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To the Most Reverend and Rt. Hon. the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury,

In your interview with the BBC today, you state that Christians have a moral duty to support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions because if they do not, “billions may die.” Yet the reasoning on which you base this astonishing statement appears to me to be inconsistent with the facts. Please allow me to explain my reasoning. In all of what follows, I shall accept as a given the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Third Assessment Report.

The problem is that the deleterious effects of global warming, assuming they do come about, are actually exacerbations of existing problems. Indur Goklany, writing for the National Center for Policy Analysis, has examined to what degree global warming would make worse the problems of hunger, drought, sea-level rise, and disease, which seem to be the base of your assertion of threats to the life of billions. He found:

- By 2085, the contribution of (unmitigated) warming to the above listed problems is generally smaller than other factors unrelated to climate change.
- More important, these risks would be lowered much more effectively and economically by reducing current and future vulnerability to climate change rather than through its mitigation.
- Finally, adaptation would help developing countries cope with major problems now, and through 2085 and beyond, whereas generations would pass before anything less than draconian mitigation would have a discernible effect

In other words, we can do more to help the poor by combating these problems now than we would by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. There is a terrible opportunity cost to drastic action to reduce climate change, and that cost would likely weigh heavier on the world’s poor than the effects of global warming itself.

Moreover, it is acknowledged by every responsible economist that drastic action to reduce fossil fuel use would increase energy costs, which would in turn reduce household income. Wealthier *is* healthier, and richer *is* cleaner. Limiting economic activity therefore can have

a dramatic impact on quality of life, not least by reducing life expectancy. Researchers have found a direct correlation between income and mortality, with a disproportionate impact on poorer communities. Thus, policies that reduce societal wealth can be expected to induce premature mortalities, as well as to increase disease and injury rates.

For example, it is often asserted that global warming already kills 150,000 people per year worldwide. Yet a recent econometric study by Johns Hopkins epidemiologist Harvey Brenner found that replacing U.S. coal with higher-cost fuels for the purposes of energy production would result in at least 195,000 additional premature deaths in the U.S. alone. Given that recent “Kyoto-lite” measures proposed in the U.S. Senate such as the Climate Stewardship Act proposed by Senators McCain (R., Ariz.) and Lieberman (D., Conn.) would result in the replacement of about 78 percent of coal with high-priced fuels, it is entirely plausible that even “baby steps” towards emissions reduction would result in the deaths of more people in the U.S. than global warming would worldwide. The effects of such strategies if adopted across the globe could be far more devastating than global warming even if alarmist predictions come true.

Your Grace, may I humbly submit that more thought be given to the unintended consequences of such well-intentioned statements as that you have just made. By devoting spiritual and temporal energy to reducing carbon-dioxide emissions, you may hurt the poor more than you help them.

I should be happy to send you documents and papers making this argument in more detail. In 1987, I spoke on the same side as you in a debate at the Oxford Union on whether God made man in his own image. I was impressed by the thought and conviction that went into your speech. As a fellow Wadhamite, I share your compassion for the poor and your determination to alleviate their poverty. I hope that you will be able to reflect more on this subject and appreciate that the arguments against drastic action to reduce emissions are as compassionate as those in their favor.

I have the honor to remain, yours sincerely,

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