

The Falling Away of the Lutheran Churches.

Today Lutheran congregations that once were staunch seventy years ago during the declining one-hundred-year golden age of Christianity in America, have become more lax in biblical teaching, and have relaxed their practice of the biblical commandments quietly and without fanfare, but intentionally. They have become worldly, and have rolled back biblical morality inch by inch. Why? It is because of peer pressure, or, as Scripture puts it: of being a “men pleaser” (Ephesians 6:6).

Though Lutheran congregations commonly would resent this description, and would point to their biblical congregational constitutions, and declare, “This is our standard for belief and behavior,” it could be countered by pointing out, for instance, “Do you still consider gambling to be a sin? When was the last time your pastor preached a sermon against this common sin? Would you demand that a member of your congregation who sold lottery tickets at his privately owned business must cease and desist, just as he would in the sale of pornographic magazines? Would you excommunicate him if he would refuse? Would you bring church discipline against any member who would continue to visit a casino?”

Speaking of which, how many excommunications have there been in your own Lutheran congregation in the last fifteen years? Check your church records of one hundred years ago! Why were there more excommunications in those days than there are now? Was it because your congregation today is more pure

than it was back then? Would that be the reason? Rather, would it not be that your congregation is more lax now than it used to be in its concern for unrepentant souls?

Things that once were considered to be sin years earlier, and rightly so, have now been placed into a gray area, where “we cannot tell” anymore, that is, where church members would no longer conclude that something would be a sin. Indeed, some things have been passed through the gray area into the “no-longer-sin” area.

What if John the Baptist were called to one of our Lutheran congregations today? If he were to say such things as: “Bear fruits worthy of repentance!.... And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”.... God’s “winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his threshing floor, and gather his wheat into the barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:8, 10, & 12), could the contemporary Lutheran congregation stand to hear such biblical things? Would it not order him to leave?

In a Publisher’s Preface to a recent translation of a Lutheran devotional work from the 1800’s in America, the unsigned writer stated: The author’s “comments about Roman Catholicism or Reformed theology or Methodism may sound harsh to the 21st century ear” (C.F.W. Walther, *God Grant It*, translator Gerhard Grabenhofer [Saint Louis: Concordia, 2006]. Tell me why would comments that sounded normal to the 19th century ear “sound harsh to the 21st century ear”? The

answer is: Because biblical law and gospel preaching is out, speaking “smooth things” is in (Isaiah 30:10). The simple explanation is there has been a “falling away” in the Lutheran church. The current consensus of American Lutheran congregations is: It is no longer necessary nor desirable to be faithful to biblical doctrine or practice. “Every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). A “horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely.... And my people love to have it so” (Jeremiah 5:30, 31).

Just the same, congregations that call themselves the people of God and that have crosses on their roofs cannot continue on indefinitely with such impunity. God will not be mocked (Galatians 6:7). At some point he must withdraw his grace, and keep his threat to punish such faithlessness, spiritual adultery, and prostitution, as he calls it (Jeremiah 3:8-9).

What must Lutheran congregations do? They must address the contemporary question: “If the Lord would be with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13), and apply the biblical answer. That is to say, to this end they must renew efforts at repentance and prayer, and petition humbly for the Holy Spirit’s help to open their eyes and to sanctify their intent. They must begin an in-house reformation which would get rid of all man-made teachings and practices and return to Scripture’s teachings exclusively.

In addition, after each future Islamic assault on this country, or after every regional or national calamity, the Lutheran congregations could and should call for a day of humiliation, of prayer, and of fasting, urging their laymen to redouble their efforts at repentance, gospel

belief, humbleness, and the fear of God. They should have printed prayers, sermons, devotions, and supplemental material for classes and for home use in order that the laymen could and should know with biblical certainty why God is doing this, what he has said about it, and what is expected of the Christian!

Do not ask your congregation to do this, insist on it! If it would refuse and give you specious excuses, begin to homechurch!