

Climate alarmism rests on faith

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AFTER two stints as pope of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Rajendra “Patchy” Pachauri has seized the opportunity of a pause in global warming to announce, first, his resignation and, second, his undying faith in the cause.

In a letter to be read from pulpits and weather stations across the world, Dr Pachauri vindicates the trust placed in him as pope of the IPCC by declaring that for him, the protection of Planet Earth, the survival of all species and sustainability of our ecosystems is more than a mission. It is my religion and my dharma.

It doesn't take much faith in the scientific method to accept, as *The Australian* does, that during the past century or so industrial development and greenhouse gases have been associated with rising temperature. But it's the overheated rhetoric on climate that shows we are often dealing with a dogmatic quasi-religion, not science.

Lightning and a thunderous voice from the clouds may announce a revelation that believers revere as settled doctrine. But science has a habit of unsettling; as surprising results mount up, they put yesterday's theories under strain.

The current pause in warming may – or may not – mask an underlying trend that fits the global warming thesis. The general mechanism whereby greenhouse gases trap energy emitted by the Earth and push up its temperature may be well understood but much else is not and should not be anointed as dogma.

Climate models are attempts to mimic the complex interplay between human activity and nature, it's dopey to hold them out as prophecy. The degree of man-made warming to come, its likely effects good and bad, and the case for remedial action balanced against other claims on scarce public resources are all matters for expert advice, rational debate and decisions open to review as new data comes to hand.

It's not blasphemy to probe the data, expose the false alarmism of the now notorious “hockey stick” graph or point out the lousy track record of climate

models. It's basic economics and common humanity to wonder aloud whether improving water quality in poor countries would be a better use of funds than the more speculative climate mitigation projects.

Yet, as the 2009 Climategate emails showed, those prone to alarmism react to dissent and debate as if they are high priests of a besieged cult rather than scientists open to inquiry. Dr Pachauri's panel serves up ex cathedra rulings on phenomena beyond its control and unbelievers, even lukewarmers, in the memorable coinage of Matt Ridley, former science editor of *The Economist* find themselves anathematised.

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