

TEMPERANCE

A Social Document from the
Augustana Lutheran Church



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A Statement of the Augustana Lutheran Church, 1938

1938: Minutes, pp. 224-225

The Augustana Synod has always recognized the liquor traffic as a destroyer of souls and therefore, as an enemy of the church. The Synod has been justified in this attitude, because the liquor traffic challenges the church with grave social problems in its heartless waste of human resources and human life.

The following facts are pertinent:

Automobile traffic is made exceedingly hazardous by even a moderate use of alcohol, and innumerable accidents in other fields are also directly and indirectly traceable to this cause. The tissues and organs of the human body are frequently so harmfully affected by alcohol that serious illness and death result from its use.

Indulgence in strong drink in many cases reduces the family income so much that a healthful standard of living becomes impossible. The family's moral standard is also lowered and home life is disrupted. The drunkard and his dependents often become felons or public charges.

The drunkard frequently makes a nuisance of himself in public, as well as at home. Persons who ordinarily are of an amiable disposition may, under the influence of liquor, become exceedingly silly or beastly. The consumption of liquor, particularly in places of public entertainment, tends to break down one's sense of moral responsibility, contributing to sexual promiscuity and other licentious practices.

To regulate the liquor traffic and deal with the criminals which it directly or indirectly produces demands an expensive judicial organization, the construction and upkeep of numerous jails and various other institutions, all of which increase taxes far beyond the revenues that can be collected. The liquor traffic is always a financial as well as moral and spiritual liability, and never an aid to the taxpayer.

The Christian's conscience is bound by the Word of God. Paul has written: "Be not drunken with wine wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). "Be not deceived ... no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). The Christian recognizes drunkenness as a terrible sin.

In view of the above and much more that could be cited, the Synod must maintain its traditional opposition to the liquor traffic. Therefore, be it resolved:

1. That the Synod urges all its pastors to instruct their people on the evils of intemperance, particularly the evils of intoxicating drink, and earnestly lay on their hearts their Christian obligation to give offense to no one.
2. That the Synod urges the Board of Parish Education to provide proper lesson material on this most important question, for use in the church schools.
3. That the Synod favors and urges the providing of lesson material for use in the public schools that, in a scientific and constructive manner, will deal with the true physical, mental and moral effects of the use of alcohol.
4. That the Synod urges the leaders of our young people, both in local and general organizations, to provide programs in which the evils of strong drink are stressed, and the ideals of sobriety attractively presented.
5. That the Synod urges all its members to use their best efforts, through whatever legitimate and proper channels that may present themselves, to wipe out the present liquor traffic.