

What Is “the Wisdom from Above”?

Last week I posted [a blog piece](#) answering the objections of one Christian college faculty member, a theology professor, to our [*Open Letter on Climate Change to the People, their Local Representatives, the State Legislatures and Governors, the Congress, and the President of the United States of America*](#) because he thought the world’s poor would be hard hit by manmade global warming.

Another negative response came from a professor in the physics and engineering department of a different Christian college, and because the correspondence that ensued is instructive I’ll share it here—again protecting his identity.

This professor initially signed the *Open Letter* but then wrote, “*Please remove my endorsement that I just submitted. Your email was misleading and I thought I was signing for a climate policy to reduce greenhouse gases.*”

I responded:

Grace and peace to you in Christ, and thank you for your note. We’ve removed your name from the list of endorsers. I’m sorry you misunderstood our email inviting you to endorse the letter. We tried to make it as clear as possible:

Recently nearly 200 people, including 21 climate scientists and over 120 other natural scientists, plus over 50 theologians, pastors, and other religious scholars and leaders, have endorsed the letter below *opposing policies to fight manmade global warming* [emphasis added] by mandating reductions in CO2 emissions—policies that would trap billions in poverty and push millions back into it.

And of course the letter itself made its position very clear.

I note that you’re in the department of engineering and physics. Quite a few physicists and engineers have signed the letter, so I’d welcome you to study it with care and reconsider joining them. Few people are very aware of the strong empirical evidence against the theory of dangerous manmade global warming, and one good place to begin studying it would be our papers:

- [*A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming*](#) (2006), by Spencer, Driessen, myself, and Ross McKittrick, Ph.D. (Environmental Economics), Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, University of Guelph, author of the Donner Prize-winning *Taken By Storm: The Troubled Science, Policy and Politics of Global Warming* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2002), IPCC expert reviewer (Working Group 1).
- [*A Renewed Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Examination of the Theology, Science, and Economics of Global Warming*](#) (2010), with chapters on

- Theology, by Lead author: Craig Vincent Mitchell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, TX; Contributing authors: E. Calvin Beisner, Ph.D., National Spokesman, Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, Burke, VA; Peter Jones, Ph.D., Director, Christian Witness to a Pagan Planet, and Adjunct Professor and Scholar in Residence, Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, CA; Vishal Mangalwadi, LLD, Fellow of the MacLaurin Institute, University of Minnesota, and Director of South Asian Resources; Ben Phillips, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Houston, TX; Reviewers: Barrett Duke, Ph.D., Vice President, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Washington, D.C.; Wayne Grudem, Ph.D., Research Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies, Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, AZ; Daniel R. Heimbach, Ph.D., Professor of Christian Ethics, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina; Kevin Alan Lewis, J.D., Th.M., Assistant Professor of Theology and Law, Biola University, La Mirada, CA; Robert L. Reymond, Ph.D., retired Professor of Systematic Theology, Old Testament, and Hebrew, Knox Theological Seminary, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Rev. Jim Tonkowich, M.Div., D.Min., Scholar and former President of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, Washington, D.C.;

- Science, by Lead author: Roy W. Spencer, Ph.D., Principal Research Scientist in Climatology, University of Alabama, Huntsville, U.S. Science Team Leader for the Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer aboard NASA's Aqua Satellite, and author of *Climate Confusion: How Global Warming Hysteria Leads to Bad Science, Pandering Politicians, and Misguided Policies that Hurt the Poor*; Co-author: David Legates, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Climatology, University of Delaware; Reviewers: Gordon Evans, M.S., Environmental Manager, Texas A&M University System; Victor Goldschmidt, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Purdue University; Guillermo Gonzalez, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physics, Grove City College, Grove City, PA; Edward C. Krug, Ph.D., Soil & Water Chemist, Illinois State Water Survey; Ross McKittrick, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Economics, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, Expert Reviewer, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, co-author with Christopher Essex of *Taken By Storm: The Troubled Science, Policy, and Politics of Global Warming*; Michael Salazar, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Chemistry, Union University, Jackson, TN; James Wanliss, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physics, Presbyterian College, Clinton, SC; and

- Economics, by Lead author: G. Cornelis van Kooten, Ph.D., Professor of Economics and Research Chair in Environmental Studies and Climate, University of Victoria, BC, Canada, Expert Reviewer, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; Contributing authors: E. Calvin Beisner, Ph.D., National Spokesman, Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation; Pete Geddes, M.S., Vice President, Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment; Reviewers: Adel Abadeer, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI; P.J. Hill, Ph.D., Professor of Economics, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL; Ross McKittrick, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Guelph, Ontario,

Canada, Expert Reviewer, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, co-author with Christopher Essex of *Taken By Storm: The Troubled Science, Policy, and Politics of Global Warming*; Tracy Miller, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Grove City College, Grove City, PA; Shawn Ritenour, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Grove City College, Grove City, PA; Timothy Terrell, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics, Wofford College, Spartanburg, SC; Charles van Eaton, Ph.D., Emeritus Distinguished Professor at Large and Director of the Institute for Critical Thought and Analysis, Bryan College, Dayton, TN

- [*A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: The Case against Harmful Climate Policies Gets Stronger*](#) (2014), by lead authors David R. Legates, Ph.D., is Professor of Climatology at the University of Delaware, Newark, DE, and G. Cornelis van Kooten, Ph.D., is Professor of Economics and Research Chair in Environmental Studies and Climate, University of Victoria, BC, Canada.

Whether you read any of these or not, I hope you will pray for us as we, along with many others, consider the complex and challenging issues surrounding climate change and climate policy.

Several months later, when we sent a new invitation to the same list of Christian college faculty members from which he had not unsubscribed, he responded:

As a Christian academic, I refuse to sign your letter. It is full of half-truths and misrepresentations. At least you stated that human-induced climate change is real. To state that it has stopped for the last 17–20 years is cherry picking data so that 1998 stands out as a very warm year. 2014 was the warmest year on record and we are on course to shatter that record in 2015.

I replied:

Grace and peace to you in Christ. Thank you for taking the time to express your concern and disagreement with our *Open Letter*.

You expressed two specific objections, to which I'll offer brief responses:

1. Stating that warming “has stopped for the last 17–20 years is cherry picking data so that 1998 stands out as a very warm year.” First, the method by which the period during which there has been no statistically significant warming is identified is not cherry picking but rather simply a matter of comput[ing] backward to find the most remote date to which a zero trend line can extend, and reporting it. Second, we didn't specify 1998, you did, and in reality the start point for the “pause” (prejudicial term that presupposes resumption; better would be “absence of warming”), which as of now reaches to 18 years and 9 months according to the satellite data, is February, 1997, as shown here. (For discussion, see [here](#).)



2. “2014 was the warmest year on record and we are on course to shatter that record in 2015.” According to some datasets (and some sets that include both data and heavily massaged “data”), yes and yes, and according to others, no and no, and according to some yes and no, and according to others no and yes, and according to all, the differences among the warmest six to ten years are within the margin of error in the measurements. Many able discussions of this have been published, but it happens that I posted one small one yesterday [here](#) that you might find interesting to get started.

As empirical evidence mounts, providing correction to the climate models, climate scientists (including not just “skeptics” but also plenty of affirmers of the IPCC’s views) are steadily reducing estimates of “climate sensitivity,” as reported [here](#), and it is increasingly unlikely that warming will accelerate enough over the remainder of this century to come anywhere near the IPCC’s “best estimate” of 3.0°C of warming at equilibrium from doubled CO₂ concentration, as discussed [here](#).

Again, thank you for writing. May the Lord graciously enable His people to come to understand His world better and better, that we might be excellent stewards of it, enhancing its fruitfulness, beauty, and safety, to the glory of God and the benefit of our neighbors.

His reply took on a combative tone:

Sorry, not convinced. Not even close. The link you sent me is not an article from a refereed journal. The plot you sent me of constant temperature is from a source that was not documented, only as “RSS feed”. I had to Google it to learn RSS stands for “remote sensor system”, of which there are several. The website reeks of bias. Even Spencer’s website shows an increase of global temperature.

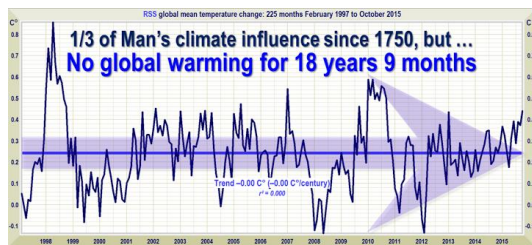
Since over 90% of the net heat absorbed by the earth is in the oceans, these data should be included in any analysis. The satellite data are only for the atmosphere. Even so, they are reasonably consistent with the NOAA data. The earth is warming and it is caused by human activity.

The ten warmest years on record have occurred from 1998-present. And you're trying to convince me that there is a pause or "absence of warming"?

I replied, trying to cool the tone while redirecting attention to evidence and logic:

Grace and peace to you in Christ. Fear not, I'm not trying to pressure you to change your mind and sign the letter. Instead, I'm just hoping to carry on a gracious dialogue between Christian brothers guided by the words of the Apostle James (3:17: "... the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere," and 4:11: "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law.") and the Apostle Paul (Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."). Our focus should be on evidence and the logic of inference.

I start with the assumption that you know a great deal more about physics and engineering than I do. I wouldn't dream of challenging you in that regard, so please take what follows in that light.

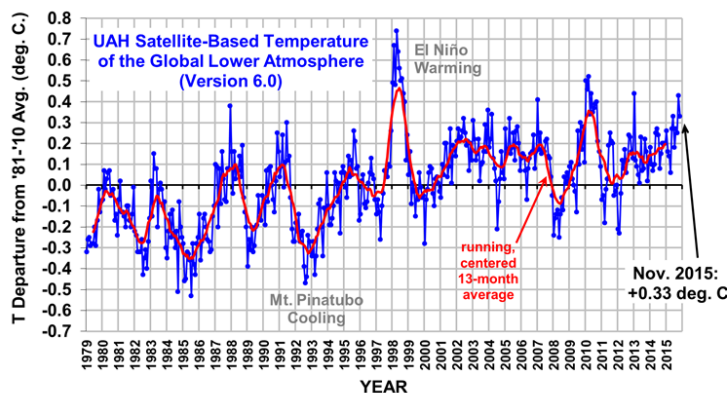


You dismissed the graph I used (reproduced here for your convenience, since it dropped out of your reply) on the grounds that the source was not documented. That you didn't recognize the term "RSS" (not "RSS feed") suggests that you've not followed high- or even moderate-level discussions of empirical data related to global

average temperature (GAT). Anyone following those discussions would have recognized it instantly, and simply to put that there is sufficient sourcing in the community of discussion. It does not refer to any of several "remote sensor systems" but to a company, "[Remote Sensing Systems](#)," one of two research centers (the other being [Earth System Science Center at the University of Alabama](#), headed by my friend [Dr. John R. Christy](#), Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science--and, by the way, a devout Christian and former missionary to Kenya) that process the data collected by the Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer flying on NASA's Aqua satellite—a project for which Cornwall Alliance Senior Fellow [Dr. Roy W. Spencer](#), Principal Research Scientist in Climatology in the ESSC with Dr. Christy (and also a strong evangelical Christian), is U.S. Science Team leader. Drs. Christy and Spencer control the AMSR equipment that collects the raw data, and they at UAH and their counterparts at RSS are the two primary research teams processing those data for use by other researchers around the world. Because of slightly different methods of handling the raw data, they come up with extremely slightly different end products describing GAT, but definitely not different enough to warrant significantly different conclusions about GAT trends. (RSS's product indicates ever so slightly less warming than UAH's.) Should you wonder whether Drs. Christy and Spencer are respected in the climate science community (as distinct from the environmentalist climate-change activist community), you should know they are both very heavily published in the standard refereed journals, with [Spencer's research articles listed here](#) and [Christy's here](#) (though it looks like neither has kept his list

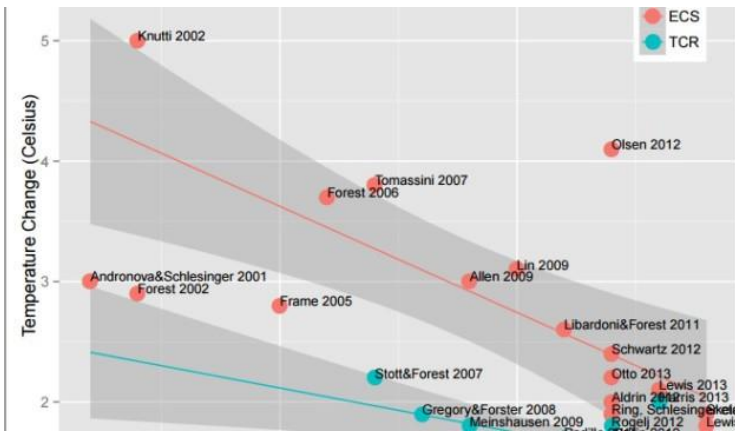
very up to date; I've read various refereed pieces by both published later than the most recent ones they list).

You also dismissed the graph on the grounds that the article from which it came is not from a refereed journal and the website that hosted the article “reeks of bias.” Well, I hesitated linking to that article for the latter reason, but I decided not to hide that from you. Though I happen to agree with many of the conclusions argued for at the site, I don't like its tactics—flamboyant and strident. But as for whether the article was from a refereed journal, that's quite irrelevant to the question whether it, or particularly that graph within it, is factual. As I'm sure you're aware, a great deal of good-quality scientific writing gets published outside refereed journals, and peer review not only doesn't guarantee the quality of what gets published but sometimes stands in the way of publishing high-quality material (particularly when a particular scientific paradigm has become dominant, and even more so when the relevant journals are controlled by people committed to a particular paradigm), as (peer-reviewed!) studies [cited here](#) have shown. One of the problems with peer review is that it's typically a very slow process not suited to information that updates constantly—and that's the case with that graph. Its maker, Christopher Monckton, updates that graph every month, applying each time the same method (least squares linear-regression) to the updated data from RSS or UAH (not the same every month because occasionally one or the other delays posting of its data—but as I said, their data are so nearly identical as not to make a significant difference). Refereed journals typically aren't interested in publishing that kind of thing. So Monckton writes it up and then submits it to various non-refereed places for publication—usually WattsUpwithThat.com, a website that focuses on climate science, but sometimes, as in this most recent instance, climatedepot.com. The low-down, though, is this: To reject the point the graph makes one needs not just to point to its source (the genetic fallacy) but to show why it's wrong. Can you do that? In particular, can you explain why it (and the rest of Monckton's discussion and graphs in that article) don't adequately support his point that the climate models “run hot” (as they say in the climate science community) and CO₂'s warming effect is probably significantly less than the 1.5°C to 4.5°C with 3.0°C best estimate the IPCC offers?



You next write, “Even Spencer’s website shows an increase of global temperature.” Here is the most recent graph Roy has published of the UAH satellite data. Yes, it shows, for November, a temperature anomaly from the 1981–2010 average of 0.33°C through November, and a linear trend from 1979–2015 of about +0.63°C. What does that imply

related to the debate over the magnitude of warming from enhanced atmospheric CO₂ concentration?



If IPCC's AR5 (2013) best estimate of equilibrium climate sensitivity (ECS) of 3.0°C were correct, we would expect to see about 0.3°C of warming per decade, or, for the 3.6 decades of satellite data, 1.08°C, 3.28 times the observed warming. This suggests that the models do indeed "run hot," and that is precisely what lots of leading climate scientists around the

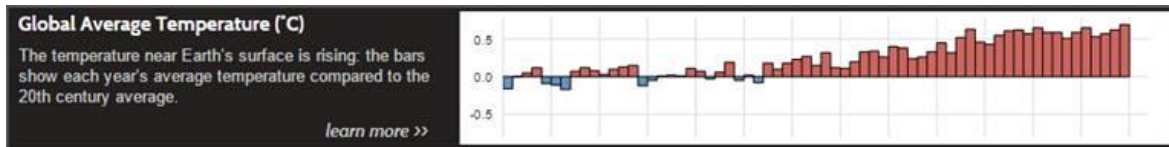
world, including plenty who are involved with the IPCC and who have in the past embraced high estimates of ECS, as illustrated in this chart and discussed by climate sensitivity researcher Nicholas Lewis in a recent series of articles, "Pitfalls in climate sensitivity estimation," [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), and [Part 3](#). For ongoing discussion of the falling estimates of ECS, see [here](#), on the blog of Dr. Judith Curry, Professor and former Chair of the [School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences](#) at the [Georgia Institute of Technology](#) and President (co-owner) of [Climate Forecast Applications Network \(CFAN\)](#).

Next you write, "Since over 90% of the net heat absorbed by the earth is in the oceans, these data should be included in any analysis. The satellite data are only for the atmosphere." That is absolutely right. And many people with many different perspectives in the climate-change discussion think that's a major reason (but not the only—among others, the fact that models seem to misrepresent cloud feedback is another major reason) why the earlier estimates of ECS, based on climate models, run hot. The claim by the IPCC from 1990 onward has been not that the total energy content of the land/ocean/atmosphere system would increase by so-and-so many Quads (one hypothesis) but that global average surface temperature would rise by so-and-so many degrees (a different hypothesis) in response to rising atmospheric CO2 concentration. Ocean heat absorption may indeed explain (partly) why that claim was wrong, but that doesn't mean the claim wasn't wrong. The temperature change in the oceans due to the absorption of a certain amount of energy is much smaller than the temperature change in the atmosphere and thus probably of much less consequence.

Then you write that the satellite data "are reasonably consistent with the NOAA data." Well, I'm not sure what you mean by "reasonably consistent," but I would assess them as significantly inconsistent with the NOAA data. I've read numerous discussions of this over the years, especially in the last six months or so since release of NOAA's "Possible artifacts of data biases in the recent global surface warming hiatus," by Karl et al. in *Science*, 4 June, 2015. One of the more interesting ones is by my friend Dr. Ross McKittrick, Professor of Economics at the University of Guelph and a specialist in global temperature data analysis, an expert reviewer for the IPCC (and also a committed evangelical Christian), which you can read [here](#); McKittrick helpfully present the graphs of the data from quite a variety of different sources. My own response to the Karl et al. study is [here](#), where you'll find links to various other critiques of Karl et al.

Now I want to introduce a new issue into our discussion: the significance and consequences of such warming as has happened and is likely to happen in the modern (i.e., post-19th-century) period, even assuming that the “[consensus](#)” narrative is correct.

Let’s take this NOAA graph—among the most iconic—from the Climate.gov website for starters (and charitably ignore the fact that it is mislabeled as “Global Average Temperature” when it should be “Global Average Temperature Anomaly,” that is, it shows not the actual temperature but the divergence of the temperature from the 20th-century average):



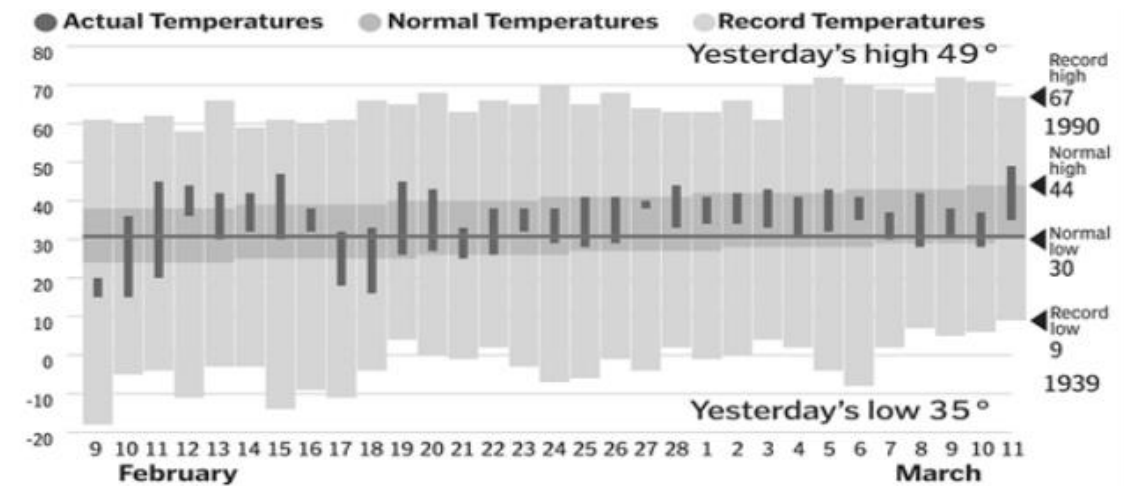
This certainly gives the impression of a precipitous increase in temperature from 1950–2014 (the period covered)! That’s the effect of limiting the perpendicular axis to such narrow scope.

Veteran observers will note that the entire range is only 0.9°C (from -0.2°C in 1950 and 1956, to {allegedly [more about this in a moment]} +0.7°C in 2014), but even they will be hard pressed to suppress the psychological impact of the graphic depiction: cool, pleasant blue for the below-average temperatures, ominous red for the above-average temperatures.

And even those learned observers will be even harder pressed to remember that there is absolutely no scientific basis for the claim that “average” here is any better for the world than any of the above-average (or for that matter below-average) readings.

The fact is that even if we concede the temperature claims behind the graph (that is, if we ignore the [strong evidence that NASA and NOAA have tampered with temperature data](#) in ways that exaggerate apparent warming over the period), **the range depicted is so small as to have no significant effect on human or other life on Earth.**

This chart, sent me by MIT Emeritus Professor of Climatology Dr. Richard S. Lindzen, from the weather page of the *Boston Globe* published March 12, 2013 (any other date would serve as well—the *Globe* prints this chart, updated, regularly), which shows the range of temperatures in Boston for each date from February 9 through March 11, illustrates that:



The record high for March 11 was 67°F (19.44°C) in 1990; the record low was 9°F (-12.78°C). The range, then, from record low to record high (the light-gray shaded area) is 58°F (32.22°C).

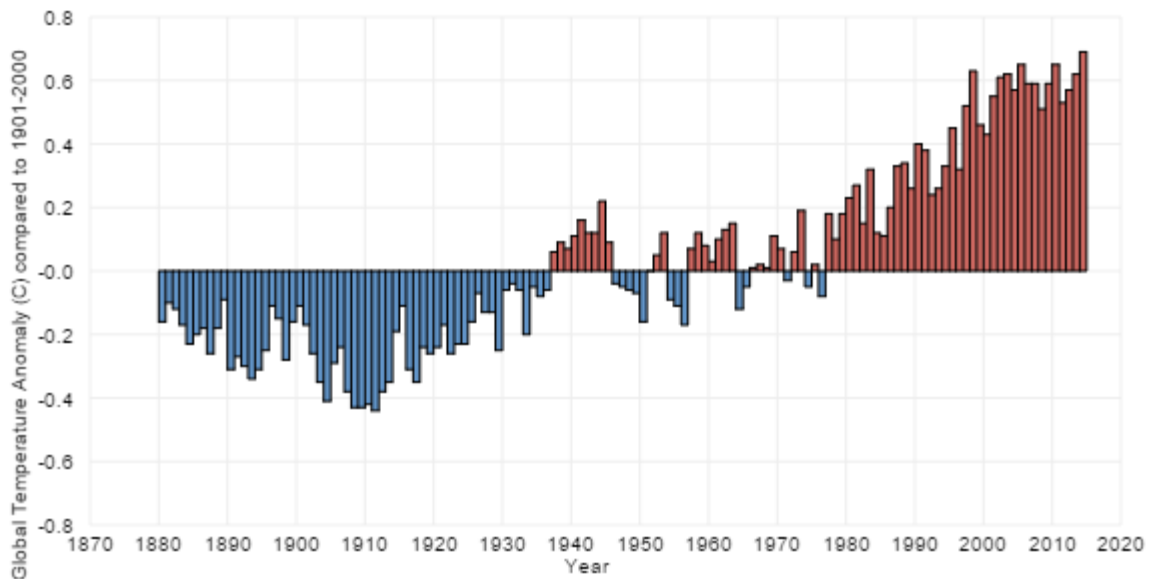
The normal high for March 11 over the period was 44°F (6.67°C), and the normal low was 30°F (-1.11°C). The range, then, from normal high to normal low was 14°F (7.77°C).

The actual maximum and minimum for each single day, February 9 through March 11, 2013, is depicted by the dark-gray vertical bars. The range on any given day runs from as much as about 25°F (13.89°C) for February 11 to as little as about 2°F (1.11°C) for February 27.

Now, here is the really stunning part of the graph. **The thickness of the black horizontal line stretching all the way across the graph depicts the entire range of global average temperature (GAT) variation claimed for the period since the Industrial Revolution,** illustrating, by comparison with the high/low ranges and the daily maximum/minimum ranges, how small the change in global average temperature is.

And that's **global** average temperature—spread out over the whole globe, in other words, not concentrated in a single city, like Boston. The influence of that on any given locale is insignificant.

NOAA offers a longer time series for its GAT “data” (really fudged) on the page that comes up if you click “[learn more](#)” next to that graph, and this is probably the most iconic of all:

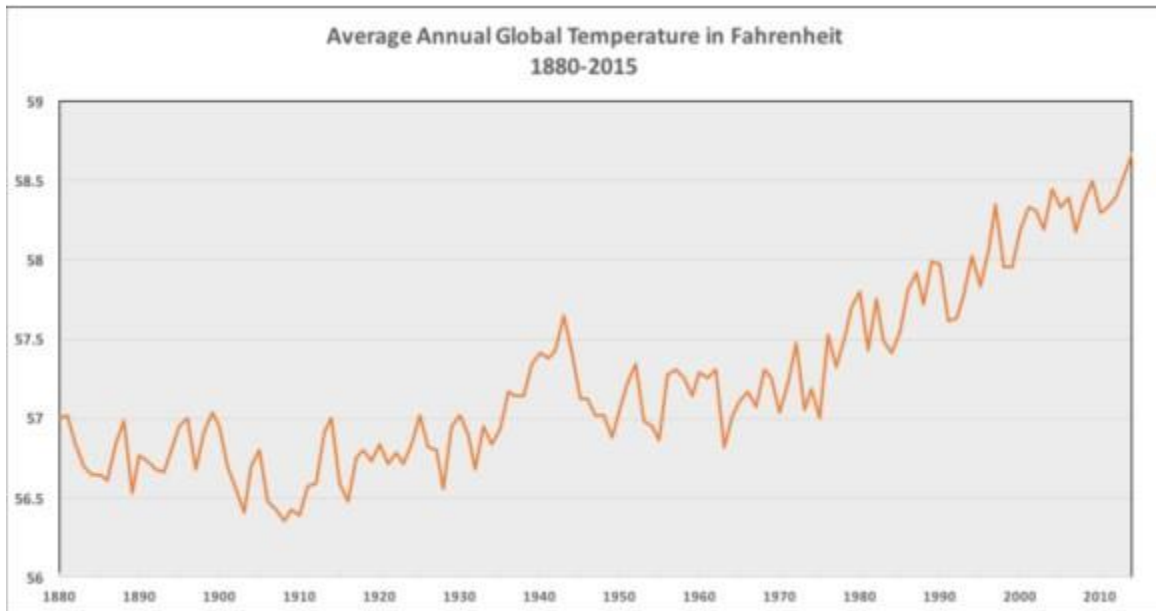


The coldest year appears to have been 1911, at 0.4°C (0.72°F) below the (alleged) 20th-century average. The (allegedly) warmest was 2014, at 0.7°C above that average. But the total spread is 1.1°C (1.98°F). Boston’s temperature change within single days routinely runs 10–20°F (5.6–11.1°C)—five to ten times the range of GAT change in the entire 135 years covered by NOAA’s graph—and on no single day from February 9 through March 12 of 2013 was the range from maximum to minimum as narrow as the entire warming from 1880 to 2014.

About 23 years ago, when I was managing editor for a massive book project edited by the late Julian L. Simon, *The State of Humanity*, Julian taught me one of the most valuable lessons I’ve ever learned about graphing data: Whenever possible, use a zero baseline—or, if graphing percentages, a full 100-point spread—for the Y axis. Anything else distorts proportions.

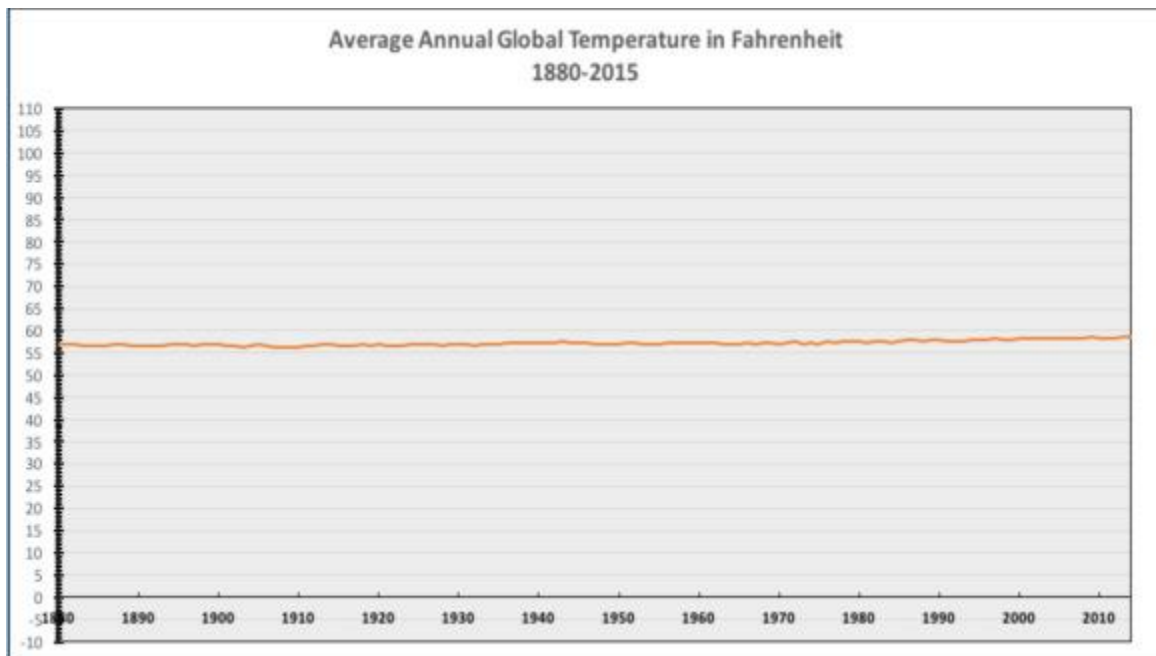
Failure to do that is one of the cardinal sins of the global warming alarmist movement—and it’s a sin that’s repeated thousands and thousands of times over, particularly in depicting temperature trends.

As Cornwall Alliance Senior Fellow [Steven Hayward put it](#): “the typical chart of the global average temperature is usually displayed this way:



“Whoa! We’re all gonna fry!

“But what if you display the same data with the axis starting not just from zero, but from the lower bound of the actual experienced temperature range of the earth? I had never thought of this until an acquaintance sent it along today:



“A little hard to get worked up about this, isn’t it? In fact you can barely spot the warming. No wonder you need a college education to believe in the alarmist version of climate change. No wonder the data ([click here](#) for original NASA data if you want to replicate it yourself) is never displayed this way in any of the official climate reports.

“If this chart were published on the front page of newspapers the climate change crusaders would be out of business instantly.”

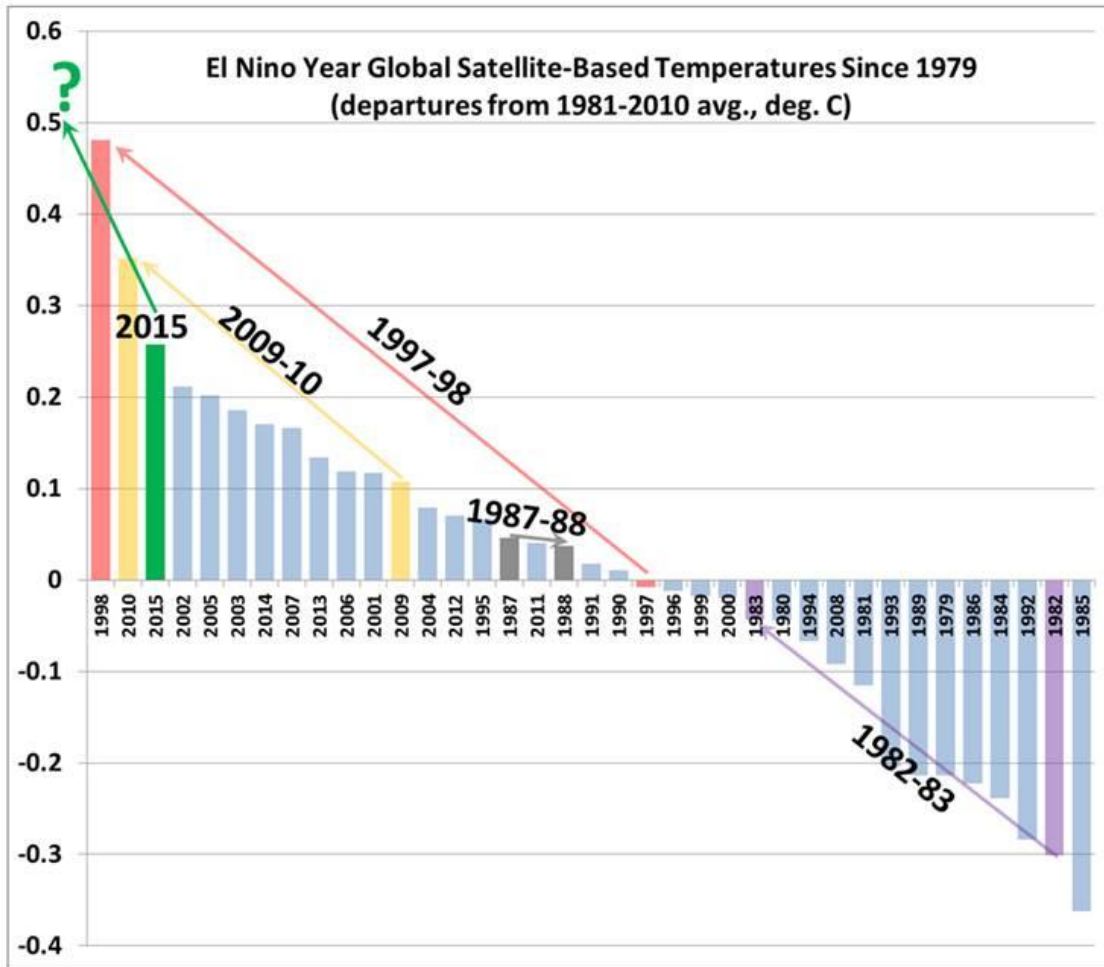
And that second graph only goes from -10 to +110°F. To be *really* realistic, it should go from 0°Kelvin (-273.15°C, or -459.67°F) to at least 330°K (56.85°C, or 134.33°F), to give room near the top for the highest atmospheric temperature ever recorded on Earth, 329.7°K (56.67°C, or 134°F). On that scale, the 1.1°C or K (1.98°F) would equal a change of only 0.33 percent.

Again, I'm not trying to persuade you to sign our letter. I do hope, though, that your seeing this might prompt you just to begin reconsidering some of your general thinking about AGW. When [Judith Curry](#), a long-time contributing and sometimes (if I remember correctly) lead author for the IPCC, began doing that, she eventually shifted her thinking and now generally counts as a “lukewarmer”: Yes, human activity contributes significantly to GW, but far less than the IPCC thought and probably not dangerously, and the risks from that are considerably outweighed by the benefits of the energy obtained from the generation processes that contribute to the warming.

May the Lord bless your Christmas season!

The next day I added a P.S.:

P.S.: As it turns out, 2015 will probably be not the warmest but the third warmest year in the satellite record:



For discussion, see <http://www.drroyspencer.com/2015/12/2015-will-be-the-3rd-warmest-year-in-the-satellite-record/>.

He replied:

Again, you are cherry-picking your data. I consider the NOAA data more reliable.

And you continue to espouse "17 years with no warming", which artificially selects the period just before 1998 as the starting point.

I responded:

Why do you consider the NOAA data more reliable? Are you familiar with the number and locations and qualities of the surface stations on which NOAA builds its database and with how representative, or unrepresentative, they are of the global atmosphere (whether surface,

LT, MT, UT, or entire), and with how those compare with the quality of the satellite measurements? Have you read some of the critiques of the data homogenization techniques NOAA, NASA, CRU, and others use? Have you considered the likelihood that random errors in data collection would lead to a very consistent pattern in that homogenization of raising more recent and lowering longer past temperatures? Are you even familiar with the discussion?

And if I wanted to cherry pick, I'd choose any time in 1998 as my starting point, not February of 1997, which was significantly cooler. Choosing 1998 would give me a downward trend, not upward. But besides that, it's not a matter of cherry picking, it's a matter of answering the mathematical question, "Starting at the immediately finished month, how far back can one go in time and still have a least squares linear trend not significantly different from zero?" That's a legitimate question, and the answer is February 1997.

I really get the impression that you're taking potshots on a subject about which you've not done much study. Of myself, I can say this: I've read about 50 books and thousands of articles (hundreds of them refereed) on the science of climate change, and about 40 books and thousands of articles (scores of them refereed) on the economics of climate and energy policy. On a typical day I read five to ten articles on these combined subjects. I've been doing this with full time for the last seven years, with heavy concentration for the four years before that, and had studied it moderately well for the previous fifteen years. I'm personally acquainted with lots of the leading scholars in this field and have the privilege of calling a good many of them good friends. One of them told me as much as five years ago, "You know, Cal, you know the scientific arguments pro and con on global warming a lot better than the vast majority of climatologists, because while we study our own narrow little specialties, you're reading all across the board." I say this not to boast but to challenge you to become at least a little better acquainted with the global discussion on this than your emails suggest you are at this point.

You might begin by reading Sir John Houghton's [*Global Warming: The Complete Briefing*](#), which though the original edition appeared well over a decade ago remains probably the best presentation of the case for moderately high climate sensitivity. (Houghton was for about seven years chairman of the IPCC.) Then, since the other side gets so little attention and you're therefore likely not so acquainted with it, move to these:

- Roy W. Spencer, Ph.D. (one of the world's leading climatologists, and a Senior Fellow of the Cornwall Alliance), *The Great Global Warming Blunder: How Mother Nature Fooled the World's Top Climate Scientists*, [available from Cornwall Alliance by clicking here](#)
- Patrick J. Michaels and Paul C. Knappenberger, [*Lukewarming: The New Climate Science that Changes Everything*](#)
- Craig D. Idso, Robert M. Carter, and S. Fred Singer, *Why Scientists Disagree about Global Warming: The NIPCC Report on Scientific Consensus*, which you and your friends can [read free online here](#), though it's a bit technical

He replied:

I've read Houghton's book, but it's been a while. I used it as a resource for a topics course I taught a few years ago.

I am familiar with most of the scientists you mention, at least Singer, Lindzen, and Spencer. They all have made money from their contrarian stance on climate change. Singer is infamous for obfuscating many issues, including the health benefits (!?) of smoking. Lindzen is (at least was) funded by fossil fuel companies (Peabody Coal and Exxon-Mobil). I don't know how much Spencer makes on his book(s).

So you claim that the Paris climate talks are a waste of time, and are motivated by some nefarious world-wide conspiracy? Really?

I responded:

1. I read Houghton's book three times through, the crucial chapters five or six times.
2. Your [ad hominem circumstantial fallacy](#) [link added for this blog post] addressing Singer, Lindzen, and Spencer is not only logically fallacious but also factually wrong. Singer never defended smoking as healthy; he dislikes smoking and cigarette smoke, affirms and always has that smoking itself was dangerous to health, but pointed out the poor statistical methodology by which the case for health hazards of second-hand smoke was made. Spencer has only ever been supported in his research by NASA (like his partner John Christy), from which he (and Christy) won a major award for their work on satellite temperature measurement methodology. Both Spencer and Christy are devout, humble, generous, hard-working brothers in Christ whom I know very, very well. Your attack on their character is disgusting and quite unbecoming not only a scientist (who ought to think logically) but also a professed Christian (at least, I assume you're that, teaching where you do). The least you could do would be to try to be consistent: If you're going to question Lindzen's (or any other "climate skeptic's") scientific judgment because of funding sources, you ought to question much more the work of the folks on the other side, whose funding is orders of magnitude higher, from both government (which is of course not morally neutral) and industry.
3. No, I don't attribute the UNFCCC or the COPs to a worldwide conspiracy, but I do recognize that some political agendas have a role.
4. I see also your reference in an ensuing email to *The Republican Brain*. No, I will not descend with you into the gutter of *ad hominem* mudslinging. It's a waste of time.

And he doubled down on the *ad hominem*:

But Singer disavowed the health problems with smoking and was paid by tobacco companies as a consultant. And you don't have a problem with that? And with climate change deniers doing the same thing?

I replied:

The Ninth Commandment forbids bearing false witness. Re Singer, see <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2011/01/03/secondhand-smoke-lung-cancer-and-global-warming-debate>.

He tripled down on the *ad hominem*:

Your refusal to read Mooney's book, or consider doing so, shows the same thing that you are accusing me of: closed-mindedness. For the record, I am an independent and have no party affiliation but am disgusted with people like people like Inhofe, Cruz, Trump, ... who claim to represent Christians or Christian values.

I read the following today, attributed to Inhofe. As a Christian and a scientist, I find it embarrassing.

Inhofe told Family Research Council president Tony Perkins on his "[Washington Watch](#)" program that Americans simply don't care about the issue anymore and that there is nothing the U.S. government can do to reduce carbon dioxide emissions anyway.

"I know there are some out there, probably a couple hundred people, who actually believe that the world is coming to an end and man-made global warming is going to cause it, so I just want to give them the assurance that if they're right and we are wrong, [proposed climate policies are] not going to reduce but it will increase CO2 emissions," he said.

"They don't understand," he added. "God's still up there and there's a reason for this to happen."

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"They don't understand," he added. "God's still up there and there's a reason for this to happen."

- See more at: <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/inhofe-climate-change-science-ignores-gods-power#sthash.jWIWtujp.dpuf>

At this point, I confess, my patience was depleted. I replied:

1. I never said I didn't read Mooney's book. Even before he interviewed me for one of his articles in, if I remember correctly, the *New York Times*, I had read enough of it to convince me, as one who used to teach logic at the graduate level, that it is largely given over to (mostly informal but often also formal) fallacies. My point in saying "I will not descend with you into the gutter of *ad hominem* mudslinging" was that since Mooney's book is largely that, and you appealed to it, I would not descend with you into that gutter.
2. Guilt by association, which you commit below by your appeal to Inhofe, is also a logical fallacy.

3. I personally hate party politics and consider the two major political parties to be the Reprehensibles and the Damnocrats, so don't waste my time with suggesting that my position on this is driven by party politics. As an interdisciplinary (bringing the principles, methods, and tools of multiple disciplines to bear harmoniously to address multifaceted problems) scholar who has done graduate and postgraduate level studies and writing in philosophy, logic, history, theology, economics, demography, political philosophy, and, yes, the scientific arguments for various estimates of ECS and its consequences for humanity and the rest of the environment, I do my best to bring all those different fields together in my studies of climate change and climate and energy policy, and I benefit enormously from consultation with over 60 other evangelical scholars associated with the Cornwall Alliance and scores of other scholars, some evangelicals, some mainline Protestants, some Roman Catholics, some Jews, some atheists, some agnostics.

I don't intend to invest any further time in this correspondence. You are at least an intelligent man, capable of learning what "the other side" says on this issue, if you're willing. It appears at present that you're not willing. I can't do anything about that.

I wish you well. Goodbye.

I post all this here to illustrate how widespread is the problem, even among highly intelligent, *Christian* academics, of resorting to *ad hominem* and other types of logical fallacy rather than focusing on evidence and logic when arguing about global warming and other contentions issues. It is more than time for a restoration of reason, respect, and charity in these discussions.