



Written by [John Larabell](#) on January 5, 2015

Published in the January 5, 2015 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 31, No. 01

The Rise of Doublethink

"To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them....

The power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.... To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient." — George Orwell, 1984



In George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*, citizens of Oceania were required to exercise *doublethink* on a regular basis in order to believe and go along with the lies that "Big Brother" told them. One particularly notable feature of doublethink in Orwell's novel was that most, if not all, of the people were unaware that they were even engaging in such a display of mental gymnastics, or if they were aware of it, they would deny they were doing it. Readers of *1984* might be shocked or even cynically amused that such a mental exercise could even take place among anyone, much less a large segment of the population. We regret to announce that doublethink is alive and well in modern society, and it has a name: belief in catastrophic man-made global warming. To put it more precisely, believing that the Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old and has gone through various geological ages and periods (which the majority of scientists today claim to be the case) and simultaneously believing that industrial emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere will have catastrophic effects upon the Earth's climate is a perfect example of doublethink.

Global-warming believers almost universally accept the idea of a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth, so for the purposes of this article, we will refer to the geological ages of the Earth as propounded by the majority of modern scientists. We are not making any claims as to the age of the Earth, as there are many people (including scientists) who believe that the Earth is much younger than several billion years. But to point out the glaring contradictions in the views of man-made global-warming believers, we need to examine the model of modern secular science that teaches an "old Earth."

We will examine four areas of concern for many global-warming believers — atmospheric CO₂ levels, global temperatures, melting ice, and sea level rise — in the context of the modern science model of a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth. Then we will determine whether or not the view of global-warming believers regarding each of these four areas is indeed doublethink.

Exhibit A: Atmospheric CO₂ Levels

Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere are a constant source of worry for environmentalists and people who believe in man-made global warming. Currently at around 400 parts per million (ppm), or 0.04 percent of the total atmosphere, CO₂ acts as a greenhouse gas, trapping heat



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and potentially causing the Earth to warm.

The argument goes like this: The more CO₂ that is put into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas, etc.), the greater the greenhouse effect, and the warmer the Earth will get. Eventually this will lead to a “tipping point,” at which all sorts of climate catastrophes occur. A “runaway greenhouse” is even possible if CO₂ levels get too high, leading to continuous heating to the point that the planet as we know it will literally be destroyed. Many climatologists say we are very near the “tipping point,” and that the ideal CO₂ level is around 350 ppm (which we have already exceeded). For instance, in 2007, popular environmentalist Bill McKibben launched [350.org](#), an activist organization that aims to pressure world leaders to enact climate-change legislation with the goal of reducing atmospheric CO₂ content to 350 ppm or less.

So let’s take a look at the claims of modern science regarding CO₂ levels. Ancient CO₂ levels are typically determined by measuring the CO₂ uptake in the weathering of certain minerals, and CO₂ release during the erosion of fossilized organic matter. More recent CO₂ levels can be determined by examining ice cores from Greenland or Antarctica. Using these and other methods, many models indicate that CO₂ levels are currently very *low* when compared to past levels. Atmospheric CO₂ levels, according to the GEOCARB III (2001) model by Robert Berner and Zavareth Kothavala of the Department of Geology and Geophysics at Yale, were at various times *several thousand* parts per million. Other models place CO₂ levels lower than the GEOCARB III estimates, but all place past levels far higher than those of today. As Figure 1 illustrates, atmospheric CO₂ levels of 10 times, and even 15 times, modern levels were not uncommon.

According to the “old Earth” model, the current geological period has exhibited the *lowest* concentration of atmospheric CO₂ since life proliferated. That bears repeating: The “pre-industrial” 300 ppm and even the current 400 ppm are the some of the lowest CO₂ levels ever seen on the Earth! Even with CO₂ at several thousand parts per million, the planet did not spiral into a runaway greenhouse; the Earth was just fine. Furthermore, CO₂ levels have fluctuated greatly over the past geological ages, and all of this tremendous fluctuation happened completely independent of the industrial burning of fossil fuels, which has been going on for less than 200 years.

The verdict? Believing the popular scientific view of a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth that has passed through various geological ages with vastly higher CO₂ levels than at present, during which plant and animal life flourished, while simultaneously believing that atmospheric CO₂ levels of 400 ppm are dangerous and the planet is at risk of climate disaster is, indeed, doublethink.

Exhibit B: Global Temperatures

In addition to rising CO₂ levels, global surface temperatures are another point of constant fear among global-warming believers. Even a (very) slight rise in average temperature over a period of a few decades is said to be a harbinger of doom, and predictions of skyrocketing future temperatures and the accompanying natural disasters (floods, storms, droughts, fires, etc.) are often heard on mainstream media news programs. If current atmospheric CO₂ levels are no cause for alarm, then what about temperatures?



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Back we go to our “conventional science” model of a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth. Past temperatures are determined through various means, such as measuring the oxygen isotope and mineral content in fossilized sea life (warmer or cooler oceans will lead to changes in these elements), plant leaf shape (tropical-type plants existing in higher latitudes suggest warmer climate), and the carbon and oxygen content in certain minerals. As one might guess from reading the above information regarding CO₂ levels, temperatures throughout most (but not all) of the Earth’s past have been much higher than they are today. For example, a 2004 study by Dana Royer et al. published in *GSA Today* placed temperatures in the very ancient past at levels approaching 25 °F warmer than those of today. While estimates of the distant past temperatures are very approximate, and increase in accuracy the closer they get to the present, Figure 2 shows clearly that modern temperatures are quite low compared to what the Earth has experienced for most of its history. And high temperatures did not always correspond to higher CO₂ levels, and vice versa. There were times in Earth’s past when CO₂ levels were extremely high by today’s standards yet temperatures were close to present levels, and times when CO₂ levels were close to modern levels yet temperatures were considerably higher. So the slight temperature rise in the late 20th century is nothing to be alarmed about, and any temperature rise is not definitively linked to atmospheric CO₂ levels anyway.

Today’s average temperatures are, in reality, some of the coolest the Earth has ever experienced. The only times it was cooler were those of intense glaciation where ice sheets covered far more of the Earth’s surface than they do today.

The verdict? Believing the modern scientific view of a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth that has passed through various geological ages with much higher average global surface temperatures than at present, during which plant and animal life flourished, while simultaneously believing that any very slight temperature rise over the past several decades is dangerous and that the planet is at risk of climate disaster is doublethink.

Exhibit C: Melting Ice

What about shrinking glaciers and melting polar ice caps? We’ve all heard countless stories about melting ice owing to a warmer climate, brought on by elevated CO₂ levels. This, global-warming believers say, will disrupt the polar ecosystem, threatening polar bears, penguins, seals, etc. Sea levels will also rise, flooding coastal areas and displacing or even killing millions of people. While this certainly sounds frightening, should we really worry about this now, and take drastic methods to cut industrial CO₂ emissions?

Scientists following the model of an “old Earth” determine ancient ice sheet extent primarily by examining oxygen isotope levels in core samples from the ocean floor. Based upon this and other methods, such scientists claim that there have been several periods in the Earth’s geologic history where permanent ice sheets were present. However, most of the Earth’s history enjoyed a warmer climate where no permanent ice sheets existed. This is a bit ironic, because believers in made-made global warming seem to obsess over melting ice sheets, when in terms of geologic history permanent ice sheets are a relatively rare phenomenon.

While glaciation began in Antarctica some 35 million years ago, the most recent major glaciation began around 2.6 million years ago and is still in effect. This glaciation has seen alternating “glacials” and



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“interglacials” in 40,000 to 100,000-year intervals, in which ice sheets advanced and retreated over the Earth’s surface, greatly influencing global climate and temperatures. We are currently experiencing an interglacial period, referred to as the Holocene, that began some 11,000 years ago, at the end of what is known colloquially as the Ice Age.

We can make several important observations at this point. First, the normal state of the Earth is to *not* have permanent ice sheets. Glacial periods are abnormalities that occur occasionally on Earth’s geological timeline. Second, atmospheric CO₂ levels have little correlation to glacial events. Glaciations have occurred while CO₂ levels were, according to some models, 10 times higher than they are currently, and the modern low CO₂ levels during the current glaciation are abnormal when compared to historic levels during glaciations. Third, since past glacial stages lasted tens of millions of years, the current glaciation will likely last much longer. The current “interglacial” that we are experiencing could someday come to an end, and continental ice sheets could once again advance to cover Canada, the northern United States, much of Europe, etc. Fourth, all of these glaciations began and ended independent of any human activity. Not even our current interglacial that began around 10,000 years ago was brought about by industrial activity.

The verdict? Believing in a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth that has passed through various geological ages in which the normal state is a warm environment with no permanent ice sheets, punctuated by several periods of glaciation, while simultaneously believing that any recent melting of the polar ice sheets is disastrous is doublethink.

Exhibit D: Sea Level Rise

Rising sea levels are a companion problem to melting ice sheets in the theory of catastrophic man-made global warming. If sea levels continue to rise, goes the theory, millions of people living in low-lying coastal areas will be forced to evacuate. Entire island chains, such as the Maldives, which lie to the southwest of India, are only a few feet above sea level on average. Rising sea levels naturally would cause a great deal of hardship for people in such areas. But are sea levels really rising at a dangerous rate, and can any modern sea-level fluctuations really be attributed to human industrial activity?

Global sea levels fluctuate for a variety of reasons. Plate tectonics and resultant changing depths of the ocean basins have a slow, long-term effect on sea levels. Short-term changes (relatively speaking) in sea levels can be attributed to the advancing and melting of polar ice sheets associated with glaciations. Other, very minor, influences on global sea levels include changes in water temperature, changes in the salinity of the water, and seasonal variations owing to precipitation and wind patterns, etc.

So what does the geological record tell us about global sea levels? According to the “modern science” view of the Earth’s history, sea levels over the past eons have seen tremendous variation and, for the most part, have been much higher than they are currently.

According to a 1977 study by Peter Vail et al. commissioned by Exxon, sea levels frequently reached 100 to 250 meters (around 330 to 820 feet) higher than they are today. A 1983 study by Anthony Hallam et al. places very ancient sea levels even higher, peaking nearly 400 meters (around 1,300 feet) above modern levels. (The Vail and Hallam sea-level curve models can be seen in Figure 4.) Past sea levels are difficult to determine, and but studies done on sea-level changes, such as those done by Bilal Haq in 1987 and K.G. Miller et al. in 2005, suggest that sea levels over the last 100 million years follow



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the same curve as the Vail and Hallam models but suggest a lower amplitude of change, with sea levels peaking at 100-150 meters (330-500 feet) above today's levels. While certainly lower than what is suggested by Vail and Hallam, these levels are still enormously higher than the tiny amount of sea-level change recorded in recent years that has many people worried about impending climate doom.

So what about modern sea-level rise? Modern sea-level measurements, which began around 1880, show a nice linear increase beginning in 1900 and extending to the present. These measurements indicate a 20th-century sea-level rise of a whopping eight or nine inches, an amount not even visible on most charts of sea-level rise since the last glaciation. (See Figure 5.) Just as with CO₂ levels, temperatures, and glaciations, sea levels have changed dramatically over the Earth's geological history, and they are currently at a low point on the geologic timescale. In fact, only during periods of intense glaciation have sea levels been significantly lower (a few feet is not significant) than they are today.

The verdict? Believing in a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth that has passed through various geological ages in which sea levels fluctuated greatly, and were normally much higher than they are now, while simultaneously believing that the 20th-century sea-level rise of around eight inches is disastrous and caused by human activity is doublethink.

The Final Verdict

As mentioned above, nearly everyone believing in catastrophic man-made global warming also believes that the Earth is 4.5 billion years old and has experienced the dramatic climate change illustrated in this article. Only by engaging in doublethink could a person believe that any modern climate events are indications that the Earth is heading for disaster, and that this is caused by human industrial activity.

Global-warming believers, to be consistent, must either deny any past climate changes or explain how any very slight recent climate change is catastrophic when the Earth has experienced climatic changes more drastic by far than anything in recent history. For instance, how did CO₂ levels get so high in the past, and how did they get so low (relatively) at present? How did ice sheets form during the various glaciations, and how did they melt? All of this happened without industrial CO₂ emissions.

Few who believe in a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth would seriously claim that the planet's climate from the beginning of life until the Industrial Revolution was held at a constant, unchanging state. If so, why is "change" now considered so dangerous? Using a "pre-industrial" climate of 1850-1880 as a baseline, which is often done for CO₂ levels and sea levels, only makes sense if the Earth began at that point. Using the climate of 1950-1980 as a baseline, which is frequently done for average global temperatures, makes even less sense.

James Hansen et al. noted in a 2008 paper published in the *Open Atmospheric Science Journal* that "Paleoclimate evidence and ongoing global changes imply that today's CO₂, about 385 ppm, is already too high to maintain the climate to which humanity, wildlife, and the rest of the biosphere are adapted." It is true that human civilization began in, and is thus adapted to, the current Holocene climate that began after the last glacial event, but to think that the Earth will be forever locked in its present climate state barring any human-caused increases in CO₂ levels is silly. And to imagine that we can keep the Earth forever locked in its present climate state if we reduce industrial CO₂ emissions is arrogant and demonstrates a profound lack of critical thinking skills. The polar ice sheets could melt completely as



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they have done in the past, causing sea levels to rise dramatically. Or the Earth could enter another glacial period. The point is, Earth's climate has always changed, and it will continue to change regardless of what humans do or do not do, long after fossil fuel supplies have been exhausted.

Believing in the views of science and believing in catastrophic man-made global warming is illogical. It is contradictory. It is doublethink.



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