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12-23-2007

### December 23, 2007: The Evangelical Stance on Global Warming

Bruce Ledewitz

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Title: The Evangelical Stance on Global Warming

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12/23/2007--I was very sad to read the most recent issue of World, the excellent Christian news magazine. The issue contained a story by Mark Bergin that repeated the usual positions taken by many conservative Christians concerning global warming: there is scientific dissent on the matter, warming may be beneficial, and natural cycles rather than human activity may be causing any warming that is going on. It is not so much that these positions are wrong, which they are, but that conservative Christians as a whole, and with exceptions now, would prefer that global warming not be true. I mean by this that the near scientific unanimity on the topic would normally be enough proof, unless there were a reason not to accept the conclusion. For example, there is much scientific consensus about evolution, but insofar as evolution contradicts the Bible, there is a reason to be skeptical of the data. But global warming does not contradict the Bible. So there should not be any reason for Christian skepticism. People would not lightly talk about a momentous change like warming the global climate as a likely "good thing" unless there were some reason. Nor would one conclude that a mysterious natural cycle is causing something that had been predicted according to increased human contributions of greenhouse gases. Of course there could be such a coincidence—a natural cycle taking place just as human carbon use is going up—but why not just accept the most obvious explanation that we are doing this? In other words, why do some Christians want global warming to be false? One telling of the global warming story could be that man is greedy and misuses God's gift of a beneficent world climate. Surely that would be a biblical perspective on human sinfulness. Why isn't World magazine criticizing industrial capitalism for forgetting God? Part of the reason may be that conservative Christians got into the habit of supporting capitalism when Communism was plainly atheistic. This is also why some Christians support a weak central government and low taxes when those categories seem irrelevant to biblical concerns. But, accepting global warming need not lead to top-down solutions. A carbon tax would allow the market to cut greenhouse emissions. Carbon trading also introduces market discipline to the global warming issue. I don't understand this opposition and I am sad. It makes Christianity look like mere apology for wealth accumulation. World Magazine is not alone. Richard Neuhaus's magazine, First Things, also loves to make fun of global warming concerns. I would just once like to see the theology of such a position explained.