

July 7, 2015

The Pope again. Joel Kotkin with a long essay on the Green Pope.

*Some future historian, searching for the origins of a second Middle Ages, might fix on the summer of 2015 as its starting point. Here occurred the marriage of seemingly irreconcilable world views—that of the Catholic Church and official science—into one new green faith.*

*As Pope Francis has embraced the direst notions of climate change, one Canadian commentator compared Francis's bleak take on the environment, technology, and the market system to that of the Unabomber. "Doomsday predictions," the Pope wrote in his recent encyclical "Laudato Si," "can no longer be met with irony or disdain."*

*With Francis's pontifical blessing, the greens have now found a spiritual hook that goes beyond the familiar bastions of the academy, bureaucracy, and the media and reaches right into the homes and hearts of more than a billion practicing Catholics. No potential coalition of interests threatened by a seeming tsunami of regulation—from suburban homeowners and energy firms to Main Street businesses—can hope to easily resist this alliance of the unlikely.*

### **Historical U-Turn?**

*There are of course historical parallels to this kind of game-changing alliance. In the late Roman Empire and then throughout the first Middle Ages, church ideology melded with aristocratic and kingly power to assure the rise of a feudal system. ...*

*... What makes the Pope's position so important—after all, the world is rejecting his views on such things as gay marriage and abortion—is how it jibes with the world view of some of the secular world's best-funded, influential, and powerful forces. In contrast to both Socialist and capitalist thought, both the Pope and the greens are suspicious about economic growth itself, and seem to regard material progress as aggression against the health of the planet.*

*The origins of this world view back to the '40s. An influential group of scientists, planners, and top executives voiced concern about the impact of an exploding population on food stocks, raw materials, and the global political order. In 1948, environmental theorist William Vogt argued that population was outstripping resources and would lead to the mass starvation predicted in the early 19th century by Thomas Malthus.*

*The legacy of Malthus, himself a Protestant clergyman, dominates environmental thinking. As historian Edward Barbier notes, Malthusianism presumes that a culture or society lacks all "access to new sources of land and resources or is unable to innovate," thus is "vulnerable to collapse." In his seminal 1968 book, *The Population Bomb*, Paul Ehrlich predicted imminent mass starvation in much of the world and espoused draconian steps to limit fertility, which he saw being imposed by a "relatively small group" of enlightened individuals. He even raised the possibility of placing "sterilants" in the water supply and advocated tax policies that discouraged child-bearing.*

*Ehrlich's dire predictions proved widely off the mark—food production soared, and starvation declined—but this appears not to have dissuaded the Church from embracing Ehrlich's contemporary acolytes. ...*

... This confluence of private interest, public power and the clerical class is suggestive of a new feudal epoch. Bankrolled by inherited money, including from the oil-rich [Rockefellers](#) as well as Silicon Valley, the green alliance has already shown remarkable marketing savvy and media power to promote its agenda. Now that their approach is officially also the ideology of the world's largest and most important church, discussion of climate change has become both secular and religious dogma at the same time.

What we seem to have forgotten is the historic ability of our species—and particularly the urbanized portion of it—to adjust to change, and overcome obstacles while improving life for the residents. After all, the earliest cities of Mesopotamia and Egypt arose, in part, from a change in climate that turned marshes into solid land, which could then be used for intensive, irrigated agriculture.

Similarly, pollution and haze that covered most cities in the high income world—St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Dusseldorf, Osaka, Los Angeles—only a few decades ago has greatly improved, mostly through the introduction of new technology and, to some extent, deindustrialization. In recent decades, many waterways, dumping grounds for manufacturers since the onset of the industrial revolution and once considered hopelessly polluted, have come back to life.

This notion that people can indeed address the most serious environmental issues is critical. We should not take, as Francis does, every claim of the climate lobby, or follow their prescriptions without considerations of impacts on people or alternative ways to address these issues. As we have seen over the past few decades, many of the assertions of environmental lobbyists have turned out to be [grossly exaggerated](#). ...

**Steve Hayward** asks if it is the unabomber or the unapapa.

Anyone remember the good old days when you couldn't tell the difference between the Unabomber's manifesto "[Industrial Society and Its Future](#)" and Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance*? There was even an [online quiz](#) you could flunk. (Though to remind everyone once again, both owed more to Heidegger.)

Well, it's time to rerun that drill with Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment. Which is exactly what Colby Cosh does in Canada's [National Post](#): ...

**HNGN.com** writes on the Pope's environmental Rasputin.

Pope Francis' canticle, *Laudato Si*, finds its roots in a hymn written by St. Francis of Assisi. The hymn spoke of "Brothers" Sun and Fire, as well as "Sisters" Moon and Water, powerful metaphors that must've resonated deeply within the Pope and the saint. Curiously enough however, one of the Pope's scientific advisors may take the figurative statements of the hymn a little too realistically.

*Hans Schellnhuber, a self-professed atheist, is one of Pope Francis' prominent scientific advisors. What makes him even more remarkable, apart from his disbelief in a universal, omnipotent deity, is the fact that his beliefs lie very close to nature, according to The Stream.*

*Schellnhuber's beliefs are most accurately called Pantheism, ...*

---

---

---

## Daily Beast

### [Green Pope Goes Medieval on Planet](#)

***Pope Francis's embrace of the direst ideas about climate change could usher in a new feudalism that stalls progress and penalizes the world's poor in the name of environmental safety.***

by Joel Kotkin

Some future historian, searching for the origins of a second Middle Ages, might fix on the summer of 2015 as its starting point. Here occurred the marriage of seemingly irreconcilable world views—that of the Catholic Church and official science—into one new green faith.

As Pope Francis has embraced the direst notions of climate change, one Canadian commentator [compared](#) Francis's bleak take on the environment, technology, and the market system to that of the Unabomber. "Doomsday predictions," the Pope wrote in his recent encyclical "Laudato Si," "can no longer be met with irony or disdain."

With Francis's pontifical blessing, the greens have now found a spiritual hook that goes beyond the familiar bastions of the academy, bureaucracy, and the media and reaches right into the homes and hearts of more than a billion practicing Catholics. No potential coalition of interests threatened by a seeming tsunami of regulation—from suburban homeowners and energy firms to Main Street businesses—can hope to easily resist this alliance of the unlikely.

### ***Historical U-Turn?***

There are of course historical parallels to this kind of game-changing alliance. In the late Roman Empire and then throughout the first Middle Ages, church ideology melded with aristocratic and kingly power to assure the rise of a feudal system. Issuing indulgences for the well-heeled, the Church fought against the culture of hedonism and unrestrained individualism that Francis has so roundly denounced. The Church also concerned itself with the poor, but seemed not willing to challenge the very economic and social order that often served to keep them that way.

Historically Medievalism represented a "steady state" approach to human development, seeking stability over change. Coming after the achievements of the classical age—with its magnificent engineering feats as well as an often cruel, highly competitive culture—the Middle Ages ushered in centuries of slow growth, with cities in decline and poverty universal for all but a few.

To be sure, the Church played an important, if difficult role, in preserving classical culture and, in the Renaissance, often nurtured a resurgence in some classical values of human self-improvement, science and inquiry, and individual enterprise. But ultimately, as Max Weber

noted, it could not compete with a Protestantism that fit more easily with the emerging capitalist spirit. Protestant countries—the Netherlands, northern Germany, Britain, and America—took the lead in the development of the modern world.

Capitalism, particularly during the early industrial revolution, often abused human dignity and engendered huge poverty. This still happens today, as the Pope suggests, but this system has also been responsible for lifting hundreds of millions of people—most recently in China and East Asia—out of poverty. Without the resources derived from capitalist enterprise, there would have been insufficient funds to drive the great improvements in sanitation, housing, and education that have created huge pockets of relative affluence across the planet.

### ***The Coalition for Anti-Growth***

What makes the Pope's position so important—after all, the world is rejecting his views on such things as gay marriage and abortion—is how it jibes with the world view of some of the secular world's best-funded, influential, and powerful forces. In contrast to both Socialist and capitalist thought, both the Pope and the greens are suspicious about economic growth itself, and seem to regard material progress as aggression against the health of the planet.

The origins of this world view back to the '40s. An influential group of scientists, planners, and top executives voiced concern about the impact of an exploding population on food stocks, raw materials, and the global political order. In 1948, environmental theorist William Vogt argued that population was outstripping resources and would lead to the mass starvation predicted in the early 19th century by Thomas Malthus.

The legacy of Malthus, himself a Protestant clergyman, dominates environmental thinking. As historian Edward Barbier notes, Malthusianism presumes that a culture or society lacks all “access to new sources of land and resources or is unable to innovate,” thus is “vulnerable to collapse.” In his seminal 1968 book, *The Population Bomb*, Paul Ehrlich predicted imminent mass starvation in much of the world and espoused draconian steps to limit fertility, which he saw being imposed by a “relatively small group” of enlightened individuals. He even raised the possibility of placing “sterilants” in the water supply and advocated tax policies that discouraged child-bearing.

Ehrlich's dire predictions proved widely off the mark—food production soared, and starvation declined—but this appears not to have dissuaded the Church from embracing Ehrlich's contemporary acolytes. This is not to say that environmentalism has not achieved much in terms of cleaning the air and water, restoring wildlife and expanding open space. Yet these triumphs are not seen as sources of inspiration by a movement that seems to live off pointing to a doomsday clock.

Given their lack of faith in markets or people, the green movement has become ever less adept at adjusting to the demographic, economic, and technological changes that have occurred since the '70s. Huge increases in agricultural productivity and the recent explosion in fossil fuel energy resources have been largely ignored or downplayed; the writ remains that humanity has entered an irreversible “era of ecological scarcity” that requires strong steps to promote “sustainability.”

The green movement's views on population represent the most difficult contradiction in the new alliance. Many environmental organizations and pundits favor strong steps to discourage people from having children. The Church and Francis are now allied to the likes of [Peter Kareiva](#), chief scientist for the U.S.-based Nature Conservancy, who has concluded that not having children is the most effective way for an individual in the developed world to reduce emissions, although he

adds that he himself is a father. In the United Kingdom, [Jonathan Porritt](#), an environmental advisor to Prince Charles, has claimed that having even two children is “irresponsible,” and has advocated for the island nation to reduce its population by half in order, in large part, to reduce emissions.

***The Poor will always be with us. But they might not go along with the plan.***

Another flash point between papal concerns and those of their new best friends lies in addressing poverty. The Pope is correct in identifying inequality and poverty as major concerns, but it’s hard to say how green strategies—particularly when they make energy, housing, and industry far more expensive—actually alleviate the plight of the poor or the middle class.

Ultimately the green platform seeks not to increase living standards as we currently understand them (particularly in high income countries) but to purposely lower them. This can be seen in the calls for “de-development,” a phrase employed by President Obama’s science advisor [John Holdren](#) for all “overdeveloped” advanced countries, in part to discourage developing countries from following a similar path. This way of thinking is more mainstream among European activists who seek to promote what is called “[de-growth](#),” which seeks to limit fossil fuels, suburban development, and replace the current capitalist system with a highly regulated economy that would make up for less wealth through redistribution.

We are not talking here about not socialism, as some right-wingers suggest. Marxism, for all its manifest flaws, justified itself by promising to improve living standards; it was passionate about technology, which is one reason Marx called it “scientific socialism.” Instead, Francis seems closer to Peronism, the dominant state ideology of his native [Argentina](#). Even before his most recent *pronunciamento*, Francis widely [disparaged](#) capitalism, which he equated with the cronyism dominant throughout South America.

Peron himself may have battled the Church of his day, but Francis’s relations with the current Peronist regime have warmed considerably, particularly since his ascension. As the *Guardian* [reports](#), when he was named pontiff, posters quickly appeared around Buenos Aires with the image of Francis over the words “Argentine and Peronist.” Peronism embraces the ideal of an economy where justice is [mandated](#) through the state’s redistribution of wealth.

This is not reassuring. Since the last century, Argentina has been one of the world’s greatest economic [failures](#), a country that despite a talented and educated populace and huge natural resources, has tumbled from rich country status to a second or third world country. In essence, replacing the American dream with an Argentinian one sounds less than appealing.

Trying to sell anti-growth green ideology may prove a tougher in the developing world. Not surprising then that, no matter what the rhetoric that is adopted by the climate conference to be held in Paris this month, critical figures like India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not restrict building new coal plants—the [country](#) has tripled coal imports three fold since 2008. In the sweltering cities of the subcontinent, moves to ban air conditioning are simply not good politics. And Chinese President Xi Jinping, the leader of the world’s largest carbon emitter and user of coal, clearly has no real intention of reversing rapid development, based in large part fossil fuels, till [2030](#), when reasonably priced alternatives may well be generally available.

In contrast, many greens now seem to embrace ever continuing poverty for emerging countries. [Prince Charles](#), for example, embraces the “intuitive grammar” of ultra-dense slums such as Mumbai’s Dharavi, which, he claims, have perfected more “durable ways of living” than those in the suburbanized west. Similarly, the influential environmental group [Friends of the Earth](#)

applauds recycling in Dharavi as an “inspiration” for the urban future. California’s [Stewart Brand](#) openly endorses the notion “Save the Slums” because they will save the planet.

Given the reluctance of still poor countries to further impoverish themselves, the burden of the Catholic-green alliance will necessarily fall on the middle and working classes. As we can already see in [California](#) (the state with the most draconian environment laws), long-term economic growth has been tepid, despite the occasional tech and property bubbles. At the same time, the state suffers not only among the highest unemployment rates in the country, but the highest level of poverty, when cost of living is addressed, and has become home to one-third of the nation’s welfare recipients.

### ***Overcoming the “Poverty of Ambition”***

Architect Austin Williams suggests that sustainability, the new prayer word of spiritual greenism, “is an insidiously dangerous concept, masquerading as progress.” It poses an agenda that restricts industry, housing and incomes in a manner that severely undermines social aspiration. Indeed, Williams argues, greens and their allies—now including the world’s most important church—have created “a poverty of ambition.” Williams suggests the common green view is that humanity is “destructive and in need of reduction” rather than “a source of innovation, creativity, imagination and socialization.”

What matters little to the green movement are the economic ramifications of their preferred policies, such as forcing a large percentage of the population into “fuel poverty.” Loss of jobs in trucking and manufacturing would hit blue-collar workers and neighborhoods hardest, according to most studies. How this jibes with meeting the high welfare and retirement costs with an urban population increasingly dominated by immigrants, their offspring, and other poor children, seems problematical at least.

The new feudal order that is being proposed, like the original, is based as much on powerful self-interest as fulsome good intentions. [Tech oligarchs](#) love a regime where they can invest in renewables with the guarantee of public subsidy. The Trustifarians promote subsidies and renewable use through their foundations and feel personally vindicated for their efforts. The media can celebrate the enlightening shift towards sustainable power. Academics receive grants and churn out studies in support. And the lawyers and the upper bureaucracy achieve ever greater job security to administer the entire program. The Church, by embracing the strongest intellectual current, gets a shot at renewed relevance, and even “hipness.”

This confluence of private interest, public power and the clerical class is suggestive of a new feudal epoch. Bankrolled by inherited money, including from the oil-rich [Rockefellers](#) as well as Silicon Valley, the green alliance has already shown remarkable marketing savvy and media power to promote its agenda. Now that their approach is officially also the ideology of the world’s largest and most important church, discussion of climate change has become both secular and religious dogma at the same time.

What we seem to have forgotten is the historic ability of our species—and particularly the urbanized portion of it—to adjust to change, and overcome obstacles while improving life for the residents. After all, the earliest cities of Mesopotamia and Egypt arose, in part, from a change in climate that turned marshes into solid land, which could then be used for intensive, irrigated agriculture.

Similarly, pollution and haze that covered most cities in the high income world—St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Dusseldorf, Osaka, Los Angeles—only a few decades ago has greatly improved,

mostly through the introduction of new technology and, to some extent, deindustrialization. In recent decades, many waterways, dumping grounds for manufacturers since the onset of the industrial revolution and once considered hopelessly polluted, have come back to life.

This notion that people can indeed address the most serious environmental issues is critical. We should not take, as Francis does, every claim of the climate lobby, or follow their prescriptions without considerations of impacts on people or alternative ways to address these issues. As we have seen over the past few decades, many of the assertions of environmental lobbyists have turned out to be [grossly exaggerated](#). Similarly, concerns over “sprawl” in the high-income world, for example, have focused on such things as the disappearance of forests, yet, with enlightened policies, both green spaces and forest lands have expanded. Similarly, “sprawl” has not impinged much on farmland or harmed food stocks; indeed both the European Union and the United States continue to produce vast surpluses of food. Rather than suffering from “peak oil,” we are awash in oil and gas.

At the same time, new technologies like low emission cars, solarizing homes, more efficient monitoring of energy use and some intelligent planning—for example, dispersing work or planting trees—make the draconian steps being proposed by many greens and their allies [moot](#). There is simply no reason, as a recent McKinsey [study has shown](#), for a shift to denser urban housing, a critical element in contemporary climate change thinking.

The key issue may be how Catholics embrace his views, and how willing they are to work with environmentalists whose views on family, fecundity, abortion, and gay marriage are polar opposites of church dogma. As one influential lay Catholic explained, many do not look to the Church for scientific and political direction but for spiritual and moral leadership. “The Church speaks with moral authority, at least to me,” this prominent Catholic suggested, “but it does not possess a special scientific authority—a fact well established by its history (see Galileo).”

Certainly the Church that built so many of the world’s great hospitals, universities, and charities could contribute greatly to grassroots environmental efforts that do not depress the prospects for the poor. In seeking to improve conditions for its flock, the Church needs to make sure that they also don’t get fleeced and driven further into poverty. Social justice may be an important value, but it is dubious that the Church’s credibility will be well served by a neo-feudal alliance dominated by those who abhor the Church’s other core values such as family, the sanctity of human life and some degree of social prudence.

The Church, as well as those of us outside of it, would do better to develop more *humane*, and less hysterical, responses to climate-related issues, and in ways that do not stomp on human aspiration. We should avoid the march full-speed backward in time, to the glorious elitism, mass poverty, and class stagnation of the Medieval era. The world’s people, and Francis’s flock, deserve better than that.

## Power Line

### [Unabomber or Unapapa?](#)

by Steve Hayward

Anyone remember the good old days when you couldn’t tell the difference between the Unabomber’s manifesto “[Industrial Society and Its Future](#)” and Al Gore’s *Earth in the Balance*?

There was even an [online quiz](#) you could flunk. (Though to remind everyone once again, both [owed more to Heidegger](#).)

Well, it's time to rerun that drill with Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment. Which is exactly what Colby Cosh does in Canada's [National Post](#):

Non-Catholics responded positively to the Pope's tweetstorm because he seemed to be taking a firm position on climate change, and the letter certainly does that. But the head of the Catholic religion turns out to be no more capable of expressing himself compactly on one important issue than is the typical adherent of the Environmentalist religion.

The climate is a "common good," says the Pope, and there is "a very solid scientific consensus" that it is changing in "disturbing" ways. Hooray for Science Pope! But before you know it he is weighing in on drinking water. "...in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market." It turns out this is bad, even though almost any economist alive would instantly apply a red pencil and several question marks to that "despite." . . .

"The idea of promoting a different cultural paradigm and employing technology as a mere instrument is nowadays inconceivable. The technological paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic. It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same."

Pure Kaczynski, yeah? The next sentence could easily be "So that's why I moved to a cabin in the woods and started mailing bombs to scientists." Let me give you another: Unabomber or Unapapa?

"The system does not and cannot exist to satisfy human needs. Instead, it is human behaviour that has to be modified to fit the needs of the system. This has nothing to do with the political or social ideology that may pretend to guide the technological system. It is the fault of technology, because the system is guided not by ideology but by technical necessity. Of course the system does satisfy many human needs, but generally speaking it does this only to the extent that it is to the advantage of the system to do it. It is the needs of the system that are paramount, not those of the human being."

That one's Ted — or have I switched them? No, despite the stylistic similarities, the parallel quotes, which could be multiplied greatly, does reveal a weakness in my insolent comparison. The Pope is an optimist, and thinks technology can be tamed if human hearts turn to Christ in time. Kaczynski thinks the problems involved in technological progress are inherent. He specifically argues that they cannot be solved by religion, real or contrived.

**HNGN.com**

## **Pope Francis' Science Advisor Believes in Gaia, But Not God**

***Hans Schellnhuber, a pantheist, is one of the Pope's scientific advisors.***

by Peter de Jesus

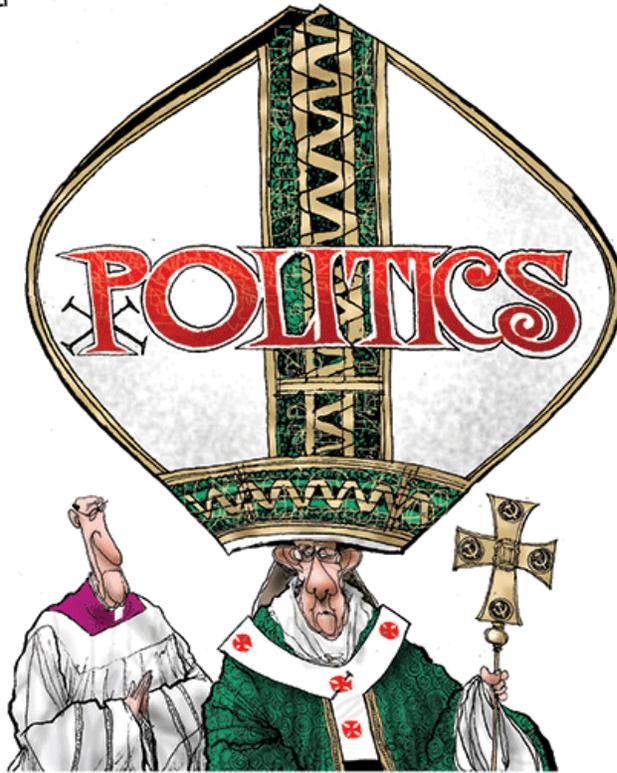
Pope Francis' canticle, *Laudato Si*, finds its roots in a hymn written by St. Francis of Assisi. The hymn spoke of "Brothers" Sun and Fire, as well as "Sisters" Moon and Water, powerful metaphors that must've resonated deeply within the Pope and the saint. Curiously enough however, one of the Pope's scientific advisors may take the figurative statements of the hymn a little too realistically.

Hans Schellnhuber, a self-professed atheist, is one of Pope Francis' prominent scientific advisors. What makes him even more remarkable, apart from his disbelief in a universal, omnipotent deity, is the fact that his beliefs lie very close to nature, [according to The Stream](#).

Schellnhuber's beliefs are most accurately called Pantheism, a variation of atheism which involves a belief system rooted in the concept of the Earth being a living, breathing organism, much like the mythological Gaia. Beyond considering the planet as a living being, pantheists believe that the Earth has a system equivalent to the human brain, which in turn reacts to the destructive things that humans initiate, [reports Rush Limbaugh](#).

The beliefs of the Pope's scientific advisor follows the Gaia principle, which was first advanced by chemist John Lovelock and microbiologist Lynn Margulis in the 1970's. The principle states that Mother Earth is alive, and to a point, even aware in some ill-defined, mystical manner. This means that the planet is quite literally the "brother" or "sister" to human beings, [according to The Stream](#).

Schellnhuber has previously stated his beliefs in the Gaia principle, stating that "the Gaia approach may even include the influence of biospheric activities on the Earth's plate-tectonic processes." This means that, in a very concise manner, natural calamities and events do not affect human life; rather, it is human life that influences natural calamities and events.



www.investors.com/cartoons



