

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church
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Enlightened by the Holy Scripture

If you have ever taken a tour in a cave, there is typically that moment when the tour guide turns out all the lights so that you can experience the darkness. I remember doing this years ago at Mark Twain's cave in Hannibal, Missouri. It was an eerie experience. What would it be like to really be in an unfamiliar cave and lose all your light, with no hope of the tour guide turning it back on? I can only imagine the panic. It reminds me of the plague of darkness that struck Egypt so that the darkness could be felt. Imagine that one for a moment. It says in Exodus 10 that the darkness remained for three days, and the Egyptians could not see one another, nor did anyone rise from out of his place for three days. That is a small taste of what eternal hell is like. Then it says in Exodus 10, "... but all the people of Israel had light where they lived." In the book *To All Eternity*, spiritual darkness is compared to the total darkness of a cave. Apart from Christ we are unable to function. Those who are found in such darkness are hopelessly lost. By our own reason or strength, we cannot move toward God or hope to please him. We should then be so very thankful that we have light where we live. The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, enlightens, and keeps us in the faith. He connects us the death and resurrection of Jesus our Savior by the Gospel and Sacraments. Just as the total darkness of the cave is easily conquered by a single candle so also is spiritual darkness conquered by the light of Christ kindled within us by the Holy Spirit in the means of grace. In the words of one of the authors of *To All Eternity* (pg. 55):

Jesus poured light into our spiritually dark world when He sent the Holy Spirit. People who could only sit in darkness and despair

because of sin and death have seen a great light. The Spirit, through the Word of God, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, shines the light of Christ for you. Titian captures the Bible's story of the work of the Holy Spirit in his painting *Pentecost*. Flames of light appear on the heads of the apostles while the Spirit fills the room with His presence and power. Darkness retreats. Each time you open the Scriptures and read the Gospel, the Holy Spirit shines the light of the Gospel upon you. In this way He sanctifies and keeps you in the true faith.

This past May we celebrated the day of Pentecost. This was the day that the words of Jesus were fulfilled when he spoke to the apostles about the *Helper* who would come - *the Spirit of truth*, which is the ESV translation (John 14-16). Other translations refer to the *Spirit of truth* as *Comforter* or *Counselor* or *Advocate*. All these terms do their best to capture the meaning of the Greek term *Paraclete*. So which word should we use? Well, it's okay to use all of them if they are understood as terms that define the content of the Holy Spirit's witness about Jesus and the heart of the Father. We all need help. We all need comfort. We all need counsel. We all need advocacy. And the Holy Spirit helps us, comforts us, counsels us, and advocates, that is, he speaks to us about Jesus and takes us to him and the Father. But he does not do this without means. He brings us to the light of Jesus in the light of the gospel and sacraments. It is in this way that we meet with Jesus, and he abides with us. If we do not use these, then we might get very well get stuck in a cave without any light.

The Spirit of truth is the *Advocate* who took the place of Jesus at the side of the apostles and brought

to their minds everything that Jesus did and said so that when they wrote down the words of the New Testament Bible it became a powerful Spirit-filled gospel testimony that touches us in such a way that Jesus is truly with us and we abide in him now by faith and forever in glory. Thus, the words of Paul in Romans 8:16 are true about us because of the miracle of Pentecost: “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit [our inner being] that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

The Holy Spirit is called our *Helper* or *Comforter* or *Counselor* or *Advocate* as one who has been literally called to our side. He is one who will constantly stand by our side in the means of grace to give us all the help that we need to make it through the dangers and the messes of our lives. When evil comes to shatter your life, the Holy Spirit whispers with great consolation in the gospel and sacraments where Jesus is to be found: “Do not be afraid. Go and do that which you have been commanded to do, and do to fear the terrors of sin, the devil, unbelievers, death, or hell. God is not angry with you, nor does he reject you. Christ, God’s Son, died for you and rose from the dead. All your sins are forgiven, and the kingdom has been given to you forever!” The service of the Holy Spirit in Gospel and Sacraments is vital in every believer’s life! In them, he makes it possible for us to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. He guides us into the truth about Christ as our Lord and Savior. This same Spirit enables us to have contact with God in prayer. He enables us to die to our sinful flesh and its evil works. He produces the fruit of good works in us. The bottom line is that his presence in our lives is the grand assurance from our Savior that we never have to face the trials and struggles of life alone. To have the Spirit in the Gospel and Sacraments is to have Christ - his words and works - and to have our Father in heaven.

So, as we find ourselves in the summer, with all the distractions that go with it, may we not forget the blessings that we have here at Trinity. We have the work of the Holy Spirit who helps, comforts, counsels, and advocates Jesus. Here, in the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of

the Sacraments, we meet with the one who became flesh and went to the cross and rose from the dead so that we might have the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation! The light of Jesus is the most precious gift that has ever been given! May we never then allow ourselves to get stuck in a cave with no light! Jesus says in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” Indeed. Like Israel at the time of the Exodus, may we too have light where we live!

Your Servant,

~Pastor Brock Abbott

Engelbrecht, Edward, et al. *To All Eternity: The Essential Teachings of Christianity*. 2002.

Altar and Pulpit Fellowship

The following is a news release that I would like to share with you as we at Trinity are a part of the United Lutheran Mission Association. We are not alone, and by God’s grace, we are growing. Please keep our fellowship in your prayers. Ask that the Lord of the harvest would continue to grow his Word among us in every way, and that he would protect us from our sinful flesh, this unbelieving world, and the devil and his hoards. May God grant us the strength to continue to be shining lights in this very dark world. As Jesus, who is our light, says to us in Matthew 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

In Nomine Jesu Christi Altar And Pulpit Fellowship Announcement (AELC, AELC, & ULMA)

After several years of discussions regarding doctrine and practice, we, the two congregations of the Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches

(ACLC), the six congregations of the Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), and the four congregations of the United Lutheran Mission Association (ULMA), give thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ that we may announce that we have officially and unanimously recognized and declared altar and pulpit fellowship with one another in April 2024.

“Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above” (LSB 649:1).

Our twelve congregations along with their pastors have come from a variety of Lutheran backgrounds: LCMS, ELS, WELS, and the Lutheran Church of Australia. The ACLC was formed in 2007, the AELC in 1993, and the ULMA in 2005.

These congregations make use of Walther Theological Seminary (WTS) to prepare men for the one holy ministry. WTS was established in 2010 and was later granted by the Illinois Board of Higher Education the Certificate of Approval and Authorization to operate in the Prairie Region of the State of Illinois, and degree granting authority. WTS offers a Master of Divinity degree program.

“Before our Father’s throne We pour our ardent prayers; Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, Our comforts and our cares” (LSB 649:2).

If you are a traditional, confessional, Lutheran church looking for a new home, or a group of faithful Lutherans looking to start a new mission in your area, please feel free to contact us:

Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches (ACLC)
<https://www.facebook.com/AssociationOfConfessionalLutheranChurches/>
Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC)
<https://www.aelc.org.au>

United Lutheran Mission Association (ULMA)
<http://unitedlutheranmission.org/>

Walther Theological Seminary
<https://waltherseminary.org>

May the Lord God bless this fellowship to the glory of His Holy name as we remain immersed in and embedded in His inspired, inherent, and authoritative Word as well as the Lutheran Confessions which are a faithful and correct exposition of Holy Scripture.

Soli Deo Gloria!

A Miniature Death

The following is an excerpt from a collection of public domain sermons given by Martin Luther. I started reading it and it kept my attention. It prepares us for our inevitable death. It is especially comforting to the Christian who knows that he or she is dying.

“A Miniature Death” by Martin Luther

The spirit indeed is willing and desires bodily death as a gentle sleep. It does not consider it to be death; it knows no such thing as death.

"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:5-11)

These words of Paul are an admirable Christian picture of death, representing it not as an awful thing, but as something comforting and pleasant to contemplate. For how could Paul present a more attractive description than when he describes it as stripped of its power and repulsiveness and makes it

the medium through which we attain life and joy? What is more desirable than to be freed from sin and the punishment and misery it involves, and to possess a joyful, cheerful heart and conscience? For where there is sin and real death – the sense of sin and God’s wrath – there are such terror and dismay that man feels like rushing through iron walls.

That dreadful death which is called in the Scriptures "the second death" is taken away from the Christian through Christ and is swallowed up in his life. In place of it there is left a miniature death, a death in which the bitterness is covered up. In it the Christian dies according to the flesh; that is, he passes from unbelief to faith, from the remaining sin to eternal righteousness, from woes and sadness and tribulation to perfect eternal joy. Such a death is sweeter and better than any life on earth. For not all the life and wealth and delight and joy of the world can make man as happy as he will be when he dies with a conscience at peace with God and with the sure faith and comfort of everlasting life. Therefore, truly may this death of the body be said to be only a falling into a sweet and gentle slumber. The body ceases from sin. It no longer hinders or harasses the spirit. It is cleansed and freed from sin and comes forth again in the resurrection clothed with the obedience, joy, and life which the spirit imparts.

The only trouble is that the stupid flesh cannot understand this. It is terrified by the mask of death and imagines that it is still suffering the old death; for it does not understand the spiritual dying unto sin. It judges only by outward appearance. It sees that man perishes, decays under the ground and is consumed. Having only this abominable and hideous mask before its eyes, it is afraid of death. But its fear is only because of its lack of understanding. If it knew, it would by no means be afraid or shudder at death. Our reason is like a little child who has become frightened by a bugbear or a mask and cannot be lulled to sleep; or like a poor man, bereft of his senses, who imagines when brought to his couch that he is being put into the water and drowned. What we do not understand we cannot intelligently deal with. If, for instance, a man has a penny and imagines it to be a five-dollar gold

piece, he is just as proud of it as if it were a real gold piece; if he loses it, he is as grieved as if he had lost that more valuable coin. But it does not follow that he has suffered such loss; he has simply deluded himself with a false idea.

Thus, it is not the reality of death and burial that terrifies; the terror lies in the flesh and blood, which cannot understand that death and the grave mean nothing more than that God lays us – like a little child is laid in a cradle or an easy bed – where we shall sweetly sleep till the judgment day. Flesh and blood shudders in fear at that which gives no reason for it and finds comfort and joy in that which really gives no comfort or joy. Thus, Christians must be harassed by their ignorant and insane flesh, because it will not understand its own good or harm. They must verily fight against it as long as they live, at the cost of much pain and weariness.

There is none so perfect that he does not flee from and shudder at death and the grave. Paul complains and confesses of himself, and in his own person of all Christians: "For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice." (Romans 7:15). In other words: By the spirit, I am well aware that when this body comes to die God simply lays me to rest in sweetest slumber, and I would gladly have my flesh to understand this; but I cannot bring it to it. The spirit indeed is willing and desires bodily death as a gentle sleep. It does not consider it to be death; it knows no such thing as death. It knows that it is freed from sin and that where there is no sin there is no death – life only. But the flesh halts and hesitates and is in constant dread lest I die and perish in the abyss. It will not allow itself to be tamed and brought into that obedience and into that consoling view of death which the spirit exercises. Even Saint Paul cries out in anxiety of spirit: "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

When we die – spiritually unto sin, and physically to the world and self – what does it benefit us? Is there nothing else in store for the Christian but to die and be buried? By all means yes, he says; we are sure by faith that we also shall live, even as Christ rose from death and the grave and lives. For we

have died with him, or, as stated above, “we have become united with him in the likeness of his death.” By his death he has destroyed our sin and death; therefore, we share in his resurrection and life. There shall be no more sin and death in our spirit or body, just as there is no more death in him. Christ, having once died and been raised again, dies no more. There is nothing to die for. He has accomplished everything. He has destroyed the sin for which he died and has swallowed up death in victory. And that he now lives means that he lives in everlasting righteousness, life, and majesty. So, when you have once passed through both deaths, the spiritual death unto sin and the gentle death of the body, death can no more touch you, no more reign over you.

Cultural Wars: The Challenge

By Steven A. Hein

The following article was written by Dr. Steven A. Hein. Dr. Hein serves as Director of the Concordia Institute for Christian Studies, an organization that offers auxiliary educational services to Christian gatherings across the country and the leadership of Lutheran Churches in West Africa. Dr. Hein also serves as an affiliate professor of theology at Concordia University, Chicago, and the Institute of Lutheran Theology. He is the author of, "Christian Life: Cross or Glory?" and "You Can Give an Answer: A Study in Christian Apologetics." The following article caught my attention as we find ourselves and our youth increasingly engaged in the so-called “Culture Wars.” I especially appreciated his thought, and I paraphrase: “talk it like we walk it!”

Culture Wars: The Challenge by Steven A. Hein

Today we need to promote almost the reverse – to talk it like they walk it – the know-how and courage to engage in social discourse that reflects the truth of God’s revelation.

The objective of warfare is to exert superior power to achieve some advantageous outcome against an enemy or adversary - or defensively speaking, to

prevent such an outcome. We are used to thinking about wars that centrally involve military conflict. This has certainly been the case as we think of significant wars that established our nation (the Revolutionary War), preserved our nation’s union (the Civil War), and protected it from significant military aggression (e.g. World Wars I, II).

Not all wars involve military conflicts, however. For several decades, our nation has experienced a cultural sort of warfare. It has involved conflicts over what norms and standards should govern acceptable social discourse within our society. These have been named, culture wars. The term culture is a rather nebulous term. It can refer to the temporal affairs of the life of an individual, a group, or a whole society. It can embrace a people’s language, habits, beliefs, customs, social organization, and technologies. Culture expresses a people’s values, especially what is understood as good and important in the temporal and material spheres of life.

Culture involves a uniting of plural values and endeavors. Within the history of our nation, culture has included the cultivation of religion and eternal values largely shaped by the Christian worldview. These cultural foundations are reflected in many of our nation’s founding documents, countless memorials, statuary, and plaques. They are confessed in the Pledge of Allegiance (one Nation under God) and declared on our currency (in God We Trust). Currently, culture warfare is being waged against our country’s founding values, ethical standards, and the importance of the exercise of faith. The cutting edge of this conflict has been over acceptable social discourse and the enemy is understood to be the influence of Christianity.

There is common agreement about the symbiotic relationship between language and culture. Language shapes culture and culture shapes language. It is commonly held that language exerts the greatest influence over the shape of culture. Yes, the pen is mightier than the sword. Change how people talk and you will eventually change how they will think and act. The power of language to shape thought and behavior is the greatest in the

initial formation of social discourse in small children. In today's culture wars, ideological progressivists and revolutionaries use language to transform and reshape our culture, especially targeting our children.

Proponents of atheistic, progressive, and socialist ideologies dedicated to transforming American culture have employed Postmodern strategies to reshape our language into a reflection of their philosophical and social values. Their focus is especially to transform and replace social discourse that traditionally has been shaped by the Christian worldview. Language shaped by the faith of Christ's Church is their enemy.

Postmodernism holds that all meaning of legitimate language is only a function of its usage. Words mean what we choose them to mean and nothing more. Therefore, language is abused when employed to convey alleged truth, goodness, or beauty in any universal or absolute sense. Meaning in language is relative to its usage within a culture. Truth, goodness, and beauty are therefore multicultural – none superior or inferior to others. Taken as a whole, language constitutes a story or narrative of a given people's view of what things mean and their significance. Metanarratives should be questioned for their appeals to universal reason. . There is no timeless trans-cultural meaning or significance of things as reflected, for example, in language shaped by the Christian worldview.

Are the contours of our contemporary culture wars beginning to come into focus? Progressive and radical Postmoderns have weaponized language to eliminate from social discourse all elements of meaning, purpose, and value traditionally shaped by Christianity. Their target population is especially the young, including our young. They conduct their warfare by engaging in three interrelated strategies: deconstruction, marginalization, and identification.

Deconstruction involves associating unacceptable words, concepts, and meanings with commonly understood negative and repulsive designations. The goal is to eliminate their usage. Language is deconstructed by closely associating it with such

repulsive things as bigotry, hate speech, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, etc. Such words are then replaced with terms and ways of speaking that are deemed respectful and appropriate. Deconstruction began some decades ago where political correctness, for example, required replacing Merry Christmas with Happy Holidays. Today, deconstruction efforts have greatly intensified. They include the demand that sexual and gender designations (including the use of adjectives and pronouns) be disconnected from biology to reflect individual personal choice. To do otherwise in social discourse, sermons, and Christian education is condemned as hate speech.

Closely related is the strategy of marginalization, a tactic that exerts social pressure to conform to the program of language deconstruction. Those who continue to use deconstructed language are stigmatized as lacking in education or mental health, or both. Such people receive the identification of bigots, haters, racists, Nazis, homophobes, xenophobes etc.

Additional social pressure has tended to follow the advice of behavioral studies expert Cass R. Sunstein (Nudge, How Change Happens). For desired social change (including matters of language usage), some people need to be given a nudge. If a nudge does not work, they need a push. If a push does not work, perhaps a shove, then perhaps . . . they may need to lose their job or some other important affiliation. The radical demonstrations and riots of late fit well into this strategy and have instilled fears in many of poverty, pain, and even death.

How should Christians respond? The Church has well understood its pedagogical task to teach the baptized appropriate language for the confession of faith and the confession of sin. It has molded consistent language formation for worship, prayer, and personal devotion. However, our families and churches have largely seceded the formation of acceptable social discourse to public education, social media, entertainment, temporal authorities, and the like. As these have been taken over by Postmodern progressive ideologies, our people (especially our children) are being taught and

influenced to engage in everyday language that is devoid and increasingly antithetical to the Christian worldview and the faith into which we are baptized. Especially for the young, the threat to spiritual health cannot be minimized.

When the habitual use of anti-Christian discourse and thought categories conflict with the faith, a tension develops that can work to call into question the meaningfulness of life in Christ. Faith life can become progressively hollow, disconnected, and irrelevant to the experiences of daily life and what seems important. Is it not time that our Christian homes and churches become more proactive in counteracting our contemporary culture war adversaries and their strategies to transform the language and thinking of our people?

In the old days, we challenged our young people to walk it like they talk it. Today we need to promote almost the reverse – to talk it like they walk it – the know-how and courage to engage in social discourse that reflects the truth of God’s revelation. Because the surrounding culture will not, parents and servants of the word need to develop ways and means to translate the faith into appropriate social discourse and urge its use. Will our people, including our children, have to pay a price for doing so? Probably so, and more so probably up the way. Thus, we also need to make the case. We need to teach our people why doing so and paying the price are worth it. “What profit does a person have to gain the whole world and yet lose his soul” (Mark 8:36)?

<https://www.1517.org/articles/culture-wars-the-challenge>

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All articles must be approved by Interim Pastor Brock Abbott. Articles with no author are written by him.

JUNE 2024

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30 VICAR KILLION						

JULY 2024

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