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Recommended Citation

Maxwell, C. Mervyn, "The Launch Pad" (1969). *Faculty Publications*. 3834.
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the launching pad

With C. MERVYN MAXWELL
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Q. I say that rational man ought not to worship and bow down but to understand and reverently appreciate. Worship and blind faith belong only to the ignorant and superstitious. You say that a man needs to believe, to have faith, and that the world is in turmoil and we cannot take time to be rational about religion. Just grasp at it, have faith, and pass it on. Christianity is crumbling. More and more people are finding their own answers. I can partially agree with your answer in the July-August issue—I can understand attributing marvelous physical evidences to something, God it may be called; but credit is one thing and worship is something else.

A. Blind faith believes without evidence or in spite of evidence. Intelligent faith is based on evidence.

I do not say, "Just have faith and pass it on." Like you, I too oppose "blind faith," which is one reason I write this column. I think God opposes it. Paul and Peter in the New Testament opposed it. When asking people to believe in God the apostles first presented extensive evidence (as in Acts 2, 13, 17) upon which they then invited their audiences to establish their faith.

It is unthinkable that a God intelligent enough to create the universe and the human mind would expect us to be unreasoning and fatuous.

When you say that "on the basis of evidence" you are willing to attribute our marvelous universe to a "something, God it may be called," you are standing close to my conception of faith.

If faith should not be blind, neither should worship. Worship is defined as "reverence or veneration paid to a supernatural being." The kind of worship I attempt to offer God grows directly out of an intelligent appreciation of Him as a loving, gracious, just, and all-wise Creator. Such worship, far from debasing a man, ennobles him.

Q. The Christian message is one of freedom. Jesus said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Paul said, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). Why does a magazine that calls itself *Liberty* continually try to get us back to the bondage of the old Jewish Sabbath?

A. The freedom that Christ brings to us is not freedom from the law, but freedom to obey the law.

A natural man, Paul says, "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7); but, he points out, Jesus came "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (verse 4).

Innumerable Christians around the world testify to the effectiveness of Christ's grace in helping them overcome sin—in changing thieves and cheats into honest men, transforming angry husbands into kind and patient ones, and so on. Christ's freedom enables us to keep the moral law instead of breaking it.

And if it is Christ who makes us free, this freedom cannot be realized apart from a close personal relationship with Him. The seventh-day Sabbath—which the Bible calls "the sabbath of the Lord" (Exodus 20:10)—is vital to the fullest realization of this freedom. It provides for twenty-four hours every week of a unique and highly spiritual relationship between a man and his Saviour, and thus is basic to the very freedom of which you speak. The seventh-day Sabbath does not oppose spiritual freedom but helps assure it.

Q. Sometimes it seems that the Baptists are yielding to pressure to accept Federal aid, and sometimes it seems as though they're holding out against it just as they always have. It's confusing to me. Can you help?

A. Major Baptist denominations in the United States have what is known as a "congregational" type of organization. Each congregation is more or less an autonomous unit capable of making its own decisions. Local congregations send delegates to representative assemblies called associations, the decisions of which have a strong influence on the member churches but are not considered binding. The consequence is that no one voice speaks for all Baptists. Thus one Baptist institution or congregation may accept Federal funds while another rejects them, and there is no "inconsistency" in the process.

One State association may make one recommendation and another State association make a different one. For example, the thousand messengers (delegates) to the annual meeting of the Virginia Baptist General Association last November approved a motion which permitted each Baptist school in Virginia to decide independently whether or not to accept Federal funds. On the other hand,

the Montgomery Baptist Association of Montgomery, Alabama, at the same time ruled after lengthy debate that the Montgomery Baptist Hospital might not accept the Federal money it had requested in lieu of a deficit of ninety thousand dollars that had resulted in the past year from caring for Medicare patients.

Baptists in America have traditionally stood in the forefront of opposition to the acceptance of Federal funds. It was they who motivated Jefferson to set up a complete separation of church and state in Virginia and later to coin his famous "wall of separation" apothegm. Even in granting permission to local schools to decide about Federal funds, the Virginia Association insisted, according to a newspaper report, that this did not represent a breach in the historic Baptist stand because "there are Federal programs in which the institutions could participate without violating the separation of church and state traditions."

Q. I greatly enjoy *Liberty*. Would you print a correction of an error in the July-August "Launching Pad"? Jehovah's Witnesses do not refuse blood transfusions on the basis of a Biblical command not to "drink" blood as you say, but on the Biblical command to "abstain from" blood (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25). If your doctor told you to "abstain from" alcohol, do you think it would be permissible to inject a little of it into your veins? Actually this command has proven very wise to follow, since blood transfusions may carry hepatitis and many other diseases. An M.D. of my knowledge has performed "upwards of 20,000 surgical operations" without ever giving a blood transfusion, prescribing

normal-saline solution instead, even in extreme cases, and has never lost a patient.

A. I personally have taken a pledge to "abstain from" alcohol, but I understand this pledge to refer to alcoholic beverages and not to small amounts of alcohol for medicinal purposes, which have no observable effect on one's ability to think. In Bible times the command to "abstain from blood"—a good translation—unquestionably had nothing to do with transfusions, which were unheard of then.

If a child is dying in a hospital and the hospital is unwilling to give a normal-saline injection in lieu of a blood transfusion, would it not be better to take the chance that the child might pick up a disease from blood than to let it die without the blood?

I think it would—but this is my own conviction. I respect the right of others to believe as they see fit, and I do appreciate this clarification. Thank you.

Q. Should state aid be given to a school belonging to a denomination (Catholic) that teaches and practices throughout the world a doctrine opposite to the First Amendment?

A. Of all the Presidential candidates in 1960 only John F. Kennedy, the Roman Catholic, came out clearly on the separation of church and state.

But this is beside the point. No state aid should be given directly to any school of any religious denomination. The progress of religion in the United States over the past two centuries demonstrates beyond an iota of doubt that religion flourishes best when it is not supported by the state, a fact thus vindicating the wisdom of our founding fathers in setting up a separation of the two.

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