

Preface

Global warming is arguably the defining scientific issue of modern times, but it is not widely appreciated that the foundations of our understanding are almost two centuries old. The sensitivity of climate to changes in atmospheric CO₂ was first estimated about one century ago, and the rise in atmospheric CO₂ concentration was discovered half a century ago. The fundamentals of the science underlying the forecast for human-induced climate change were being published and debated long before it started to appear in the newspapers.

The aim of this book is to gather together the classic scientific papers that are the scientific foundation for the forecast of global warming and its consequences. These are not necessarily the latest in the state of play; there can be subsequent quantitative revision. But these papers are the big ideas. Some of the good old good ones can be heavy going, it must be admitted, so we will try to guide the reader with some verbiage of our own, unworthy though it may be. ~~We summarize the results for you, and provide the latest revisions from the ongoing literature, how strong the water vapor feedback turned out to be, for example. We will fill in the context, the personalities, and the aftermath of the ideas in the papers. We'll also presume to provide short comments where they occur to us in boxes throughout the papers, signposts to help guide the casual reader.~~