

INTERFAITH EFFORT FOR DECENCY

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

The week of October 29-November 5 [2000] is designated as the 13th Annual White Ribbon Against Pornography Campaign. That's WRAP. I learned this from a packet of literature that came to our church from Morality in Media (or MIM). They describe themselves as "a national interfaith organization established in 1962 to combat obscenity and to uphold decency standards in the media." For the New York office phone (212) 870-3222.

Reading their first mailing convinced me to request more. There is an array of material, including bumper stickers that say "PORN KILLS LOVE." Especially impressive to me are the findings about the demonstrable harm of pornography and the reasons why congregations and individuals can make a difference. One learns that juries are instructed to draw upon their own knowledge of what the community standards are; but without visible community opposition to obscenity, a jury may conclude that the hardcore pornography at issue in the trial does not violate community standards. Without community opposition, many prosecutors won't enforce obscenity laws.

The notion is out there that nothing is really "dirty." This notion can come from a lack of appreciation for what is clean and what is sacred. People become less aware of the distinction between love and lust. Even some who go through the trappings of a sacred wedding ceremony may be unclear about that distinction.

In presenting my religious belief, I do not wish to imply that the MIM organization subscribes thereto. My point of view comes from a theological book published by Emanuel Swedenborg way back in 1768.

Although called for short *Married Love*, the full title of the book is: "*Delights of Wisdom Concerning Married Love, and the Insane Delights of Obscene Love.*" The book maintains that God intends for us a wholesome love in marriage, and this is "holy, pure and clean." Within this love, the book says, are gathered "all joys and delights from first to last." This is the very opposite of the lusts that threaten and sunder marriage, says the book. Lust is tragic and foolish and the antithesis of "clean."

In God's gift of married love are blessings of "innocence, peace tranquility, inmost friendship, full confidence and a mutual desire of mind and heart to do each other every good" (*Married Love* paragraph 180). In obscene love there is selfishness, disrespect and a passion for controlling.

How can mere humans hope to have a "pure" love? The encouraging answer is that no mortal is totally pure, but that it is the intention that matters. It is the intention that is "primarily regarded by God," says the book, and if a person lives sincerely, God grants a love that becomes progressively more noble (*Married Love* 71).

It is heartening to find young people who are idealistic even in this sophisticated age. Heartening too it is to find among people of all ages a desire to protect what is decent and good. This is especially true when we consider the children given into our care. I hope that many will join in wishing well to organizations and individuals who labor to make a difference for good in our moral environment.

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