

Erwin W Lutzer: When a Nation Forgets God - Seven Lessons We Must Learn from Nazi Germany

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Review:

Lutzer's previous work *Hitler's Cross* was written to discover why the German pastors were seduced to remain silent during the Nazi time. This book concentrates on the conflict between church and state both as it existed during the Nazi time and as it exists now in the actual situation in the United States. The seven lessons that are drawn from Nazi Germany are presented in the seven chapters of this book in which the first five are given Lutzer's most attention. Reminders of Scriptural principles are reserved for the end of each chapter. They are excerpted below.

Chapter 1 warns of being too critical of the silence of the German church under Hitler. Lutzer asks: "What is the role of the church in the face of governments that have self-consciously excluded God from their policies?" The United States follows Hitler's policy that "God and religion must be removed from the government" and also from 'law, education, and the workplace.' (ACLU) 25-I Secularization is supported by new laws that prevent opposition to the new values (the cheapness of life is evident in abortion and euthanasia; immorality, sexualization of schoolchildren, pornography). The consequences of the gradual privatization of religion is the loss of absolutes and the replacement of transcendent values by the 'raw use of power, eroticism, arbitrary judicial rulings, the morality of personal pragmatism.' (27-I). The introduction of 'hate speech' in the United States (obviously liked by the Muslims) leads to the danger of being interpreted a 'hate crime' which Lutzer says will mean the same as in Nazi Germany: "an opinion that the government thinks should not be expressed." Lutzer sees the future of America according to John Whitehead as a continuation of the trend to 'greater control and manipulation of the individual citizen' with the help of the media that 'alters the consciences and worldview of entire generations.' In view of the beginning persecution of Christians by ACLU Lutzer calls for developing a "theology of disobedience" in light not only of the First Amendment but also of what Niemoller and Bonhoeffer reminded us: God is separating the wheat and the chaff and sends persecution to purify his church. The chapter ends with an appeal to reread 1 Peter and to submit to the Lordship of Christ "in all "spheres" of life.

Chapter 2 begins with the scenario of economic chaos as a result of the reparations imposed on Germany after World War I. Excessive borrowing and printing money led to hyperinflation and to the Weimar Republic in 1933. The nation was ready to trade freedom for survival allowing Hitler to exploit the economic and social crisis by seizing power. He produced an additional crisis (February 27, 1933: Reichstag Building in Berlin in flames) to make new laws in order to lead to National Socialism. With the exception of the 'Confessing Church' the Church succumbed to the phenomenal economic success instead of putting up a united opposition. The Lutheran synod declared allegiance to the one-party system a matter of individual choice for pastors and church leaders. The nation chose peace and affluence, "bread and sausage above the free market and individual liberties" (47-II). German History according to Lutzer teaches the United States that there are at least biblical principles that must apply to economic theory whatever it may be: no debt, no bribe, no theft; as Christians we must not make temporal survival our highest

goal. Furthermore, politicians often use economic crisis to increase dependence on government and govt. control. Under the freedom during the time of the Founding Fathers equality referred to the law while today it means 'economic equality' by taking the money away from the rich and giving it to the poor. At times of extreme economic hardships hard choices have to be made. We all need to pray that we may not be forced to "sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate." Our scriptural guideline must be John 6:27 and Hebrews 13:5-6.

Chapter 3 briefly looks at the history of law under Hitler and under the Founding Fathers until the present time in the USA. When Hitler used the self-induced crisis of the Reichstag in order to allow him to become the source of all law/s in Germany even natural law became meaningless. Hitler making himself the lawgiver made himself God. He used the power of the law to deprive the Jews of citizenship and to outlaw them completely. When later put before the Nürnberg trials the war criminals appealed to the laws under which they had acted and consequently found no reason for remorse. The lesson derived from German history is that "Without a belief in God, nothing is unconditionally wrong." "Either God is supreme or the State is supreme." (61-II)

The Founding Fathers whether they were Christians or theists shared a common belief in the existence of God the Creator who had endowed Men with "certain unalienable Rights." For them God was the Lawgiver and therefore no laws should be passed that were "contrary to the law of God." This absolute basis was weakened when evolutionary theory was applied to the law and the "written opinion of judges." Thus the door opened for the Supreme Court of the United States in 1973 for depriving the baby in the mother's womb its status of a human being. Lutzer draws attention to the parallel between the German war criminals who gassed the Jews, and the American abortionists who argued that they were not murderers because they had not broken any laws.

A further weakening effect in America was the introduction of liberal theology. Lutzer follows Montgomery in showing the logical consequence: the loss of the biblical foundation leads to the loss of God and consequently the loss of Man. The Christian worldview was replaced by the secular humanist worldview. In this view there is no basic difference between animal and man. There are no 'unalienable Rights' anymore. This change in worldview also explains why positions in the Supreme Court and all other courts are so important. The United States Constitution is no longer absolute. It is the judges that are. One may wonder if Lutzer's long list of what may happen in courts in the future is not going to become a self-fulfilling prophecy (e.g. gender perspective, homeschooling, religious freedom and fairness doctrine). Daniel 7:27 indicates that the Antichrist is going to change 'the times and the law' and we should appreciate the freedom that is still ours and oppose the lawmakers that may want to prevent us from being obedient to God's higher law.

Chapter 4 presents Hitler's view of propaganda as a tool to manipulate the masses. He used it to teach the people his philosophy of life by changing their minds by mass suggestion with slogans and lies and in case of opposition by force. He had outlined his strategy in his book 'Mein Kampf.' His power of language was used to manipulate the emotions (hatred); reason was to be reserved for the few. Language was to camouflage his real intentions in order to hide his predetermined end or at least to present his goals in a friendly manner. For example, 'cleansing the land' was to cover up the 'extermination of the Jews' and 'euthanasia' was called 'the best of modern therapy.' (79-IV) Lutzer then gives examples to show that our modern culture uses language in the same way in order to cover up immorality of all kind; for instance "tolerance" for what is really intolerance.

Lutzer's most important point in this chapter is what he calls 'a cultural current' or a cultural movement. If a critical mass of people filter out facts to the extent that they discard

all evidence to the contrary they become prey to the lies of mass suggestion. Lutzer cites Israel as a case in point when it desired to have a king to be like all other nations.

Hitler's strategy according to the founder of a militant homosexual group was used to change American perception of the fatal link between AIDS and homosexuality. Two publications are used as evidence for how the homosexuals promoted their movement in America. The following methods are taken from Sears and Osten, "The Homosexual Agenda" in order to demonstrate the power of Propaganda: 1. Wearing out and demoralizing the opposition; 2. appealing to the emotions by reversing the roles of victims and victimizers, the oppressed and the oppressors; 3. appealing to social justice by presenting their cause as just and right; 4. destroying every trace of opposition by intimidation: calling people names like 'homophobic,' hate-mongers, 'religious fanatics' etc.. Hitler called for demonizing the opposition "if one wishes to create agreement on a political or social philosophy." 86-IV

In the United States the media joined the homosexual movement in order to protect its own survival. It was carried away by the cultural current of its time. The same principle applies to the Media and its presentation of Islam who is portrayed as a religion of peace. In Nazi Germany according to Einstein editors of newspapers and the university elites were equally silenced. Only the church showed opposition and Einstein the Jew admired her for it.

Lutzer fears that in America universities will equally be carried away by the cultural current and will not defend 'the Christian view of the world.' Opposition to the homosexual agenda has become 'intolerable.' The same is true of criticism against Islam as the case of a Canadian pastor (Mark Harding) shows. "He opposed his high-school's decision to hand out copies of the Koran and the school's decision to provide a room for Muslim students to pray". (93-IV) If the Church in America is opposed to same-sex marriages the day may come when new laws will be made to the effect that the church will lose its tax-exempt status if it does not comply. Similarly, the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) is intending to pursue diversity in programming. Just as in Hitler's time the Government will impose the laws that will introduce censorship. As Christians we can only follow the example in the book of Acts (4:17-20). Rome did not tolerate that Jesus claimed that he was the only way.

Chapter 5 draws a parallel between mandatory public education in the EU (without mentioning the case of Switzerland whose laws forbid homeschooling as well) and Hitler's educational philosophy. "Laws making education in public schools compulsory have historically been found in the most totalitarian governments where state-sponsored indoctrination was a major goal of the educational system." (98-V) Private or denominational schools were shut down under Hitler. Loyalty to the Führer was mandatory for teachers who had to teach the state-censored text-books that taught "Darwin's evolution, the supremacy of the Aryan race and National Socialism" as the source of all truth. Some textbooks used Jesus as an example of a hero who waged war against the Jews. "Hitler's educational philosophy was patterned after the Soviet revolutionaries" (101-V) although Lutzer does not enter a discussion of what characterized Soviet Revolutionaries.

The educational system did not focus on cognitive but on experience-oriented affective goals. The latter were considered to be more effective in using Nazi ideology to indoctrinate the children. "Education was life-related, experience-centered and adopted with group pressure." (106-V) For instance questions in school were specifically formulated to propagate the atheistic humanistic values of the Reich. In Math for instance the rentability of a 'lunatic asylum' was compared with housing that could be built for the same

amount. In History it was not chronology of events that was taught but selecting what fitted the party line excluding any contradicting events.

Indoctrination required the scrubbing of traditional values. "Value clarification" (invented by Dr. Sidney Simon) was to transform "the beliefs, convictions, and moral values of a child." Children had to be taught that there are no moral values and that they are free to choose their personal values. Group pressure was used to deal with students who hung on to traditional values of home and church. Such 'freedom' involved psychological manipulation upon which the child was to declare its conversion publicly, practicing them regularly. Students had to be taught that it is possible to live simultaneously with two world views which then rendered the child "defenseless against an onslaught of humanistic beliefs: evolution, socialism, the normalcy of homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, etc." (The tragedy of this system is that the child or the student neither knows that this system is used "successfully" in communist countries (and in many cases even in the USA) nor realizes that the values of this curriculum have been predetermined.

Turning to the United States Lutzer focusses on the sexualization of children. He mentions two cases where a curriculum with compulsory lessons on the gender perspective were to be introduced even to children "as young as five years old." (108-V) the second case the rights of parents based in the First Amendment are being ignored. Lutzer then discusses the reason for this attempt to sexualize children and to 'undermine our millennial code of morals and values.' He quotes Tammy Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong* (Roseville, Calif.: Oriana Publishing 2003) to show the liberal social agenda of the radical left that hides behind the cloak of 'tolerance' in order to impose their 'warped view of the world' (Lutzer). Bruce believes that sexualization benefits the porn industry of future consumers and at the same time it 'strikes a final blow to family, faith, tradition, decency, and judgment.' A seven-point list is given of values that North Carolina teachers should 'instill' in their children. One of those is that 'All ethics are situational; there are no moral absolutes.' - Hence the call to parents to examine what their children are taught. "If not, our children are mentally confiscated by an international humanistic point of view." (111-V)

Finally, Lutzer illustrates what is happening in the text-book industry in America. The PC-Movement (Politically Correct) portrays America to promote their own agenda. In particular the history of America is presented in Marxist fashion as primarily the history of class struggle and oppression. This movement assumes that there is no objective truth, that truth is changing and situational. Under these presuppositions "History is a weapon to be used for whatever purposes seem appropriate for those who are oppressed." (113-V) Whoever opposes the views of the PC-world is seen as on the side of oppression, is morally oppressive, sexist, homophobic or hate-monger. According to David Horowitz 'there are more Marxists on the faculties of American colleges than in the entire former communist bloc.'

In view of this dismal situation there are no easy answers. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 needs to be upheld with courage.

Chapter 6 lists examples of those who have been courageous like Bonhoeffer who is famous for his distinction between cheap and costly grace. We are not qualified to sit in judgment of Germany if we have never faced their situations. Christ calls us to suffering and if we are keeping silent we are comparable to those pastors in Germany who did nothing to oppose Hitler. The history of America will never be changed unless we live

authentic Christian lives as for instance the nineteenth century Lutheran pastor who was excommunicated from his church because of his stand.

Other examples of those who have suffered for the truth are Zakari Botros, a Coptic priest who at the risk of his life preaches the Gospel to fifty million Muslims in the Middle East every week. Corrie ten Boom who miraculously was released from concentration camp and became famous through her book *The Hiding Place*. Donnita Travis of the Moody Church in Chicago. She takes care of the children in the drug- and crime-ridden inner-city neighborhoods of Chicago where 85 % of the children are growing up without a father. Many others who are not named stand up for their faith against secularism, eroticism and the accusation of 'intolerance' from individuals and organizations like the ACLU.

Briefly discussing the qualities that are required to make for strong Christians Lutzer mentions prayer and fasting, ability to recite large portions of Scripture and hymns, readiness to suffer for Christ's sake and knowing that suffering is 'a gift God gives to the Church.' America is no longer the country that protects the Christian faith. The Christian experience is similar to 1 Cor 4:11-13 and should match afresh Phil 2:14-16.

Chapter 7 concludes with a reminder of Bonhoeffer's call to "Confess!" Lutzer's summary deserves being quoted: "Bonhoeffer saw clearly what we in America have not yet grasped: that for us as Christians, the conflict is really between humanism and Christianity; or alternative religions and Christianity." (133-VII). This chapter is a reminder that the Church must not be overburdened with social and political concerns and thereby forget the power of the Gospel lies in the preaching of the cross. Quoting Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity*: "Christianity becomes an empty bottle that the successive cultures fill with all kinds of things," such as the agendas of "pop psychology, environmentalism and a nationalistic spirit that cannot distinguish between Christianity and the American way of life." - "God is neither Republican nor Democrat." (136-VII) Lutzer lists a number of substitutes for the message of the Gospel from substituting the cross with 'physical healing' to 'Christianity is community.' Consumerism, self-help and the quest for personal advantage are other substitutes replacing Bonhoeffer's "costly grace" by "cheap grace".

The German pastor and theologian Helmut Thielicke gets the final quote in this book. He said in 1945 that the German nation got what it deserved because it had 'repudiated forgiveness and kicked down the cross of the Lord.' Thielicke reminded the German people that in light of the first years after 1933 "success is the greatest narcotic of all." Nationalism instead of repentance destroyed the German church. Os Guinness is allowed to speak the final word for America when he said, "there is no problem in the wider culture that you cannot see in spades in the Christian Church. The rot is in us, and not simply out there. Christians are making a great mistake by turning everything into culture wars. It's a much deeper crisis." (140-VII)

Lutzer closes his comparison of Nazi Germany with the situation in the United States with this conclusion; 'the battle is not so much between church and state as it is within our own hearts.'

Comments on this synopsis

1. Lutzer could have quoted Julian Huxley's "UNESCO, its purpose and its philosophy" (1946) in order to show that the thinking of the United Nations was a reflection of Hitler's own values as far as the low view of human life is concerned, as it is

reflected in the so-called gender perspective.

<http://www.crossroad.to/Quotes/globalism/julian-huxley.htm>

2. Lutzer may forget that homeschooling is typically a privileged American option as it never existed in Europe in the 20th century. If Germany or any European nation should portray homeschooling as 'extreme fundamentalist' or if the European union should outlaw it this does not necessarily mean the same as a prohibition in the States, nor does it necessarily mean 'state-indoctrination' even if such was the case in Nazi-Germany. Hitler's goal by decree was indoctrination while European schools historically wanted to assure proper education for everybody at a level that most people would not have been able to provide for individual families. The fact that private schools in Europe are acceptable options even for Christians would indicate that indoctrination was not in the school programs of the past. The exception would be Darwinian ideas in biology/zoology which is part of what Lutzer calls 'a cultural current.' However, Europe is now facing the influence of the European union and even Switzerland is likely to adopt the atheist-humanist worldview. Religion as a mandatory ingredient has long been removed from the school system. Churches may teach religious classes as an aside on a voluntary basis.
What was simply taken for granted - State controlled schools - may now become a liability for Christians. Private schools may one day come to an end unless they fall in line with regard to the humanist-socialist European goals of education. In Germany and in Switzerland private schools, Christian or otherwise, are still tolerated.
3. Lutzer mentions the danger of churches losing their tax exempt status if they refuse marrying homosexuals. This is an American problem as even State pastors in Europe have no right to marry anyone legally. Lutzer could have mentioned an even greater danger for missionaries of losing their Church support if they should ever point out to their sending churches that adhering to Replacement Theology is a heresy.