

## **“Al Gore: Idiot or Prophet? Christianity and Environmentalism”**

### **Reflections on Genesis 1:26-31**

Okay, as we begin these reflections I am going to show you my poker hand because I want this message to really soak into our subconscious of faith, and because you probably have already guessed my opinion of Al Gore. Now, when I show you my “hand,” you are going to think you know what I am talking about, but you’re really will not. The dilemma I am trying to overcome here is the “33%” problem; you see, 33% of you are going to listen to what I say and think, “My goodness, he’s a raving lunatic.” And there is going to be another 33% of you that will say, “Amen brother! Preach on!” Polling data shows that 33% of Americans are diehard Liberals or Conservatives, and it wouldn’t matter if your candidate said one day he/she is the “Monkey King,” you would still believe every word they said – how else to we explain the political insanity of the last ten years? I hate it when important issues – especially biblical issues – become caught up in this absurdity and people assume they know what God teaches, but they really don’t. So, I am going to show you my “hand,” you are going to think you know what I am saying but you won’t, and then I am going to sneak up on you at the end and slap you with my other “hand” you have not even been expecting.

“Capisce?”

So here it goes, I am very skeptical of the so-called “Climate Change” assumptions so many are making. Why am I skeptical? I am skeptical when so many of the proponents are making millions off of the debate. Al Gore is a millionaire now, thanks to his books and speaking engagements; people who make money off of their “crusades” always make me skeptical, which is why I am distrustful of televangelists who make millions peddling their version of the word of God (especially ones that secret away their financial information, and especially ones with hair – that’s a whole other story). I am skeptical when very wealthy people, like Prince Charles, celebrities, and politicians, fly in on their 747’s, lecture us about our “Carbon Footprint” and tell us how we should radically change our lifestyles to “save the planet,” when, well, heck, they are still jet setting around the world on their 747’s. At the “Copenhagen Climate Summit” there were so many private jets that they had to land, disembark their occupants, and fly to a neighboring country to park – talk about your “Carbon Footprint!” It makes me suspicious and skeptical when people tell me to do something that they themselves are unwilling to do. I am skeptical when people throw out the argument, “There is very little time, and we must act now.” Yea, heard that mantra before our trillion-dollar debacle in Iraq; “Saddam is a clear and present danger...we must act now.” Oceans are going to rise by one foot in coming century! Well, they rose a foot in the last century, but I didn’t hear many complaints about that. And finally, I am always skeptical when “dogmatism” rears its ugly head in any debate. I once thought “dogmatism” was limited to us religious folk; “dogmatism” being that rather absurd notion that the “truth” will go away if we just keep repeating our opinions over and over... i.e. see the “Evolution vs. Creation” debate that too many Christians keep rehashing. I have an Atheist friend – a devout atheist who happens to also be a scientist – who loves to rib me about the narrow-mindedness of Christians. I could hardly wait, when, a few months ago, the East Anglia scandal broke. Have not heard about that? Not surprising so here it is in a nutshell: scientists studying climate change were exposed for deleting data that did not support their conclusions, and

emails demonstrated that they were actively “blacklisting” any scientist that disagreed with their conclusions, turning “science” into some sort of 1950’s Communist Witch Hunt.” I couldn’t wait to call him and say, “Well I guess us Christians no longer have a monopoly on narrow-mindedness and dogmatic thinking.” He wasn’t amused.

And I am sure 33% of your right now are not amused either, and I imagine another 33% of you think I just delivered the very word of God, the gospel truth, from the mountaintop – and the 33% of you in the middle are either thinking about lunch or wanting me to hurry up and get to the point.

I share this ranting and raving because – and here comes that other hand – I want us to take the following very seriously. It doesn’t matter if we are a “Greenpeace-tree-hugging-granola-chomping-Rainbow-warrior” or a “Rightwing--blow-a-hole-in-the-ozone-let-the-sun-shine-through-pave-paradise-put-up-a-parking-lot-nutjob” because what takes priority over our political beliefs is our religious beliefs. When is the last time we even bothered to ask, “What does God teach about the environment?”

Good thing you have me. Turn to Genesis 1:26-31 and have a look at what God teaches. In these verses we stand at the sixth day of creation; God has created everything except, for what is about to become, God’s ultimate act of creation – us. God creates us in God’s own image; not that we literally look like God, though some of us think we look “godlike,” but that there is something unique and special about us that separates us from all other beings.

(Quick disclaimer here: Genesis is only referring to life here on earth; life out-there is another matter beyond the theological opining of the bible – but don’t you worry, we have a crack team within the hallowed walls of the Vatican working on this very problem).

Many people in this world have a problem with this teaching; they believe we are no different from any other life form...we are no better than the cricket, the rat, or the cow. Many people even believe that “humanity” is some sort of plague on mother earth that needs to be curtailed drastically. Hummm...God says, “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth with your presence and with your children.” But what about overpopulation, people will lament? Back to that whole “creative energy” image; we humans are quite clever – look at what we have accomplished in ten thousand years, and they say we will see that amount of change compressed into the next 20 years – that’s how much we are going to change life and the world with our cleverness. Overpopulation? What about space? Mars? Maybe I am watching too much “Star Trek” here, but I believe God gave us the intelligence and creativity to solve our problems, and perhaps our reach into space will solve the over-population problem. Christianity has a real problem with any teaching that says human life should in anyway be curtailed or seen has a threat that should be destroyed.

Think about this: much of the solutions to global climate change are methods that will stifle, halt, and even reverse the progress of human thought and achievement. Yet if we believe that we do possess the “spark” of creativity should we not as well believe that these problems would be solved by our progress in thought and achievement?

God gives us “dominion” over all the earth and all of life on it. “Dominion” is a poor choice of word translation, especially in our age when “dominion” smacks of political incorrectness. “Dominion” should really be “stewardship,” teaching us that the earth and all of life is a gift of God on loan to us. Yes, God allows us to us the earth and

all of life to advance our creativeness, but this stands as a warning that it's on loan...it's not our possession to use, abuse, and discard. I once listened to a preacher claim that the earth is ours to destroy because after all, in the end, we are going to end up with a new one anyway.

That's not what "stewardship" means. My older brother taught me the meaning of "stewardship" when he ruined that glory of glories, the teenage house party. He was entrusted with the "stewardship" of the family house one weekend the rest of us went camping. When we arrived back home we saw the devastation of the party's aftermath, and taking a cue from the twitch in my dad's eye, I concluded I best not ever follow in my brother's footsteps. The earth is a blessing of God's creative efforts, on loan to us for our enjoyment and utilization, but not ours to do with as we please. God will hold us responsible for what we do to the earth and to life on it, and we best take that very seriously no matter what we may think of the "Climate Debate."

And as we think upon such things we might also add animal rights. Look at Deuteronomy 14:3-21, 22:6, 25:4, Proverbs 12:10, it's as though PETA has been rewriting our bibles. God commands us to take special concern for animals; the old commandment about keeping the Sabbath holds the refrain, "So that your animals may rest." It wasn't until after the flood that God allowed us to eat meat; up until that point we were only permitted to be vegans or vegetarians. Makes you wonder, huh?

Where should we stand on the debate concerning "Climate Change?" It hardly matters because God has been calling us to take care of this earth for thousands of years. "Let your fields lay fallow" every seventh year so that it may rest – following that prescription may have spared us the "Dust Bowl" and other environmental disasters. Pollution, emissions, recycling, burning fossil fuels all have a theological perspective...are we listening? Are we discerning God's will?

Might want to check that out before you toss that plastic bottle out the window, buy the gas sucking land shark called an SUV, or dump those chemicals in the stream out back. What are we doing to preserve the blessings of this creation?