
rebalance restructure recycle renew conserve pray protect

HEALTHY planet / GREEN planet

GLOBAL WARMING and PRAYER

Journal Senior Writer JEFFREY HILDNER talks with Christian Science teacher RON BALLARD

IMBALANCE/EXCESS/NEGLIGENCE > RESPONSIBILITY

GREED/COMPETITION/FEAR/UPHEAVAL > SAFETY

GOVERNMENT/INDUSTRY/SCIENCE/YOU = SYNERGY

Everyone can rise to the challenge of global warming through
inspired actions, empathy, and ingenuity-fueled by

SPIRITUAL **CONSCIOUSNESS** + SCIENTIFIC PRAYER





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LOW-CARBON economy / LOW-CARBON industry / LOW-CARBON A **behavior**
NEW, LOW-CARBON WORLD.

INEVITABLE?

YES.

Global warming and other human-caused negative impacts on our planet's biosphere have triggered a tremendous shift. A shift toward a new, low-carbon future. Toward a sustainable, healthy Earth. Toward a new way of thinking.

!.TODAY PEOPLE THINK GREEN.

Our fossil-fuel-based CO₂-emissions lives are changing. We're moving from our comfort zone-into "a new comfort zone. A green zone. Fueled by conservation, recycling, innovation, technology, collaboration, and enlightenment, green is coming-and coming fast.

In fact, the evolution revolution from planet-unfriendly black fossil fuels to planet-friendly green nonfossil fuels is already underway. Green is fast becoming the new color of global unity.

What can you do to help through common sense and Christian Science?



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The Eiffel Tower just after the bulbs went out for five minutes as part of France's "lights-out" campaign Feb. 1, 2007

JEFFREY NILDNER: Ron, let's talk today about responsibility, safety, and synergy-three dimensions of humanity's accelerating effort to correct global warming and shift the ecological balance of our planet from the danger zone back to the safety zone.

I'd like to probe deep and wide. Global warming affects virtually everything on our planet-oceans and coastlines, rain forests and agriculture, animals and humans. Climate scientists tell us that excessive carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping emissions upset the natural, healthy balance of our planet, leading to extremes in weather temperatures, water shortages, violent storms, and floods.

But the impact of *correcting* global warming will also affect everything on our planet. Corrective measures will ricochet deep into the complex infrastructure of everyday life-jobs, scientific research, industry, commerce, finance, government, politics, and international policy. Harmonizing these various elements will take education, bold initiatives, changes in behavior, resolve.

And prayer.

Ideally, our deep-and-wide conversation can elevate the discussion about global warming from a limited matter-based point of view to a unique, but universally available, Christian Science perspective-a spiritual but profoundly humane and practical perspective. You and I have seen how a Christian Science perspective can help neutralize any kind of trouble, no matter how big the scale or how high the stakes.

RESPONSIBILITY/ JH: I'd like to flash back to February 1, 2007. For five minutes during the darkness of that Thursday evening, the lights on the Eiffel Tower were switched off. In fact, for those five minutes, lights dimmed throughout Paris and all of France. And during the switch-off, national consumption of electricity fell by over one percent. Which meant that tons of carbon dioxide *didn't* get released into the atmosphere.

Translation: For those five minutes, Planet Earth was more balanced-safer.

As the BBC reported, France's nationwide "lights out" campaign was "aimed at raising public awareness over global warming" and was timed to set the stage for the release of the 2007 summary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a body comprising 2,500 climate experts from 113 countries and convened by the United Nations. The IPCC concluded that the evidence for global warming is "unequivocal" and that the primary cause can be pegged to human activities, specifically those human activities

that produce carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases. Every time we use energy that comes from burning coal, oil, or gas, we add carbon dioxide to the air. In fact, human activities are responsible



for about 13 times more of Earth's warming than changes in the sun's output. The IPCC called for urgent action and warned of major impacts ahead.

But-here's the good news-offsetting the IPCC's grim assessment and their warning to limit looming and momentous risks, the report also said that the harmful consequences of rising temperatures could be blunted by prompt action.

And remedial and transformational measures are gaining momentum. Thought leaders project a green-is-ourfuture picture of the next half-century, calling for a major transformation of our energy system-a system based on clean, environmentally safe energy sources. Investment in green technology has skyrocketed. Silicon Valley venture capital investment in clean technology-including alternative energy products such as hybrid cars, solar products, and the use of nanotechnology to solve environmental problems-shot up from \$34 million in the first quarter of 2006 to \$290 million in the third quarter.

Ron, as Christian Scientists, let's take all of this into account. When it comes to prompt action, how can prayer help? How can the world set a prayer-supported course for a good future?

RON BALLARD: I think it starts by getting at the underlying problem, and that's what Christian Science metaphysics helps us to do.

In her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy speaks of mortal mind, or the thoughts of mortals, as being ". . . ignorant of itself, of its own actions, and of their results,-ignorant that the predisposing, remote, and exciting cause of all bad effects is a law of so-called mortal mind, not of matter" (p. 393). If we're to get at the underlying problem of global warming, we're going to have to address the mental assumptions.

We might say that while the exciting cause of global

warming is CO₂ emissions, the remote and predisposing cause is decidedly more mental. I would suggest that the remote cause is a basic misapprehension regarding the relation of humanity to earth. In the first chapter of the Bible (Gen. 1:28), our role is described in terms of stewardship-we are to "replenish" the earth. To replenish is to bring something back to completeness or fullness. We're going to have to shift our paradigm from one of consumer to one of producer. There are a myriad of ways that we can be supporting or promoting what is created rather than undermining or detracting from it. For instance, internationally renowned architect William McDonough offers this vision: "But what if buildings were alive? What if our homes and workplaces were like trees, living organisms participating productively in their surroundings? Imagine a building, enmeshed in the landscape that harvests the energy of the sun, sequesters carbon and makes oxygen" ("Buildings Like Trees, Cities Like Forests," [www.mcdonough.com/writings/buildings like trees.htm](http://www.mcdonough.com/writings/buildings%20like%20trees.htm)). That "what if" already exists and is but one example of the infinite range of ideas that comes when we're willing to do a mind shift.

And that leads us to what I would suggest is the predisposing cause of this problem: a basic misunderstanding of what is causative. In an interpretation of the passage in Genesis that I referred to, Mary Baker Eddy said, "Divine Love blesses its own ideas, and causes them to multiply,-to manifest His power.... This is the Science of being" (*Science and Health*, pp. 517-518). Our role in creation is to express God's power in all the intelligence, creativity, and insight that come from being God's manifestation. This process in no way denigrates our participation but heightens it, giving us access to higher realms of thought, broadening our horizons, and freeing us from self-constricting paradigms.

To truly solve a problem with the epic proportions of global warming is going to take this kind of tap into the Infinite. Will and Ariel Durant in their study of civilization observed that great change comes about not so much by numbers of people but by the power of an idea, often

held by but a few. This is why prayer can make such a difference. By yielding human preconceptions to divine intelligence and learning from the divine Mind about its sense of creation, our prayers carry the humility and power of divine authority. In this process, one with God can be the majority.



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SAFETY/ JH: People want to reclaim a safe earth. But they also want to shift to a low-carbon future that doesn't involve negative side effects, such as unemployment, dislocated lives, and poverty. And I think this shift needs to be backed by prayer so that everything will turn out okay. Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about and why we need to take seriously the call to pray.

Take corn.

Business Week recently described the global consequences of using crops for fuel and how "the economics of agriculture are being rewritten." Corn is being transformed into fuel for cars and is at the center of a massive expansion of biofuels in the US. But that sets up competition between food and fuel: "Corn is caught in a tug-of-war between ethanol plants [factories] and food, one of the first signs of a coming agricultural transformation and a global economic shift. ... At one extreme is Lester Brown, president of the Earth Policy Institute. He warns of a coming 'epic competition between 800 million people with automobiles and the 2 billion poorest people,' and predicts that shortages and higher food prices will lead to starvation and urban riots" ("Food vs. Fuel," February 5, 2007, pp. 80-83).

And factor these statistics into the equation: Converting the entire US corn crop into ethanol would replace only 12 percent of our gasoline consumption; producing 10 gallons of ethanol consumes the energy equivalent of about 7 gallons of gasoline; and greenhouse gas reductions from corn ethanol are minuscule. So from the op-ed pages of *The New York Times* to the editorial page of the *The Wall Street Journal*, you read that corn ethanol is a bad idea. Here's *The Wall Street Journal*: "... employing ethanol to reduce greenhouse gases is fantastically inefficient,' costing as much as 16 times the optimal abatement cost for removing a ton of carbon from the atmosphere" ("Very, Very Big Corn," January 27-28, 2007, p. A8).

The US corn/ethanol issue illustrates the deep-rooted complexities and contradictions that face us as we evolve, inevitably, from a high-carbon global economy to a low-carbon global economy on the way to addressing global warming.

So, how can a Christian Science perspective help? How do we pray deep and wide about this issue-so that climate initiatives don't incite competition, greed, fear, danger, and oppression, but rather harmonize, adjust, and benefit everyone involved?

RB: A key here is learning to be safe with creation not from it. We can only do that if we understand that creation is something more than just random material entities vying for their own sphere or place. So what is the true substance of creation?

We can probably agree that if we get rid of any material object we haven't really gotten rid of the idea behind the object. In this way, we might agree that the true substance of any object is the idea that

stands behind it—the idea is what endures. Christian Science teaches that ideas constitute true substance and sets us to work to discern the real nature of ideas. Christian Science holds that enduring, eternal ideas must come from an eternal source and explains that this eternal source is Spirit, not temporal matter. Thus the ideas of Spirit must be of Spirit's nature-spiritual. If we can appreciate that true creation exists only in spiritual ideas rather than in material objects, we can begin to explore how the Source of those divine ideas has created and coordinated the universe so that no element is sacrificed or compromised.

Another useful term for divine Spirit (God) is Principle. Many observers of creation have wondered at its intricacy, precision, and order, and have discerned that something so perfectly complex and complete must be attributable to a unifying principle. As we come to see that creation is, indeed, governed by the one divine Principle, we can appreciate that this Principle has the capacity to hold all of what it creates in proper relation to each other—the basis of harmony. This process of harmonious relationships among ideas (governed by Principle) is what Christian Science terms the "eternal dynamics of being." Referring to law by divine Principle, Mary Baker Eddy wrote: "It explains the eternal dynamics of being, and shows that nature and man are as harmonious to-day as in the beginning, when 'all things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made'" (*Miscellaneous Writings* 1883-1896, pp. 258-259).

When we're praying about the safety and integrity of our environment and the dramatic effects of climate change that confront us today, as well as the impact that correcting these environmental imbalances will have on employment, global economy, and day-to-day lives, it helps to realize that we have a divine Principle that continuously operates on our behalf. This Principle regulates all interaction of its creation in beneficent ways, maintaining its own divine system eternally. If we align ourselves with this divine plan and its laws, we will be assured of a harmonious outcome. That's what we're demonstrating or proving in our lives.

After all, in prayer we're not trying to change something into an outcome that we deem desirable; rather, we're allowing our thinking to come into harmony with what already is divinely established. With that kind of intellectual

humility, we'll discover the creative solutions that divine Principle constantly imparts.

SYNERGY/ JH: Synergy refers to positive combined action—specifically, mutually advantageous combined action of all participants. And what I'd like to suggest is that a responsible and safe response to global warming will require *global synergy*. Ideally, a synergy that reflects our affirmation of divine Mind's total creative and coordinating power.

You can see early signs of global synergy: carbon-neutral choices (turning off lights, recycling, and other energy conservation measures); carbon-negative actions (from greenfriendly credit programs to planting trees—over its lifetime, every tree can remove more than a ton of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere); workplaces going green. (The Mother Church here in Boston is currently going green.)

Climate initiatives are uniting diverse segments of society. *The Economist* reports that "Five years ago corporate America was solidly against carbon controls. But the threat of a patchwork of state regulations, combined with the opportunity to profit from new technologies, began to shift business attitudes.... So now the loudest voices are not resisting change but arguing for it" ("The Greening of America," January 27, 2007, p. 9). A coalition of environmentalists and some of America's best companies—including DuPont, General Electric, Alcoa, Caterpillar—just issued a "call to action" for a national cap-and-trade program to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

How can prayer support and infuse this synergy?

RB: One take on this is to realize that all of creation works together in solving life issues. Take the field of biomimicry—the design discipline that studies nature's best ideas and then imitates these ideas to solve some of our most pressing problems such as learning to harness energy like a leaf, compute like a cell, grow crops like a prairie, manufacture tough materials like an abalone. To me, this hints at a deeper metaphysical premise: The Creator is constantly revealing and defining itself in good, healthy, and harmonious ways—directing and supporting a synergy, if you will, of all creation working together within the oneness of its divine Source. And prayer that affirms this scientific fact of life can change the world for good. TCSJ