

Marc Roby: We are continuing our break from studying theology to look at some current topics of great importance from a Christian perspective. Last week we looked at the founding of the former Soviet Union and we noted that true Marxists believe that the ends justify the means. In their view, they are working to establish heaven on earth and whatever price has to be paid is acceptable. Dr. Spencer, how would you like to proceed today?

Dr. Spencer: Well, I want to remind our listeners of our discussion in Session 165, where we pointed out that according to the Bible, the most important function of government is to protect the rights of its citizens. The Bible teaches us that human freedom and human responsibility are important. This view of government is fundamentally irreconcilable with the Marxist idea of having the government be a vehicle for creating heaven here on earth.

Marc Roby: And we have also noted that the goal of creating heaven on earth is impossible in light of the fact that men are all sinners. Heaven is not possible unless our sin is removed, and only God can do that.

Dr. Spencer: That is the key problem. Because Marxism is based on a materialist worldview, it is bound to be wrong. Unfortunately, it also brings out the very worst in human nature. Let me read a quote from Louis Fischer. He was an American journalist who lived in Russia for some time and was, initially, very much in favor of what was going on, which is why he moved there. But even though he liked the theory, he became very disillusioned with the reality. He wrote that the Communist Party and the government “both bred sycophants, cynics and cowards. In the highest rank as well as in the lowest, fear rather than thought, self-interest rather than public welfare was the father of every word and deed. Anybody who had uttered a dissenting view in the past or whose independence and originality might some day nurture unorthodoxy received a 2 A.M. visit from the secret police and soon joined the involuntary ‘builders of Socialism’ in Siberia and the Arctic wastes.”¹

Marc Roby: That is frightening, but it also sounds like our politically correct cancel culture on steroids.

Dr. Spencer: I agree. As we saw last time, Lenin was absolutely ruthless. And he was followed by Stalin, who was just as ruthless, if not worse. And most other communist leaders have not been any better. Think of all the people who suffered or died in Mao’s China, or in Fidel’s Cuba, or now in Venezuela. And even the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini is a close cousin to communism, it is also a socialist ideology and both communism and fascism require a totalitarian state.

As we noted before, it is estimated that over one hundred million people have been murdered by socialist regimes since 1917.² People will do amazingly terrible things when they think they are

¹ Louis Fischer, from *The God That Failed, six studies in communism*, Hamish Hamilton, 1950, pg. 214

² Joshua Muravchik, *Heaven on Earth, the Rise, Fall, and Afterlife of Socialism*, Encounter Books, 2019, pg. 359

working for a goal as wonderful as world-wide peace and affluence, in other words, heaven on earth.

Marc Roby: We are told in Proverbs 14:12 that “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”³

Dr. Spencer: Yes, and just in case we don’t recognize how important that statement is, it is repeated for us in Proverbs 16:25. As Christians, we need to look at what God says, not what man says. God is truth and his Word is truth. If we stand on that truth, proclaim it, and make it the basis for our own thinking, we will be doing what is best. Not just best for ourselves, but best for everyone, even non-Christians.

Marc Roby: Of course, you’re not suggesting that we put in laws that require everyone to go to church on Sunday, for example, or to join in public prayers or to read their Bible every day.

Dr. Spencer: No, of course not. Christianity never teaches that we should try and force others to live like Christians. It isn’t possible for them to do so anyway; it requires Holy Spirit power to live the Christian life. But it *is* perfectly proper for us, as Christians, to influence society to the best of our ability to have a government and laws that reflect the law of God. So, for example, human life is sacred *because* God says it is sacred, and we should push for laws that reflect that fact.

Marc Roby: And God even gives us the reason it is sacred. Capital punishment for murder was commanded by God in Genesis 9:6 where we read, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”

Dr. Spencer: That is a very important point and provides a good illustration of why biblical thinking leads to what is best for everyone. While being deliberately cruel to animals is undoubtedly wrong, you don’t put someone to death for killing an animal because animals are not made in God’s image. But men and women are. Therefore, anyone who willfully takes the life of another human being, except in very special circumstances like self-defense, has sinned tremendously against God and God himself commands that society put that person to death. And the prohibition against murder applies to *all* human beings, the unborn just as much as a healthy adult.

Marc Roby: You aren’t suggesting that we should have the death penalty for abortion providers are you?

Dr. Spencer: Well, not while abortion is legal, no. But we should work to make abortion illegal and, if that were to happen, then deliberately taking the life of an unborn child should be treated no differently than deliberately taking the life of anyone else. Notice that our laws already reflect

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this idea in some ways. In the California penal code murder is defined as “the unlawful killing of a human being, or a fetus, with malice aforethought.”⁴ Now that section of the penal code also carves out an exception for the fetus when it is killed with the mother’s consent, but the simple fact it is worded this way reveals that everyone knows the truth; abortion is legalized murder, our society has simply decided that a mother has a right to murder her unborn child.

Marc Roby: That’s an accurate, but I’m sure controversial, way to put it. But you said this illustrates why biblical thinking leads to what is best for everyone. I doubt those who support abortion rights would agree, so what is your argument?

Dr. Spencer: When you stop considering *all* human life to be sacred, as we have in this country, you open a Pandora’s box and you devalue *all* human life. You no longer have a clear rational basis for saying murder is wrong. You allow it for unborn children, so long as the mother approves, so why not also allow it for newborns with the mother’s approval for example? Infanticide has been practiced in many cultures throughout history for various reasons and has been proposed quite seriously in this country by Peter Singer and others. He is a professor of bioethics at Princeton University. Although, to be fair, he does write that “We should put very strict conditions on permissible infanticide ...”.

Marc Roby: Whoa ... I’m glad to hear he at least thinks there should be limits!

Dr. Spencer: Well, his limits aren’t all that meaningful, I didn’t finish the sentence. Let me read the whole sentence, along with the one that follows it. He wrote that “We should put very strict conditions on permissible infanticide; but these restrictions should owe more to the effects of infanticide on others than to the intrinsic wrongness of killing an infant. Obviously, in most cases, to kill an infant is to inflict a terrible loss on those who love and cherish the child.”⁵

Marc Roby: Now wait a minute, a terrible loss to those who love and cherish the child? What about the child himself, or herself? That’s frightening.

Dr. Spencer: Well, I don’t want to get into his justification for this abhorrent view, I just want to use it to finish my example. In the transcript for this podcast, which is available on our website – whatdoesthewordsay.org, I cite an excellent article to read for those who are interested.⁶

But let me finish up this example. When you don’t have a clear-cut reason for the sanctity of human life, it becomes a very malleable phrase - it can mean whatever you want it to mean and you can justify abortion, infanticide and senicide, which is the killing of people who get to be too old to be useful. It is very difficult to argue against these evils without a clear-cut, independent moral position that is defensible, and the Bible gives us that position. All human beings are made in the image of God.

⁴ See Section 187 of the California Penal Code

⁵ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 3rd Ed., Cambridge University Press, 2011, pg. 154

⁶ Scott Klusendorf, *Peter Singer’s Bold Defense of Infanticide*, Christian Research Journal, Vol. 23, No. 3, available at equip.org/article/peter-singers-bold-defense-of-infanticide/

Marc Roby: OK, I see your point.

Dr. Spencer: So, as Christians, we must base our reasoning on the Bible, even when we are reasoning about forms of government and the laws in our nation. God is infinitely wiser and more knowledgeable than we are, and if we stick with what he says, it will be good for us, and for the society we live in.

Marc Roby: That does make sense. And so, getting back to our discussion of socialism, the goal of government should also be set by the Bible, not by man.

Dr. Spencer: And that is exactly my point. The government is not the absolute authority. Our rights as human beings are *not* something the government doles out, they are given to us by God. That is why our Declaration of Independence says that we are endowed by our *Creator* with certain unalienable rights. And the Declaration goes on to say, “That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”⁷ Men create governments and grant *them* certain limited powers, not the other way around. We have gotten away from that idea in this country.

Marc Roby: Yes, that is obviously true. Some people act as if they think the government is some infinite reservoir of benefits.

Dr. Spencer: That’s quite true. Many people seem have the view that government should be there to provide for our needs from the cradle to the grave, and many people in government are all too happy to encourage this view because it keeps them in power and increases their power.

But you need to think carefully if you think that that sounds good, because it means that the government will have to be so large and powerful that your rights as an individual can be trampled at any moment. Our founding fathers were very concerned about this and the system of government they put in place is an amazing compromise that demonstrates great wisdom. It balances the idea of democracy, that is majority rule, with the need to protect minorities from the tyranny of the majority. And significant changes to the form of that government have to be agreed to by a supermajority of the citizens.

Marc Roby: It is incredible to go back and study the founding documents and the debates that consumed people as they worked out the details.

Dr. Spencer: I agree. Now, this country is not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but it is a great country. It is currently fashionable on the left to view this country as some kind of imperial power, but that is unjustifiable given the facts. For example, this country only achieved a significant degree of global hegemony after World War II. And any fair reading of that history has to recognize three major facts about it.

Marc Roby: What are those?

⁷ From a transcript of the Declaration of Independence, available at <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

Dr. Spencer: First, that we were dragged into World War II against our will. There is no doubt that there were some who wanted us to join much before the attack on Pearl Harbor, but that was certainly not the majority view. Now, it is also true that it was in our own best interests to defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, but that leads to the second thing any fair history has to recognize.

Marc Roby: What is that?

Dr. Spencer: That we didn't try to permanently stay as an occupier in the territories after we conquered them! And, by the way, I'm not ignoring our allies, we didn't do it alone. But no rational person would argue that we were not the dominant force. And so my point stands, we were not in World War II for the purpose of extending our empire, which by definition puts the lie to the idea that this country is some horrid imperial power. Not only did we not try to permanently occupy Germany, Japan and other territories that we and our allies conquered, we spent a phenomenal amount of money to build them back up after the war so that they would have functioning economies. That has never been done by any other victorious nation to the best of my knowledge.

Marc Roby: Well, the Marshall Plan was an incredible success to say the least. Unlike the Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I and made World War II almost certain given its harsh treatment of Germany, we poured enormous resources into rebuilding Europe after World War II, including Germany.

Dr. Spencer: And, to be honest, that was again in our own best interest given that Russia was much closer to those countries and would probably have taken over Europe had we simply left, but just because it was also in our interest does not negate the fact that it was a very generous act that benefitted our European allies immensely. And we did much the same in Japan.

Marc Roby: OK, what is the third major fact you said has to be recognized?

Dr. Spencer: That, as far as I am aware, the United States is the only country in the history of the world to ever gain any significant degree of hegemony *without* it being a part of a conscious plan to rule the world or at least a large portion of it. Nor was it done *primarily* for our own benefit. We were not seeking to conquer territory in order to add it to our country or to steal natural resources or subjugate people. And we weren't primarily defending our homeland either, the continental United States was never seriously threatened. We would have been happy to stay out of the war entirely, but we chose not to.

Marc Roby: That's a great point.

Dr. Spencer: When you put that together with the phenomenal success of our free-market based economy to improve the lives of almost all people, we have a lot we can justifiably be proud of in this country.

Marc Roby: Although we must also admit we do have things to be ashamed of as well, and we have a lot of things that can be improved upon.

Dr. Spencer: And both of those points are obviously true. We should be ashamed of having slavery up until the time of the thirteenth amendment, and we should be ashamed as a nation for the Jim Crow era that followed. But the United States is far from unique in terms of slavery.

Slavery has been a part of human history for as long as we have records. And racial discrimination has been, and still is, a common problem virtually everywhere. These are simply the result of the fact that human beings are sinners. But, as we noted in Session 161, God gives us our purpose, place and priorities. So long as we keep that in mind and seek a government that is consistent with our purpose, which is to glorify God, and our place, which is that we are finite creatures, wholly dependent on our Creator, and which seeks to implement the priorities God gives us for our lives, then we will be doing what is right and best for everyone.

Marc Roby: And socialism fails in all three of those areas. Because it is built on a materialist, atheist worldview, it completely misses the purpose of human life, in fact it rejects that there *is* any purpose – we are just cosmic accidents. It doesn't even recognize that there is a God, let alone that our chief end is to glorify him. It also doesn't see that we are mere creatures, entirely dependent on our Creator, so it gets our place wrong. It thinks we are the ultimate beings. And, finally, its priorities are wrong since it ignores God's revelation.

Dr. Spencer: One of the most poignant things I have ever read about this was written by Whittaker Chambers.

Marc Roby: Most of our listeners will probably not know who he was, so let me provide some very brief background. Whittaker Chambers was an American writer who was a communist and worked as a spy in the Soviet underground in this country in the 1930's. He later defected from communism and, most famously, was the primary witness in the Alger Hiss case in the late 40's.

Dr. Spencer: And Alger Hiss was an assistant to Assistant Secretary of State Francis Sayre in the FDR administration, participated in the Yalta Conference with FDR, Winston Churchill and Stalin, and was heavily involved in drafting the charter for the United Nations. He was convicted of perjury, rather than espionage, because the statute of limitations had run out on the espionage charges. He proclaimed his innocence right up to his death in 1996 and the case is still somewhat controversial, although I think the evidence that has come out after his death makes it quite clear that he was a Soviet spy.

Marc Roby: And Whittaker Chambers wrote a very famous account of his life and the trial, called *Witness*.⁸

Dr. Spencer: That's right. And the reason I bring this up is that he wrote what he called a "Foreword in the Form of a Letter to My Children" that is one of the most poignant and amazing things I've ever read. His burden was to explain to his children how he could ever have been involved with something as evil as the Soviet Union.

Marc Roby: And it would be good to note that he became a confessing Christian.

⁸ Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*, Regenery History, 2014 (republication – original was 1952)

Dr. Spencer: In fact, let me quote from his forward, he wrote that “I date my break [with communism] from a very casual happening. I was sitting in our apartment ... My daughter was in her high chair. ... My eye came to rest on the delicate convolutions of her ear ... The thought passed through my mind: ‘No, those 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.’”⁹

Marc Roby: Well, that’s the first time I’ve ever heard of God using the shape of a human ear to bring someone to faith, but it makes perfect sense!

Dr. Spencer: Yes, it does. But the thing I really wanted to read is his answer to a question he posed. And you have to remember that this forward is in the form of a letter to his children. He wrote, “I see in Communism the focus of the concentrated evil of our time. You will ask: Why, then, do men become Communists?”¹⁰

Marc Roby: That’s a great question, how does he answer it?

Dr. Spencer: It takes him a couple of pages, so I’m going to give excerpts from his answer. He wrote that “Communism makes some profound appeal to the human mind.” Then he goes on to say first what communism is *not*. He says it is not “just the writings of Marx and Lenin, ... the Red Army, secret police, labor camps” and so on. He also says, “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.’”¹¹

Marc Roby: You’ve spoken several times about the Marxist idea of needing to create a new man.

Dr. Spencer: And that’s the idea. But now let me finish by reading the really critical part of his answer. He wrote, “The tie that binds [communists] ... in defiance of religion, morality, truth, law, honor ... even unto death, is a simple conviction: It is necessary to change the world. ... Communists are that part of mankind which has recovered the power to live or die – to bear witness – for its faith. And it is a simple, rational faith that inspires men to live or die for it. It is not new. It is, in fact, man’s second oldest faith. Its promise was whispered in the first days of the Creation under the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: ‘Ye shall be as gods.’ It is the great alternative faith of mankind. ... It is the vision of man’s mind displacing God as the creative intelligence of the world.”¹²

Marc Roby: Wow, that is powerful. And he was quoting from Genesis 3 of course, when Satan tempted Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in spite of the fact God had warned Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate from it. Satan contradicted God and said,

⁹ Ibid, pg. xlv

¹⁰ Ibid, pg. xxxvii

¹¹ Ibid, pg. xxxviii

¹² Ibid, pp xxxviii-xxxix

as we read in Verses 4 and 5, “You will not surely die, For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Dr. Spencer: That is the key to why all forms of Marxism – socialism, communism, fascism – or whatever, are absolutely incompatible with biblical Christianity. They are based on materialism, a rejection of God. They come from Satan, the father of lies. Chambers hit the nail on the head, the origin of Marxism was in the garden when Satan called God a liar and told man that *he* could be like God.

Marc Roby: That is a profound realization. Where do we go from here?

Dr. Spencer: We will soon begin to look at other modern manifestations Marxist ideology, things like the Black Lives Matter organization. But we first need to see how it is that Marxist ideology has become so common in our society today.

Marc Roby: I look forward to that discussion, and this is a great place to finish for today, so I'd like to remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org. We will do our best to answer.