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## THE END OF THE MODERN WORLD

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**I**N THE MID-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, THE DISTINGUISHED Italian-German Catholic intellectual Romano Guardini published a prophetic book whose German title predicted THE END OF THE MODERN WORLD.<sup>1</sup> Today, as we advance into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we are also advancing into that "End," which Guardini argued would be catastrophic. Thus, he wrote:

*Modern man believed that an increase of power meant an increase of "progress" itself ... [However,] close examination proves that recent years have been marked by a monstrous growth in man's power over being ... [Yet] power cannot really be possessed ... rather, it unfolds independently ... Demons may [then] take hold of man ... demons, then, who rule man once he has abdicated his responsibilities ...*

*The bourgeois superstition of relying on "progress" has been shattered ... Nature is now rising up in that very form which subdued the wilderness – in the form of power itself ... [Meanwhile,] scientifically educated gentlemen everywhere deliver their speeches [and] the machines are running on schedule and the authorities function as usual ... Yet Nature is becoming more and more disintegrated ... We seem to be rushing toward an event which ... can only be described as global catastrophe.<sup>2</sup>*

### Two Threats of Global Catastrophe

At "The End of the Modern World," two closely related global catastrophes loom on our historical horizon. Each threatens to destroy much of our home planet Earth's beautiful but fragile community of life, including human life. The first is *nuclear war*. The second is *ecological devastation*.

Those two global threats are closely related because they both arose from the same misguided modern-bourgeois and male-elitist technoscientific project of *conquering Nature*. Rachel Carson called it the "War against Nature."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DAS ENDE DER NEUZEIT, first published in German in 1950 and initially published in English as THE END OF THE MODERN WORLD, Trans. Joseph Theman & Herbert Burke (Sheed & Ward, 1956). Guardini's generic use of "man" and "men" was typical of his times. However, toward the end of this book, he addressed his book's "portrait of the human type" of "our age" and explicitly stated: "We must not forget that the portrait is of a man by a man." Thus, for Guardini, those who are bringing about "The End of the Modern World" are explicitly male. In the spirit of Guardini's book, we might further describe that portrait as modern bourgeois elite-males.

<sup>2</sup> Guardini, END OF MODERN WORLD, from various pages throughout the book.

<sup>3</sup> Rachel Carson, SILENT SPRING, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002).

Many modern bourgeois male elites also directed their "War against Nature" against humans whom they chose to dehumanize. They identified those 'dehumanized' humans with frightening aspects of Nature (e.g., "beasts" or "brutes"). At the same time, they assumed themselves, as bourgeois male elites, to be above Nature.

Again, arising from that same modern-bourgeois and male-elitist project, these two global threats are differentiated only by their speed. Nuclear war comes suddenly. Ecological devastation expands slowly.

However, while nuclear war remains only a threat, albeit a proximate and terrifying one, ecological devastation has already begun. Modern ecological devastation has now entered its catastrophic stage. Yet so many people keep its still-expanding reality marginalized or even hidden within their perhaps intentionally ignorant consciousness.

These two interrelated global threats of nuclear war and ecological devastation are the joint outcome of Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization, which contains two competing political-economic poles, namely, Capitalism and Communism. In their constant pursuit of "growth," Capitalism and Communism are jointly compelled to expand their colonization of Nature and other humans (the global working class).

Continuing "growth" by Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization continually advances what Romano Guardini called "The End of the Modern World." It also advances the ecological devastation of life across our home planet Earth (again, including human life).

### **The First Global Threat of Nuclear War**

In this prophetic book, Dr. Joseph J. Fahey has powerfully warned us about the first global threat, which is nuclear war.

While Dr. Fahey has made this first threat frighteningly clear, it may nonetheless be helpful to share here an excerpt from a final public letter written by a former nuclear-war planner as he was dying of cancer. His name is Daniel Ellsberg, of "the Pentagon Papers" fame. A great prophet of our times, he wrote:

*For the last forty years, we have known that nuclear war between the US and Russia would mean nuclear winter: more than a hundred million tons of smoke and soot from firestorms in cities set ablaze by either side, striking either first or second, would be lofted into the stratosphere where it would not rain out and would envelop the globe within days.*

*That pall would block up to 70% of sunlight for years, destroying all harvests worldwide and causing death by starvation for most of the humans and other vertebrates on Earth.<sup>4</sup>*

### **The Second Global Threat of Ecological Devastation**

Again, ecological devastation, as the second global threat, is already underway. Further, it has now entered the catastrophic level, as the Club of Rome's 1972 and 1974 "limits to growth" reports warned decades ago.

If contemporary global capitalist and communist economies do not move away from their compulsion for perpetual growth, *the modern economic overshoot of planetary resources will cause the global collapse of all human civilization.*

Further, if our global energy structure does not shift from fossil fuels to renewable sources, *global warming will kill much of life across our home planet Earth, including human life.* All that indeed constitutes "The End of the Modern World."

However, we may be grateful that two important and prophetic religious documents have warned us about this still-expanding global ecological devastation. The first is Pope Francis' 2015 Catholic document LAUDATO SI' - *On Care for Our Common Home*.<sup>5</sup>

The second prophetic religious document is the 2024 global Islamic book, AL MIZAN - *A Covenant for the Earth*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://americanswhotellthetruth.org/march-2023-letter-from-daniel-ellsberg>.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.almizan.earth/\\_files/ugd/57dc1c\\_e32d3b0734f84d75b2ffbea8ee2037a8.pdf](https://www.almizan.earth/_files/ugd/57dc1c_e32d3b0734f84d75b2ffbea8ee2037a8.pdf).

## Dual Failure of Modern Nation States

The modern principle that the nation-state is the sovereign political power across our home planet Earth became a foundational teaching for the Modern World.

In Europe, during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century, the Treaties of Westphalia planted initial seeds for this modern principle of national sovereignty. Later, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the principle took on aggressive power with the American, French, and Haitian revolutions.

Still late in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and following World War I and World War II, emancipatory nationalist developments began to dismantle modern Western empires and their vast colonizing control. (However, neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism took their place).

Those accomplishments extended the principle of national sovereignty to the West's former colonies. They also established the principle of national sovereignty in international law.

Today, however, at "The End of the Modern World," and as the modern "War against Nature" threatens global nuclear war and enters the catastrophic level of global ecological devastation, the principle of absolute national sovereignty has itself become a life-threatening global failure.

The most powerful modern capitalist and communist nation-states have proven themselves incapable of redirecting their economies away from the still-expanding arms race, including the nuclear arms race, and from the still-expanding global ecological devastation.

That failure to redirect their national capitalist and communist economies toward global peace and global ecological sustainability constitutes *the geo-systemic failure of the modern principle of national sovereignty*.

## The Need for Global Government

The League of Nations, established after World War I, and the United Nations Organization (UN), established after World War II, were both important but inadequate responses to the growing need for world government. Of the two, the UN has been far more successful because it now embodies vast functions of global governance.

However, despite UN leaders' powerful calls for global nuclear disarmament and global ecological sustainability, the UN has been unable to stop the growing threat of nuclear war and the still-growing catastrophe of ecological devastation. The UN has also been unable to stop the proliferation of regional wars.

Further, that geo-systemic failure has now become *ecologically acute*. Again, still-expanding global ecological devastation increasingly threatens the possibility of human civilization. It also threatens the viability of much of life across Earth's Biosphere, including human life.

The joint causes for this geo-systemic failure of the principle of national sovereignty are two interwoven yet unaccountable and out-of-control global forces.

1. **Political Power.** The first is the *political power* of wealthy nation-states, institutionalized in their veto power within the UN Security Council and in their coercive global military power.
2. **Economic Power.** The second is the *economic power* of gargantuan transnational corporations, gargantuan transnational investment pools of private capital, and gargantuan national sovereign funds, all functioning "freely" within the "free market" of the new Global Finance Capitalism.

Yet, because of these two globally unaccountable forces, and before the breakthrough of global government can emerge, our human family may have to undergo even greater technoscientific attacks from Industrial-Colonial Civilization's "War against Nature" in its capitalist and communist forms.

Even now, many now see this "War against Nature" as apocalyptic. It is becoming a global destroyer, causing not only what Guardini called the "End of the Modern World" but also threatening to end human civilization and extinguish much of life across our garden planet Earth.

### **Pacem in Terris'** **Call for a New World Order**

In the face of this perhaps apocalyptic horizon, let us hope and pray that John XXIII's prophetic call in *PACEM IN TERRIS* for "Peace on Earth" through a "new world order" – along with Pope Francis's call in *Laudato Si'* for "integral ecology" – may become foundational for

thought and action across the entire global Catholic family, which constitutes approximately 18% of our global human family.

Similarly, let us hope and pray that John's and Francis' prophetic calls will continue to inspire peoples of all faith traditions, who constitute 80% of our global human family.

Finally, let us hope and pray that John's and Francis' prophetic calls, addressed to all people of goodwill, will also reach the hearts and minds of all those good people within our global human family who follow either of the modern secularizing ideologies of Liberalism or Marxism.

Finally, I thank Dr. Joseph Fahey for writing this also prophetic book about Pope John XXIII's prophetic encyclical letter. It will help us to keep alive John XXIII's bold vision that, perhaps one day, may help to move our global human family to embrace democratic global governance.



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