

The

TRUTH

about



COMIC BOOKS

by Ruth I. Johnson

Do you have the courage to learn the truth about comic books? Are you willing to face the facts and act accordingly? Do not read this leaflet until you have settled these questions.

Walk through your drugstores, newsstands, and bus depots, and glance at a few of the titles flashed on our magazines—CRIME—SEX—LOVE—MURDER.



THE TRUTH ABOUT COMIC BOOKS

Approximately 90,000,000 comic books are sold each month. The biggest share of these magazines are about crime and sex and are purchased by children and young people.

“According to the ‘Wall Street Journal,’ there are 840,000,000 units released each year—twenty per cent more than four years ago.”*

Since 1947 juvenile delinquency has increased approximately twenty per cent, and the worst part of this is that younger and younger children are involved in violent crimes.

Did you notice something here? In recent years there has been a twenty-per-cent increase in comic-book production. In approximately the same period of time there has been a twenty-per-cent increase in juvenile crimes!

Their Contents

Comic books and magazines, which are said to be harmless reading for young America, contain some of the most gruesome, gory stories and pictures ever to be printed in any nation. Children and young people indulge to such an extent that many of them become mental criminals before they reach their “teens.”

These magazines, which in 1952 were said by the Navy officials to be “too gory for the American sailor,” are now in the hands of boys and girls and young people all over our land.

They are even being read by six- and seven-year-olds, who lay aside their school reader for the crime comic books.

The "Ladies' Home Journal" printed an article in November, 1953, in which the author, Dr. Fredric Wertham, an authority on juvenile delinquency, stated that the Navy had rejected these comic books because they try to avoid the sale of material which "goes beyond the line of decency."*

Many of these magazines give, in word and picture, a detailed description of how to steal and kill; and they get away with it. Everything from stealing a piece of candy to robbing a bank can be found in the crime comics.

In some stores the sex and crime magazines are stacked side by side with the bottles of liquor. While boys and girls and young people are not permitted to buy the liquor, children of all ages can buy the poison that is found in these books. Even the youngest reader is exposed to indecency and crime. These magazines are poison for the mind, and we should regard them as such.

In the ten-year period from 1937 to 1947 there were 19 different crime-comic magazines on the market. During the following year 107 new crime comic books came out. With the "exchange" method in use, millions of



people handle them every month.

Dr. Wertham gives us this story: "An eight-year-old girl, living in a very comfortable environment in Long Island, said, 'I have lots of friends, and we buy about one comic book a week; and then we exchange. I can read about ten a day. I like to read the comic books about love, because when I go to sleep at night, I love to dream about love.' "*"

I challenge you to do as I did. Visit your local bookstores, your respectable department stores, your drugstores, and even your neighborhood grocery store, and let your eyes fall on the racks filled with trashy magazines and novels. You will notice that the majority of magazines show daring pictures of half-clad women, beastly looking men, killers, gunmen, and all other forms of crime and sex. The Scriptures instruct women to be adorned in modest apparel (I Tim. 2:9), but these magazines show them in almost no apparel at all.

Christians Unconcerned

The sad part of this whole situation is the unconcern of Christians all over our land. In many cases parents have no idea what is being seen and read by their children.

Sermons, articles, talks, and editorials have been released by outstanding clergymen and well-known authors of our day; but very little is being done to keep down the sale of crime comics and sex stories. Some Christians smile at the one who tries to bring these things into the open and in their smug way say, "Aren't you

being a little narrow?"

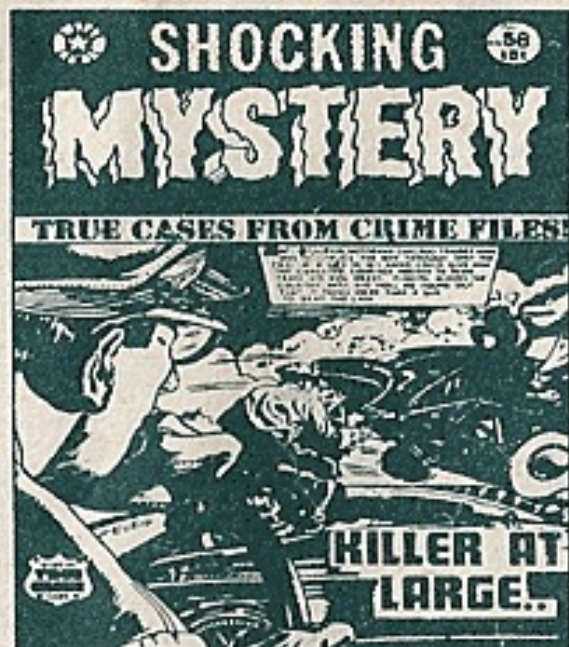
Those who do realize the dangers involved try to blame the storekeeper who fills his magazine racks with such material, but this cannot be done. Remember, the average businessman is interested in business. He sells those things which the public demands. If people want this material, he stocks it.

The Norwalk Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, Winton Burne, said that the problem with teen-agers is largely one of sex. "Their appetites, desires, and ideas on this subject are received in a large degree from the magazines (including comics) which are procurable on newsstands. There are plenty of unwholesome seeds planted in the kids' minds by this literature."**

A young man who is now behind prison bars because of a sex crime recently said, "I'm no different from anyone else. I can see now what made me what I am. It came from those filthy magazines that you nice people allow to be plastered all over the newsstands . . . I was a kid at a newsstand when I started down . . . It was one of your respectable citizens who started me down, the wealthy guy who owned the newsstand. How was I to know that the stuff was poison? Where's the big shot who gave me that start? I know. He's still doing his corrupt business, and he's free!!!"**

When the publishers of the crime magazines are faced with the statement that their material is corrupting American youth, they tell us that it should not hurt the strong-willed reader.

Again we quote Dr. Wertham: "We would not by law permit people to sell bad candy with poisonous ingredients because the manufacturer guarantees that it will not hurt children with strong stomachs and will sicken only those



children who are inclined to have stomach upsets in the first place. Yet that is how the comic-book industry reasons."*

What is happening to our morals? These magazines can continue to sell only as we buy them. As parents carelessly allow children to "read anything," these sales will increase.

Some Results of Comics

Dr. Fredric Wertham, who has written a complete book on this subject, lists a few of the results of our twentieth-century comic books. Perhaps they will help to open our eyes.

1. "Three boys, six to eight years old, took a boy of seven, hanged him nude from a tree, his hands tied behind him, and then burned him with matches. They could not find their first choice for this treatment—a girl of six. Probation officers, investigating, found that they were re-enacting a comic-book plot."

2. "A boy of eleven killed a woman in a holdup. When arrested, he was found surrounded by comic books. His twenty-year-old brother said, 'If you want the cause of all this, here it

is: It's these rotten comic books. Cut them out, and things like this wouldn't happen.' "

3. "A boy of thirteen committed a 'lust murder' of a girl of six. After his arrest, in jail, he asked for comic books. 'I refused, of course,' said the sheriff. Another thirteen-year-old boy, who spent 'most of his time looking at comic books,' committed a 'sex murder' of a girl of four."*

Newspapers are filled with similar reports, and yet we carelessly say, "They aren't really harmful." What is the matter with Americans today? Don't we care to face facts? Why do we allow ourselves to read these reports, see the results, and still sit back and do nothing to curb it?

What Can Be Done?

It is our privilege to write to our congressmen. We are the ones who can refuse to buy this filth. We can tell our grocer, our druggist, and our newsman that we will refuse to patronize their business establishments as long as they carry such material.

But you say, "I'm only one." True! And I am another, and there are others. If each person reading this leaflet would take action, something would happen very soon.

Perhaps if we analyze our lives, we will find that deep down in our hearts we do not really care. It may be that our careless indifference is the result of an impure heart. Christ said, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, las-

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civiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). In Proverbs 23:7 we read, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Christians, we are "bought with a price." We need things which are wholesome, things which will build up our spiritual lives, which will give us spiritual vitamins to help us "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

It is up to us—the adults of this nation—to clean house and make the surroundings and circumstances wholesome for today's children. It is your job—and mine. Let us PRAY and WORK and SEE GOD PERFORM THE MIRACLE.

* These quotations were reprinted by special permission from the "Ladies' Home Journal." Copyright, 1953, by Fredric Wertham.

** These quotations were reprinted through the courtesy of Van Kampen Press, from the book "Poison Peddling."

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