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C. Mervyn Maxwell
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Recommended Citation

Maxwell, C. Mervyn, "Insight" (1970). *Faculty Publications*. 3855.
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insight

By C. MERVYN MAXWELL

Department of Church History, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan

Q. LIBERTY mystifies me. It's modern, relevant, and with it. But it treats religion as if it could help! Shades of Galileo, the Inquisition and Salem! Anybody knows religion has always retarded freedom. But LIBERTY shakes me up. Maybe you're right. Maybe religion can help the country.

A. I had a Chevrolet once. It was a lemon. Next year I bought a Ford. You see, I didn't give up on cars.

Some forms of religion have retarded freedom, but religion per se can be good. Christianity, I believe, can help our nation in many ways; one way, at the grass roots level, is by giving individuals real freedom.

The religion of Jesus offers a man freedom from guilt: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us" (1 John 1:9).

It offers freedom from undue anxiety: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22).

It offers freedom from crippling timidity: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

It offers freedom from needless pessimism: "According to his promise we wait for . . . a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13, R.S.V.).

It offers freedom from ill will toward one's neighbors: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).

And it offers freedom even from hostility and suspicion: "I say unto you, Love your enemies" (chapter 5:44).

Q. Without Federal or State aid, more and more parochial schools will have to close as parents find it increasingly difficult

to pay tuition in the nonpublic school. But don't think that we Roman Catholics close our schools down just to put pressure on the legislatures. We try everything else we can first—consolidation, the closing of a single room, the closing of a few grades. But the closing of entire schools seems more and more to be the only answer. To put millions of children out of parochial schools will not only destroy one of the finer elements of our society (the parochial school system) but will also place a great burden on taxpayers generally. "Parochiaid" would not only save parochial schools; it would also save taxpayers a lot of money.

A. I heard a most thought-provoking reply to your line of reasoning at the public hearing for Michigan's "Parochiaid" bill 2424. A spokesman for a group called Catholics for Public Schools observed: (1) That attendance at Catholic schools is dropping partly because of the declining birth rate since the increased use of contraceptives among the faithful; (2) that the vast majority of Roman Catholics don't want their children in church-related schools anyway; and (3) that if "we Catholics sincerely wish to save the taxpayers and at the same time our schools we can easily do it: we own \$44.5 billion worth of property in the United States and can easily support our own schools without government aid."

To this may I add my comments? It is not only that children are leaving Catholic schools; priests are leaving Catholic parishes by the hundreds. Is the low salary priests receive the reason? Would government aid help hold Catholic clergy?

Catholic authorities themselves admit that one of the main reasons for the increase in operating costs for parochial schools is the rapid decline in the number of women who are willing to teach as nuns on a vow of poverty, requiring the employment of "nonreligious" at regular salaries. The basic reason why attendance in Catholic schools is falling off since Vatican II is that many Catholics—laymen, clergy, and religious alike—no longer see the need to be different at a sacrifice.

Q. Why should an increasingly secular nation insist that a religious and pacifist conviction be the only legal justification for avoiding military service?

A. Only two or three requests for conscientious-objector status used to be filed with the Selective Service System each week; recently, I understand, this number has jumped to about a hundred. At the same time demonstrations against the Vietnam war have been staged that appear to many citizens to be un-American or even Communist organized. All this has led the Selective Service to want to know whether a CO applicant is a sincere patriot following his own convictions or a disloyal parrot following someone else's.

You must make it plain that you are sincere, but it may not always be necessary to prove that you believe in God. A United States Court of Appeals meeting in Manhattan in 1964 ruled that requiring this of a CO was contrary to the Fifth Amendment, in that it discriminated between believers and unbelievers in such a way as to violate the principle of due process.