

# Blessed are the peacemakers

What we are witnessing is not the triumph of religion or secularism, but the cynicism of power using both.

John McKay



Opinion

SCARBOROUGH, ONT.—“*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*” *Matthew 5:9.* Pope Leo XIV has been forceful in calling for peace in the Iranian war, condemning what he calls “absurd and inhuman violence,” warning that “hands are full of blood,” and reminding us that “war does not solve problems, it amplifies them and leaves lasting wounds.”

United States President Donald Trump, characteristically, did not respond to the message. Instead he attacked the messenger calling Leo “weak,” “terrible on foreign policy,” and “weak on nuclear weapons.” What any of that means is unclear. My personal favourite is “he meets with Obama Sympathizers like David Axelrod a LOSER from the left.”

What is clear is the pattern: ignore the substance, discredit the source.

And then, in a moment that captures the strangeness of our times, Trump posts images of himself embracing Jesus Christ. Even the odious Iranian theocracy must wonder about these crazy Americans.

Religious history is no stranger to division: the split between Catholic and Orthodox Christians in 1054, the Sunni-Shia divide, the Protestant Reformation. Yet, in modern American politics, an unlikely alliance emerged: evangelical Christians and conservative Catholics united over shared social concerns. That alliance has formed the bedrock of Trump’s political support.

But now, even the faithful are being tested.

Many conservative Catholics are appalled by the belittling of the Pope, by the rhetoric of war, by what they see as outright blasphemy. Evangelicals, too, are uneasy. “God shall not be mocked,” as Galatians reminds us.

And yet, many remain loyal arguing that Trump, like King David, is flawed, but chosen. They certainly share the practice of serial adultery, but King David was at least a true warrior that led his nation into battle. Still, the belief persists that he will lead them to a kind of Promised Land rooted in Christian nationalism.

At the same time, an apocalyptic strain of theology fixated on “end-times” scenarios continues to shape views on Israel and the Middle East. But reading geopolitics through prophecy is a poor substitute for sober foreign policy.

So the question arises: is there any limit to the faithfulness of the faithful?

For some secularists, this spectacle reinforces their argument that religion should be banished from the public square altogether. Faced with this chaos, they say: “a pox on all your houses.”

But that argument collapses under its own weight.

Because the so-called secularist-in-chief is Trump himself perfectly willing to exploit religious voters while showing open contempt for their beliefs. “My dear Christians,” the message seems to be, “I’ll



Pope Leo, right, has been forceful in calling for peace in the Iranian war, so U.S. President Donald Trump, left, called him ‘weak,’ ‘terrible on foreign policy,’ and ‘weak on nuclear weapons.’ Trump also said the Pope ‘meets with Obama Sympathizers like David Axelrod, a LOSER from the left.’ *Photographs courtesy of White House photographer and Wikipedia*

take your votes.” Who is playing whom is not always obvious.

And history offers little comfort to those who think militant secularism guarantees rationality. The Soviet Union, Communist China, and Nazi Germany hardly stand as

monuments to reason. Secular extremism can be just as destructive as religious extremism.

Here in Canada, debates like Quebec’s Bill 21 reflect a similar overreach; the notion that wearing a religious symbol somehow undermines public service. It

doesn’t. Competence and integrity are not determined by what someone wears.

As former prime minister Pierre Trudeau once said, the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation. And as his son Justin Trudeau has echoed, it has no business telling people what to wear.

The state must recognize that it, too, has its limits.

Millions of people order their lives around their religion. That reality cannot be legislated away. Nor should it be manipulated for political gain.

What we are witnessing is not the triumph of religion or secularism, but the cynicism of power using both.

So perhaps we return to first principles: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

Believe it, or not.

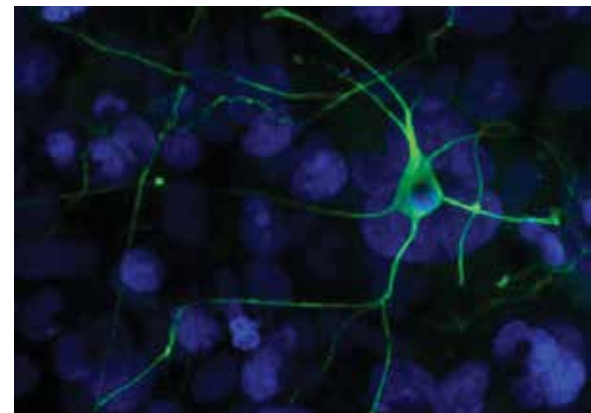
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*The Hill Times*

## A monkey used in research can cost over \$30K — before a single experiment begins.



Credit: Jo-Anne McArthur/WeAnimals



Credit: Emulate Inc.

### Their Brain:

- Nonhuman primate: \$17-33K+
- Housing/care: \$7-30K/year

### Additional costs:

- Permits, transport & customs
  - Quarantine (~4 weeks)
  - Veterinary/compliance
  - Equipment (e.g., MRI scanner, anesthesia machine)
  - Biohazardous materials handling
  - Institutional subsidies from taxpayers
  - Failure costs (delay, safety, efficacy)
- \*95% drug failure rate

~\$24-63K+ per animal in first year of experiment (full costs are significantly higher)

### Human Brain-on-a-chip:

- Organ chip: \$800
- Biological inputs (cells, matrix, media & reagents): \$200-600 \*dependent on per experiment usage
- Equipment (Zoë, amortized): \$100

### Capabilities:

- Uses human cells
- Models human-relevant responses
- Faster, scalable testing
- More accurate in predicting human biology
- Improved safety and sustainability

~\$1100-1500 per chip experiment

\$42M for new primate research centre at Laval — \$0 for a national centre for alternatives

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