



Peace Advocate News

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Matthew 5:9

Peace begins when you make your peace with Jesus, accept Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord.

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Populism

Many people in the world are captivated by the appeal of populism. While there is not one clear agreed upon definition of what populism stands for, it is generally understood as a political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are being disregarded by established elite groups. The populist message does not always take the same form, but people who feel ignored and economically disadvantaged are likely to look with favor on a political approach that appears to be speaking for them.

At its best, populism can foster greater involvement by people in how they are governed and help improve life for all. At its worst, it is a means for a charismatic leader to persuade people to follow them. On the surface such a leader appears to offer what the people want, but in fact, the leader has a hidden agenda which has little to do with the people's needs. Calling out populism has been a favorite tool used by charismatic, but authoritarian leaders who want political power. After they gain that power, the needs and wishes of the people enticed to follow them, are ignored.

The fact that populism is taking hold in many places in the world today, may make it seem like people around the world are uniting and moving together toward a common goal, but the only thing these populist movements have in common is that they are against something. What they are against is not necessarily the same from one movement to the next. Populist leaders and populist movements are usually happy to state what they are against but they generally are not clear about what they are for.

To many populist leaders, specific issues do not matter as long as those leaders can tap into the anger and discontent the people are feeling. An easy way to do this is to tell discontented people what they want to hear even if it is fiction. These leaders present the situation in the way that will best serve their purpose. The energy generated by their efforts and the movements they lead is nearly always negative, and is used to manipulate people. Such leaders thrive on the reality that, for many people, if you tell them something long and loud enough, they will accept it as fact even if it is not fact and there is overwhelming evidence that proves it is not fact. An uneasy human reality is that people tend to hear and believe what they want to.

Rather than seeking workable solutions to problems, populists tend to tap into an all too human desire to

find scape goats – that is, someone or group to blame for all that is 'wrong' with the system as it is. Those designated as scape goats are not the problem and generally are not in a position to 'fix' it, but once they are labeled as scape goats by populist leaders, they will pay the price for the discontent people feel. When there are old grudges, ethnic divisions, political differences, economic issues, or even family squabbles to rekindle, these will be used to help divide people and tear a community apart for the good of no one except the leader seeking power. We have seen this over and over again. In Rwanda it brought genocide as it did in Germany with Hitler's treatment of the Jews before and during World War II. Other examples are clear in the rise to power of other dictators who have blamed intellectuals, or minority groups, or 'foreigners', or indigenous people, or emigrants for the problems of the day. Political leaders in this country have been known to use the same tactics – the treatment of Native American, Blacks, the Japanese, and emigrants for example.

What are the warning signs and how can one avoid being caught up in such a political trap?

- First educate yourself. Know the truth about people seeking power. Are they open about their past or do they keep secrets? Know the issues of the day. Get a variety of opinions from several different sources. Check on where you get your information. Also know how the system works. Beware of anyone who claims they are the only one to trust; that everyone who disagrees with them is lying; that only they and their 'people' have the 'real' story.
- Refuse to play the blame game. It is rare for one person or group to be 'the' cause of a problem. Even those who sit back and let things happen, are part of the problem because of what they did not do! If a leader is playing the blame game, do not help them create a scape goat.
- Watch out for those who are negative. A negative attitude never builds people up but it is great for tearing people and societies down.
- Watch out for anyone who says they have all the answers and will 'fix' everything. Fixing problems is not a one-person job. All parties touched by the problem should and must be involved in seeking a solution if one is to be found. A good leader is one who can facilitate not 'dictate' a solution.
- Look for good listening skills. Can the leader or group fairly and without belittling or putting down,

clearly explain the point of view and position of their opponents accurately?

- Look for people who admit their mistakes. If a leader or group misquotes someone, misstates information, gets something wrong, will they say so, apologize, and correct themselves?
- Beware of people who keep secrets, especially if they imply that only they are entitled to know, or capable of understanding the information they hide.
- A good leader does not have to be a genius, but they should be an active learner and seek out people who have the experience and knowledge they lack, for input and advice. Someone with no more training or experience with an issue than you have is not an expert just because they agree with you. Good leaders should listen to more than one point of view. *Being proud of ignorance is not a virtue.*
- While there may well be a certain amount of ego involved in seeking a leadership role, a leader is first and always the servant of those they lead. The best example of that is Jesus himself.
- Beware of those who spend lots of time finding ways to exclude people from participation in the political process, especially if the people they are trying to exclude are very likely to support opposing views. This is one of several ways a potential leader can try to rig the system in their favor.

A system that includes everyone equally will serve the people far better than one that favors only a few. When one group is favored at the expense of others, the favored ones may live the 'good life' for a time, but the moral and ethical cost they will eventually pay will be high. The cost everyone will pay when exploited people finally demand their rights will likely also be high. Many dictators are deposed by a violent and costly uprising of the people. . .



A Call to Limit the Power to Make War

The Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy has joined 42 other groups from across the political spectrum in signing a letter to chairman Elliot Engel and ranking member Michael McCaul of the House Foreign Affairs Committee asking them to bring up Rep. Barbara Lee's legislation to repeal the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force, for prompt consideration, before their committee. The March 13th letter says, in part, that "the Executive Branch has expanded its interpretation of the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) (PL 107-40) far beyond Congress's original intent, in order to justify an ever-increasing number of military operations around the world. We therefore write to express our support for H.R.1274, which would repeal

the 2001 AUMF eight months after enactment." The Framers of the Constitution, recognizing the Executive Branch's inclination to war, wisely and deliberately assigned to Congress the power to decide whether, when, and where the United States goes to war. . ." The full text of the letter is at www.fcni.org/updates/42-organizations-urge-support-for-aumf-repeal-1996

Newsline 3-22-2019

"Peace is people choosing to live differently.

Irish Women's Coalition

The coalition was made up of Protestant & Catholic women who worked to help bring peace to Northern Ireland. Their years of peacemaking efforts were being ignored by the men who were trying to negotiate peace, so the Women's Coalition started the Women's party so they could get women elected to seats at the negotiating table. They won 2 seats on the negotiating team that worked out the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement) that determined how Northern Ireland would be governed to end the violence there. Their efforts to formally bring women into the peace-making process were a forerunner to the 2000 UN Resolution that, among other things, states women should always be included in the peace process. The 2016 Peace Accord in Columbia is the first to be negotiated since this UN resolution has been in force that actually tried to implement the resolution.



Remember Nigeria!

Update

Recent violence has taken a new turn. When Boko Haram comes into a village, they come in shooting and are immediately recognizable to the local people. However, in some recent attacks they arrived dressed like soldiers in military vehicles so local people did not recognize them for what they were until they opened fire and started looting. This has created more fear. These attacks seem to have focused on destroying business, homes and food supplies. The attackers have also stolen police vehicles.

In the most recent attacks. EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) members were killed and women abducted. One of the dead was a 102 years old EYN member. Another was the father of the pastor of EYN's largest congregation. EYN continues to work on rebuilding and helping people live with the trauma they have experienced. 81 more trauma counselors have been trained. Some areas are so unsafe the trainers cannot spend the night in the villages where they are needed to train people and help people. Many congregations still meet in temporary shelters because their buildings were burned. Pray for everyone affected by this violence and fear.

April 14 marked the 5th anniversary of the kidnapping of the Chibok school girls (now young women). 106 of them are still missing. "The Nation" newspaper in Nigeria reports on a vigil held in Lagos by the advocacy group, Bring Back Our Girls. Prayers and support for them were shared. Samuel Dauda, a former EYN pastor

serving in Chibok, was present alongside a leader of Bring Back Our Girls, the executive director of Enough Is Enough Nigeria, other Christian pastors, and Muslim imams. Simultaneous vigils were held in Abuja (Nigeria's capital), London, New York, and Washington, D.C. The event featured the reading of a prayer written for the girls by Jewish rabbis in New York titled "An Interfaith Prayer for Chibok--Five Years in Captivity." Read the full article at <https://thenationonline.net/christian-muslim-jewish-clerics-pray-for-chibok-schoolgirls>

Newsline 4-19-2019:

Giant Steps Backward

For the last several decades the world has taken several important steps toward eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons. The big nuclear powers have negotiated several treaties to eliminate some nuclear weapons and limited others, but there is a great deal more that needs to be done. Countries with nuclear weapons not a part of these negotiation efforts must be included; also, countries actively trying to acquire nuclear weapons must be included.

As the only country that has actually used nuclear weapons, it was appropriate that the U.S. took a lead in many of these limiting efforts. However, the reality that there is no way to have a 'limited' nuclear war is still being ignored. There is no way of using nuclear weapons at all that will not affect the whole world. Despite this, the U.S. has now unilaterally decided to reverse course and rekindle the arms race.

- The current administration is pulling out of the treaties so long in the making. This means breaking promises to friends and foes alike around the world.
- They are planning a massive effort to rebuild nuclear arsenals with new 'improved' weapons at tremendous cost.
- They are promoting the idea that using nuclear weapons is feasible by making some of the new ones so-called 'low-yield' weapons. They claim that these weapons could be used against 'small' targets without affecting large areas. They also claim that this will make nuclear weapons a better 'deterrent' because they could actually be used. They further claim the 'other side' already has these weapons and thinks they could use them because the US will not respond with their older more powerful and destructive weapons. These claims are ridiculous.

The human cost for this return to cold war thinking is incalculable. The financial reality will also be immense. The stated costs are as follows. (In reality the actual costs will be many times higher.)

- **to replace all current Minuteman missiles** with new ICBMs (more than 600 of them, 400 for active deployment and the rest for tests and spares.) **Total cost: more than \$140 billion.**
- **of a new fleet of missile-carrying submarines** – the Columbia class to replace Ohio class sub-marines. (that's 12

new subs, each of which will carry 16 sub-launched ballistic missiles.) **Total cost: \$128 billion**

- **of a new long-range bomber** with enhanced stealth capabilities, the B-21 Raider is to replace the B-2 and the B-52. (the air force wants at least 100 B-21s at \$546 to \$606 million each in 2016 dollars.) **Total cost: \$97 billion**
- **of a new air-launched cruise missile** called a "long-range stand-off weapon" or LRSO. These would be carried by the new B-21 bomber. (the air force wants at least 1,000 LRSOs that have greater range, accuracy, and stealth capabilities.) **Total cost: \$11 billion**

Source: Michael T. Klare. "Making Nuclear Weapons Menacing Again: The Pentagon Plan to Overhaul the US Nuclear Arsenal Is As Costly As It Is Dangerous." *The Nation*. V 308:9, 4-8-2019. p.16-19, 26.

Examine Yourself

"For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths (II Timothy 4:2-4)." Many people now happily listen only to what they want to hear or see. They are willing to accept anything that agrees with their self-created world view and reject everything that does not fit their view. They ask no questions and want no answers but their own. They will shut their eyes to all manner of corruption to maintain their world view. Some people, including some leaders, will say anything if it supports what they want – even if it misleads, or they know it to be false. The cost of silently letting this happen is devastating. 'I said nothing when they came for the socialist, the trade unionists, and then the Jews, because I was not one of them. Then, they came for me and there was no one left to speak out.' (Martin Niemöller, German Lutheran WW II pastor)



The first casualty of such thinking is truth. Living by lies may work for a time, but it does not change reality and when reality finally must be faced, the consequences of having ignored it may be devastating and irreversible. Making choices based on lies, cannot address the issues at hand. We are called to seek the truth because the truth will set us free (John 8:32). Lies will put us in a cage.

The second casualty is community. It happened over and over through-out history. When people set themselves up as the center of the universe and declare everyone else to be evil, inferior, or a threat, the results are unspeakable, and in the end, those people destroy themselves. No one can survive alone. No two people always agree. To maintain their center of universe position, these power seekers will eventually turn on each other. Seeking the center means a life of fear in a gilded cage – appealing on the outside, but still deadly.

The third casualty is innovation, creativity, and progress. The people who are the most creative and innovative think outside the box. They will solve the problems people face because they are open to all ideas and possibilities. They respect the old and are open to the new, even ideas that may not fit in a gilded cage world. Isolating one's self from anything different and condemning anyone who thinks differently can be deadly to the mind, the soul, and the body. The Dust Bowl in the 1930s was caused by not adapting farming methods to the environment. Some of the first Europeans in Australia starved to death because they would not eat the grubs and other outback survival foods the native people offered to keep themselves alive.

Examine yourself. Reexamine what God asks of you. "Hear, O Israel; The Lord is our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:29-31)." Remember who your neighbors are (Luke 10:25-37). If you find yourself in a gilded cage, return to the Word for guidance and seek help from all your neighbors – friends and enemies alike – to open the cage doors and step out into the challenges and possibilities, messy though they may be, to seek a better world for everyone, because the "Lord God made them all."

Worship Resources

Make Praying for Peace Part of Your Worship Remember in prayer:

1. **On-going mis-treatment of children & parents by immigration authorities at the U.S. border.** Even families allowed to enter the U.S. while awaiting court decisions on their asylum claims are treated like criminals. The administration is planning to charge fees for seeking asylum and use other means to discourage people from even applying for asylum.
2. **The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** – health workers continue trying to end an Ebola outbreak.
3. **People in Syria** live with constant warfare. Much of the country is in rubble with no water, sewer, electricity, etc.
4. **The victims of gun violence and for those willing to commit such senseless acts.** Attacks on the synagogue in California & on the University of North Carolina campus
5. Those effected by the bombings in **Sri Lanka**
6. **All people in this world who live with war.**
7. **People facing torture.**
8. **Child Soldiers**
9. **Girls & Women** facing abuse & violence every day
10. **Those now waging war by remote control** – they push buttons here that hurt or kill men, women, children on the other side of the world
11. **Pray for people forced to flee their homes in this hemisphere.** People from Venezuela, El Salvador, Guatemala, & Honduras.
12. **The people of Venezuela** who are in the middle of major political upheaval made worse by outside interference

13. **Those in prison for their beliefs or persecuted for reporting genocide & other human rights abuses** including: reporters in Myanmar, opposition leaders in Cambodia & Russia, those working for change in Central America.
14. **Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, British Indian Ocean Territory, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Greenland, Guam, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, South Korea, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, West Bank & Gaza, Yemen.** These are some of more than 80 countries where the U.S. is engaging in some kind of military activity. We are launching regular air strikes or drone attacks in at least 7 of them. The U.S. has combat troops in at least 14 areas. The U.S. is conducting military training and/or has bases in the rest. The U.S has taken its counterterrorism war to 39% of the countries in the world.



Resource List

See specific articles for related resource information.

Matzen, Robert. *The Dutch Girl: Audrey Hepburn and World War II*. GoodKnight Book, 2019.

This is the remarkable story of a young girl who survived World War II. It is also a story that shows just how devastating, bloody, complicated and messy war is for soldiers and civilians. It is not a Hollywood story; it is the human story of a girl who became a woman of peace.

The United Nations has launched a new data tool on modern-day slavery.

Doris Abdullah, the Church of the Brethren's representative to the UN shares that this interactive data tool, called Delta 8.7, was created by the UN University Centre for Policy Research. The UN says it "shows a mismatch between where modern slavery occurs, and where governments are spending resources to address it, [and] could help make a positive impact on policy debates surrounding the issue". Included is a map with information on the organizations that work with the business sector to combat modern slavery. Find the map and more information at: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/goal-of-the-month/#delta . Source: *Newsline* 4-19-2019.

Look for Peace & Reconciliation Resources on the Northern Ohio District Website.
For access go to: www.nohcob.org



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