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the launching pad

With C. MERVYN MAXWELL
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Q. I notice that *Liberty* does not oppose Bible reading in the public school. I think our Reform Jewish synagogue takes a more consistent position on church-state separation than you do! [Nebraska]

A. Apart from its spiritual message, the Bible is a great literary treasure. It is a foundation of much that is best in our civilization. It is one of the best-preserved and best-authenticated primary sources for ancient history.

Any other book with similar recommendations we would never dream of banning. We would consider doing so a violation of the freedom of speech, not to say a repudiation of common sense. For a discussion on methods of teaching the Bible in public schools, see page 8.

Q. I was surprised that the Christmas stamp issued by the United States Post Office for 1967 had so distinctly religious a motif. Isn't this an infringement of the separation of church and state? Did it just happen? Was no voice of protest raised?

A. The 1967 Christmas stamp was based on a famous painting by Hans Memling *Madonna and Child With Angels*.

A number of persons and organizations did protest against the issuing of the stamp. A suit filed by Americans United insisted that it was not so much a "Christmas" stamp—there being no crib, manger, shepherds, or Wise Men—as a Roman Catholic portrayal of the virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven holding a Roman Catholic missal (mass book) in her hand.

On September 14, 1967, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed the suit. It virtually acknowledged that the stamp was religious but said "the publication of a postage stamp, even if it consists of a design of religious significance," is not contrary to "either the establishment clause or the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment." It further stated that "the Postmaster General in selecting designs for postage stamps is not subject to judicial review."

Incidentally a similar stamp has come under criticism in the United Kingdom. The stamp there is based on a painting of the Madonna and Child by Murillo. The Evangelical Protestant Society of

Belfast, Northern Ireland, in a letter to the British Postmaster General said, "We believe this to be a direct insult to British Protestants as the stamp is a purely Roman Catholic reproduction of the Madonna and Child, which forms part of the religious beliefs of Roman Catholics."

Q. Your opposition to the use of Federal funds for church-related buildings is incredible. Youngsters are going to attend college somewhere; if not on a private campus, then on a State university campus. If it's O.K. for tax money to house these students on one campus, then it's O.K. for it to house them on another campus. America is changing, but *Liberty* has maintained its individualistic stand against "Federal aid" so long it cannot think a new thought. [Maryland]

A. *Liberty's* position may be less individualistic than you think. James Madison warned against diverting even "three pence" from public funds to church-related institutions, and we have no record he ever served on the *Liberty* editorial staff!

Leo Pfeffer says in his *Church, State, and Freedom*, page 446: "Every state admitted to the union since 1876 was compelled by Congress to write into its constitution a requirement that it maintain a school system 'free from sectarian control.' Today practically every state in the nation has a constitutional provision that either expressly or impliedly prohibits the appropriation of public money to schools controlled by religious organizations. (Maine and Vermont appear to be the only exceptions.)"

And *Liberty* may be less old-fashioned than you think. Presented only last November with a chance to change its constitution and legalize State aid to parochial schools, New York turned it down by a margin of two and a half to one.

Opposing Government aid to church-related educational institutions is not so much individualistic as it is up-to-date American!

Q. The Catholic Church has made so many changes in recent years, do you think it will ever lift its ban on the married priesthood?

A. A married pope is unthinkable, I'm sure. Married cardinals and bishops are also impossible, so far as I can judge the Catholic Church. But a