Thou shalt not pollute the earth

Rashida Ahmad reports on a new Vatican list of 'modern-day sins'

WE live in modern times, and we sin in modern ways, according to the Vatican which updated the well-worn seven deadly sins in March by adding seven new sins for what it calls an age of "unstoppable globalisation."

Those with hell and damnation in store for them these days include polluters, drug pushers, the obscenely rich (nothing new there!), and scientists who manipulate human genes.

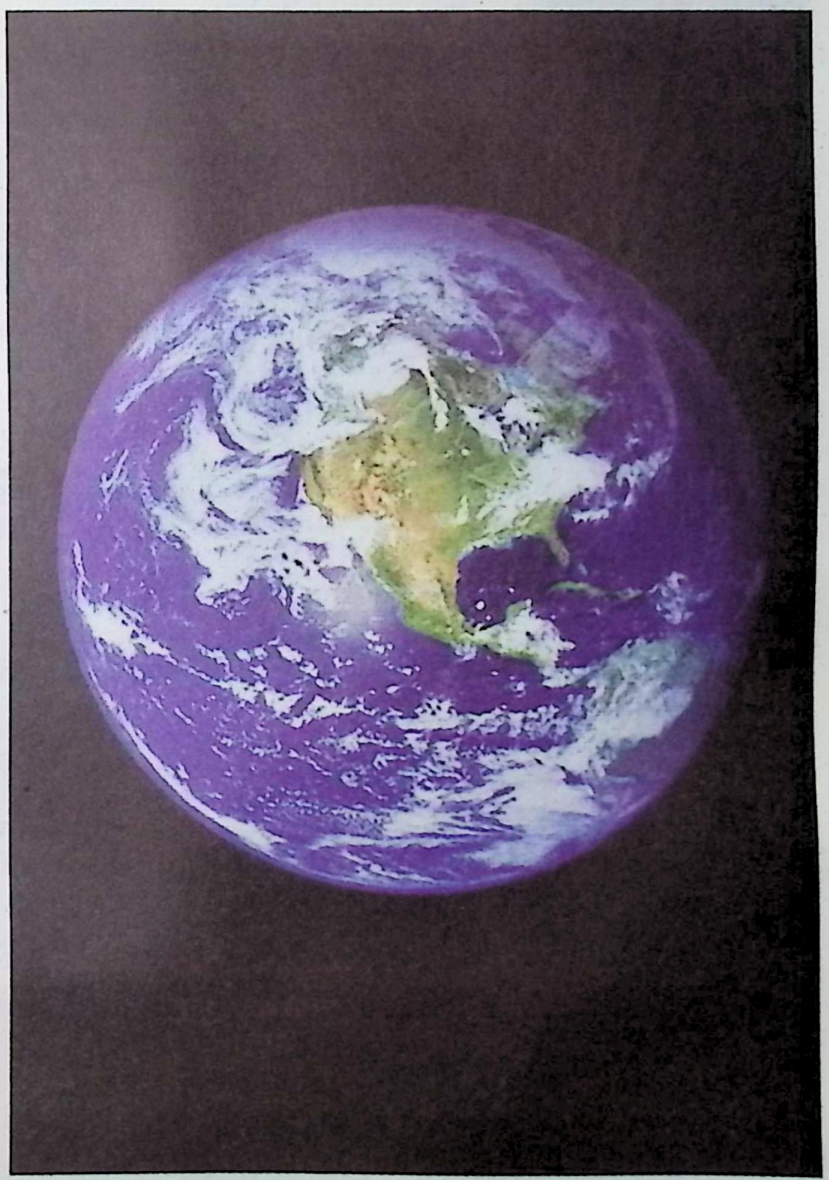
Just so that there would be no confusion, the Catholic Church helpfully clarified that "immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell."

So, could "thou shalt not pollute the earth" and "thou shalt not clone" be added one day to the age-old Ten Commandments?

Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, the Vatican's number two after the Pope, spoke on the thorny subject of transgression and modern evils, and gave the rundown of new mortal sins in a newspaper interview after a week-long training seminar in Rome for priests.

"You offend God not only by stealing, blaspheming or coveting your neighbour's wife, but also by ruining the environment, carrying out morally debatable scientific experiments, or allowing genetic manipulations which alter DNA or compromise embryos," he said.

The new list of sins, published on March 9 in the Vatican's newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, came as the Pope increasingly laments the "decreasing sense of sin" in today's "securalised world."



The Catholic Church divides sins into venial (or lesser) sins and mortal sins. The latter threaten the soul with eternal damnation unless absolved before death through confession and penitence.

It holds mortal sins to be "grave violations of the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes," including murder, contraception, abortion, perjury, adultery, and lust.

Although there is no absolute list of mortal sins, many Christians accept the seven deadly sins or capital vices laid down in the 6th