

Weighing Climate Change, Pope Francis, and Vegetarianism

Which of these are found wanting?

By Matthew Priebe

Over the last few decades, discussion of “environmental” issues has increased greatly. Perhaps the most contentious argument has been the reality or not of climate change. Due to the fact that this issue is not really the most important topic needing solving, I have refused to address this in my public presentations. But because of the recent Papal encyclical LAUDATO SI, this has become a pressing issue for many people. But is the crisis real? And is the Catholic Church’s proposed cure worse than the disease? Does Pope Francis have a hidden agenda that affects you and your faith? What is the truth of climate change, the Pope’s solutions, and our response to this issue? I have decided to tackle the science and politics involved and hopefully provide an Adventist perspective to this debate.

We first need to understand basic underlying terminology. The phrase “climate change” is a bit misleading, as the climate is constantly changing and has been doing so for over 5000 years. That is life on a damaged planet. The more accurate term is “global warming,” the idea that the temperature of the planet’s oceans and atmosphere is increasing, and was coined by scientists decades ago. But due to the fact that global warming will have erratic results in different areas, it became easier to use the term climate change to describe the practical results of a rising global temperature. Most areas will get hotter, some cooler. Most areas will get drier, some wetter. All areas will be subject to greater extremes than normal, resulting in increased damage caused by the weather. Some critics have seen a sinister motive in the changing name of this issue, but in reality it is just a more easily understood name for the same phenomenon. One name refers to the result; the other name refers to the cause. For the simplified purposes of this article, I will arbitrarily refer to the identical issue of global warming/climate change as climate change.

Real Science or Scare Tactics?

Our first question: Is climate change real? This would seem to be a fairly easy problem. Stick a bunch of thermometers in the air and water around the world and see if they go up or down every year. Simple right? This has been done for much of the last century and the results seem to be conclusive. The global temperature *has* been rising rapidly and is now at record highs. There are fluctuations and complex patterns involved but the overall trend is dramatically up. But there are many voices that claim these results are rigged or statistical illusions. Is there any other evidence to support these claims?

There are some arguments for climate change that are based entirely on faulty assumptions. Ice core and peat layer samples that supposedly give a history of Earth’s climate are not helpful, since these historic

estimates are based on evolutionary dating systems that have serious flaws. Time forbids a review of the inaccuracies of these dating methods. But to go back "millions of years" to see how the climate has changed will lead to no useful information.

My ministry is called Ask the Animals Productions. I prefer to follow God's command in Job to ask unbiased animals what is going on rather than humans who have axes to grind. What do the animals tell us? Here are a few examples.

- We find that birds, dragonflies and other highly mobile animals are moving greatly to stay in temperature conditions to which they are suited. They are appearing hundreds of miles from their historic range.
- Butterflies are climbing mountains to stay in their specialized temperatures, since lower altitudes are becoming too hot. The longest running butterfly study on earth has proven this beyond question.
- Polar Bears, Ringed Seals and Bearded Seals are starving to death as their ice habitat melts at the wrong time of year. Caribbean seabirds are starting to breed months earlier than they did historically since spring starts earlier now. Canadian Red Squirrels breed two weeks earlier than they did previously. Marmots emerge from hibernation three weeks earlier than recorded just thirty years ago.
- More disturbing, caterpillars are hatching earlier each year with warmer temperatures, but the warblers that feed on them are still going by length of day to know when to lay eggs. The caterpillars emerge and become adults before the warblers begin to catch them for their chicks' food. So by the time the baby birds hatch, there are not enough caterpillars and the babies starve.
- In a similar situation, a type of shrimp called Krill become active and multiply under Antarctic sea ice based on temperature and ice melting cycles. Since ice is melting at abnormal times, the Krill reproduce and die off at much different times than previously. This is hurting great whales who travel the oceans to reach Antarctic waters to feed on Krill. The hungry whales arrive after the Krill are gone. Adele Penguins face the same food shortage as they try to raise their young.
- Animals that are unable to move to new areas are dying. An example is the Karner Blue Butterfly, found only with a specific lupine flower. Places where just a few years ago had many Karner Blues have now lost them completely, such as Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Woodland Deer Mice used to appear in all of Michigan's forests, but now have died out from the Lower Peninsula, remaining only in the cooler Upper Peninsula.
- A surprising side effect of warming temperatures is the altering of the male/female ratio of sea turtle hatchlings. Some reptiles have their sex decided by the temperature of their eggs, and Hawksbill Turtles are having more females than normal.
- Coral reefs are made by tiny animals and are the heart of warm water ecosystems. Raised ocean temperatures are weakening or destroying coral in huge sections of tropical seas, resulting in bleached coral that usually dies.

- Much attention has been paid to shrinking ice sheets and retreating glaciers. The toes of glaciers are so far from where they were just a few years ago that it is shocking. Glacier National Park in Montana soon will have no glaciers. (What will we call the park then?) But there are other physical manifestations not as well known. Sea levels are rising, and again this is not conjecture but a measurable scientific fact based on data from over a century.
- Even more alarming, ocean currents are changing. Major currents have been circulating in regular patterns for as long as we have known about them. But now they are altering their routes. The Humboldt Current normally flows only along the Pacific Coast of South America. Humboldt Squid is a typical animal found in this current and is now found in abundance off the coast of California for the first time ever. They have moved north as water temperatures have changed.

As a naturalist, I encounter examples like this constantly. Only time prevents an exhaustive list of changes that animals are revealing. I could easily double the length of this article with examples of nature illuminating disturbing alterations. So the animals, without political bias or agenda, tell us clearly that climate change is not only real but probably worse than we realize. So I take that as conclusive and will ignore the industry-backed climate deniers dominating many media outlets. Climate change is real. It is documented and grounded from many sources. Do not be bullied by climate deniers who only repeat talk radio dogma. About the only people left who deny climate change are the politicians bribed by industry lobbyists and the media promoters of those politicians. As factual evidence mounts, those who deny climate change will be increasingly marginalized and ignored.

Human Industry or Natural Cycles?

This leads to our second question: Is climate change caused by humans or natural forces? This is a more legitimate question and offers room for differences of opinion. Much effort has been put forward to demonstrate that modern industry pollution has caused current climate change. Others claim it is natural variation of the earth or is caused by sunspots. But if it is a natural variation, then why aren't the animals adapting to this supposedly natural change? Change is happening so fast that species cannot respond quickly enough and are going downhill. Changes this rapid only happen from dramatic world events, such as the massive changes after the flood. Nothing obvious has occurred in the last few centuries to account for what we see. And with each passing day the sunspot hypothesis loses traction, since it predicts an overall cooling that is failing to occur.

So are humans responsible? The evidence leans that way and is it really any surprise? The Bible repeatedly shows the wickedness of humanity and how the earth is ruined because of it. Hosea 4:1-3, Isaiah 24:4-6, Jeremiah 12:4 all strongly state that the earth suffers because of human defilers. Many other texts [Ecclesiastes 9:3, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 1] show that any human apart from God is wicked and always will be wicked. Since this applies both to atheists and those who profess religion but live a life that pleases Satan, we begin to see the majority of our 7 billion on Earth are fulfilling God's prophecies of self-destruction. When

our population was low, the contamination we produced was limited in extent and duration. But with people now everywhere and using huge amounts of resources, the direct and indirect destruction is overwhelming the ability of the planet to recover. Nearly all seabirds have plastic in their stomachs. Seafood and fish are so full of toxins and metals that the myth of healthy fish is one of the big lies of industry propaganda. The tuna or salmon you eat will kill you just as quickly as the factory farmed pig or chicken. Flocks of birds drop dead out of the sky for no apparent reason. Frogs are born with multiple legs or other grotesqueries. Store bought weed and bug killers are one of the main reasons that 40% of insect pollinator species are now going extinct. GMO crops contaminate wild plants with their toxic pollen and so Monarch butterflies are vanishing. A survey of problems like this is endless and depressing.

Ocean acidification is a crisis even more urgent than climate change. Pollution entering the oceans is changing the PH balance of the water. Even a small change will quickly destroy Earth's ocean life. Revelation 8 predicts a massive loss of life in the seas, even before the plagues of Revelation 16 destroys sea life completely. Furthermore, half of the vertebrate wildlife on earth has been lost since the 1970's. That means that if 100 individual animals lived in a patch of forest or desert or wetland in 1970, there are 50 animals there now, on average. Think about how much carnage would be required to destroy half the human population in 50 years. That is the carnage that has been inflicted upon the animals. The deliberate brutality involved for sport and greed, as well as the indifferent destruction by industry and development is so overwhelming that the mind retreats before it. With all of humanities' proven crimes against nature, is it any surprise that human pollution is altering the climate of our globe? But climate change poses a unique problem in trying to stop it.

Our third main question is: What can we do to stop climate change? If it is natural, than there is obviously nothing we can do. But assuming climate change is human caused, can we stop it? The answer is not positive. If we stopped polluting immediately everywhere, without making any more mistakes, the effects will not begin to help for nearly a century. We have already done so much damage that the short term consequences cannot be prevented. This is not a popular topic of discussion, because people give up if their own lifetime cannot be improved. The discussion would have to focus on helping our descendants, and most people are too selfish to care about *them*. Instant gratification is all that resonates in our selfish age.

There is even more of a disconnect with Christians who believe in an imminent coming of Jesus to restore humanity and the world He created. Why should Christians care what happens now since soon there will be a newly remade world? There are two major problems with this view. First, we have no timetable of *when* Jesus will return. We only are told that He *will* return. And nowhere has God promised that He will prevent us from suffering the consequences of our actions. Just the opposite in fact. If we are still here in a century, this planet may be so miserable and unlivable that it will be a nightmare for those relatively few survivors who manage to hang on. God has told us through the Bible and Ellen White that He is really waiting for us, not

the other way around. This makes our duty to vindicate God's government all the more urgent, so that He can return as soon as possible before our environment disintegrates completely.

Second, the scripture teaching of dominion makes us responsible for what happens to the earth and its inhabitants. I looked at our dominion over animals in my presentation "Animals, Ethics & Christianity." And I looked at our dominion over the earth in my presentation "Without This Animal You Will Die!" So I will not repeat all of that here. But the summary is that everything on this planet belongs to God, not us. We are stewards until His return and He will not reward us for killing the animals or polluting the ecosystems that He designed. God has stated unequivocally that when He returns He will destroy those who destroy the earth. [Revelation 11:18] God will not honor those who display a "trash this world and get a new one free" attitude.

So we are faced with a serious dilemma. Whether climate change is caused by man or not, we are not going to fix it any time soon. But our individual actions still matter, as they display the character of Christ or Satan, as shepherd or destroyer. If we take actions that cause needless destruction to life, we fail in the God-given responsibility of stewardship of His world, His animals, and His human children. So our best policy is to practice the least destructive lifestyle we can, while staying true to God's revealed will in the Bible. Please note that one *cannot* be true to the Bible and Inspiration without caring for nature. But to care for nature *without* following the Bible is just as pointless. And this brings us to the Pope.

World Saver or Power Seeker?

In 2015, Pope Francis wrote "LAUDATO SI', ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME," making the Catholic case for environmental care. It is an official document that carries binding force for every Catholic and is designed as a road map to worldwide cooperation. It has been hailed as the greatest or worst thing the Papacy has recently produced, depending on people's agendas. What is the truth of this document and the motivation behind it? Having read the entire document, unlike most of the people who either attack or praise it, I will analyze the theme and agenda of this historic missive.

The claim that this document is just about climate change is totally false. This is a sprawling paper that touches on many concepts and doctrines. There is Mariology, sacrament advancement, and promotion of Sunday worship replacing the seventh-day Sabbath of the Bible. Francis uses this document as a soapbox to preach the Catholic version of religion. But his central themes are care for the environment and the poor. About 75% of the massive document is an analysis of the problems facing the Earth, the poor, and society in general. And I challenge anyone to find any flaws in his review of the problems we face. Francis argues that our world is disintegrating and human life is pretty miserable all over, from rich to poor. Those critics who pretend this is all doomsday whining are wearing a blindfold and will be very surprised when everything collapses around them. Francis condemns consumerism and our shallow society that cares for nothing except the next shot of entertainment. Spirituality is stressed as a cure for the world's ills and Francis

demands a new understanding of the kinship of all created life. How can anyone argue against that? His basic message of the disease of sin is everything true Christians have been saying for centuries.

The danger comes in Francis' proposed solutions. To be honest, there are few offered. He gives general platitudes but he refrains from many specifics. He does promote economic systems that are alien to normal Western systems. He wants a leveling of the world's wealth so that all are cared for. But that is beyond the purview of this article. Of far more interest is his proposal that the only way to enforce worldwide compliance to environmental standards is a single agency that has binding power over all nations. Quoting from Paragraph 175: "It is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions....To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority."

Who will lead this all powerful agency that will control all aspects of life in order to save the planet? Francis doesn't say, but I'm sure if nominated, he would reluctantly accept the role. Just temporarily, of course, until the burden of leadership can be laid aside. History knows only one outcome of this scenario; that absolute power corrupts absolutely. I leave it to the reader to imagine what a church (dedicated to replacing the Bible Sabbath and teachings with doctrines of 1500 years of human pronouncements) would do with unlimited veto-proof power.

But there are other serious issues involved. Francis proposes several reforms to help the environment in the short and long term. All of them are very familiar to anyone listening to environmentalists for the last 30 years. Recycling, reduction of fossil fuels, increased mass transit, eliminating consumerism as the driving goal of economics. All of these are worthy goals and have been preached by many people for decades. In fact, Francis has basically regurgitated environmental doctrine without inventing anything new himself. It is like reading an article by Greenpeace. Reading Francis' hard hitting expose of destruction, one would expect the Pope to address ALL the concerns killing the Earth and the poor. But here is where the duplicity and agenda of the Papacy is truly exposed.

What is missing from Francis' description of why we are in our current crisis? What is actually the single driving force behind virtually every area where humans are destroying ourselves: deforestation, topsoil erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, social injustice, and the spread of human disease? The industry most to blame for the mess we are in is not oil or coal but rather the meat industry. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to several branches of animal killing by the singular title of "meat industry." This includes factory farms, rangeland ranching, hunting for food, commercial fishing, and egg/dairy production. The meat industry uses more resources, destroys more wildlife, wastes more fuel and water, and leaves more people starving and destitute than any other cause. This is above and beyond the

mass suffering of the animals killed by this bloody industry. Any plan to save the environment that ignores the meat industry *is preordained to fail*. And that is precisely what the Pope's plan does. There is not a whisper in the entire encyclical of this central issue. How can this be?

The reason becomes clear when we look at the environmental groups who dominate climate change discussion. They also refuse to acknowledge the evil the meat industry causes. They pretend that taking shorter showers and driving a Prius will solve all the world's ills. I'm using hyperbole of course, but the reality is that mainstream environmentalism has refused to address "meat" despite the overwhelming damage it causes. By contrast, those organizations that focus on "animal protection" or "animal rights" issues have been loudly condemning the cruelty and waste of meat for decades. But Francis deliberately chose to ignore this message in favor of the limited dogma of typical environmental groups.

Who Really Cares About Saving Life?

For those not aware of the subtleties that separate various activist groups, a brief clarification will be helpful. Groups labeled as "green" often have very different motives and agendas. Typical "environmental" groups focus on protecting species rather than individual animals. They usually support sport hunting/fishing, meat eating, and most killing of common animals. By contrast, "animal rights/protection" groups focus on protecting individual animals by opposing sport hunting/fishing, meat eating, and most other forms of cruelty. This puts many "green" groups at odds about what is the most urgent threat to nature. Nowhere is this more evident than the meat industry. "Animal" groups oppose the cruelty, waste, and destruction of the meat industry. "Environmental" groups actively try to ignore the issue. If you doubt this, watch the documentary "Cowspiracy," and see the leadership of famous environmental groups squirm when asked about the meat industry. There is even a possibility that pro meat industry groups actively fund environmental groups to keep them quiet on this issue. It is shocking. Typical environmental groups include National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, Audubon Society, Greenpeace, and Sierra Club. Typical animal groups include Humane Society of the United States, In Defense of Animals, Sea Shepherd, and PETA. One of the few environmental groups that doesn't hide the damage caused by meat is the Center for Biological Diversity.

This means there are two contradictory views of the importance of the meat industry. Those who view the meat industry as merely a cultural choice that can be continued indefinitely, and those who see the industry as so destructive that it needs to end immediately. The overwhelming evidence is on the side of those who see meat as a great threat to animals, nature, and humanity. Animals raised for food require massive amounts of land and food and water. The meat industry generates enormous pollution from fecal waste, pesticide and herbicide use, and energy consumption. The very premise of meat eating leads to collapse, as the resources used are squandered to provide a small end product for the privileged few.

The Adventist Health Study has compiled extensive evidence documenting the consequences of meat to the environment. They are currently publishing their findings on the many dangers involved in society's meat addiction [www.environmentalnutrition.org]. The meat industry as a food source is demonstrably unsustainable. If humanity maintains or increases its meat consumption, mass-starvation and conflict over dwindling food and water resources will result. The United Nations, in assessing causes of climate change, have placed the meat industry at the very top of the list, since so much energy is wasted and so much pollution is generated. Every other industry generates less climate change effects, including coal and petroleum production. Objective analysis of the many problems caused by meat will show that those who ignore it are doomed to fail in any effort to save the planet. Which brings us back to Pope Francis' encyclical.

There is not a whisper about meat and its consequences by Francis. He deliberately ignores this issue and gives the same Band-Aid solutions most environmental groups favor. Why would he do this? Is it because the Papacy is ignorant of the damage that meat causes? Impossible, since the evidence is readily available and has been for a long time. So it must be a deliberate choice to hide the issue. He talks about economic systems, he talks about spiritual values, he talks about fossil fuels and renewable energy and he even talks about saying grace before meals. He does not talk about meat. This is inexcusable. This shows that he is not interested in real solutions. Instead, he is interested in saying what he knows mainstream environmentalists want to hear. Instead of honestly trying to solve environmental problems, this document is specifically crafted to convince an environmentalist audience that he is one of them. I cannot emphasize this enough.

Francis champions the poor extensively and then ignores the fact that every year America alone wastes enough grain on farmed animals to feed over eight billion humans. Hello? Starvation could be virtually eliminated from our planet if we fed the food America already grows to people rather than to cows and pigs. If Francis really cared about the poor, he would have made this a central core of his agenda. Biodiversity hotspots are being destroyed in the tropics so that cows can graze on the ruins. If Francis really cared about biodiversity, he would have condemned the massive expansion of ranching to third world countries (which also cripples the poor by eliminating the ecosystems they depend upon). The meat industry produces staggering amounts of waste that contaminates fresh and salt water. If Francis really cared about pollution, he would have condemned factory farms spewing filth onto the landscape. The fishing industry rapes the oceans to the point of ecosystem collapse and all those poor who depend on the sea get poorer. If Francis really cared about the seas, he would have demanded that nations focus on tofu rather than tuna. Mounting unsustainability of a world based on a meat economy threatens future generations with ruin and madness. If Francis really cared about the future, he would have spelled out how a vegan economy would provide for all.

But Francis does not really care about this. Francis does not care about the environment. Francis does not care about the planet. And Francis does not care about the poor. His proposed solutions would have been utterly different if he did. So what *does* Francis care about? Well, remember paragraph 175 that I quoted above? About a "world political authority" that has the power to "impose sanctions" to save the planet? That

is what Francis cares about and the sole reason for this document. Francis cares about power. And Francis cares about control. He has jumped on the environmental bandwagon to become the religious leader that secular and eastern religions can follow. Stunningly, he even uses the term "Mother Earth" toward the end of the document, slyly identifying himself with the paganism many New Agers follow with their worship of Gaia/Mother Earth. There are also subtle hints throughout the encyclical supporting pantheism, another bulwark of environmentalists who lean toward spirituality. In several places, Francis insinuates that mechanistic evolution is factual, angling for the support of worldly scientists. All of this is deliberate and calculated to convince the Pope's audience that he is "one of them."

Nothing like this has ever been seen from a major religious power. Churches have historically shunned any defense of nature and animals. Sole voices in every faith have championed the voiceless and argued for the protection of nature, myself included. But no church leadership, speaking on behalf of their religion, has ever said we must save the planet or else. This has actually been why uncountable souls have been turned away from Christianity for centuries. Those who correctly see the importance of animals and care about their treatment have been spurned by the killers and torturers that pretend to be followers of God. "Bow-hunters for Christ" and church fundraisers centered on eating animals killed for social pleasure are examples of the blindness of apostate Christianity. True Biblical Christianity treasures *a//*the souls God has created and does not kill them unless there is no other choice. But instead of being the head, Christianity has been the tail, hiding the truth in order to pander to people involved in bloodshed and cruelty. And the Papacy is a prime offender in this area. For over a thousand years, Catholic leadership has explicitly stated that animals are soulless inferiors that can be tormented as we wish, that those who stand for animals and nature can stand alone, and that the planet will be just fine no matter what we do. The position now held by Rome is diametrically opposed to everything they have ever stood for. Once again, this should tell us what is really going on and why.

Envoy

So should we care about God's creation? Of course. God told us to do so. If we do not, He will count us unfaithful stewards of His property. Should we care about the lives of animals? Of course. God told us to do so. If we do not, He will give us the same answer He gave to Balaam after he beat the donkey. Should we care about the poor? Of course. God told us to do so. If we do not, He will eventually tell us, "Depart from me, ye cursed." [Matthew 25: 41] And this brings us to a final truth. Since the Papacy seems to have another agenda besides what Francis claims, it is critical that opposition to his proposals be handled correctly. Under no circumstances should we stand with the destroyers of life in order to oppose the Papacy's real goals. First of all, do not claim climate change is a hoax, as you will be easily marginalized and humiliated by the readily available evidence demonstrating its truth. Climate deniers are the flat-earthers of the 21st century. But most importantly, don't defend cruelty to animals and exploitation of nature in order to spite the statements of caring the Pope has professed. But can we really care about creation and animals and the poor without

following Pope Francis' true agenda? Absolutely, since Francis no more cares about animals or the environment or the poor than he cares about you. Which is: Not At All. Never let anyone brand you as a New Ager or a Catholic or an atheist for following the truths of the Bible. The Bible transcends all the political agendas and deceitful plans of those working toward their own aggrandizement. The truth remains the truth even when superficially used by selfish schemers. Even if they wear a cloak of some Bible truths, look beneath to see their true colors.

And the final truth: Stop eating animal corpses. Meat kills all involved with its production and use; you, the animals, the poor, and the planet. Let cruelty go, and reach forward to the diet of Eternity.