

LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

A Social Document from the
Augustana Lutheran Church



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

A Series of Statements of the Augustana Lutheran Church, 1954, 1960

1954: Minutes, p. 231

The Church has instructed "its representatives to the National Lutheran Council to do their part in helping the National Lutheran Council promote wholesome radio and television programs."

1960: Minutes, p. 251

There are some lists currently published by reasonably good publications, such as "Parents Magazine," "Time," and "The Green Sheet" (known otherwise as "Joint Estimates of Current Entertainment Films" and issued bimonthly by the Department of Public Relations of the Motion Picture Producers Association.)

Three problems are involved in the making of evaluations and in the publishing of lists:

1. There is the difficulty of evaluation without censorship.
2. It is difficult to make a list sufficiently comprehensive and sufficiently current to be of value to anybody.
3. The publication of any list of "acceptable" motion pictures and so forth runs the risk of being an endorsement of a particular motion picture, which may in general be good but may have some objectionable parts.

However, if the Church wants to have evaluations published, we recommend that this work be done by the Church's Bureau of Press, Radio, and Television.

We further recommend that the real way to get at this problem is not thro' lists, but thro' continued efforts to improve the quality of pictures, efforts in which we are participating.

In this connection we direct attention to a resolution adopted by the Executive Council of Augustana Lutheran Church on October 13, 1959, saying that the Church join "the West Coast Office of the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches in protesting and opposing a "downward trend in morals and in deploring the lack of a sense of public responsibility by many of those who produce... pictures."

We recommend that parents in the following ways play a constructive part in dealing with the matter relating to motion pictures and television programs:

1. by training and by example help their children to develop proper moral standards and sound judgment in reference to programs.
2. by observing the usual patterns of motion pictures shown at various motion picture houses, so as to know the relative quality of pictures shown in them.
3. by reasonably limiting the amount of time children devote to motion pictures and television programs so that the children can be sufficiently trained in reference to a necessary variety and range of wholesome activities and in reference to self-discipline.
4. by refraining from looking at bad motion pictures and television programs, thus setting a good example for their children.
5. by seeing evaluations of motion pictures and television programs in the daily papers, weekly magazines, and public libraries, which can give information supplementing that provided by reliable publications, such as, for example, those mentioned above and other good publications.

Resolved that:

In addition to endorsing the statements of the Executive Council on the subject of motion pictures, adopted at its October 13, 1959 meeting, the Church express its readiness to join with similarly minded church bodies in efforts to improve the moral quality and standards of motion pictures and television programs.

Resolved that:

The attention of parents be called to the following ways in which they may deal constructively with the matter relating to motion pictures and television programs:

- a. By training and by example help their children to develop proper moral standards and sound judgment in reference to programs.
- b. By observing the usual patterns of motion pictures shown at various motion picture houses, so as to know the relative quality of pictures shown in them.
- c. By reasonably limiting the amount of time children devote to motion pictures and television programs so that the children can be more sufficiently trained in reference to a necessary variety and range of wholesome activities and in reference to self-discipline.
- d. By refraining from looking at bad motion pictures and television programs, thus setting a good example for their children.
- e. By noting evaluations of motion pictures and television programs in the daily papers, weekly magazines, and public libraries, which can give information supplementing that provided by reliable publications, such as, for example, those mentioned above and other good publications.

Introductory

In the life of Christ the old legalistic concept of the observance of the Day of Rest was completely contradicted. The application and implication of His teaching and example lead us to conclude that a weekly Day of Rest is for the purpose of serving man's religious needs, developing relationships with family and friends, at the same time carrying on the necessary functions of providing for man's material and personal well-being. Christ Himself sums up His whole attitude in this matter by saying, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." Mark 2:27

Man's Mutual Rights and Duties

Since man can find his ultimate meaning for life only in a right relationship with his Maker, it is of the very essence of sin for him to neglect this relationship. It is also a great sin for any man to frustrate or to hinder another man in this relationship.

Each person has the inalienable right to worship God and to be provided the time and opportunity to do so. He should also be given the opportunity to worship in fellowship with other believers, which means that hours for collective worship are sacred hours that ought not usually to be violated or substituted.

For Lutherans and most other Christians, Sunday is a Day of Rest, and the morning hours are the time most often set for collective worship. They are therefore sacred hours for us. However, there are Christians of other denominations and persons of other faiths whose times for worship fall on other days. We ought to respect their right to worship, if our own right in this matter is to be upheld.

Close to the right to worship is the right to develop relationships with one's family and friends. It is now more and more being recognized that such development of relationships belongs to a proper use of the Day of Rest. Further, as the Church has always held, man needs the Day of Rest for his general well-being.

With each mutual right there falls upon all men a mutual duty. Each employer has the duty to provide for his employees the opportunity to worship, so far as is possible. Actions which keep employees from the worship of God should be resisted. Each of us is duty-bound to promote and protect the proper use of the Day of Rest for the sake of free conscience under God and for humanitarian reasons.

Man's Response – Attitude and Motive

The correct use of the Day of Rest should not be approached from the point of view of a legalistic code, even a simple one. Jesus does not substitute a less complicated code for an older more difficult one. He appeals to motives and tries to develop attitudes. Only a proper development of attitudes and motives based on Christ's example and applied sensibly to the society of our day can work. This application must be made by Christians in all walks of life in their daily and weekly situations.

The Principle of Degree

There are some activities in the interest of man's well-being that must be performed

on the Day of Rest as well as on any other day. Some activities, particularly in the realm of business, can not be justified, and are in fact a real hindrance to the observance of the Day of Rest.

After the Christian has carefully explored his own attitude and motive for conducting himself in a certain manner on the Day of Rest, he will often have to make some decision as to the degree in which he will participate in various activities or require others to do so. He will not only consider whether these activities are for the purpose of serving some human need under God, but also how much of these activities are necessary in order to achieve the goal of needed service, and further, to what extent these activities can be engaged in without destroying the meaning of the Day of Rest.

Summary in Points

1. The Church must continuously uphold the sacredness of the Third Commandment as God-ordained to meet the needs of man spiritually, emotionally, and physically.
2. The Church must continuously teach men their mutual rights relative to the Day of Rest and their mutual duties to uphold these rights for one another.
3. The Church, using the example of Christ and relying upon the power of the Holy Spirit, must continuously strive to develop right attitudes and motives among its people relative to the use of the Day of Rest.
4. The Church recognizes as legitimate the performance on the Day of Rest of some duties necessary for the physical and material well-being of man and the performance of a reasonable degree of generally useful or needed services and the participation in a reasonable degree of wholesome recreation, fellowship, and constructive activity.
5. Ultimately the right use of the Day of Rest will depend upon the conscientious decisions and applications of believers in their daily and weekly situations and not on any code or legislation.

Resolved that

The Church adopt the statement "On the Right Use of the Day of Rest."