

Sermon 9-6-26
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Trinity Lutheran Church
W. Hempstead, NY
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Revenge Of The Arians?

Well, here we are at the national Labor Day weekend holiday of a midterm election year. Therefore, as has been my custom for the last six years, we'll look into things of state and society. So, here's the question that has been in play for much longer than the last six years. What philosophy or religion should be at the center of this society? Archaeology has revealed that this is actually an ancient question. Every society has had to answer it.

Like it or not, human beings are spiritual creatures joined to physical bodies so seamlessly that it's impossible to tell the difference until physical death separates the two. Most every religion in the world proclaims that the death of the physical body does not mean the death of the spirit. And science is reluctantly and grudgingly confirming this since the advent of being able to medically resuscitate patients in cardiac arrest.

There is a whole new area of research into what are called Near Death Experiences. A person goes into cardiac arrest and is clinically dead for a short period of time before being resuscitated. Many people the world over report experiences while clinically dead. Some of these can be validated scientifically. While dead, the person hears conversations, or sees serial numbers on equipment, or items on the roof of a hospital that are reported and can be validated. Therefore, since human beings are spiritual creatures, we continuously live, move and have our being on a spiritual level.

Human beings are also social creatures. And because we're social creatures, in order for society to function, there must be agreement at least on ethical norms. But, societies are more cohesive when there's also agreement on spiritual norms. Societies fall apart when there is no longer agreement on spiritual norms. And when two spiritually cohesive societies with very different spiritual norms come into contact, a struggle often erupts over which one will be supreme.

Over the course of history there have been many attempts to join the political governance of the state with the spiritual force of religion. One nation, one religion makes for a powerful state. The Roman Empire is a case in point. By the time the Roman Republic foundered and the empire was established by Augustus Caesar, Rome ruled the entire Mediterranean world. The empire contained many nations and cultures. What would hold this empire together other than force? Caesar arrived at a solution built on the religious polytheism — the worship of many gods and goddesses — that was at the heart of every conquered nation except Israel. Everybody had a shelf of gods and goddesses that they worshipped in order to meet various needs. Caesar declared himself a god and found a seat on every shelf. The casual worship of Caesar as a god unified the empire.

However, Jesus of Nazareth was born into the empire. And this changed everything. A son miraculously born to a virgin Jewish woman who in adulthood proved Himself by word and deed to be Yahweh, the Son, was rejected by His people, suffered death by Roman crucifixion, was miraculously raised from death in an immortal human body, and ascended

into heaven. His life confirmed many ancient Jewish prophecies. News of this God/man spread like wildfire through the Gentile world of the empire. As predicted by Jesus Himself, those who could receive Him joined together in congregations that formed a whole new religion. And the religion became a threat to the empire. For the unity of the empire required every subject to declare Caesar to be lord. But Christians would only declare Jesus to be Lord. Therefore, Christians were periodically persecuted unto death by various emperors over nearly the first three hundred years of Christianity. But the empire could not prevail.

Finally, Yahweh gave a vision to Roman emperor Constantine about 312A.D. Constantine and the subsequent emperors converted to Christianity. They established a new way of thinking that affects both government and religion to our day. Instead of proclaiming themselves gods, the emperors proclaimed Yahweh God, and themselves as servants of Yahweh, chosen by Yahweh. We know this theory as the divine right of kings. Then the emperors did one more most important thing. They centered the unity of the empire around Christianity itself, requiring all their subjects to become Christians and serve Messiah Jesus as they themselves did.

This action sounded the death knell of polytheistic paganism in the lands Rome ruled. Even when the western part of the empire was invaded and conquered by various northern European tribes, Christianity prevailed. The invaders and their rulers became Christian. Then in the subsequent centuries, Christian missionaries evangelized Germanic, English, Irish, Scandinavian and Eastern European rulers. They became Christians. If the ruler became a Christian, then he commanded his people to become Christians. That's how all of Europe became Christian.

And when Europeans colonized the Americas, Christianity was established here. In fact, several of the thirteen English colonies that formed the original United States began explicitly as colonies in which everyone had to belong to the same Christian denomination. But, when the present federal constitution took effect in 1789, it mandated that congress could not establish any particular Christian denomination as the official religion of the United States. However, it remained an undergirding understanding that the United States was a Christian nation. This was even stated by the Supreme Court in an 1892 decision.

In the history of Christianity there is an important event that has had repercussions down through the centuries, not only spiritually but politically as we'll see. It's the first ecumenical council held at Nicaea in 325A.D. This council was called by Emperor Constantine because there was division in the ranks of the religion he had newly made the religion of his empire. The division was over the person of Jesus Himself.

In the early 320's an important figure in Christianity arose in Alexandria, Egypt. His name was Arius. The theology of Jesus that he adopted that now bears his name — Arianism — had been brewing in Christianity for generations already. But Arius became its champion. "At the heart of Arianism is the assertion that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is not co-eternal or consubstantial with God the Father. According to Arius, only God the Father is truly eternal and unbegotten. The Son was created by the Father out of nothing before the creation of the world and therefore had a beginning. Arius famously summarized this view with the phrase, 'There was a time when the Son was not.' Arianism thus denies the full divinity of Christ as later defined by orthodox Christianity. Instead, Arius saw Jesus as the highest of all created beings, worthy of worship and obedience, but ultimately subordinate to the Father. This view directly contradicted the doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons of one essence, co-equal and co-eternal.”¹ Arian teaching was fought over at Nicaea. Eventually the council condemned it as heretical and the Arians were exiled. However, the teaching didn’t disappear. It continued to float around the Christian lands. However, Orthodox, catholic Christianity stood against it.

And there’s one more Christian heresy we need to examine. It’s called Docetism. This is the idea that Jesus of Nazareth is God. And because He is God, He could not and did not appear in a real human body. His human body was an illusion. A real human being was crucified and died on the cross but it was not Jesus. It was a doppelganger. This heresy was also condemned at the first Council of Nicaea in 325. However, like Arianism, it continued to float around in Christian lands. Keep these two heresies in mind.

For, we now come to the end of the 600’s A.D. and Islam. Right now, there are scholars subjecting Islam and its founding documents, the Koran, the Hadith and the Sira to the type of historical criticism that Christianity has been subject to for nearly 200 years. As a result numerous serious problems have emerged. For example, the Muslim claim that the city of Mecca was founded by Adam and Eve and built by Abraham, that it was a world class city of an empire founded by Muhammad in the early 600’s is just not supported by any historical or archaeological evidence. Even the name Muhammad is in controversy. It’s origin can be traced to a title that was once used to describe Jesus — machmud, meaning the blessed one.

In particular, it’s emerging that the first of the Umayyad dynasty “caliphs” or rulers who supposedly took over Islam after Muhammad’s death ruled from Petra way up in the north close to Jerusalem. Prior to 693A.D. this first caliph issued coins in his realm that had Christian crosses on them. Apparently the first caliph was a Christian. There is also evidence that he was converted by both Arian and Docetic preachers and adopted an anti-Orthodox position concerning Jesus. Therefore, beginning in 693A.D., this caliph eliminated the crosses on his coins and began to imprint them with what became the Muslim Shahada, there is no god but Allah and machmud is his prophet.

There is evidence from the writings of St. John of Damascus, a Christian, that certain chapters of the Koran were already in existence in the early 700’s. For St. John criticizes the Arian heresy found in those chapters. Therefore, in the complex power struggles and warfare of the Middle East in the early 700’s it appears that the Ummayyads used the then existing chapters of the Koran to build a whole new religion — Islam — in order to oppose the remains of the Orthodox catholic Christian Roman Empire centered in the city of Constantinople. Therefore, it’s quite possible that Islam is the political and military revenge of the Arian Christians against the Orthodox Christians who declared them heretics in 325 at Nicaea.

Interestingly, the Koran contains the Arian heresy. It says unequivocally that Allah has no son. The Koran also contains a lot of information about Jesus. In particular it says that the Jews thought they had crucified Jesus, but it was really another man. This is the Docetic heresy.

Was Islam the revenge of the Arian Christians? Certainly Islam has made war against Orthodox Christian Europe for centuries. The Ummayyads were stopped at Tours, deep in France, by Charles Martel in 732A.D. There was the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula by Christian forces that finally concluded in 1492. In the East, the remainder of the Roman Empire, called the Byzantine Empire was in conflict with Islam for 700 years across the

¹ <https://www.bibleanalysis.org/understanding-arianism-history-beliefs-and-impact/>

Holy Land and present day Turkey. The Crusades were a call for help by the Byzantine emperor. Help came from Western Europe. But then it didn't come at all, and Constantinople fell to Islam in 1453. The great eastern center of Christianity was wiped out. It became the Muslim city of Istanbul, Turkey — as it is to this day.

The Mediterranean island of Malta changed hands various times from 870 through to the 1500's. In 1565 it was Christian again and successfully ward off a huge invasion by the Muslim Ottoman Empire. (David told us about this recently.) The Austrian city of Vienna, deep into Europe, was put under a terrible but ultimately unsuccessful siege by the Muslim Turks in 1529. Again it was successfully defended from a terrible Turkish siege in 1683.

In 1806 the present U.S. republic waged its first war under President Thomas Jefferson. It was against the Barbary Pirates — northern African Muslim Berbers from present day Tunisia who demanded exorbitant protection money from Christian nations in order for their ships to safely transit the Mediterranean Sea and who kidnapped Christian passengers into slavery. The shores of Tripoli in the anthem of the U.S. Marines recalls that successful war.

In terms of their military conflict with Christian nations, the Islamic Empire fell on hard times beginning with Napoleon's successful invasion of Egypt in 1798, followed by a successful English invasion in 1799. The low point was reached with the defeat of the Muslim Turkish Ottoman Empire in World War I. After the war, its land was carved up by the victor nations into the nations of the present day Middle East.

But then something happened that reversed Islamic fortunes. World War I produced the atheist communist revolution in Russia. Atheism and Communism became the rage in European universities as Moscow sought to subvert the rest of Europe. Then came World War II and the post-war subjugation of eastern Europe to the atheist Soviet Union. During the ensuing Cold War, secularism, atheism and Marxism continued to subvert the Christian underpinnings of the West, including the U.S.

An Iranian Shiite named Ruhollah Khomeini studied in Paris in the period immediately after the first world war and realized that Western philosophy and religion had been hollowed out by the spiritual and intellectual forces at work in Europe. He determined in his heart that Islam was the answer. In 1920's Egypt a group called the Muslim Brotherhood was first organized, dedicated to restoring the glory of Islam. Khomeini got his chance to make Islam the answer when he led the successful 1979 revolution that established the Islamic republic in Iran. Out of that revolution came a terrorist network that includes Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis.

In 1948 the newly independent state of Israel successfully defended itself against an attack by five Muslim nations. Israel fought subsequent wars with many of the same Muslim states in 1956, 1967, 1973 as well as other minor wars. Most recently Israel has fought in Gaza after being attacked from there. In 2026 it has also attacked its bitter enemy, the Muslim republic of Iran in cooperation with the U.S.

In 2001 the United States homeland itself came under attack from Muslim terrorists. The attack was especially grievous here in the New York City area. In a few days we'll memorialize the 25th anniversary of that attack.

Unfortunately, great leftist guilt for colonialism became the norm in Western Europe during the late 20th century, fanned on by Marxist thought. Eventually this resulted in the massive immigration of illegal aliens into Europe from Muslim nations during the first three

decades of the 21st century. A similar thing has happened here. Only the U.S. is much larger and can absorb the immigration with less distress.

Nevertheless, Chicago Islamic Scholar, [Mohammad Nusairat](#) was recorded recently speaking to a U.S. Muslim audience and saying, “Unfortunately, these days . . . we don’t have this doctrinal concept firm in our minds — that Islam did not come to coexist. The Prophet Muhammad said: ‘Islam is always superior and should never be surpassed.’ Islam is raised high, and nothing is raised above Islam. We can’t think of Islam that it came to live with these other religions in a sense that Islam is a religion amongst those religions, and they have a share with the truth, and they have a share of justice, and they have a share of the correct worship of Allah. Islam came to correct all of that. Islam came to remove the oppression of all those religions. . . .”

In those words is a definite threat. If Islam ever gains the upper hand politically, it will revoke the first amendment and politically suppress all the other religions in the U.S., including Christianity. This is the historic problem with Islam. It’s a vigorous political movement masquerading as a religion. And in a religiously tolerant West it easily slides under the radar as just another religion.

But the West is beginning to come to its senses. The Austrian government in Europe plans to introduce a constitutional law to ban political Islam. The Chancellor of the government there says “If religion is used politically, we must oppose it with all severity.”²

The state of Florida has taken action against any intrusion of Sharia law into Florida state law. The state of Texas is following suit. Times are changing and they must change. For, Islam is not just another religion among religions. It is a definitive political movement with a strong agenda that completely unites state and religion.

The other day I saw a political cartoon that uses the traditional meme of a large fish swallowing a smaller one. In this cartoon the smallest fish is the Democratic Party. It’s being swallowed by the Democratic Socialism party. In turn that fish is being swallowed by the larger fish of Communism. But finally all are being swallowed by Islam. It’s similar to how Iran became an Islamic republic in the 1979 revolution. The Marxists there led the revolution only to be swallowed by the Muslims under the leadership of Khomeini.

In our present situation, the first amendment leaves us somewhat vulnerable. It was written for a time when everyone was in agreement that Christianity was the spiritual basis for a sound government for the U.S. At the time, the first amendment eradicated any possibility that any Christian denomination might compete for political dominance.

In 1789 Islam was a foreign religion that everyone assumed would stay foreign. But that’s not the case now. Both legal and illegal immigration from Muslim lands is rapidly changing the fabric of some U.S. cities. It would be one thing if Islam could see itself as a religion among religions and recognize the U.S. constitution as the law of the land. And there are probably many Muslims who feel that way about their life here. However, the Muslim scholar I quoted above is correct concerning the spiritual fundamentals of Islam, its founder and its founding documents. Islam cannot merely evangelize. It must subjugate. It will evangelize while its weak. But once it’s strong enough, it must subjugate. That is the will of Allah.

² <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2026/09/02/austria-announces-plans-to-ban-political-islam-in-bid-to-confront-muslim-brotherhood/>

Now Jesus told us in Matthew 28:18-19, “18 . . . ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” So, Jesus meant for His Church to be aggressive in this present world. However, because His Kingdom is not of this world, Jesus did not command His Church to be a military power. Nor did He command His Church to subjugate the world. Historically, things have happened where the church did get involved in military subjugation due to the alliance between church and state that Constantine first created. However, Jesus gave us no command to subjugate. And when everything is said and done Christian moral and ethical standards are higher than Muslim Sharia law. Therefore, Christianity is intrinsically different from Islam.

So, as a nation, we’re being confronted with a choice. Which religion will we choose to undergird our society. Which God will we choose? Historically, we’re Christian. Therefore, is it correct to forbid Muslim Sharia law to infringe in any way upon the rights that even Muslims have under the U.S. constitution and law? In any conflict between Sharia law and U.S. law which should automatically win? Should we forbid any part of Sharia law from being incorporated into U.S. law? These are the significant questions facing us in the years ahead. It’s time for the nation to wake up and compare Allah with Yahweh. And now that the Islamic founding documents have been translated into English, it’s time for the nation to compare them with the Christian founding documents. It’s time to compare Muhammad with Jesus. Much hangs in the balance. Amen.

Bible quotes are from the ESV except where indicated.