

The Bible, Death and Taxes

Tax time is upon us. Opinions concerning taxation range from Coolidge's estimation that "Collecting more taxes than is absolutely necessary is legalized robbery;" to FDR's remark that "Taxes, after all, are dues that we pay for the privileges of membership in an organized society."

Will Rogers said, "The income tax has made more liars out of the American people than golf has." ??Yale historian, Dr. Harry S. Stout, wrote that the American system of government was enormously influenced by biblical sermons on political thought, including taxes. Stout wrote in *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*:

"The seventeenth-century founders of New England set out to create a unique and self-perpetuating 'people of the Word,' and by extending the sermon to all significant facts of life—social and political, as well as religious..."

Jesus paid taxes, albeit in a most miraculous way, out of the mouth of a fish! Christ told His disciples that we should render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God's what is God's. St. Paul urged believers in the very capital of a tax-burdened empire, "For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing."

The Mosaic Law legislated taxes to support the Levitical priesthood. There were abuses and the prophets denounced them. In New Testament cases tax collectors were converted. Matthew not only became a disciple but also wrote the first book of the New Testament. Undergirding all of this is the fact that a representative government is the ideal that is urged, whether in Israel with elected elders, or in the early Church with deacons and elders. "No taxation without representation" is a biblical concept that like all biblical precepts creates

freedom and blessing.

In taxes as in every other area of life, following God's Word brings a new way of life that doesn't make liars out of people, but better citizens, freer people, and a more honest government. In every season, the Church must declare the truth of God into the arena of human government.

For the Bible does speak about taxes.