republicans not so much --- believers vs. deniers.

Most atheists are Democrats although it might be prudent for some to reconsider after pondering who, other than an all-powerful God, would have placed planet Earth in the very narrow Goldilocks zone of our solar system. If, like planet Venus, we were a few thousand miles closer to the sun we'd burn up; if a few thousand miles further out we'd freeze. God's gift and exquisite placement of our planet did not come with written instructions on how to care for it perhaps He assumed we'd figure it out. Current evidence indicates that God would not be pleased with our stewardship of His magnificent gift.

To ensure the future of our planet, most people, especially scientists who have studied the problem, have concluded that CO2 emissions must be reduced significantly by reducing fossil-fuel consumption. Many US citizens, including those not named Al Gore, agree. Leaders of virtually all countries recognize and accept this reality with the notable exception of the current designated leader of the free world, President Trump, who believes that man-made climate change is a "Hoax". By appointing those who think like him to key positions in the Environmental Protection Agency our president has not only made it very difficult to pass legislation to reduce CO2 emissions but has also eliminated many current curbs on pollution. President Trump's views on climate change have been supported by a significant portion of his base - evangelical Christians. Most evangelicals have been enthusiastic supporters of Trump because of his pro-life stance and his two Supreme Court appointments which have ensured a conservative majority on the court for many years to come thus giving realistic hope to evangelicals that Roe vs. Wade will eventually be overturned. (Climate-change believers could argue that climate change legislation would save many more future lives than right-to-life legislation). With their No. 1 pet cause - *right to life* - currently in good hands, evangelicals have less will, enthusiasm or need to support Trump's views on climate change. It appears that evangelical support for Trump is waning, if not crumbling, as evangelicals become increasingly aware of the perils to human life from a warming planet and that saving future lives from this danger is a worthy endeavor for all Christians. Trump's actions and views on other subjects have made evangelical Christians uncomfortable but have been tolerated because of his support for their No. 1 issue.

More and more evangelicals and independent Christian thinkers are now devoting their time and energy to what they believe to be a serious subject, one that could turn into their new No. 1 cause: *The future of our planet*. Here's respected evangelical Christian author Dr. Scott Rodin, a proud conservative Republican and former climate denier in a recent posting: "*Perhaps most alarming of all is our apathy in the face of unequivocal evidence that we are ruining this planet. Caring for the environment is not a political issue, it is a moral issue. There is a way to create jobs, minimize regulations and expand our economy by implementing aggressive policies that will decrease pollution, increase investment in alternative resources and seriously energize our country in the international effort to curb global warming. There is no doubt this can be done. God help us if we don't have the will to do it.*" Sounds eerily similar to what might come out of the mouth of a Democrat Environmentalist - 2 words that are anathema to many Republicans.

Citizens that would like to see action taken on global warming should let their congressional representatives know. This might mean that these representatives would have to denounce previously held beliefs (as Dr. Rodin, above, did) but knowing that they would retain the support of Christian evangelicals would make such a move more palatable and would also make it easier for them to exit the "climate closet". Not incidentally, it could also prolong their careers.

Joe Traynor, 8/30/19