

Tax Policy Offends Christian Values

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During his first term President Bush dished out enormous tax cuts, mostly benefiting the wealthy, increased the proportional tax burden borne by the middle class and ran up a gigantic federal deficit. Despite escalating costs for the war in Iraq and hurricane disaster recovery, President Bush's second term goals include making these tax cuts permanent while cutting numerous discretionary spending programs that help poor and middle class Americans.

Even worse President Bush's tax policy is part of a larger trend leading to a flat tax primarily on wages and the voices of protest are either being ignored or dismissed as socialist.

These voices need to challenge President Bush with Judeo-Christian values.

An unabashed evangelical Christian, President Bush claims Jesus is his favorite philosopher and that "we ought to love our neighbor like we love our self, as manifested in public policy...". Almost eighty percent of Americans practice Christianity or Judaism.

The moral principles of biblical justice teach that all persons are created in God's image and therefore must have a reasonable opportunity to reach their potential to do God's work. This means we must strive to provide every American access to minimum subsistence, adequate education, healthcare and housing. This is not socialistic equality.

Federal law must force us to pay taxes to meet these common needs because nobody pays their fair share voluntarily. Due to our inescapable greedy tendencies resulting from the Fall of humankind, charitable giving cannot replace adequate tax revenues. An "A+" in charity will never average an "F" in justice to a "C".

The biblical messages, "to whom much is given, much more is required", and, wealth can only be held with a "light grip" require the tax burden to be moderately progressive. This is not socialistic confiscation.

Judeo-Christian guided tax policy balances individual rights to enjoy private property with the moral obligations owed to the community and imposes greater economic sacrifices at higher levels of income and wealth. Although biblical principles provide no exact details, when debating the specific level of tax revenues and the appropriate degree of progressivity, we must always first ask whether the wealthy and powerful are paying their fair share. This is because they are especially tempted to fight for the smallest tax burden possible without considering the moral obligations of their faith.

The most appalling feature of President Bush's tax policy are his reasons defending it. President Bush has never examined whether the wealthiest Americans are paying their fair share of taxes. Instead he disgracefully relies on the discredited theory of supply-side economics and places supreme importance on preserving private property while assuming only individual effort produces wealth.

The absence of Judeo-Christian values in our tax policy discussions is a sign that we have perverted religion to a low-sacrifice operation. Authentic faith in Jesus Christ results in a high level of sacrificial discipleship. However too many Christians, including President Bush, have limited their faith-based public policy concerns as only including a handful of theologically controversial issues that require little or no personal sacrifice.

The most hypocritical example is narrowing abortion to the legal issue. The moral tragedy of abortion cannot be separated from tax policy. This is because embracing the dignity of life requires adequate tax revenues to allow all persons, especially children, a reasonable opportunity to reach their divinely created potential. Christians who believe abortion is immoral must also support the high-sacrifice of Judeo-Christian guided tax policy. Otherwise their opposition to abortion has no credibility as a respectable moral position.

If President Bush's tax policy trends continue, the Bible promises our nation will gradually decline and ultimately fail. We must bring the high-sacrifice of Judeo-Christian values into our tax policy discussions or else the powerful forces of our own greed will destroy us.

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