

Forcing Change



Not so Fast on “Judge Not” *A Call to Righteous Judgment*

By Brad Hughes

Editor's Note: As America and the West slide into moral depravity and continually walk away from Biblical standards – from legalizing homosexuality to penalizing Christian businesses that uphold family values to the rise of the pornography industry – and as the Christian community buckles under the pressure, the following article by Brad Hughes couldn't be more timely. Mr. Hughes is a Fellow in Worldviews and Economics at the Centennial Institute in Denver, Colorado, and has granted permission to publish this important essay.



Index:

Judge Not, P.1.

Fast Facts, P.8

Dumb Taxes, P.11.



Carl Teichrib, Editor

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

The tolerance movement in our secular culture screams this biblical passage (Matt: 7:1) to silence Christians from expressing their biblical judgment in opposition to the moral relativism of the American culture. This has become the clarion call of the millennial generation, the most unchurched cohort in America.¹ The resulting silence has helped usher in widespread abortion, homosexuality, pornography, drug use, alcoholism, gambling, censorship, infidelity, illegitimacy, divorce, abuse, same sex marriage, greed, cheating, violence, and the demise of America's Judeo-Christian institutions.

Moral decay, along with economic prosperity, are the hallmarks of our age.

History shows that moral decay and economic prosperity will accompany each other only for a season. This is clearly recorded over and over in the Bible. It is recorded by secular sociologists (Sorokin and Unrein.) It is recorded by historians (Toynbee and Tytler.)

Many Christians mistakenly believe they should not judge others because they do not understand hermeneutics, the discipline of interpreting the Bible. It is clearly not true. A text out of context is a pretext. Christians should clearly exert judgment and be involved in the culture. We should examine the different types of judgment to understand what Jesus meant with his oft-quoted words in Matthew 7:1.

There are two kinds of judgment Jesus teaches in the Bible. The first is unrighteous judgment, meaning that we should not judge hypocritically (Matt. 7:1, Luke 6:36-38) based upon appearance (John 7:24) or withhold judgment entirely (Matt: 15:13-16). This means that we may not judge on the basis of a hypocritical judgment of a sin we ourselves are guilty of, judge based upon insufficient information, or not judge at all. All are unrighteous judgments.

Consider the following; “The most common word for 'judge' in the Greek Testament is the verb 'krino,' found 114 times. It is rendered into English by a variety of terms, e.g., 'judge,' 'determine,' 'condemn,' 'call in question,' etc. The word means to 'select'; then to 'come to a conclusion, make a determination' – sometimes with the added idea of relating that conclusion to a specific act or a certain person...” [see footnote 1].

Not judging at all may be the worst of the unrighteous judgments. Hypocritical judgment typically hurts the individual. Withholding judgment can hurt a society. This helps explain why America is in steep moral decline. This may also be the most egregious example of what many Christians do today out of fear of being ridiculed, persecuted, losing friends, or losing money. “He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD” (Proverbs 17:15). Tacit assent justifies the wicked and is clearly wrong according to

Your membership keeps the research going!

Your membership helps fund the research and expenses incurred in producing each issue of *Forcing Change*. *Thank you!*

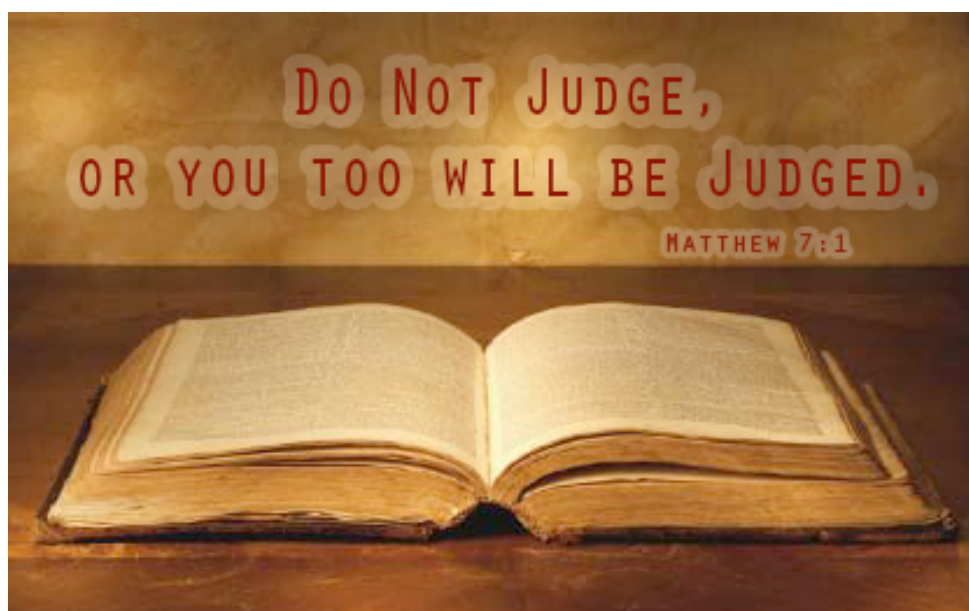
the Bible. The Christian should not avoid exercising judgment when faced with clear examples of moral wrong.

Jesus reprimanded the church at Thyatira; “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols” (Revelation 2:20). Jesus taught that if we tolerate false teaching on divorce and remarriage (which leads God’s people to commit sexual immorality), God will not hold us guiltless (Matthew 5:31-32; and 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). James 4:17 tells us that deciding not to speak and act in the face of wrong is a sin; “To him that knows to do good and does not do it. It is sin.” 2 Tim 3:16 confirms we should speak out; “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.”

In the same way, Matt. 5:13-16 tells us to be salt and light to the world. Salt is a preservative that prevents decay but requires contact to effectuate result. Jesus condemned the indifference of the Laodicean church in Rev. 3:14, which many emulate when they remain silent while judgment is required. We are to be Christ-exalting and not man-pleasing in our conduct. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Silence in the face of evil, is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act...”

Many Christians fear men so much because they fear God so little.

Many Christians have a low view of God and a high view of themselves which causes them to remain silent when confronted with behavior that is opposed by the Bible. J. Vernon McGee said; “What a mistake we make if we think that the church has the authority to decide what is right and what is wrong. The true church is made up of believers in Jesus Christ, and they form what Scripture calls the body of Christ. They are to be lights in the world. And if we are going to be lights in this dark world, we need to be careful to identify with the person of Jesus Christ and recognize... the Word of God as our authority.”



When we ignore what Christ teaches in the Bible, we are exalting ourselves and allowing sin to establish a stronghold. Jesus clearly taught that most people go to hell. Matt: 7:13 tells us that the gate is narrow that leads to life and only a few find it. Oddly, most people believe in the concept of hell but believe that someone else is going there instead of themselves (despite the fact that most people will end up there.)

The decision to not be salt and light in a dark world is analogous to allowing children to play in a dangerous intersection, that is, someone will be getting hurt and we could have stopped it had we intervened. Luke 12:48 says, “But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” It is abundantly clear that choosing silence when judgment is required is the wrong decision for the Christian.

The second type of judgment is called righteous judgment which must be based on conclusive evidence and the word of God. Righteous judgment requires an understanding of the Bible and a responsibility to speak out against moral decay. Jesus said, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). This resonates with Leviticus 19:15; “You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. But in righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.”

Paul wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). Jesus said of John the Baptist, “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:28). John the Baptist spoke out in righteous judgment against Herod the Tetrarch and was beheaded for his trouble (Matt 14:1-13).

Christians should be judging each other, as Paul explained to the Corinthians: “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore ‘put away from yourselves that wicked person’.” (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

Paul encouraged judgment against fellow believers; “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Paul went further in the judgment of other Christians; “And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

The Old Testament taught: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Proverbs 1:7). The prophet Jeremiah recorded, “You live in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:6). In Job 21:14 we read, “Yet they say to God, ‘Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways.’” A discerning and mature Christian is one who is “trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14) and thus knows how to apply Scripture to everyday life. We compare, test or judge what we see or hear to Scripture and to what God has defined as right and wrong doctrine and theology.

In the New Testament, the word discern (diakrisis in Greek) means “judicial estimation,” in other words, “to judge or to assess.” The Bible commands us to judge or “test all things,” in other words, to practice discernment.² 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 says, “Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” And Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Furthermore, Paul wrote, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Col 2:8). Acts 17:11 says that when Paul taught the Bereans, they were “more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

Those who will not judge are spiritually immature, are deceived, or they are spiritually dead. What the church needs today is a class of believers who will rightly judge, confront evil, and stand for the truth without compromise. Compromising truth with evil is like seasoning good food with cyanide. The worst lie is often a half-truth and the worst sin is often the sin of omission. We often, through deconstructionism, let words lose their intended meaning. When words lose their meaning, people lose their lives. To illustrate, the beneficent sounding Charitable Foundation for Institutional Care, CFIC, was the name of the organization that oversaw the Nazi concentration camps. The Bible says that we are to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). If we see a loved one about to be devoured, do we remain silent and say “Judge not and be not judged?” Of course not. This saying is the shibboleth of the tolerance movement which is rooted in secular philosophy.

The Bible clearly teaches that justice and judgment are basic attributes of God’s character: Isaiah 30:18 states that “the LORD is a God of justice.” Psalm 9:7- 8 states that as the moral lawgiver, it’s His nature to judge because “He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.” It is important to note that God’s attribute of holiness is His paramount attribute, and it is the only of His attributes that is repeated three times in a row in the Bible for emphasis. The phrase “holy, holy, holy” appears twice in the Bible, once in the Old Testament (Isaiah 6:3) and once in the New Testament (Revelation 4:8).

Recall that Jesus spoke out in harsh judgment on numerous occasions. It is useful to understand that Jesus is eternal, part of the Triune godhead, holy, and immutable. This means that Jesus bears responsibility in the Old Testament decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, to unleash the great flood that destroyed all but eight of mankind, to command the slaughter of the first born sons in Pharaoh's Egypt, and the slaughter of the Amalekites, Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, and others. This reality underscores that Jesus does judge and there can be a significant cost attending that judgment.

Jesus spoke harsh words of judgment in the New Testament as well. "You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt 12:34). Another example of His judgment is the following; "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean" (Matt 23:27). Jesus said, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Jesus said, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt 10:34).

Jesus admonished, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). He also scolded troublemakers; "If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt 18:6). He said, "You fools and blind men, which is more important, the gold, or the temple that sanctified the gold?" (Matt 23:17). In Matt. 23:33, He said to the Pharisees, "You serpents. You brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?" In John 8:33, He said, "You are of your father, the devil and you want to do the desires of your father." There at least 18 occurrences in the Bible where Jesus spoke harshly in such judgment. Most people depict Jesus as only love and grace while ignoring His holy judgment.³ However, the Bible shows that Jesus – hardly politically correct – could appear harsh as He judged righteously.

Jesus will bring God's punishment on the wicked and ungodly at His second coming: Second Timothy 1:7-9 says that "the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Jude 14 and 15 states, "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'."

Jesus spoke often of the "day of judgment" at His Second Coming. A brief look at just the Book of Matthew makes that abundantly clear. Matthew 10:15 says, "Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" Matthew 11:22 states, "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." Matthew 11:24 confirms, "But I say to you that it shall be more

tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.” Matthew 12:36 gives the reminder, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. Matthew 13:41-42 warns that “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

The Bible clearly teaches that God judges nations and people. It teaches that righteous judgment is an essential part of His character. It teaches that man is made in God’s image and followers of God should be salt and light in a world of darkness. It is important for God’s people to understand the Bible, apply it in their lives, and stand for its principles in the face of an increasingly hostile culture that is dominated by secularism. Jesus commanded His followers to indeed judge, but to judge righteously, forbade them from judging unrighteously, and to do all things in love. Secularism has attempted to twist biblical passages to prohibit judgment and embrace tolerance for all behaviors. It is the ignorant, evil, or indifferent that will embrace that faulty premise.

Those that say “judge not and be not judged” to condone volitional autonomy irrespective of morality invite judgment upon themselves while tacitly endorsing the increased moral decay of a culture already vexed by depravity.

Dr. Adrian Rogers once said, “Even now, the raging waters of God’s wrath pound against the dam of his mercy.”

It is more urgent now than ever to speak truth into the culture, and into the lives of people who matter most to us, and to do so before the dam breaks. *FC*

Endnotes:

¹ www.patheos.com/blogs/publiccatholic/2012/10/number-of-americans-who-do-not-identify-with-any-religion-increases

² <http://c309365.r65.cf1.rackcdn.com/SpiritualDiscernmentAndFalseTeaching.doc>

³ <http://carm.org/jesus-say-mean-things>

Fast Facts on World Change

“Fast Facts on World Change” is a short collection of news-worthy and interesting items, each demonstrating, in one way or another, the systemic changes that are washing through society.

Organization of United Religions

On September 4, former Israeli president, Shimon Peres, met with Pope Francis to talk about his idea of creating an Organization of United Religions. The purpose, according to a Reuters article posted the following day, will be to “combat violence in God's name.” Meeting with the Pope for 45 minutes in his residence, Peres suggested a “new world body” that would be styled like the United Nations.

“Now, given the fact that the United Nations has had its day, what is needed is an Organization of United Religions, [a] U.N. of religions,” explained Peres. Reuter's reported that Peres added, “What is needed is an unquestionable moral authority that says in a strong voice 'No, God does not want this and does not permit it'.”

In an interview on this idea of an Organization of United Religions, Peres explained that he believed the Pope should head the new institution, as “he is perhaps the only leader who is truly respected.”

Christian Persecution

Around the world, Christians are being persecuted for their faith. In Nigeria the Islamic militant group, Boko Haram, have murdered Christian children, including the recent beheading of a six-year old boy. According to Voice of the Martyrs, this incident took place on June 1. International Christian Concern (ICC), a group that monitors Christian persecution, noted that, “For years, Boko Haram has targeted Christian minorities in the majority-Muslim north. Recent reports indicate that several Christian men have been beheaded following the declaration of the caliphate on August 24.” In Algeria, churches are being attacked and Christian families are being denied housing. And Christians in Iraq have suffered brutally under ISIS; Mass executions, beheadings, rapes, and burnings.

As ICC wrote in late August,

“The dangers for Iraq's Christians are prompting many of them to seek ways to leave the country. The threat that they face directly from ISIS, along with the sustained violence of the past decades leaves many Christians unsure that they can stay in Iraq. While many leaders are urging people to consider staying, the realities that confront them on a daily basis make it a nearly impossible choice to make.”

Pray for the persecuted church in Iraq, and for brothers and sisters-in-Christ around the world who face death, injury, shame, and homelessness for their faith.

BRICS: New Economic Order?

In July, leaders from the BRICS nations met to consider a new economic order, one based on the realities of the five regional powerhouses that make up this little talked-about group: **B**razil, **R**ussia, **I**ndia, **C**hina and **S**outh Africa. When the BRICS summit was over, a new global banking entity was unveiled, the New Development Bank. When operational, the NDB is expected to become a global alternative to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

As the United States and European partners have been the dominant players in the IMF and World Bank, it is recognized by some analysts that the NDB has the potential to become the economic engine for a non-Western “world order.”

But it's not all roses for BRICS, as trade tensions and even regional military stresses exist between some of the participating countries, such as the long-simmering fracture points between India and China. As one commentator for *African Business Review* said, “If the BRICS countries are able to achieve unity of purpose, this group and its new development bank could become very powerful in changing the global financial landscape. Of course, the big question is their ability to achieve unity.”

Parliament of the World's Religions

The organizing committee of the Parliament of the World's Religions has publicly announced that the host city for the 2015 Parliament of the World's Religion will be Salt Lake City, Utah. This anticipated event, which has become a major global gathering of religious leaders, has been likened to a spiritual olympics.

The first parliament took place in Chicago during the 1893 exhibition (see picture below), however, the next one didn't occur until a century later – and this was held in Chicago as well. Since then, parliaments have convened in Cape Town (1999), Barcelona (2004), Monterrey (2007), and Melbourne (2009). Over 10,000 people participated in the Melbourne event.

Chair of the board, Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, wrote the following; “America is the home base of the interfaith movement and it's about time the Parliament come back home. The Parliament in 2015 will strengthen the interfaith movement through our listening, sharing and networking with each other.”



Pagan Pride Rising

Pagan Pride is on the rise. Held annually as a celebration of paganism and as an outreach to the non-pagan community, Pagan Pride is a network of community “pride” events that take place around the world, usually in late August or September. In 2013, publicly open and accessible Pagan Pride gatherings were held in 98 locations in Canada, the US, Mexico, Brazil, Italy, Austria, and the Dominican Republic. Approximately 65,700 attended, up by more than 20,000 from the year before.

Started in September 1998, Pagan Pride began with 18 celebrations attended by 800-1000 people. By 2004, over 40,000 souls partook in the celebrations, concerts, and other events that mark Pagan Pride. Meant as a public outreach, Pagan Pride includes charitable collections and food drives, and individual events are tailored to the local community.

For 2014, over 160 events are listed on the Pagan Pride webpage, and approximately 130 of those are in the United States.

Rising Acceptance of Same-Sex

Changing American Congregations is the name of a recent study published by Mark Chaves of Duke University and Shawna L. Anderson from the University of Chicago. This report, pulled from the six year data sets of the National Congregations Study (NCS) - itself based on 1,331 church leadership interviews from across America - demonstrated that, overall, congregations in the United States have become far more accepting of same-sex integration.

“The 2006 and 2012 NCS’s asked informants whether or not an openly gay or lesbian couple in a committed relationship would be permitted to be full-fledged members of the congregation, and whether or not such people would be permitted to hold all volunteer positions open to other members... In just six years, the number of congregations whose leaders said that gays and lesbians could be full-fledged members increased from 37.4 percent to 48 percent. The number of congregations whose leaders said that no volunteer leadership positions were closed to gays and lesbians increased from 17.7 percent to 26.4 percent.”

However, discrepancies were noted in terms of “religious traditions.”

Catholic parishes had actually declined in accepting gays and lesbians working in a volunteer capacity, moving from 39% to 26%. And Catholic parishes “whose leaders said that gays and lesbians could be full-fledged members decreased from 74 percent to 54 percent.” These findings, the authors reflected, could be the result of backlashes against the legalization of homosexual marriages in certain states.

White conservative Protestant churches, while showing a favorable rise in acceptance of gay/lesbians members (from 16% to 24%), nevertheless remained unchanged in accommodating gay/lesbian leaders (4%).

Conversely, white liberal churches, black Protestant churches, and non-Christian congregations had large enough increases in gay/lesbian acceptance that the aggregate change “is remarkably large for just a six-year period.”

See the report here: www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/Changing_American_Congs.pdf

Iran's New World Order

In early September, Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei emphatically stated that a “new world order is emerging” and that “Iran will have a strong role in creating it.”

In a press story that found its way into regional and global news outlets, the Ayatollah explained that Iran's version of “world order” would supplant America's influence as the West and capitalism was collapsing.

“We have important potential outside Iran,” explained Iran's Supreme Leader, “supporters, strategic depth in the region, some because of Islam, some because of Shia religion. These are our strengths, we should use them all.”

The English translation of his speech declared; “And it is not only in the region, outside the region, in Latin America, in some important parts of Asia we have strategic depth, we have the tools to use these opportunities...”

Citing Israel's recent “defeat” at the hands of “the small population of the Muslims in Gaza,” the Ayatollah announced that the “Zionist regime, as the symbol of the West's power” was brought “to its knees.” Thus, “the current world order cannot continue and a new order is emerging.”

-- Dumb Taxes --

By Simon Black

Editor's Note: Simon Black is the founder and force behind *Sovereign Man*, a personal liberty service that works to equip clients with offshore citizenship and investment opportunities.

In the days of ancient Rome, it was tradition for the upper class to liberate their slaves after a set number of years.

The Roman government, however, looked at this as an opportunity to generate revenue, and they taxed the newly freed slave on his freedom.

I can't imagine anything more repulsive than paying tax on freedom. But they gave it a pretty good try...

In 1696, the English government under William III (William of Orange) passed a new law requiring subjects to pay a tax based on the number of windows in their homes.

Not willing to pay such a ridiculous tax on something as basic as sunlight, many Englishmen simply reduced the number of windows in their homes. There was less light... and less ventilation... which ultimately became a public health problem.

To follow that up, England introduced a tax on candles in 1789. Making your own candles was outlawed unless you first obtained a license and paid tax on your own homemade candles. As you could imagine, most people just did without.

Coupled with the window tax, this was a very dark time for England. And it took until the mid 19th century for the government to realize its stupidity and repeal the taxes.

But if that sounds excessive, consider the Johnstown Flood Tax.

In 1936, the town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania was devastated by nasty flood, and in its efforts to 'do something,' the state assembly imposed an emergency, 'temporary' tax of 10% on all alcohol sold in the state.

This 'temporary' tax remained in place for nearly three decades, at which point it was raised to 15% in 1963, and again to 18% in 1968.

The 'temporary' tax still exists today, proving once again that there's nothing more permanent than a temporary government measure.

Curiously, you can never find the tax on an alcohol receipt; state law requires that the tax be built into the price. So all alcohol simply costs 18% more in Pennsylvania, and most people don't even know that they're paying it.

But if that sounds ridiculous, consider that the city of Pittsburgh charges a 5% "amusement tax" on anything that offers entertainment in the city.

I was curious how the government, in its sole discretion, defines 'amusement'. Well, it turns out there's quite a lengthy definition, which includes "concerts, moving picture shows, vaudeville, circus, carnival and side shows... wrestling matches, boxing and sparring exhibitions..."

Naturally. How could the great city of Pittsburgh possibly function if the government wasn't out there grabbing its tax dollars from vaudeville and sideshows...?

But back in the United Kingdom, the government taxes you on entertainment even if you stay home through its television tax.

In the UK if you own a television in your home, you must pay an annual fee, formally called a television license, for each television you own. The funds are used to finance programming on BBC, whether you watch those channels or not.

Color (or I should say 'colour') televisions are taxed at a 145.50 pounds annually, whereas black and white TV sets (seriously?) are taxed at 49 pounds per year.

Blind people still have to pay the tax, but at a reduced rate of 50%. How generous. And of course, failure to pay this fee subjects the violator to criminal penalties.

There were 155,000 convictions and fines in 2012 alone. And 51 people actually went to prison that year for failure to pay the TV tax.

You just can't make this stuff up... **FC**