

“Revisiting ‘Centesimus Annus’ and American Ideals Amid the CCP’s Human Rights Atrocities”

“She did not know at all that she had swept away the logic of the mind, the logic of history, the logic of politics, the myth of the 20th century, with five annihilating words: one night he heard screams.” – Whittaker Chambers, “Witness”

In arguably the most memorable passage of his 1952 [book](#), “Witness,”¹ Soviet spy-turned-Christian Whittaker Chambers documented the visceral screams of communism’s victims that a formerly pro-Soviet German diplomat had heard in Moscow. As the diplomat’s daughter recounted to Chambers, these were the soul-piercing cries that jolted her father out of his ideological stupor.

In these current times, similarly harrowing screams are ringing out across the Asian continent. Thanks to the internet and digital technology, the world has now heard the desperation of the people of China in videos² from April of last year. The [footage](#) that Relevant radio host Patrick Madrid posted on Twitter (which subsequently went viral) panned several residential towers in Shanghai filled with people screaming from their balconies amid draconian COVID-19 lockdowns.

The howling anguish permeated the atmosphere over this city of more than 25 million people who were forced to stay in their homes for days, unable to go anywhere, and with food heavily rationed. Such a distraught cacophony of voices illuminated for the watching world the depths to which the CCP controls its populace.

In late November, again under severe COVID-19 restrictions, an [apartment building caught fire](#) in a Uyghur-majority neighborhood in the city of Ürümqi in the Xinjiang province³. Residents of the building were prevented from exiting. Ten people were killed as a result of this and several others were injured. These events sparked intense anger toward the CCP and their handling of the disaster,

¹ <https://www.amazon.com/Witness-Cold-Classics-Whittaker-Chambers/dp/162157296X>

² <https://twitter.com/patrickmadrid/status/1512600957204537350?lang=en>

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-63752407>

which led to an eruption of [widespread street protests](#)⁴, an occurrence so rare in China it elicited comparisons to the 1989 [Tiananmen Square demonstrations](#)⁵.

To be sure, harsh lockdown policies were implemented in many nations during the COVID-19 pandemic, yet what happened in China, particularly given how people were driven to the brink of insanity, was perhaps the apotheosis of the CCP's crimes. With ruthless ferocity, the Party has oppressed millions upon millions for decades under its hopelessly flawed creed, a dogma that is predicated on a lie about human beings.

The CCP's anthropological error

The CCP's socialist conception of the human being is as destructive as the Marxist-Leninist version that dominated Russia and Eastern Europe for much of the 20th century. Then, as now, the wisdom of Pope John Paul II proves timely. The Polish pontiff observed in his 1991 [encyclical](#) *Centesimus Annus* that socialism's great error is fundamentally anthropological, as the human being is, in such a system, "reduced to a series of social relationships, and the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears, the very subject whose decisions build the social order"⁶.

This false, socialistic notion of the human person, which is central to the CCP's vision for society, is the key reason why communism is an inadequate form of governance in China.

In communism, humans are socio-economic commodities possessing no transcendent meaning and they can thus be instrumentalized and abused for the unmistakably godless purposes of those at the helm of state power. Religions that object to their goals – especially Christianity but other faiths too – must be strenuously opposed and undermined.

By contrast, the Christian faith, which indubitably inspired the American founders

⁴<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/thousands-in-china-protest-zero-covid-policy-in-largest-demonstrations-in-decades>

⁵ <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/12/06/tiananmen-protest-china-zero-covid-00072430>

⁶ https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html

to begin the Declaration of Independence with the assertion that they considered it self-evident that all men are created equal, exalts every person as uniquely valuable members of the human family. Human dignity is inherent by virtue of being made in God's image.

Pope John Paul II understood this, reminding the world in his landmark encyclical that it is "not possible to understand man on the basis of economics alone, nor to define him simply on the basis of class membership" for at "the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God."

Yet the CCP cannot abide the eternal verities that infuse the Judeo-Christian worldview since any paradigm that points to an authority beyond their own ill-gotten power poses an existential threat to its continuance. The party's relentless push to overwrite the attitude that man takes to the great mystery of God in pursuit of their ill-fated ends belongs on history's ash heap.

The CCP's Human Rights Abuses, Communism's Horrors

Given the endemic disregard for the dignity of the person in communism, it is no surprise that the CCP's human rights atrocities and their disastrous effects have continued apace.

Breathtaking in its scope, China's long-running one-child policy, predicated on its false anthropology, has yielded countless forced abortions and sterilizations since 1949. As Population Research Institute President Steven Mosher explained in an August 2019 EWTN [interview](#), the Chinese Communist regime has prevented an estimated 400 million births⁷. Chinese people "will see their family tree with all the branches shorn away" having effectively "killed off half of two generations," he noted. This remains true despite the CCP's shift in 2015, when the party announced an end to the policy.

Presently, the CCP subjects China's Uyghur Muslim population to inhumane detention and other monstrous abuses on the basis of their religion. As the BBC [reported](#) in September, human rights groups believe China has detained more

⁷ <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/42140/chinas-one-child-policy-will-leave-lasting-damage-expert-warns>

than one million of them against their will in "re-education" facilities⁸. These detention centers are more accurately described as concentration camps and many Uyghurs have been tortured and sentenced to life in prison.

Tens of thousands of innocent Chinese people have also been killed over the course of many decades for the purpose of [forced organ harvesting](#) – a lucrative trade that is believed to be worth more than \$1 billion every year⁹. The most likely victims of this brutality are prisoners of conscience from minority populations, including Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, and Tibetan Buddhists.

Remedies: American ideals and institutions

In view of these horrors, is there hope for this vast Asian nation that is home to over 1.3 billion people?

The answer is yes. American ideals and institutions provide a remedy for these problems, one that rejects the flawed anthropology at the center of the CCP worldview. While the United States has weathered some politically stormy seasons in recent years, the lasting genius of its Constitution is its sober recognition of the perils of a monolithic party or ruler. By design, the American founding charter sets forth from the beginning three distinct branches of government, creating a system of checks and balances.

Where Chinese communists have begun with a crucial anthropological error, the American founders enshrined a crucial anthropological truth. By deliberately separating power in its governing institutions, it is much less likely to fall into the hands of a dictator or an autocratic cabal. The deliberate separation of powers also reflects a certain sobriety regarding the human condition, one that recognizes nature's God and that men are not God. Humans are, rather, creatures prone to corruption by possessing too much power and in need of having their temporal power restrained.

⁸<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62744522>

⁹<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/06/china-un-human-rights-experts-alarmed-organ-harvesting-allegations>

Conclusion: The hope of the Gospel

Most hopefully on the human rights front, what the CCP has been unable to achieve, despite its many violent crackdowns over the years, is the suppression of the Gospel. Daryl Ireland, a Boston University School of Theology professor, [estimates](#) that Christianity in China has grown from 1 million to 100 million adherents in the past forty years¹⁰. Indeed, it appears that many Chinese people who have known atheism's dark void have discovered the person of Christ as the "existentially adequate response to the desire in every human heart for goodness, truth and life," as John Paul II wrote in 1991.

If this trend continues in China, the rising collective desire for goodness, truth, and life among the people will spiritually dismantle the anthropological falsehood upon which the current system rests. Whenever and however that happens, may a truly just form of government that honors human rights swiftly replace the CCP's behemoth totalitarianism.

¹⁰ <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2023/why-is-christianity-growing-in-china/>