

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

1207 West 45 Street Austin, Texas 78756

Interim Pastor Brock Abbott – (512) 453-3835

Sunday School and Bible Study 9:15 AM – Divine Service 10:30 AM

October 1, 2024 Volume 26 Issue 6

December 2024 – January 2025

A Blue Christmas

To illustrate what he calls “major depression,” Dr. Richard O’Connor writes about a woman by the name of Nancy:

Nancy describes her depression as a well. When it is at its worst, she is stuck down in the mud at the bottom of the well. The mud is full of worms and rats, and it’s all she can do to keep from being eaten alive. When she’s feeling good, she’s out of the well, able to look around at life and see opportunities and joy. Most of the time, she’s part-way down the well. Her view of life is restricted; she can see it’s there, and she remembers what it’s like to feel good, but she can’t quite reach it.¹

Perhaps you find yourself living in a Blue Christmas. Aside from the obvious and maybe corny connection to Elvis Presley, why do we call it “blue”? You may or may not know this, but under a blue light, both red and green objects look black.² The colors of Christmas are red and green, but when we turn on a blue light in our minds, a red and green Christmas turns to black. If all we see is black, then you cannot see the colors. This is melancholy or depression. Here one is low in spirits.

What is the color of your room? Better yet, for a moment, I want you to imagine that your mind is like a large room. Like any ordinary room, there are walls and a ceiling. Can you imagine, painting the walls and the ceiling of your mind with nothing but black paint? Can you imagine hanging up pictures on that wall that are nothing but negative pictures. Pretend that there is a chair in the room of your mind, and all you do, day after day, is sit in that chair and constantly stare at the dark walls and the negative pictures. Such contemplation in this room is bound to influence who you are and what you do. It will touch what you think and feel. It can even lead to a damaging of your physical wellbeing.

In my opinion, there are different degrees of depression. Some people would describe themselves as being depressed from time to time. Others would say that they feel depressed all the time. Some continue to function

when they are depressed, and then there are those who shut down and maybe find themselves sleeping all the time. While we can talk about the causes of depression such as stress, anxiety, and worry, we know that all the causes fall under the umbrella of sin. Sin is a lack of fear, love, and trust in God above all things. This is a hard truth that we learn from the downcast, depressed Cain who ultimately kills his brother Abel, and finds himself as a restless wanderer upon the earth. Before Cain goes so far, the Lord says to him, “. . . sin is crouching at your door, it desires to have you, but you must master it (Gen. 4:7).” The Biblical record indicates that Cain never mastered it. The way to master sin is the context of the love of Jesus in his atoning sacrifice, the forgiveness of sins, and the hope of heaven.

Like Cain, the dark walls and the negative paintings of God in our minds can lead us to irreparable damage to our spiritual and physical wellbeing. What color is your room? In other words, with what do you fill your mind? It is good to answer those questions from time to time, since we have the tendency to simply sit in the chair and stare at the walls and the pictures in the mind without much consideration as to what it really is that we are looking at. We need to be careful to avoid the color and pictures that lead us away from a healthy contemplation of God and his good gifts in Jesus’ cross and empty tomb. If all we do is stare at pictures that communicate stress, worry, and anxiety, and if all we do is think of depressed thoughts that lead to more depressed thoughts, then we will damage our brain, our soul, our body and everything in our world. Like a black hole, everything will be sucked in and trapped.

There is nothing more agonizing than a Blue Christmas. As I said a moment ago, stress, anxiety, and worry can easily lead a person into a deep and abiding depression that will not let go. Peter invites you to cast all your anxieties on God because he cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7), and this is most certainly true at the cross. When Jesus addresses our anxieties about everyday needs, he invites us to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, which is the same as saying that we are to seek him! He is the

one thing needful, and from him everything else false into place in such a way that it serves our salvation. Remember the account of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42?

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Oh, how we frequently become distracted like Martha and become blue. I really appreciate that expression: "Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." May we also choose the good portion! May Jesus never be taken away!

What if I were to tell you that there is a type of blue Christmas in which all of us should be wrapped up? You know that in Christianity, there are many colors that symbolize certain things. For example, you know that green symbolizes life, white symbolizes righteousness, red symbolizes fire and blood, purple symbolizes sorrow and suffering. Do you know what blue symbolizes in Christianity? Blue is a symbol of heaven, and it signifies truth.³

For the Christian, there is a blue Christmas that is all about the baby Jesus who came into this world to proclaim truth, and to take us home to heaven. Yes, it's okay to become all wrapped up in the blue kingdom of heaven. A blue Christmas is right and salutary when our thoughts are directed toward the truth of God's Holy Word. The walls of our minds and the pictures we put up there are to be about what we have in the life, sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. This seeking first the kingdom and the righteousness of our Lord powerfully paints a new color on the black walls of our minds and replaces the negative pictures that we have placed there. The blue kingdom of heaven and the truth will keep all things in their proper perspective, giving us the clarity that we daily need. If our Savior takes care of us forever, then will he not take care of us today in his own way and time for our ultimate salvation?

In Psalm 19 (14), David puts it in this way: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my

Redeemer." The meditation of our heart is where we sit in the chair and look at all things in the light of what we have in the one who is our Rock and Redeemer. Christ is the Rock on which we stand secure because he has purchased us from sin and death with his life and his holy, innocent precious blood. Our sins have been forgiven no matter how black they may be! He has rescued us from this dark world, and the wicked forces that paint horrific pictures in our minds have been defeated. The Lord bids us to believe in him and to consider him in all things. He repaints our walls and places new pictures in the mind. Our life is a righteousness that is ours through Jesus and him alone, and that is supposed to change the way we see things.

Jonas Von Stockhausen served the town of Nordhausen, in Thuringia as a captain who policed the community. After eleven years of faithful service, he became afflicted with melancholy. On November 27, 1532 Luther wrote him a letter, of which, I will only set before you a portion:

Good friends have informed me that the evil one is tempting you severely with weariness of life and longing for death. My dear friend, it is high time that you cease relying on and pursuing your own thoughts . . . let our words penetrate to your heart. Thus, God will strengthen and comfort you by means of our words . . . And if it is hard for you to do this, imagine that you are held fast and bound by chains and that you must work and sweat yourself out of their strangle hold by powerful exertions. For the darts of the devil cannot be removed pleasantly and without effort when they are so deeply imbedded in your flesh. They must be torn out by force . . . Grit your teeth in the face of your thoughts, and for God's sake be more obstinate, headstrong, and willful than the most stubborn peasant or shrew - indeed, be harder than an anvil or piece of iron . . . But if you do not resist and oppose, but rather give your thoughts free reign to torment you, the battle will soon be lost.⁴

Luther is right. We do not give our thoughts free reign. Instead, our thoughts are to conform to the thinking of God. Paul (Rom. 6:11-14) says that "sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace." Living under grace is not an easy thing for as long as we still have the sinful flesh. We are to count ourselves dead to sin and we die to sin every day. And that is why Luther talks about gritting the teeth and tearing out the darts of the devil with force. Sin shall not be our master, but sin does not take the battle lightly or lay down easily. But, on account of the grace of God in Christ, we have a wonderful blue heaven that is in Christ. Since we have

the truth that lifts our eyes to the blue sky and righteousness that lasts forever, we overcome and fill our hearts and minds with Christ Jesus. Being wrapped up in this type of blue Christmas is what we need.

Paul writes these words in Philippians 4:8-9, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” Do you see the colors that are to be painted in the mind? Do you see the pictures that we should be looking at every single day? I leave you with the words of Herman W. Gockel who comments on Philippians 4:8-9. He once wrote:

Here was Paul’s first-century prescription for spiritual and mental hygiene. What he is saying in effect is this: Keep your mind fixed at all times on the God of your salvation, the God who has chosen you in Christ, the God who has forgiven you all your sins and has adopted you into the glorious family of His redeemed. Let all your gladness be rooted in Him, for He is the only Source of light and joy. And since through Christ you have learned to know Him as your loving, forgiving, and provident Father, don’t have a worry in the world. Don’t let your mind be clouded with anxious thoughts. But when such thoughts *do* come, go right to God! . . . with His divine peace standing guard over your heart, you will find it possible more and more to devote your thoughts to things that are morally beyond reproach, to things that are respectable, honest, pure, well pleasing to God . . .⁵

1. Richard O’Connor, Ph.D., *Undoing Perpetual Stress the Missing Connection Between Depression, Anxiety, and 21st Century Illness*, (New York: Berkley Books, 2005), 243-244.
3. *Ibid.*, 664.
4. Theodore G. Tappert, editor and translator, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 89-90.
5. Herman W. Gockel, *Answer to Anxiety*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1965), 157.

A Sermon by Martin Luther, from his Wartburg Church Postil, 1521-1522

The following sermon is an edited portion taken from volume I:134-160 of *The Sermons of Martin Luther*, published by Baker Book House (Grand Rapids, MI). It was originally published in 1906 in English by Lutherans in All Lands Press (Minneapolis, MN), as *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, vol. 11. This e-text

was scanned and edited by Richard Bucher, it is in the public domain, and it may be copied and distributed without restriction. As stated, this is an edited portion. I edited the sermon for many reasons, but to mainly get to the second part – “The Birth of Jesus Considered in its Spiritual Meaning.”

The Story of the Birth of Jesus; and the Angels' Song – Luke 2: 1-14

5. This Gospel is so clear that it requires very little explanation, but it should be well considered and taken deeply to heart; and no one will receive more benefit from it than those who, with a calm, quiet heart, banish everything else from their mind, and diligently look into it. It is just as the sun which is reflected in calm water and gives out vigorous warmth, but which cannot be so readily seen nor can it give out such warmth in water that is in roaring and rapid motion.

Therefore, if you would be enlightened and warmed, if you would see the wonders of divine grace and have your heart aglow and enlightened, devout and joyful, go where you can silently meditate and lay hold of this picture deep in your heart, and you will see miracle upon miracle. But to give the common person a start and a motive to contemplate it, we will illustrate it in part, and afterwards enter into it more deeply.

6. . . . behold how very ordinary and common things are to us that transpire on earth, and yet how high they are regarded in heaven. On earth it occurs in this wise: Here is a poor young woman, Mary of Nazareth, not highly esteemed, but of the humblest citizens of the village. No one is conscious of the great wonder she bears, she is silent, keeps her own counsel, and regards herself as the lowliest in the town. She starts out with her husband Joseph; very likely they had no servant, and he had to do the work of master and servant, and she that of mistress and maid, They were therefore obliged to leave their home unoccupied, or commend it to the care of others.

7. There were, no doubt, many wives and daughters of prominent men at that time, who lived in fine apartments and great splendor, while the mother of God takes a journey in mid-winter under most trying circumstances. What distinctions there are in the world! It was more than a day's journey from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in the land of Judea. They had to journey either by or through Jerusalem, for Bethlehem is south of Jerusalem while Nazareth is north.

8. The Evangelist shows how, when they arrived at Bethlehem, they were the most insignificant and despised, so that they had to make way for others until they were obliged to take refuge in a stable, to share with the cattle, lodging, table, bedchamber and bed, while many a wicked

man sat at the head in the hotels and was honored as lord. No one noticed or was conscious of what God was doing in that stable. He lets the large houses and costly apartments remain empty, lets their inhabitants eat, drink and be merry; but this comfort and treasure are hidden from them. O what a dark night this was for Bethlehem, that was not conscious of that glorious light! See how God shows that he utterly disregards what the world is, has or desires; and furthermore, that the world shows how little it knows or notices what God is, has and does.

11. But the birth itself is still more pitiful. There was no one to take pity on this young wife who was for the first time to give birth to a child; no one to take to heart her condition that she, a stranger, did not have the least thing a mother needs in a birth-night. There she is without any preparation, without either light or fire, alone in the darkness, without anyone offering her service as is customary for women to do at such times. Everything is in commotion in the inn, there is a swarming of guests from all parts of the country, no one thinks of this poor woman.

23. Let us now look at the mysteries set before us in this history. In all the mysteries here two things are especially set forth, the Gospel and faith, that is, what is to be preached and what is to be believed, who are to be the preachers, and who are to be the believers. This we will now consider.

II. The Birth of Jesus Considered in its Spiritual Meaning.

A. The teaching concerning faith.

24. Faith is first, and it is right that we recognize it as the most important in every word of God. It is of no value only to believe that this history is true as it is written; for all sinners, even those condemned believe that. The Scripture, God's Word, does not teach concerning faith, that it is a natural work, without grace. The right and gracious faith which God demands is, that you firmly believe that Christ is born for you, and that this birth took place for your welfare. The Gospel teaches that Christ was born, and that he did and suffered everything in our behalf, as is here declared by the angel: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." In these words, you clearly see that he is born for us.

25. He does not simply say, Christ is born, but to you he is born, neither does he say, I bring glad tidings, but to you I bring glad tidings of great joy. Furthermore, this joy was not to remain in Christ, but it shall be to all the people. This faith no condemned or wicked man has, nor can he have it; for the right ground of salvation which unites

Christ and the believing heart is that they have all things in common. But what have they?

26. Christ has a pure, innocent, and holy birth. Man has an unclean, sinful, condemned birth; as David says, Ps. 51, 5, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Nothing can help this unholy birth except the pure birth of Christ. But Christ's birth cannot be distributed in a material sense neither would that avail anything; it is therefore imparted spiritually, through the Word, as the angel says, it is given to all who firmly believe so that no harm will come to them because of their impure birth. This is the way and manner in which we are to be cleansed from the miserable birth we have from Adam. For this purpose, Christ willed to be born, that through him we might be born again, as he says John 3:3, that it takes place through faith; as also St. James says in 1, 18: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

27. We see here how Christ, as it were, takes our birth from us and absorbs it in his birth, and grants us his, that in it we might become pure and holy, as if it were our own, so that every Christian may rejoice and glory in Christ's birth as much as if he had himself been born of Mary as was Christ. Whoever does not believe this, or doubts, is no Christian.

28. O, this is the great joy of which the angel speaks. This is the comfort and exceeding goodness of God that, if a man believes this, he can boast of the treasure that Mary is his rightful mother, Christ his brother, and God his father. For these things actually occurred and are true, but we must believe. This is the principal thing and the principal treasure in every Gospel, before any doctrine of good works can be taken out of it. Christ must above all things become our own and we become his, before we can do good works.

But this cannot occur except through the faith that teaches us rightly to understand the Gospel and properly to lay hold of it. This is the only way in which Christ can be rightly known so that the conscience is satisfied and made to rejoice. Out of this grow love and praise to God who in Christ has bestowed upon us such unspeakable gifts. This gives courage to do or leave undone, and living or dying, to suffer everything that is well pleasing to God. This is what is meant by Isaiah 9: 6, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," to us, to us, to us is born, and to us is given this child.

29. Therefore, see to it that you do not find pleasure in the Gospel only as a history, for that is only transient; neither regard it only as an example, for it is of no value without faith; but see to it that you make this birth your own and

that Christ be born in you. This will be the case if you believe, then you will repose in the lap of the virgin Mary and be her dear child. But you must exercise this faith and pray while you live, you cannot establish it too firmly. This is our foundation and inheritance, upon which good works must be built.

30. If Christ has now thus become your own, and you have by such faith been cleansed through him and have received your inheritance without any personal merit, but alone through the love of God who gives to you as your own the treasure and work of his Son; it follows that you will do good works by doing to your neighbor as Christ has done to you. Here good works are their own teacher. What are the good works of Christ? Is it not true that they are good because they have been done for your benefit, for God's sake, who commanded him to do the works in your behalf? In this then Christ was obedient to the Father, in that he loved and served us.

31. Therefore, since you have received enough and become rich, you have no other commandment to serve Christ and render obedience to him, than so to direct your works that they may be of benefit to your neighbor, just as the works of Christ are of benefit and use to you. For the reason Jesus said at the Last Supper: "This is my commandment that ye love one another; even as I have loved you." John, 13: 34. Here it is seen that he loved us and did everything for our benefit, in order that we may do the same, not to him, for he needs it not, but to our neighbor; this is his commandment, and this is our obedience. Therefore, it is through faith that Christ becomes our own, and his love is the cause that we are his. He loves, we believe, thus both are united into one. Again, our neighbor believes and expects our love, we are therefore to love him also in return and not let him long for it in vain. One is the same as the other; as Christ helps us so we in return help our neighbor, and all have enough.

32. Observe now from this how far those have gone out of the way who have united good works with stone, wood, clothing, eating and drinking. Of what benefit is it to your neighbor if you build a church entirely out of gold!? Of what benefit to him is the frequent ringing of great church bells? Of what benefit to him is the glitter and the ceremonies in the churches, the priests' gowns, the sanctuary, the silver pictures and vessels? Of what benefit to him are the many candles and much incense? Of what benefit to him is the much chanting and mumbling, the singing of vigils and masses? Do you think that God will permit himself to be paid with the sound of bells, the smoke of candles, the glitter of gold and such fancies? He has commanded none of these, but if you see your neighbor going astray, sinning, or suffering in body or soul, you are to leave everything else and at once help him

in every way in your power and if you can do no more, help him with words of comfort and prayer. Thus has Christ done to you and given you an example for you to follow.

33. These are the two things in which a Christian is to exercise himself, the one that he draws Christ into himself, and that by faith he makes him his own, appropriates to himself the treasures of Christ and confidently builds upon them; the other that he condescends to his neighbor and lets him share in that which he has received, even as he shares in the treasures of Christ. He who does not exercise himself in these two things will receive no benefit even if he should fast unto death, suffer torture or even give his body to be burned, and were able to do all miracles, as St. Paul teaches, I Cor. 13ff

Concerning the Name "Lutheran" (Cont'd.)

The following article (Concerning the Name "Lutheran") was written by C. F. W. Walther in *Der Lutheraner* 1 (1884): 2-4, 5-7, 9-12. The article was written 140 years ago and still answers questions that are asked by a new generation. It is in three parts. In each part, a question is raised regarding the name "Lutheran" and then answered. The questions are: 1) Is it wrong to use such a name? 2) What does it mean to be a Lutheran? and 3) Why do we keep this name? It was translated by Mark Nispel in June 2019 and is in the public domain. In this issue of *Te Deum*, we present the third question and answer.

Concerning the Name "Lutheran"

by C.F.W. Walther

Translated by Mark Nispel

PART III - October 5, 1844

B. Why do we continue to keep this name?

In the first articles under this name we claimed that according to his own explanation Luther did not want the disciples of Christ to name themselves after him and further that not only those people were Lutheran who carried the name explicitly but instead that all true Christians are included in the name Lutheran whether they are called Lutheran, Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, Methodists etc. Therefore, perhaps the question will now arise: "Under such circumstances how can you still adhere to the Lutheran name? How can you in good conscience still keep a name which serves to separate you from others when you protest so strongly

against the accusation of ecclesiastical division and sectarianism?” — It is time to clearly speak to this point.

First, we answer this question with another question: How should we name ourselves in order to do what is right? It is certain that the name of a church cannot merely be some meaningless title but that it should accurately express what she truly is, namely, what she believes, teaches and confesses. If we do not want to be hypocritical, the name under which we proceed would give a plain clear answer to the question: “Of what and of whose faith are you?”

Certainly, some will now say: Why don't you call yourselves Christians? We answer: we do use that name. And we hold this name so near and dear that we are willing to offer blood and life for this name. We became Christians already in baptism and that and nothing else is our highest comfort and peace. Whoever is not a Christian and yet is a Lutheran and wishes to lose the first name in favor of the second does not know the meaning of either name. With pleasure we remember a poem found in Young's Nightly Devotions:

A Christian! What a noble name!
The most lofty title a man can have!
And yet men wipe you,
O holy cross, form their brow
as the most shameful of marks?
shaking (their head) the angels see
this as they ever tremble.
They fly back from the lost
and who knows whether it is more from
astonishment or from sadness that
they here quit their office in despair.

Indeed, there was a time when it was enough to say: “I am a Christian.” This was sufficient to confess the true faith in one's heart especially in the first three hundred years of the Christian era. Such confessor indeed often awaited the death of a martyr.

So, what are the special circumstances now with this name? Since Christianity is split into a thousand sects who would know what we believe if we merely wanted to confess: We are Christians! Are there not many who want to be known as Christians who even deny Christ and struggle against him denying his eternal deity and completely sufficient redemption? Are there not many who put themselves forward as preachers of the gospel only on account of greed who indeed no longer believe in Christ and his holy word but who want to keep the old tradition of going to church?

Indeed, a man would need no other name than the name “Christian” in order to confess his faith if everyone was as honorable, or rather as audacious and impudent, as certain Mr. Oludwig in New York and a certain Mr. Kock

in St. Louis. For these have publicly acknowledged an irreplaceable contempt toward the Crucified and ceremoniously erased themselves for the list of those who want to have a part of the redemption of the Son of God.

No other name would be needed, I say, if everyone in our days who wanted to depart from the word of Christ so clearly acknowledged the matter and would renounce the Christian name. But now since the enemies of Christ adorn themselves with this name in order to eat his bread everyone can see that a time has come in which the friend of Christ must clearly declare himself if he does not want to deny his beloved Savior before the world.

Now perhaps others will say: “So you don't want that! Fine, then call yourselves Catholic. But to this suggestion we say: God forbid! Indeed, the laughable accusation is often made against Lutherans that they are very much like the Catholics. But who was it that first in public writings truly attacked the Roman papacy as the chair of the antichrist. revealed it to all the world, mortally wounded and killed it? Was it Zwingli? Was it Calvin? Was it Wesley? Wasn't it our Luther? Did not all other true and supposed reformers continue the attack on the enemy from within the fortress which Luther had taken in the heat of battle? How could Lutherans call themselves “Catholic” when the archenemy of the Lutheran church calls himself by this name so that with this beautiful name, he might hold captive the consciences of the souls freed by Christ?

For indeed the name Catholic is a glorious name for it means the universal Christian church which was established by the apostles and spread out upon all the earth outside of which there is no salvation. Obviously, no one can be a Christian who would not confess himself as belonging to the church which is catholic or universal in the truth. And there was a time when the true church used this name and with this name separated herself from all false doctrines and their sects. And it has a glorious sound. How wonderful the name catholic sounds. For example, in the mouth of Athanasius or Augustine when they use it against the sects of the Arian, the Donatists and others. How glorious the name rings in the time of the Roman bishop Gregory the Great who completely rejected the title of the universal bishop of Christianity. Gregory wrote to Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria among other things: “You allowed a haughty designation in the title of your letter in that you grant me the title of the universal pope.

I ask that hence forth you do no such thing.” (L. VIII. ep. 30). In another place this Roman bishop (who died in 604 AD) wrote that until his time no Roman bishops had been willing to carry this title for fear that the true faith would be lost, and a bishop would become the forerunner of the antichrist.

While the bishops of Rome still wrote in this manner and were appalled that by accepting the title of universal bishop over all Christianity Christ, who is the true head of the entire church, would be robbed of his honor—at that time there was still a true church which called itself the catholic or universal church. But what is the meaning of the word Catholic Church now? It is the fellowship of those who recognize the bishop of Rome as the head of the church, as standing in the place of Christ and God himself. They recognize him as infallible and give his commands unconditional obedience. They must therefore worship all the unquestionable errors of the papacy such as: the sacrifice of the Mass, praying to the saints, purgatory, the worship of images and relics, the pope's indulgence, human works unto salvation and self-chosen works, the forbidding of the bible and marriage, tradition or the unwritten Word of God, compulsory fasts etc. etc. which all the confessions and catechisms of the new Roman Catholic Church teach along with the explicit explanation that outside of this faith no one can be saved. (Prof. fid. cath. e Conc. Trid. a S.P. Pio IV extracta, No. 28) Since from this it is now clear that the name "Catholic" has a new meaning, namely the Roman papacy with all its atrocities and in no way the universal Christian Church, and thus indicates a sect, obviously no one who recognizes the Word of God as the true rule of the Christian faith can trouble us to use this name.

Perhaps another will say: OK, then call yourself Reformed. For that is indeed what you want to be, a church cleansed of all false doctrines and wrong practices. It is true that this name, too, when understood in accordance with the original meaning of the word gloriously shows what the Lutheran church claims itself to be. She even calls herself such in her symbols. But would it be honorable to use a name which originally indicated what we intended but which now has an entirely different meaning and would be understood entirely differently? Wouldn't we then be committing the sin of having a secret reservation taking our own words to mean something different than everyone understood them? God preserve us from such a thing! An honest man must speak in such a way that he reveals the true sense of his heart with his words. The character of the true church has therefore been the utmost honesty. All false churches have attempted to draw as near as possible to the orthodox confession in their expressions in order that their erring ideas might be craftily covered up and they then can keep secret reservations (as to the meaning). Therefore, the church spoke all the more clearly and wrote and confessed her doctrines more precisely and distinctively because this became more necessary as time went on if she didn't want to be misunderstood. But what is understood now by the name "Reformed church"?

It identifies the fellowship of those who have accepted the ideas of Zwingli and Calvin. The so-called Reformed confess that through baptism a man is not born again; it is merely a sign and seal of grace but not a means of grace. The name "Reformed" also refers to those who confess that the holy Supper is merely a meal of remembrance in which the body and blood of Christ are not eaten at all according to Zwingli and only spiritually according to Calvin. But in no way is it truly present (as Christ says) and therefore it is not eaten sacramentally with the mouth.

The name "Reformed" further refers to those who confess that God predestined some to salvation and others to damnation according to an absolute decree. For it says in the most important public confession of the Calvinistic-reformed church, namely, in the Synod of Dort: The Reformed churches teach that the reason why God chose some and passed by the others" (rejected them) is not their unrepentance and their lack of faith, but rather only the pleasure of God." (Syn. Dord. p. 535).

Further in this confession it says: "it was entirely the free decree of God that Christ should truly redeem from every people, clan, race and every tongue those and indeed those alone who were elected from eternity." (Cap. 2, Art. 8). Who is not alarmed that this is really the doctrine of the Reformed church? Indeed, might not many who call themselves Reformed be alarmed when they read this, those who did not suspect that their church sometimes openly, sometimes secretly taught such errors in their public confessions. The Reformed church contradicts the clear words of Christ concerning the holy sacraments. For Christ speaks clearly concerning both: "This is my body; This is my blood. Truly, Truly I say to you, if anyone is not born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Further, the Reformed church with their doctrine of the election of grace denies the highest comfort of the gospel, that God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). She tears the sinners from Christ and does not let them come and draw near full of confidence. She gives them nothing except the anxious expectation of whether they are elected or rejected by God.

Indeed, the Reformed church with that doctrine blames God that not all men are saved and therefore mocks his eternal mercy in Christ. So? Since the name "Reformed" indicates this faith can we Lutherans use it who simply remain with God's clear words and recognize the essence of the Gospel to be the article that Christ is the savior of all sinners? If someone comes to him, will he not send them away? No way! And this is why we also cannot call ourselves Episcopalian, Presbyterians, Baptists and the like. Namely, all these groups, in addition to many other great errors, teach the errors of the Reformed concerning the sacraments, especially the Presbyterians and Baptists.

They also accept this teaching concerning eternal election.

Now perhaps many others will say: "But what can you find against the name 'Evangelical'? Wouldn't it be right to exchange the name Lutheran with this name? With this name you wouldn't be required to accept a doctrine that you thought was false, would you? Don't you know that the Evangelicals are made up of those who permit full freedom in the articles in which the Lutheran and Reformed church disagree and leave it to every conscience as to what he will preach as the right understanding?"

Of course, we know that. That is why we can no longer use the name Evangelical. The name itself is indeed wonderful and precious. Indeed, it was the Lutheran church which for a long time was the only one called Evangelical. For two or three hundred years whoever confessed: I am an Evangelical, confessed that he was a Lutheran as all the world knew. It was indeed through Luther that God laid his Gospel again into the hands of all. But times have changed and with them the customs and meanings of names.

He who now says: I am an Evangelical, confesses that he is such a Christian that no one can tell what he believes in many of the chief articles of the Christian religion. Now I ask, how can one who believes what he preaches is true and does not garble the truth but instead desires to fully confess it, how can he (no matter what he believes is true) confess to belong to a church which uses two different types of confessional writings which are contrary to one another, and which reject one another? How can he belong to a church which has no clear confessions and indeed in which two different types of faith are praised as good, the truth and lies? (For two doctrines contrary to one another cannot both be true!) Wouldn't one think it's impossible for men who believe the entire Bible is true to come to think that the new so-called union or Evangelical church is the last blossom of the kingdom of God in the world, the outer court of the divine temple of a thousand-year kingdom of Christ upon earth (awaited by enthusiasts)?

This church was established by the Prussian King and forced upon tyrannized congregations against their will and smuggled in with all kinds of intrigue and eagerly promoted by most rationalists! Instead, won't the result of this church be the return of the time of the Tower of Babel and its confusion of languages? And in place of the true unity of faith and spirit of the Christian church doesn't it establish an external ceremonial union of people who believe differently? Through this new Evangelical Church isn't the doubt over certain points of contention between the Lutheran and Reformed raised to the point of an article of faith and isn't the forfeiting of the truth given

as the answer to the supposed orthodox? And doesn't the new Evangelical Church through her default confession that this and that article of faith can be taught differently here and there clear the way to the time when everything which is clearly spoken in God's Word is explained to be uncertain and indiscernible? Then wouldn't the explanation of Scripture be left to the arbitrary nature of every enthusiast and rationalist? Isn't the fear well founded that if a congregation constitutes itself first as Evangelical without the foundation of an explicit confession that there a rationalist preacher will follow the Evangelical preacher there? Won't that of necessity happen? Doesn't one of them consider to be wrong precisely what the other says is right. If the Evangelical preacher first says: "The explanation of this verse about the sacraments, predestination etc. is left to every man's conscience," so that no one will be declared a heretic over a difference in these points, can't the rationalist then demand this right of freedom in the explanation of Scripture and use it many other points? In short, that which is now called the Evangelical Church lacks a confession of truth in the most important parts of Christian doctrine and declares that this is unimportant, unessential and of no importance and that the Word of Christ is uncertain. Therefore, she can be seen as nothing else than a fellowship of those who are indifferent, that is, of those who consider true and false doctrine to be of equal importance. Therefore, it is impossible for us Lutherans to any longer call ourselves Evangelicals in order not to be confused with these people and thus deny our faith. All the more we must call to all the Lutherans who have allowed themselves to be fooled by the beautiful Evangelical name and to be lured into the net of false union: "How long will you vacillate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, so follow him! If however, Baal is God then follow him." (1 Kings 18.)

Perhaps another will then say: "All right, then call yourselves Protestant." It is true that for a while after 1529 the Lutherans alone were called Protestants. In 1529 the Lutheran Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg and other Lutheran princes and cities of the kingdom wrote a protest to the Imperial Diet in Speier. This protest was against the Diet's declaration that the sharp edit of Worms published in 1521 against Luther and Luther's banishment should be carried out. And from this protest the Lutherans were given this name. Although this name could well mean that we as orthodox believers would protest against all abuses and false doctrines, yet it is well known from history that later all those who separated from the papal Church were included under the name Protestants. This name too therefore in no way agrees with the faith in our hearts in that we protest just as much against the erring doctrines of all other churches just as against the Roman Catholic

Church. In addition, it is becoming more customary in our days for those Protestants to even call themselves Evangelical-Protestants when in fact they don't protest against the doctrines of men but instead against Christ, his gospel and all the holy things of his church. Namely, these people, as is well known, have embraced the decision to entirely extinguish the sunlight of the gospel and to remove it from heaven to earth and instead use the torches, lights and lamps of the wisdom of their reason and thereby finally bring about the long-awaited enlightenment and maturity of the poor world which they mourn because she has unfortunately again lost the light of paganism and fallen into the darkness of Christianity! Who can ask us to use the same name as such Protestants and to be yoked together with them?

But since we live in America perhaps many, in light of the fact that we've rejected all the previous names, will give us the advice to call ourselves dear Methodists. This name does sound wonderful. Who would reject this name if only the thing itself were good and godly? We cannot deny that the Methodist fellowship must have a very luring appeal for people who come here from corrupted congregations in Germany where so many belly servers sit in the seat of Moses. For contrariwise what zealots they find here for converting souls! What zealots in prayer, song and reading! What frankness in confessing their faith in word and deed! How much trouble most of them go to in order to gain heaven! But no matter how many inexperienced people consider all this to be sure marks of the true church none of this is decisive for those who are experienced in God's Word.

The Savior tells us that which is necessary for the church of Christ with the words: "If you remain in what I say, you are my true disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31f.) It is a question of remaining in what Christ says or in his words. Indeed, he who wants to be a living member of the church must also show it through his enthusiasm in sanctification. But the holiness of Christians cannot save me. Only the pure word which they have and by which they remain can do that. This is precisely however what man looks for in vain in the most enthusiastic of Methodists.

They depart from the clear words of Jesus Christ who is the True One and the Almighty not just in the doctrines concerning the holy Sacraments. They mock us therefore as wooden books that we remain simply by the words of our Savior, and they, instead, unfortunately, follow their reason and their false doctrines. They also build almost their entire Christianity, their certainly of their place in God's grace and their spiritual rebirth, upon their uncertain changing feelings. They follow their hearts.

Since they do not want to keep themselves solely with the world and to establish everything upon it they obviously do not come to any lasting peace in Christ. They torment and agonize themselves in their own works and must finally hear the word: (Isaiah 55:2): "Why do you count your money where there is not bread and you work where you cannot become satisfied? Listen to me and eat that which is God etc." With the Methodists, whom many think good of, that which is lacking above all is a pure doctrine of justification and still more the right application of the same.

Therefore, so many among them continually learn but cannot come to a knowledge of the truth. So many seek peace in themselves, in their battles and troubles and do not find it. For only Christ who offers himself to us in words and who wants to be grasped only in words through faith, is our righteousness before God and our complete peace. It is impossible then for us Lutherans to call ourselves Methodists and thereby give witness that we trade the clear infallible and unchanging word for the appearance of human piety, works and sentiments. As long as a Methodist is entangled in his error, he will look upon us with a deep sight as upon a man who lacks spiritual experience of the heart. We can affirm in the truth however that we know from own experience that all our own works are lost and that all that is human will wilt and burn in the fire of trial even if its is ever so precious and apparent before men. And further, only keeping the word and the grace proclaimed in it rescues from doubt and leads to a blessed victory. While the Methodist experiences the sweet feeling of grace he freely mocks the Lutheran keeping of the word, as happens so often. But when he comes into difficult trials, he will experience that which he mocked. It is certain that without the terror of repentance no one can come to faith and that this faith is no dead thought of our heart but rather a living trust which only the Holy Spirit can work. However, it is also true that whether one trusts in external works of repentance or sets his trust in the inner work of his soul and thereby desires to obtain his salvation, both are shameful monkey and with both Christ is lost.

Here we must once again stop and ask our readers to wait for the promised conclusion in the next issue.

Trinity Lutheran Church
1207 West 45th Street, Austin, TX 78756
~ 512.453.3835 ~ www.trinityaustin.com ~
Trinity Te Deum is published bi-monthly.
Deadline for all articles is the 15th of the odd months.
All articles must be approved by Interim Pastor Brock Abbott.
Articles with no author are written by him.

DECEMBER 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 PASTOR KEISTMAN W/ HOLY COMMUNION	2	3	4	5 ADVENT VESPERS 7:30 PM CARL ROTH	6	7
8 PASTOR BROCK W/ HOLY COMMUNION BUS CAROLING 1:15 PM	9	10	11	12 ADVENT VESPERS 7:30 PM CARL ROTH	13	14
15 VICAR KILLION NO COMMUNION	16	17	18	19 ADVENT VESPERS 7:30 PM CARL ROTH	20	21
22 VICAR KILLION NO COMMUNION	23	24 X-MAS EVE CANDLE LIGHT CAROL SERVICE 7:30 PM (ELDER)	25 X-MAS DAY SERVICE 10:00 AM (ELDER – NO COMMUNION)	26	27	28
29 PASTOR KEISTMAN W/ HOLY COMMUNION	30	31				

JANUARY 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5 VICAR KILLION NO COMMUNION	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 PASTOR KEISTMAN W/ HOLY COMMUNION	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 PASTOR BROCK W/ HOLY COMMUNION LIFE SUNDAY	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 VICAR KILLION NO COMMUNION	27	28	29	30	31	



DECEMBER 2024-JANUARY 2025