

GAMBLING

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, p. 223, 224

On the recommendation of the Commission on Morals and Social Problems, the church has adopted the following stand on gambling:

We deplore the wide-spread development of the vicious practice of gambling in our American community life. The numerous methods and means by which this sin is being committed constantly increase. Moreover this subtle vice touches and influences, in greater or less degree, every man, woman and child in our nation. The harmful effects of this mania, as it pertains to the character development of our children, we specifically condemn. Our churches and church members are directly affected.

Gambling adds nothing to the wealth of the community. It is claimed that it provides a form of recreation and pleasure which is not only legitimate but helpful, so long as the sums staked are such as a man can afford to lose. But such an attitude draws a line of distinction between rich and poor. What is right for the rich man is pronounced wrong in the case of the poor man. Moreover, the practice is perniciously antisocial. It is, as Herbert Spencer says: "A kind of action by which pleasure is obtained at the cost of pain to another. The happiness of the winner implies the misery of the loser. This kind of action is, therefore, essentially anti-social; it sears the sympathies, cultivates a hard egoism, and so produces a general deterioration of character. It is a habit intrinsically savage." In an atmosphere of brotherhood no form of gambling could exist. Its motive power is covetousness. It is an attempt to get property without paying the price for it. It is robbery by mutual agreement, just as dueling is murder by mutual agreement. In the habitual gambler, the higher faculties through disuse become atrophied and his life, out of touch with honest labor, intoxicated by excitation of his favorite passion, becomes besotted and depraved. At the foundation of the whole system is uncurbed greed. It is a sin that cuts across and ignores the will of God by removing the acquisition of wealth from the realm of reason and conscience. The New Testament ideal of stewardship, wherein all of life is set forth as a trust from God, to be administered to His glory, is flagrantly violated.

Therefore, be it resolved that,

1. We call upon all pastors and Christian leaders to enlighten our people especially the young, as to the moral and spiritual evil of all forms of gambling.

We also request our Board of Parish Education to include educational material on this problem in our church and school literature.

2. The Synod herewith forbids, the use of raffles, lotteries and all other games of chance in our various churches.
3. We urge concerted and vigorous action against all further efforts to legalize any form of gambling, whether on the part of city, state, or national government.