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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

GROWING MENACE OF MAIL ORDER OBSCENITY

Under this title the United States Post Office Department published the following information on May 25, 1959:

What Is the Mail Order Obscenity Racket?

The vile racket that traffics in obscenity and pornography by mail has now reached a sales level estimated at more than a half-billion dollars a year.

Relying on the historic sanctity of first-class mail in the United States, and liberal court interpretations of what constitutes obscenity, peddlers of filth can reach into virtually every home in America.

This is a matter of growing concern especially to American parents because teen-agers and even grade-school boys and girls are becoming the principal targets of these racketeers.

The Post Office Department, which is responsible for enforcing the laws against transmitting indecent literature and film through the mail, estimates that merchants of filth will double the scope of their already extensive operations over the next four years unless parents and the decent-minded public join in a determined campaign to stamp out this racket.

Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield has emphasized that the absolute privacy of the mail is a basic American right and that the Post Office Department cannot and will not violate this right, even when it has strong evidence that the mail is being used for unlawful purposes.

The Post Office Department, therefore, must rely on the complaints of an alert citizenry—of people into whose homes solicitation material is sent—to take action against the purveyors of mail order obscenity.

Antiquated Laws and Liberal Court Interpretations a Handicap

Until August of 1958, however, an additional handicap was placed on the Post Office Department. Obscenity laws had shackled the Government by permitting it to prosecute only at the point of origin of the mail. This meant that court actions were taken primarily in New York and Los Angeles, where interpretations of what is obscene or pornographic are much different from those in the average American community.

In recent years, the Post Office Department had urged Congress to amend the law so that prosecutions could take place where the obscene material was received, where the actual damage was being done, and where citizens would have an opportunity to express their standards of morality and decency. This amendment was enacted, and signed into law by President Eisenhower, in August of 1958.

Taking advantage of the new legislation, the Post Office Department during the past year has completed approximately 14,000 separate investigations, almost two thirds of them based on complaints from American parents whose children received lewd solicitations for sales of obscene materials through the mails.

No Youngster Is Safe from Solicitation by Merchants of Filth

A child need not have indicated any interest in this trash to receive it in the mail. The racketeers openly solicit every young person whose name they can obtain, whether through the purchase of mailing lists, study of school classbooks, or through the use of fake business "fronts." Postmaster General Summerfield says the Post Office Department has thousands of letters from indignant parents whose children received unsolicited obscene material soon after answering an advertisement to purchase some innocent item such as a baseball bat or a toy automobile, or whose names were obtained because they had joined a youth club or social group.

In a recent raid by the Postal Inspectors in New York City on just one dealer in pornography, 17 tons of highly obscene printed and filmed materials were confiscated, as well as mailing lists containing the names of thousands of high school graduates culled out of high school yearbooks.

The Post Office Department estimates that between 700,000 and a million children in American homes will receive unsolicited obscene and pornographic literature through the mails this year.

Postmaster General Urges Concerted Action

In testifying before Congress recently, Postmaster General Summerfield said: "Ruthless mail order merchants in filth are violating the homes of the nation in defiance of the national government. They are callously dumping into the hands of our children, through our mail boxes at home, unordered lewd material, as well as samples soliciting the sale of even more objectionable pictures, slides, films, and related filth. Unquestionably, these large, defiant barons of obscenity are contributing to the alarming increase in juvenile delinquency, as many noted authorities have publicly observed on repeated occasions."

Repeatedly, in the investigations of armed robbery, extortion, embezzlement, and forgery, authorities find that those guilty of the crimes were early collectors of obscene pictures and films.

Authorities also point out that sex criminals and sex murderers almost always prove to have a long record of addiction to pornographic and sadistic material. Children who are never exposed to this material, it is noted, may nevertheless be victims of sex criminals who *have* been exposed to it.

In a speech in Washington in May 1959 Postmaster General Summerfield said the Post Office has diligently tried to keep the mails clear of indecent materials.

In the fiscal year of 1958, he stated, investigations conducted by postal inspectors caused the arrest of 293 persons. The Post Office General Counsel issued 92 orders barring use of the mails to dealers in pornography. The arrests in 1958 were 45 per cent above the previous year and—Mr. Summerfield predicted—will increase substantially again this year.

With the weapon of the new legislation in hand, he declared, the Post Office is greatly intensifying its campaign.

"We are, in effect," he said, "declaring war on these purveyors of filth, big and little, high and low.

"We are launching an intense and unrelenting effort to stop this monstrous assault on the nation's children in every way possible.

"And we are confident that, with adequate public and legislative support, this job can be done."

Fourfold Program of Co-operation

To achieve this co-operation, the fourfold Post Office program is:

1. Drawing maximum public attention to the menace of this racket;
2. Urging parents to help apprehend the mailers of filth to their children;
3. Helping mobilize community support behind adequate law enforcement of local ordinances or state laws when these purveyors are apprehended and brought to court;
4. Rallying public opinion behind new and stiffer legislation on obscenity.

Parents of America Are Key to Effective Action Against This Racket

Parents into whose homes obscene material is mailed are urged to take these two simple steps:

1. Save all materials received, including the envelope and all enclosures; and
2. Report the matter immediately to the local postmaster, and turn the materials over to him, either in person or by mail.

Postal inspectors stand ready to take action when evidence is received anywhere that the laws applying to the mailing of pornographic material have been violated.

The Congress has shown deep concern over this problem, and special committees are currently giving it serious and purposeful study.

In increasing numbers of communities throughout the country, parents, various organizations, civic groups, newspaper publishers, and others are working together in determined efforts to help meet the racketeers' challenge.

By supporting and aiding the Post Office and backing up members of Congress and local officials who are fighting to stamp out this evil, they can look to the real success that is vital to the nation's moral fiber and future welfare.

BRIEF ITEMS FROM RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

Bethel, Germany.—Germany has been selected to become the "stronghold" of Islam's missionary work in Europe, a prominent West German Protestant missions leader said here. Professor Georg Vicedom of Neuendettelsau addressed 40 delegates to a study conference sponsored by the Association of Evangelical Missionary Societies in Germany.

Noting that Germany had become "a major objective" of non-Christian religions, Dr. Vicedom said individual missionary efforts of young Mohammedan students and "calculated campaigns" of Islamic groups such as the Ahmadiyya Mission have become increasingly active in recent years. He cited the erection of mosques and mission centers in Hamburg, Munich, Berlin, and the Ruhr area financed by the latter group. "While Islamic parishes in Germany are still small in number," he said, "their missionary zeal is enormous."

Dr. Vicedom also noted that "the biggest missionary era of the Christian church does not lie behind us, but is still to come." The "essence" of today's missionary work, he stressed, is no longer to Christianize peoples of Asia and Africa in the shadow of Western colonialism or to help eliminate their material distress. "Our objective," he said, "must rather be to equip, in the spirit of ecumenic co-operation,

the young native churches, which today constitute the largest missions potential of Christianity, for their own missionary efforts and to make available to them theologians from Western Christian countries."

Boston.—Merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America "at the earliest feasible date" was approved 3 to 1 by local churches and fellowships in a nationwide plebiscite.

Results of the voting were announced here by Dr. William B. Rice of Wellesley Hills, Mass., chairman of the Joint Merger Commission, which has been negotiating the union since 1955. He said about 600 of a possible 930 churches and fellowships participated in the plebiscite, with 75 per cent approving the merger. As a result of the voting, Mr. Rice explained, a plan of union will be presented at a joint conference of the two denominations in Syracuse, N. Y., October 31 to November 2.

If the union plan is approved by both denominations, Unitarians and Universalists will be asked to ratify the merger in 1960. The proposed new body, to be known as the United Liberal Church, will unite some 105,000 Unitarians and 75,000 Universalists.

Although the commission has been working on the union since 1955, the merger has been in the offing for more than 12 years. In 1953 youth organizations of both denominations were united into the Liberal Religious Youth, and a year later their departments of education, public relations, and publications were merged into the Council of Liberal Churches.

Washington, D. C.—Parishioners of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Pittsburgh, Pa., lost a battle to try to save their church from being razed in a slum clearance and redevelopment project when the United States Supreme Court declined to entertain their appeal. The court in a unanimous "per curiam" (by the court) order declared that "the motion to dismiss is granted and the appeal is dismissed."

"Taking the papers whereon the appeal was taken as a petition for writ of certiorari, it is denied," the court added. In layman's language, this meant the highest tribunal agreed with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court that the appellants had no legal standing on which to sue in court. And the constitutional issues which they raised were not sufficient, in the court's opinion, to warrant a review of the case.

The parishioners, members of a parish of predominantly Italian descent, objected bitterly when they learned their house of worship was to be razed to make way for the "Lower Hill" redevelopment

project in a crowded old area of downtown Pittsburgh, while another Catholic church in the area, Epiphany, was to be spared. However, the Most Rev. John F. Dearden, then bishop of Pittsburgh and now archbishop of Detroit, had agreed to accept, as trustee of St. Peter's Parish, a settlement of \$1,240,000 for its buildings.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court had ruled that the parishioners had no standing in court. At issue was the constitutionality of a 1935 state law declaring that church members have no rights in the congregation's property by virtue of their membership and that church property shall be bought, sold, and controlled according to the rules of the various denominations.

St. Peter's parishioners complained that this meant members of different churches were treated differently in the eyes of the law, but the Pennsylvania courts held this was not discriminatory, simply representing a decision by civil authorities that they would not intervene in ecclesiastical matters.

BRIEF ITEMS FROM NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

New York.—The three church bodies that will unite next year to form "The American Lutheran Church" have reported a combined baptized membership of 2,191,327 in 1958, a total increase of 70,960 over the previous year.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church gained 36,312 members, or 3.35 per cent, to boost its membership to 1,119,121 by the end of last year. The American Lutheran Church added 32,245 members, or 3.31 per cent, in 1958 to reach a total of 1,005,174, the fourth Lutheran body to pass the million mark in membership. The United Evangelical Lutheran Church showed an increase of 2,403 members, or 3.7 per cent, and now has 67,032 members.

The uniting churches will hold their final conventions as separate bodies April 19—21, 1960, at Minneapolis, to be followed April 22—24 by the constituting convention of The American Lutheran Church, which will begin to function Jan. 1, 1961.

New York.—At least 80 of the 305 Lutheran churches in Metropolitan New York are interracial in membership, according to a study made by the Lutheran Welfare Council of New York. The inquiry, which drew replies from 167 of the congregations, also revealed that 50 other churches are ready to welcome all comers, while 37 gave no indication of their attitude on the racial question.

Among the 138 congregations which did not reply to the question-

naire, a number are known to be interracial in interest or in fact, but were not included in the Welfare Council's summary, it was said by Dr. Cordelia Cox, executive secretary of the agency.

Of the 80 interracial congregations responding to the study, one is predominantly Chinese, six are largely Negro, and 68 are mostly white. Within this group, seven congregations have more than 50 per cent nonwhite membership, eight between 25 and 50 per cent, and 65 less than 25 per cent.

Although the question was not specifically asked, many replies noted cultural and national groups. These in order of their frequency included whites, Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesians, and American Indians. One congregation named 28 nationalities among its members, another 22.

All five boroughs and four counties of New York reported one or more congregations which are integrated and others which are "quite willing to have integrated membership as people of other races move into their neighborhoods," Dr. Cox observed. Queens borough listed 22 integrated congregations out of 40 reporting; Brooklyn, 16 of 32; Manhattan, 11 of 16; the Bronx, 12 of 19; and Staten Island, two of five. Westchester County reported five interracial churches out of 15 which responded; Nassau, eight of 26; Suffolk, three of 12; and Rockland, one of two.

The Welfare Council's summary pointed out that several of those responding to the inquiry objected to the word "integration" on the grounds that its use "seemed to them to smack of race consciousness and segregation." Dr. Cox stressed that she agreed with those who believe no Christian membership distinction should be made on the basis of race, "yet the fact remains," she added, "that distinctions are made, and it is well to be aware of them if we are to help overcome them."

Geneva.—Dr. Franklin Clark Fry of New York, president of the Lutheran World Federation, will represent the federation at the consecration of Bishop-elect Sigurbjörn Einarsson as head of the National (Lutheran) Church of Iceland in Reykjavik on June 21.

Bishop-elect Einarsson, for the past ten years a theological professor at the State University in Reykjavik, was elected in March to succeed Bishop Asmundur Gudmundsson. Bishop Gudmundsson, who has reached the compulsory retirement age of 70, has headed the Icelandic Church since 1954. Nearing completion is the church's new cathedral, which is being erected at Skalholt. Skalholt is the ancient bishop's seat that dates back to the beginning of the 11th century.

The Church of Iceland, an LWF affiliate, has about 150,000 members, or approximately 90 per cent of the country's population.

New York.—The following figures are taken from the new directory of the Lutheran World Federation. They give the membership of Lutheran Churches.

GENERAL SUMMARY

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| 61 member churches of the LWF | 49,894,688 |
| Eight LWF recognized congregations | 6,510 |
| Lutheran churches and congregations outside the LWF | 5,638,793 |
| United churches in Germany (after deduction of non-Lutheran members) | 15,595,077 |
| TOTAL | 71,135,068 |

By continents, Lutherans are distributed as follows:

| | All Lutherans | LWF Members |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| Europe | 59,416,587 | 42,397,110 |
| North America | 8,022,940 | 5,230,514 |
| South America | 779,844 | 551,296 |
| Asia (and adjacent islands) | 1,453,828 | 1,338,940 |
| Africa (and Madagascar) | 1,178,968 | 332,021 |
| Australia (and New Zealand and New Guinea) | 282,901 | 51,317 |

Countries having the most Lutherans (more than one million) are:

| | |
|---------------|------------|
| Germany | 37,252,486 |
| U. S. A. | 7,627,738 |
| Sweden | 7,000,000 |
| Denmark | 4,304,000 |
| Finland | 4,234,244 |
| Norway | 3,173,523 |

THE MEMBER CHURCHES OF THE LWF

| | | |
|-----------------|--|-----------|
| Argentina | United Evangelical Lutheran Church | 3,786 |
| Australia | The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia | 51,317 |
| Austria | Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria | 392,837 |
| Brazil | Synodal Federation, Evangelical Church of Lu- theran Confession in Brazil | 509,000 |
| British Guiana | Evangelical Lutheran Church in British Guiana .. | 7,000 |
| Chile | German Evangelical Church in Chile | 25,000 |
| Czechoslovakia | Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Con- fession in Czechoslovakia | 415,269 |
| | Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession | 53,000 |
| Denmark | The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark .. | 4,304,000 |
| Estonia (exile) | Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church | 66,000 |
| Ethiopia | Mekane Yesus Evangelical Church | 631 |
| Finland | Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church | 4,234,244 |
| France | Church of the Augsburg Confession of Alsace and Lorraine | 240,000 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of France | 42,000 |

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| Germany | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria | 2,469,000 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brunswick | 700,000 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church in the State of Hamburg | 790,000 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover | 3,770,000 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lübeck | 205,000 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg .. | 1,144,651 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oldenburg | 543,000 |
| | Evangelical Church of Pomerania | 700,000 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony | 4,413,699 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg- Lippe | 75,240 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schleswig- Holstein | 2,477,819 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia | 1,800,000 |
| | Evangelical Church in Württemberg | 2,400,000 |
| | The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong | 4,800 |
| Hong Kong | Hungarian Evangelical Church | 432,961 |
| Hungary | National Church of Iceland | 150,000 |
| Iceland | Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church | 254,462 |
| India | Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church | 34,957 |
| | Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church | 209,371 |
| | Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church | 35,743 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh | 4,971 |
| | The South Andhra Lutheran Church | 13,854 |
| | The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church | 54,222 |
| | Batak Protestant Christian Church | 717,398 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy | 6,000 |
| | Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church | 9,162 |
| | Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church | 120,000 |
| | Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church | 12,000 |
| | Malagasy Lutheran Church | 208,526 |
| | Mexican Lutheran Church | 858 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands | 60,000 |
| Norway | The Church of Norway | 3,155,323 |
| Poland | Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland | 125,000 |
| | The Church of Sweden | 7,000,000 |
| Sweden | Lutheran Church of Northern Tanganyika | 122,864 |
| Tanganyika | American Evangelical Lutheran Church | 23,043 |
| United States and Canada | American Lutheran Church | 972,929 |
| | Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church | 576,189 |
| | The Evangelical Lutheran Church | 1,082,809 |
| | The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church | 37,142 |
| | Lutheran Free Church | 77,304 |
| | United Evangelical Lutheran Church | 64,629 |
| | The United Lutheran Church in America | 2,395,611 |
| | Evangelical Church in the Peoples' Republics of Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina | 11,150 |
| | Evangelical Christian Church of the Augsburg Confession in the People's Republic of Slo- venia | 23,478 |
| | | |

| | |
|--|--------|
| Evangelical Church in the People's Republic of Serbia | 8,100 |
| Slovak Evangelical Christian Church of the Augsburg Confession in Yugoslavia | 57,339 |

LWF RECOGNIZED CONGREGATIONS

| | | |
|-----------|---|-------|
| Colombia | San Mateo Congregation Bogota of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia | 1,700 |
| | Parish of Cali, San Martin's Congregation | 235 |
| Ecuador | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ecuador, Congregation in Quito and in Guayaquil | 250 |
| Peru | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Peru | 1,350 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Barquisimeto | 87 |
| Venezuela | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela, Congregation of the "Resurrection" of Caracas | 2,500 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Turen | 76 |
| | Evangelical Lutheran Church of Valencia | 312 |