WEEK 2 OF 6

Atheism & Materialism

vs. the God of Scripture

Christianity & Communism • November 1, 2026

Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church • Tampa, Florida

Review & Introduction

Week 1 Recap

- Marx & Engels: Manifesto (1848), historical materialism, class struggle
- Lenin: Vanguard party, Bolshevik Revolution 1917, Comintern
- Soviet Union: collectivization, gulags, ~60 million deaths 1917–1991
- Mao, Castro, Pol Pot: global spread of Marxist-Leninist regimes
- Communism as total worldview — not merely economic policy

Today's Focus

From historical overview to philosophical and theological analysis.

Central question: What does Communism say about God — and what does Scripture say in response?

Atheism and materialism are not incidental to Communism. They are its foundation.

"The issue is not merely political or economic — it is fundamentally theological."

Marx on Religion

“Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

— Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, 1843 (Introduction)

Feuerbach’s Projection Theory	Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872): God is not the creator of man but man’s projection of his own ideal nature onto an imagined infinite being. Theology is therefore concealed anthropology.
Religion as False Consciousness	For Marx, religion is ideological superstructure that legitimizes the economic base. It reconciles the oppressed to their misery by promising heavenly reward — a tool of the ruling class.
The Necessary Abolition	“The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness.” The Communist program must therefore eliminate religion to liberate humanity.

Source: Marx, Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (1843)

The Communist War on Religion

Theory—→Practice

League of Militant Atheists (USSR)

1925–1947

Soviet state organ dedicated to eliminating religion. At peak: 5.5 million members, 100+ newspapers. Demolished 40,000+ churches; converted cathedrals to warehouses, stables, cinemas.

Persecution of Clergy

Romania — Richard Wurmbrand

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand imprisoned 14 years by Romanian Communists; tortured for Christ. Testified before U.S. Senate 1966. Founded Voice of the Martyrs. "I was beaten with clubs. They experimented on me with drugs."

Chinese Cultural Revolution

1966–1976

Mao declared China a religion-free nation. Red Guards destroyed temples, churches, mosques. Buddhist monks killed or sent to labor camps. Bibles burned. Estimated 1.5 million killed.

Albania: First Atheist State

Hoxha Regime, 1967

Enver Hoxha declared Albania the world's first officially atheist state. All 2,169 churches and mosques demolished or converted. Clergy executed. Religion punishable by imprisonment.

Source: Wurmbrand, Tortured for Christ

Solzhenitsyn's Diagnosis

"More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." And if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.""

— Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Templeton Address, 1983

"Militant atheism is not merely incidental or marginal to Communist policy; it is not a side effect, but the central pivot."

— Solzhenitsyn, Templeton Address, 1983

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) — Nobel Prize in Literature 1970 • 8 years in Soviet labor camps (Gulag Archipelago)

Source: Solzhenitsyn, Templeton Address (1983)

The God of Scripture

The ontological foundation Communism denies

WCF Chapter II — The One True God

> *"There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory."*

— Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter II.1

Self-Existent	God's being is from himself (a se). He does not depend on matter, energy, or any prior cause. He is the uncaused cause. This directly refutes materialist accounts of ultimate origins.
Eternal & Immutable	God is not subject to time, change, or historical process. Marxist dialectical materialism makes history the driving force of all reality; God transcends history and drives it purposefully.
Personal & Triune	God is not the impersonal ground of being or a force within matter. He is a personal agent — and more: he is tri-personal, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a community of eternal love.
Morally Holy	God's holiness grounds objective moral reality. Without God, morality collapses into class interest (Lenin) or evolutionary survival. With God, justice and love are metaphysically grounded.

Source: Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. II

Creation, Providence & Purpose

WCF IV — Creation

"It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein..." (IV.1)

Creation is ex nihilo — not from pre-existing matter, but by the sovereign word of a personal God.

WCF V — Providence

"God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least..." (V.1)

History is driven by divine providence — not blind economic forces or material dialectics.

Sources: WCF IV-V; Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2

Marxist View

Matter alone is real. Man is a product of economic forces. History is self-creating progress through class struggle. No design, no telos, no transcendent meaning.

Christian View

God created all things with purpose. Man bears God's image. History is providentially governed. Reality has built-in meaning, telos, and moral direction.

"Man is the image of God, not by virtue of his body, nor exclusively in his rational nature, but as a whole person. The imago Dei covers the full range of man's being — rational, moral, spiritual, relational." Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics

Schaeffer's Argument

The Infinite-Personal God

Starting point: a personal God who is there, who speaks, who made man in his image.

Derivatives: meaning, morality, beauty, love, law, science — all grounded in the personal.

Matter + Energy + Chance

Starting point: impersonal matter, energy, and random process — nothing more.

Derivatives: no meaning, no objective morality, no beauty, no love — only chemistry.

"The basic problem of the Christians in this country... is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals... If we as Christians do not speak to the crucial issues of our age, then we are not faithful to the calling God has given us."

— Francis Schaeffer, A Christian Manifesto (1981)

Source: Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live

The Insufficiency of Atheist Ethics

> *“Our morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat... Morality is what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the toilers around the proletariat.”*

— V.I. Lenin, Speech to the Third Congress of the Russian Communist Youth League, 1920

Dostoevsky

The Brothers Karamazov

“If God does not exist, everything is permitted.” The logical endpoint: without a transcendent lawgiver, there is no law — only power and preference.

C.S. Lewis

The Abolition of Man (1943)

Those who debunk all objective value — the Tao — produce “men without chests”: intellect and appetite without moral formation. The abolition of man’s soul is the abolition of man.

Lenin’s Logic

Applied Marxist Ethics

If morality serves the class struggle, then any act that advances the revolution is moral. This logic authorized the Gulag, mass executions, forced starvations — all “moral” by definition.

Source: Lewis, The Abolition of Man

Discussion

1. Marx called religion the “opium of the people.” In what ways is his critique partially true of how Christianity has sometimes been practiced? How does the gospel itself challenge that distortion?

2. Solzhenitsyn said, “Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.” Do you see evidence of this dynamic in contemporary Western culture? What might a modern Solzhenitsyn say about our moment?

3. Lenin stated that morality is entirely subordinate to class interests. How would you respond to someone who says, “You don’t need God to be a good person”? What does Communism’s history add to that conversation?

4. Schaeffer argued that the infinite-personal God is the foundation for meaning, morality, and science. Where do you see this argument most needed in your own workplace, neighborhood, or family conversations?

WEEK 3 OF 6

Coming Up Next Week

The Marxist View of Man vs. the Biblical Doctrine of Sin

Marx's Anthropology

Man as economic animal; perfectibility of human nature through changing material conditions; Communist utopianism.

WCF VI — Original Sin

Total depravity, the fall, and radical corruption of human nature. Why utopian projects always fail.

Reinhold Niebuhr

"The children of light and the children of darkness." Why idealism without sin-realism is dangerous.

Soviet Utopianism: The New Soviet Man: Communism's attempt to create a new humanity by changing the environment. The catastrophic result when reality collides with ideology.