

Dear Friends,

I am happy to report that the Wall Street Journal has just published a strong and long review of *Apocalypse Never*, reprinted below.

Michael

Apocalypse Never Review: False Gods for Lost Souls

Environmentalism offers emotional relief and spiritual satisfaction, giving its adherents a sense of purpose and transcendence.



Michael Shellenberger in 2019.

PHOTO: OSCAR GONZALEZ/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

By John Tierney

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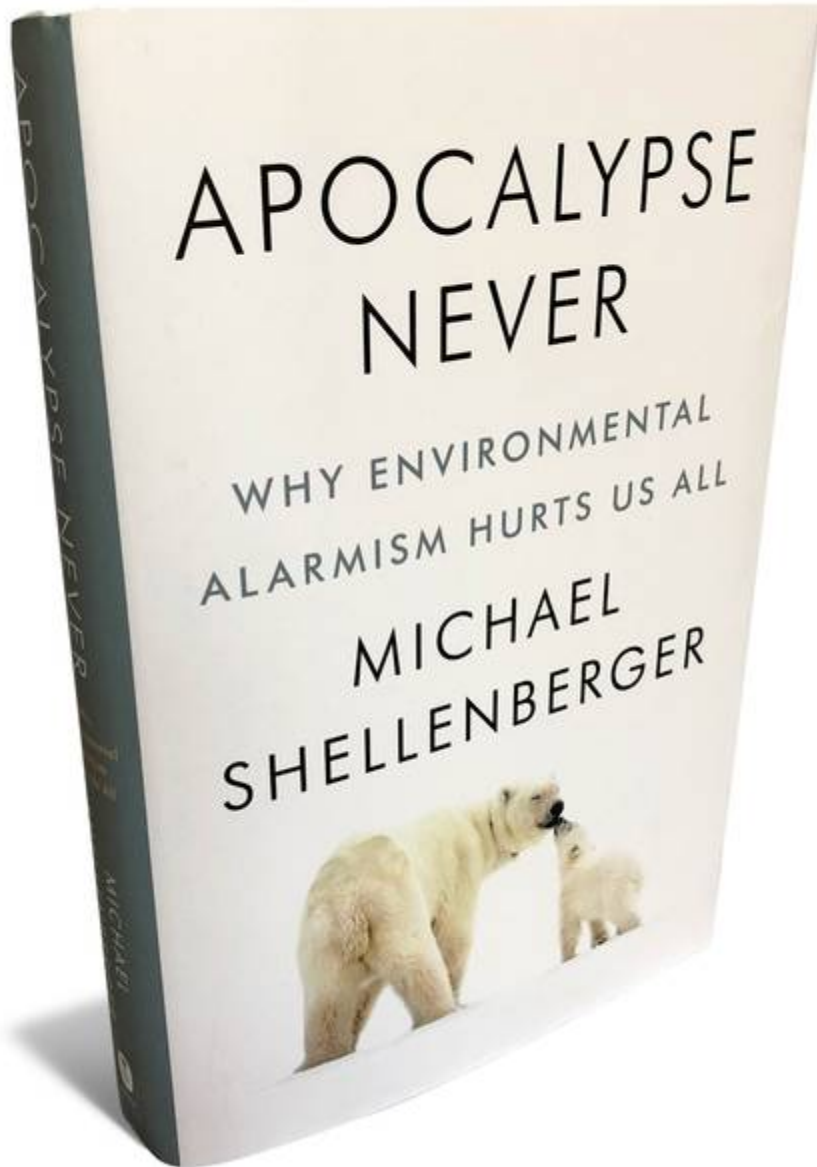
There is a recurring puzzle in the history of the environmental movement: Why do green activists keep promoting policies that are harmful not only to humans but also to the environment? Michael Shellenberger is determined to solve this problem, and he is singularly well qualified.

He understands activists because he has been one himself since high school, when he raised money for the Rainforest Action Network. Early in his adult career, he campaigned to protect redwood trees, promote renewable energy, stop global warming, and improve the lives of farmers and factory workers in the Third World. But the more he traveled, the more he questioned what Westerners' activism was accomplishing for people or for nature.

He became a different kind of activist by helping start a movement called ecomodernism, the subject of "Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All." He still wants to help the poor and preserve ecosystems, but through industrialization instead of "sustainable development." He's still worried about climate change, but he doesn't consider it the most important problem today, much less a threat to humanity's survival—and he sees that greens' favorite solutions are making the problem worse.

He chronicles environmental progress around the world and crisply debunks myth after gloomy myth. No, we are not in the midst of the "sixth mass extinction," because only 0.001% of the planet's species go extinct annually. No, whales were not saved by Greenpeace but rather by the capitalist entrepreneurs who discovered cheaper substitutes for whale oil (first petroleum, then vegetable oils) that decimated the whaling industry long before activists got involved. No, plastics don't linger for thousands of years in the ocean; they're broken down by sunlight and other forces. No, climate change has not caused an increase in the frequency or intensity of floods, droughts, hurricanes and tornadoes.

In 2002, Mr. Shellenberger proposed the New Apollo Project, a precursor to the Green New Deal. Many of its ideas for promoting renewable energy were adopted by the Obama administration and received more than \$150 billion in federal funds, but Mr. Shellenberger was disillusioned with the results. A disproportionate share of the money, as he documents, went to companies that enriched donors to the Obama campaign but failed to yield practical technologies.



APOCALYPSE NEVER

By Michael Shellenberger
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He now considers most forms of renewable energy to be impractical for large-scale use. Windmills and solar power are too expensive and unreliable as a primary source of power for people in poor countries, and they cause too much environmental damage because they require vast areas of land and harm flora and fauna. He faults Western activists and governments for trying to force these technologies on Third World countries and prevent them from building hydroelectric and fossil-fuel power plants.

"Rich nations," he writes, "should do everything they can to help poor nations industrialize." Instead "many of them are doing something closer to the opposite: seeking to make poverty sustainable rather than to make poverty history."

While industrialization causes a short-term rise in carbon emissions, in the long term it's beneficial to the environment as people move to cities, allowing farmland to revert to nature, and as prosperity enables them to switch to cleaner and more compact forms of energy. Carbon emissions decline as people move from wood to coal to natural gas, and then ultimately to what Mr. Shellenberger calls the safest and cleanest source: nuclear energy, the only practical technology for drastically curtailing carbon emissions, if only green activists would stop trying to shut down nuclear plants.

Mr. Shellenberger blames the anti-nuke movement partly on fearmongering by activists and journalists, partly on instinctive hostility to new technology, and partly on financial self-interest. "Every major climate activist group in America," he writes, including the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Sierra Club, "has been seeking to close nuclear plants around the United States while taking money from or investing in natural gas companies, renewable energy companies, and their investors who stand to make billions if nuclear plants are closed and replaced by natural gas."

Mr. Shellenberger makes a persuasive case, lucidly blending research data and policy analysis with a history of the green movement and vignettes of people in poor countries suffering the consequences of "environmental colonialism." He realizes, though, that rational arguments alone won't convince devout environmentalists. "I was drawn toward the apocalyptic view of climate change twenty years ago," he writes. "I can see now that my heightened anxiety about climate reflected underlying anxiety and unhappiness in my own life that had little to do with climate change or the state of the natural environment."

For him and so many others, environmentalism offered emotional relief and spiritual satisfaction, giving them a sense of purpose and transcendence. It has become a substitute religion for those who have abandoned traditional faiths, as he explains in his concluding chapter, "False Gods for Lost Souls." Its priests have been warning for half a century that humanity is about to be punished for its sins against nature, and no matter how often the doomsday forecasts fail, the faithful still thrill to each new one.

"The trouble with the new environmental religion is that it has become increasingly apocalyptic, destructive, and self-defeating," he writes. "It leads its adherents to demonize their opponents, often hypocritically. It drives them to seek to restrict power and prosperity at home and abroad. And it spreads anxiety and depression without meeting the deeper psychological, existential, and spiritual needs its ostensibly secular devotees seek."

Mr. Shellenberger wants to woo them to an alternative faith that he calls environmental humanism, which is committed to the "transcendent moral purpose of universal human flourishing and

environmental progress." I'm not sure that's enough to attract converts, but it makes for a much truer picture of the world—and a much cheerier read.

Mr. Tierney, a contributing editor for City Journal, is the co-author of "The Power of Bad: How the Negativity Effect Rules Us and How We Can Rule It."

Praise for *Apocalypse Never*

I hope you appreciate my work.

Regards to all.

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