

The End of the World as We Know It

Every Sunday Christians around the world pray, after the manner of Jesus, for the hallowing of God's name, the doing of God's will, and the coming of God's reign – “*on earth* (as it is in heaven)!”

The formal language of the Lord's Prayer, as well as its familiarity, tend to obscure what it is all about. This venerable prayer calls for the end of the world *as we know it!*

The world as we know it: polluted by greed and selfishness; rife with violence and strife; filled with unconscionable suffering, barbaric cruelty, heedless ambition, and monstrous indifference. Not to mention the smugness and pride of all who refuse to acknowledge or take any responsibility for things harsh, grievous, and tragic.

Here's my (very partial) list of things I think Christians (among others) should be praying to come to an end:

- the hunger of billions and the on-going starvation of millions;
- the violence, rapacity, and sheer madness of those who lust for power;
- the brutality of gangs, vigilantes, and repressive military and police forces;
- the indiscriminate slaughter of people whose race, religion, nationality, misfortune, or geography puts them in harm's way;
- torture, extraordinary rendition, indefinite detention, drone attacks, predator missiles, IEDs, RPGs, cluster bombs, extrajudicial assassinations, unwarranted surveillance, capital punishment, and all the other inhumane ways in which humanity foolishly attempts to fight inhumanity;
- the war on terror (the “cure” has been even worse than the disease);
- the obscene inequalities in our earthly estate that tilt the playing field, preclude human flourishing, and destroy true democracy;
- the degradation of the planet in the name of profit, consumption, and short-term comfort;
- the blindness and perfidy of leaders, politicians, and citizens who prefer ideology, tradition, ignorance, habit, and sloth to hard facts, empirical realities, scientific knowledge, and disturbing evidences of the need for change;
- the insidious prejudices of creed, color, and class, which beset each of us and of which we are at best only partially aware;
- the inchoate rage and disorderedness of which each of us is capable when our own aspirations and ambitions are thwarted.

The popular rock band, R.E.M. recently disbanded. One of their best hits was, “It's the end of the world as we know it.” I especially liked the next line: “*And I feel fine!*” Should we ever come upon the end of the world as we know it, expect it to be fine. Meanwhile, blessed New Year.

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