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Recommended Citation

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the launching pad

With **C. MERVYN MAXWELL**
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Q. I'm not sure this question is in the church-state field, but I need to know. What did the Pope really say about birth control? Please rush your answer. [Washington, D.C.]

A. I suppose that with a column titled "The Launching Pad" we should have expected a question like that! In his encyclical *On the Development of Peoples*, Pope Paul declared that it is for parents to decide on the size of their family, "following the demands of their own conscience, enlightened by God's law authentically interpreted."

According to the polls, a bit better than 50 per cent of American Catholics are following their own demands if not their consciences.

Q. In some areas don't you think merchants have been using religion as a mask to hide their attempt to stifle competition on Sunday? [North Carolina]

A. Some clergymen within your own State seem to think so. Last fall a number of them spoke out against enactment of a Sunday blue law by Raleigh's City Council. Some objected to the sponsoring Raleigh Merchants Bureau's invoking of such reasons as the "moral well-being" of the community in urging adoption of the ordinance when the real motivation behind it, they said, is material and aimed at "discount houses" which do a thriving business on Sunday while other stores are closed.

An article in the January-February, 1967, *Liberty* (see "The Blue-Law Merchants," page 14) strongly supports your viewpoint. In some areas clergymen use a health and welfare rationale to mask their attempts to benefit religion.

Q. In Arizona, State welfare payments are being made to the Salvation Army. Isn't this a violation of church-state separation?

A. Not according to the Arizona Supreme Court, which ruled recently that the "true beneficiaries" are the relief cases handled by the Army—not the Army itself.

This decision was based on the child-benefit theory that "it is not the school or sectarian institution that is receiving the benefits of the appropriation but the child itself," as Justice Lorna Lockwood, who wrote the unanimous decision, put it. The ruling did contain a strong hint that Arizona's Supreme Court would not condone State payments for services

rendered by sectarian institutions if the payments cover all the institution's costs. State payments to the Salvation Army, the court said, were not made under a full-reimbursement plan but a "partially matching plan," paying only 40 per cent of the Army's actual relief costs and nothing for administration.

The court differed with a contrary Georgia court ruling by stating: "Aid in the form of partially matching reimbursement for only the direct, actual costs of materials given entirely to third parties of any or no faith or denomination and not to the church itself is not the type of aid prohibited by our constitution."

"The aid prohibited in the constitution of this state is, in our opinion, assistance in any form whatsoever which would encourage or tend to encourage the preference of one religion over another or religion per se over no religion."

I'm only explaining, not defending.

Q. Liberty has carried several articles on taxation of church properties. . . . Is it true that New Mexico has decided to tax churches? [California]

A. A tax reappraisal program in New Mexico is adding large amounts of previously untaxed church property to the tax rolls, but a spokesman for the State Tax Commission denies that there has been any fundamental change in policy. Commission secretary Jesse Kornegay blamed previous "exemptions" on a "misunderstanding."

"In the past," he explained, "some assessors of church property thought all church property not used for commercial purposes was exempt from taxation. But this is the wrong rule to apply, because all church property not used for church worship should be on the tax rolls."

"We now will have houses and other church-owned property on the rolls. Only places of worship, the parsonage and necessary lands and buildings thereto, such as a garage, are nontaxable."

Many New Mexico counties are uncovering such "lost property" in the reappraisal, and their value runs into the millions of dollars. Properties which will now be taxed, include: the Roman Catholic Christian Brothers' Retreat Ranch at Chupadero, the Methodist Assembly grounds, the Episcopalians' Camp Stoney in Santa Fe, the Glorieta Southern Baptist Assembly, and the Presbyterians' Ghost Ranch.

Liberty's position on taxation of church properties has been set forth many times in articles and editorials. Basically it supports exemption of the church sanctuary and industries which are an integral portion of a school curriculum, favors taxation of church-related businesses.

Q. Did Georgia Governor Lester Maddox really ask members of the State Legislature to take the pledge? [Tennessee]

A. According to the Religious News Service, legislators last October received pledge cards in a letter asking for help in recruiting new members for the Governor's Youth Council on Alcohol, Tobacco and Health.

They were asked to pass along names—and, presumably, signed pledge cards—to a minister, the Reverend Clifford Brewton, director of the program.

"I got a letter with a pledge card in it—and tore it up," one DeKalb County legislator reported.

Another, an Atlanta lawmaker, commented: "If they are serious about this, they'd really have to reapportion the Georgia General Assembly."

According to the RNS, the program originally started out as a project to combat use of tobacco. The council was known in the beginning as the Conference on Youth, Smoking, and Health. Somewhere along the line, alcohol was added.

The pledge card states, "I will not partake of, or use, alcoholic beverages or tobacco in any form. I understand should I violate this pledge my membership will cease. . . ."

In view of the governor's support of Sunday laws, we would like to see him take a pledge to preserve separation of church and state and respect the rights of minority religious groups.

Q. I know that you Adventists place a lot of emphasis on the second coming of Christ and the setting up of His kingdom, but what are you doing in a practical sense to alleviate poverty and suffering? . . . Aren't you concerned for the causes of rioting in our cities? [Maryland]

A. Adventists operate 320 clinics, hospitals, and sanitariums around the world. Last year the church, through its good-neighbor program, helped more than 10 million persons—many through its 2,762 health and welfare centers and welfare units. At its Autumn Council in 1967 church officials voted an intensified program to aid underprivileged minority groups of the inner cities. Included in the proposed projects are classes in adult education, health and hygiene, home nursing, cooking, sewing, budgeting, and nutrition; and establishment of clinics and summer camps.

The program also will seek to involve youth in church work and to launch a strong evangelistic thrust in the inner cities. Congregations will be trained and equipped to meet the ever-increasing

traffic in dope, alcohol, and tobacco among young people.

Q. When Christ's apostles gathered at the Jerusalem Council a few years after His death, they decreed that "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than . . . [to] abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts 15:28, 29). There is nothing here about any obligation to keep the Sabbath; why is it, then, that you teach that everyone ought to keep the seventh day? [Nebraska]

A. The decree of this Jerusalem Council says nothing about worshiping idols, taking God's name in vain, stealing, lying, or disobeying one's parents; neither does it provide for the worship of God, or for the support of the poor—or for many other important aspects of Christianity. If Christians based their entire concept of morality, ethics, and Christian worship on this decree, they would be almost indistinguishable from many respectable pagans in the world today.

The Jerusalem Council concerned itself with Jewish ritual laws, and more specifically with one of these ritual laws, ceremonial circumcision. The council's decree was not intended to deal with the larger questions of faith and morals. The seventh-day Sabbath is a part of the Ten Commandments, God's great moral code, and hence was not under discussion at the Jerusalem Council.

Q. Matthew 28:1 says that Jesus was resurrected on "the first day of the week." An acquaintance of mine says that in the original Greek this really is "on the first of the Sabbaths," meaning that Jesus was resurrected on the first Christian Sabbath. Doesn't this prove that Sunday is the true Sabbath that Christians ought to keep? [California]

A. It cannot possibly! Honest!

Prove it to yourself by looking up Acts 20:7 where Paul holds a meeting on "the first day of the week." The Greek is the same as in Matthew 28:1. If it means "the first Christian Sabbath" in Matthew 28:1, then it has to mean "the first Christian Sabbath" in Acts 20:7, even though this Sunday fell 27 years after resurrection Sunday!

The Greek *mia sabbaton* looks like "first of the Sabbaths" to a person who hasn't done his Greek homework, but never to a pro.

Mia is feminine singular; *sabbaton* is neuter plural. Idiomatically the word "day"—which is feminine singular—is missing, making the sentence say in English, "the first [day] of the Sabbaths." But "Sabbaths" was used in New Testament times as a synonym for "week," making the phrase mean "on the first day of the week."

The greatest Greek lexicographers and grammarians, Liddell, and Scott, Arndt and Gingrich, A. T. Robertson, and the rest, all agree.

Send your questions to **THE LAUNCHING PAD**
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