

Born to Win

A Mask of Evil

by Ronald L. Dart

Someone observed not long ago that the last redoubt of Marxism *in the world* was on the campuses of elite American universities. Actually, the statement wasn't a surprise, really, but it did make me start thinking about how it could possibly be so. After all, Marxism and Communism together represent two of the greatest failures in economic and political thought in *the history of man*. From a time when many people thought they had the answers...they really thought Communism had the answers, that Communism was the wave of the future. We have lived to see the Soviet Union collapse, Marxism *utterly* discredited as an economic system, and I think we're not very far from witnessing the failure of *China's* Communist regime. (That eventuality has some economists worried about the disaster that *that* would wreak on the already-weakened world economy.)

Communism has worked *nowhere*, not really, and it has led to some of the most *egregious* abuses of power in the experience of man, to the *cruelest* destruction of life and liberty. Only after the fall of the Soviet Union did we *really* get to see what had been done there. So why, I wondered, should some of the smartest, best-educated among us still cling to something that looks *very much* like Marxism and Communism?

Some time ago, a friend sent me a book by Whittaker Chambers titled *Witness*; you may have read it, may have heard of it. I had heard of Chambers and Alger Hiss back in my youth, but I paid little attention. Chambers was just finishing the book *Witness* as I was a senior in high school—when I was majoring in girls, not politics. The book is daunting, to say the least; it weighs in at *800 pages*. So it sat on my desk for months after a friend had sent it to me, until guilt finally made me pick it up and begin to read. I strongly recommend it to you. If nothing else, drop by your library and read the forewords—there are three of them: the first by William Buckley, the second by Robert Novak, the third is Whittaker Chambers' letter to his children.

It is not so much in reading it that I learned a lot of great new truths; what it did was shine a light on a subject that lit up areas I really had not thought about. I want to talk to you about it, but first I need to answer the question I raised: How is it possible that Marxism still holds sway among *so many* in the intelligentsia of *this nation*? The answer emerged for me as I read Chambers' letter to his kids. Communism and Marxism, along with Nazism, were merely masks worn by a much greater and much *older* evil, which persist in spite of the failure of the masks that we have seen.

I'm reluctant to put a name on it, because we have a bad habit of assuming that when we can name something we understand it. Not so. Names are treacherous things, and we quickly become inured to them. Liberalism, capitalism, progressivism, conservatism. Names are like chameleons; and they take on the coloring of the background, and we can look right at them and not see them. Liberals became tired of people bandying around their terminology; and it almost became "the L word" among some people. They decided they were not "liberals" anymore, they were "progressives". Republicans are becoming "conservative" (that's where the votes are). Capitalists are becoming "entrepreneurs", because the Communists beat up capitalism so bad. Secularists are becoming "progressive", too.

I'm not going to give you a name for this evil; I'm going to hand you a key that will open your eyes to recognize it in its earliest forms, wherever it emerges in the political, economic, and social systems of an age. I need also to point out there are two kinds of evil in the world (at least): there is *human* evil and *spiritual* evil. For some reasons, people are prone to deny both of these. Human evil they see as perhaps mental illness. Spiritual evil they sometimes deny by rejecting the idea of a personal devil and demons as mere figures of speech in the Bible, standing for the *wicked inclinations* of our own mind. But for now I want to return to my question: How is it possible that Marxism (or something *very much like it*) still holds sway among the intelligentsia of this nation? In reading Whittaker Chambers' letter to his children, I came to at least a partial answer. In some degree, it is revealed in the experiences of ex-Communists—defectors from the Communist system. Chambers wrote to his kids:

Yet there is one experience which most sincere ex-Communists share, whether or not they go only part way to the end of the question it poses. The daughter of a former German diplomat in Moscow was trying to explain to me why her father, who, as an enlightened modern man, had been extremely pro-Communist, had become an implacable anti-Communist. It was hard for her because, as an enlightened modern girl, she shared the Communist vision without being a Communist. But she loved her father, and the irrationality of his defection embarrassed her. "He was immensely pro-Soviet," she said, "and then—you will laugh at me—but you must not laugh at my father—and then—one night—in Moscow—he heard screams. That's all. Simply one night he heard screams."

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

Whittaker Chambers was himself an ex-Communist, and so he went on after citing what this girl said.

What Communist has not heard those screams? They come from husbands torn forever from their wives in midnight arrests. They come, muffled, from the execution chambers of the secret police, from the torture chambers of the Lubianka, from all the citadels of terror now stretching from Berlin to Canton. They come from freight cars loaded with men, women and children, the enemies of the Communist state, locked in, packed in, left on remote sidings to freeze to death at night in the Russian winter. They come from minds driven mad by the horrors of mass starvation ordered and enforced as a policy of the Communist state. They come from the starved skeletons, worked to death, or flogged to death (as an example to others) in the freezing filth of sub-arctic labor camps. They come from children whose parents are suddenly, inexplicably, taken away from them—parents they will never see again.

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

As I read that, it was the image of the freight cars that hit me. For a moment, I felt confused. I thought: Wait, wait, am I reading about the Holocaust? About Nazi Germany and the things they did? *No*, I'm reading about the Soviet Union. *They did the same thing*. They took innocent people, for whatever reason. They took whole families—men, women, and children—threw them into a boxcar, crammed them in there like cordwood, and shoved it out on a siding for them to *freeze to death* in the Russian winter. And in point of fact, the evil of Communism and Nazism is pretty much the same at the core; they are two different faces of the same evil. The Communists and the Nazis hated each other, to be sure; not because they were different, but they were rivals for the *same wicked vision*. Chambers went on:

What Communist has not heard those screams? Execution, says the Communist code, is the highest measure of social protection. What man can call himself a Communist who has not accepted the fact that Terror is an instrument of policy, right if the vision is right, justified by history, enjoined by the balance of forces in the social wars of this century? Those screams have reached every Communist's mind. Usually, they stop there.

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

I read that and I thought: Terror as an instrument of policy? This is being practiced today in Iran and other places in the world. Nowadays, it seems to be all that's in the news is *jihadism*. And what they are doing is on a very much smaller scale (so far) from anything like the Communists or the Nazis did in their day. Terror as an instrument of policy. (You know, it's hard for me to see Islam as God-denying; because one of the points that Chambers makes is that this whole Communist idea is God-denying; but I wonder if perhaps there is a part of Islam that does indeed deny God.)

Have you ever noticed the puzzlement of people who can't figure out why our administration rejects the expression "War on Terror"? Nowadays, when there is so much focus-testing of words and expressions and so forth, people are always changing the words on us so that we don't necessarily know what in the world they're talking about; or they want to be sure that we look at it the way they want us to look at it. But I remember wondering: What on earth is the big deal? George Bush called it the War on Terror; the Obama administration got rid of that. They didn't much like even talking about it as "terrorism" as such. They keep being reluctant, it seems, to *identify* it as such; and, in fact, one administration official, I think, called it a "man-caused disaster" or something like that. Well, Chambers, writing before the principal figures in the present administration were even born, talked about it this way:

What man can call himself a Communist who has not accepted the fact that Terror is an instrument of policy, right if the vision is right, justified by history, enjoined by the balance of forces in the social wars of this century?

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

You know, it's a mistake to call anyone a "Communist" today. Communism *failed*. Communism was *destroyed*. Marxism was left with its pants around its ankles. When you say that someone is a "Communist", you discredit yourself in the eyes of the onlooker. Communism was, in any case, only a mask for a mind that says your policy is right if the vision is right, justified by history, enjoined by the balance of forces. It does seem, for some reason, the Obama administration does not want to call what they are doing a "war on terror"; because they know that terrorism is a principle accepted by many people as *fully justified* as an instrument of policy. And it's as though it's a part of the domestic policy as to how we try to work with this: It's a matter of civil disobedience. It's a matter of a crime to be punished in court like any other criminal—like a burglar or a murderer.

Well, Communism, as I said, is only a mask for the mind that says your policy is right if the vision is right, justified by history, enjoined by the balance of forces. And in this simple idea you get one of the first hints of the evil that was behind the mask of Communism, Nazism, and maybe even jihadism. It is this: the pervasive idea that our goals are *so noble, so vital*, our vision *so right*, that *whatever* we have to do to reach those goals is justified. On that little academic statement there, the foundation is laid for what eventually winds up sticking a boxcar full of men, women, and children on a siding in the Russian winter to freeze to death. The old saw, "the ends justify the means" seems *so tame*; it doesn't even come *close* to describing the evil behind the mask. The ends *don't* justify the means.

But even here, we have not really yet arrived at the first signs of incipient evil—not to the key that helps us understand it, or of the cause that lies behind it. Whittaker Chambers defined the key that unlocked *his* understanding (and it's a *remarkable* statement) in his letter to his children. He said,

Yet my break began long before I heard those screams. Perhaps it does for everyone. I do not know how far back it began. [...] But I date my break from a very casual happening. I was sitting in our apartment on St. Paul Street in Baltimore. [...] My daughter was in her high chair. I was watching her eat. She was the most miraculous thing that had ever happened in my life. I liked to watch her even when she smeared porridge on her face or dropped it meditatively on the floor. My eye came to rest on the delicate convolutions of her ear—those intricate, perfect ears. The thought passed through my mind, “No, these ears were not created by any chance coming together of atoms in nature (the Communist view). They could have been created only by immense design.” The thought was involuntary and unwanted. I crowded it out of my mind. But I never wholly forgot it or the occasion. I had to crowd it out of my mind. If I had completed it, I should have had to say: Design presupposes God. I did not then know that, at that moment, the finger of God was first laid upon my forehead.

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

I sense something there that Chambers did not mention. You could have sat with him and argued Intelligent Design for hours and hours and made no progress, and staring at any other kid's ear would not have done it. It was the *love for his daughter* that opened this door—that laid the hand of God on his forehead. It was *love* that did it. Isn't that a wild idea? It was love that was the key that unlocked the chains that held him. One of the more striking things I learned about the Nazis, when I'm reading about them, isn't the great evil that they perpetrated, but the *banality* of the man who did these things. There was no *passion*. There was nothing at all like that. They were just banal in all that they did. Oh, they could be angry; but their passion was loveless. They were men who could only be passionate about *ideas*; they could not love.

This book was written back in 1952. Barack Obama was born in 1961. Why do I mention that? The first introduction to the book *Witness* was written by William F. Buckley. He had a lot to say about the man; but when he learned that Chambers had died, Buckley sat down and wept. He wrote,

[Chambers] had written me once, “American men, who weep in droves in movie houses over the woes of love struck girls, hold that weeping in men is unmanly. I have found most men in whom there was depth of experience, or capacity for compassion, singularly apt to tears.”

William F. Buckley Jr. - Witness and Friend: Remembering Whittaker Chambers

And without willing it, I saw in my mind's eye George Bush moved to tears—losing his composure. And I suddenly realized that, so far, I have seen nothing like that *anywhere* in the current administration—no passion, except perhaps in anger. But in trying to find the key to recognizing the *evil*, the absence of love may not be so easily spotted by us standing out here in nowhere's land. There is, though, a point where you *can* see it, where you will even experience it. That point will always arrive, at first in small ways, growing into something more sinister. Chambers again reveals how it came to him:

One thing most ex-Communists could agree upon: they broke because they wanted to be free. They do not all mean the same thing by “free.” Freedom is a need of the soul, and nothing else.

It is in striving toward God that the soul strives continually after a condition of freedom. God alone is the inciter and the guarantor of freedom. He is the only guarantor.

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

The tiniest departure from the fundamental principle of Liberty is the first sign of the lurking presence of evil. That's important, let me say it again: The *tiniest* departure from the fundamental principle of Liberty is the first sign of the lurking presence of evil. Chambers saw the soul of man continually striving for freedom, and that surely is one of the great drives of men—to be free from external restraint. Chambers said it was the death of the will, which Communism with great cunning always tries to induce in his victims...the death of the will, because in the will lies the man's *own* mind, his own desire for freedom, his own striving after God. For it is in God only that he can find freedom.

The enemy knows all about this yearning in man for freedom. He knows that it's a part of our nature, it's a part of our drive. So consequently, the enemy attempts to exploit this. Do you remember the sexual "liberation" movements of the 1960s, how everybody wanted to be "free"? It's funny how things stay the same over time. The great apostle Peter wrote, in the late first century, of men he called...

2 Peter 2

NKJV

¹³ [...] spots and blemishes, [...]

¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls.

And he went on to say of these men (this is in Second Peter, chapter 2),

2 Peter 2

NKJV

¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

From the great 1960s wave of sexual liberation comes bondage to corruption. Has the promise of sexual liberation been realized anywhere? You tell me what the fruits have been. I will tell *you* that one of its fruits is *50 million dead infants*. You may call them fetuses, but they had developing arms and legs, they had faces. They had fingers, they had thumbs they could suck. They had eyes, they had ears, they had a brain. They even had an identity. They were *written in God's book*. Do you realize that the numbers of aborted children in this country compares with the millions killed by Stalin, whom we condemn as a monster? No generation has ever seen a clearer example of what Peter was talking about. And what can easily be lost is this: "while they *promise* them liberty". Understand this: Promises not kept are another sign—one of the very opening signs; a very faint echo at the beginning, but it's there—of impending evil. Oh, I know, politicians are always making promises they have no intention of keeping. We listen to them, we blink our eyes, we turn away, we decide, "Oh well, he won't do that, anyway." Do we have to accept that? Can we not say *every promise not kept is a lie*? Now, what keeps it from being a lie? Well, if the person really intended to do the promise, if he really meant it, if it came from the heart, and he knows he *can't do it*, what does he do? He admits it. He apologizes. He says, "I know I promised, but I can't do it." So in the absence of that, *a promise not kept is a lie*. And you and I have every reason to ask, "*Why should we trust a liar?*"

Why do they lie? Because, in their mind, they are gods; and their vision justifies the lie. "The good we are going to do is so great, the things we are trying to accomplish are so justified, that even acts of

terror are permitted.” Chambers wrote,

The revolutionary heart of Communism is not the theatrical appeal: “Workers of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain.” It is a simple statement of Karl Marx, further simplified for handy use: “Philosophers have explained the world; it is necessary to change the world.”

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

That got to me a little bit, because all through the campaign of 2008 I kept asking myself, when people kept saying, “Change, change, change”, I said, “Change *what?*” And here, in Communism, I find the statement, “Philosophers have explained the world. It is necessary to change the world”, and nobody says, “*What for?*” He said,

Communists are bound together by no secret oath. The tie that binds them across the frontiers of nations, across barriers of language and differences of class and education, in defiance of religion, morality, truth, law, honor, the weakness of the body and the irresolutions of the mind, even unto death, is a simple conviction: It is necessary to change the world. Their power, whose nature baffles the rest of the world, because in a large measure the rest of the world has lost that power, is the power to hold convictions and act on them.

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

We have taken the freedom of religion clause in the Constitution to mean freedom *from* religion in this country, and this liberty *from* religion leads inevitably to corruption. Our school system, our universities, are becoming increasingly godless. Chambers wrote,

Political freedom, as the Western World has known it, is only a political reading of the Bible. Religion and freedom are indivisible. Without freedom the soul dies. Without the soul there is no justification for freedom. Necessity is the only ultimate justification known to the mind. Hence every sincere break with Communism is a religious experience, though the Communist fails to identify its true nature[...] A Communist breaks because he must choose at last between irreconcilable opposites—God or Man, [...] Freedom or Communism.

Whittaker Chambers - Witness

And strange as it may sound, the first time this choice was faced (and made) was in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve chose their own minds over God.

Until next time...