WEEK 3 OF 6

The Communist View of Man

vs. the Image of God

Christianity & Communism • November 8, 2026

Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church • Tampa, Florida

Review & Introduction

Weeks 1 & 2 Recap

- Week 1: Origins of Communism
- Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx — materialism, dialectic, alienation
- Week 2: Marxist Theory of History
- Dialectical materialism, class struggle, real-world body counts (USSR, China, Cambodia)
- *Reading: Schaeffer, A Christian Manifesto, Chap. 1 (The Abolition of Truth and Morality) and Chap. 2 (Foundations for Faith and Freedom)*

Today: Week 3

"The Communist View of Man vs. the Image of God"

- Marxist anthropology: species-being, no soul, no transcendent dignity
- Collectivism and the expendable individual — gulag, Maoist terror, Year Zero
- The Imago Dei: Genesis 1:26–28, Bavinck, WCF Ch. IV
- Sin, the Fall, and the Christian critique of structural evil (WCF Ch. VI)
- Liberty of conscience: WCF Ch. XX & Machen

Source: Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, WCF Chapter IV

Marxist Anthropology: Man as Material Being

“The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.” — Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, Thesis VI (1845)

Species-Being (Gattungswesen)	Marx’s term for the distinctively human capacity for conscious, free productive activity. Man is defined not by soul or divine image, but by labor and production.
No Soul, No Transcendence	Man is purely material. Religion is “the opium of the people” — a false consolation that keeps workers from recognizing their exploitation. There is no afterlife, no divine judgment, no immortal soul.
Individual Subordinate to Class	Individual identity is derivative. What matters is your class position — bourgeois or proletarian. Personal conscience, private property, and individual rights are bourgeois constructs to be overcome.
Human Nature as Malleable	The “new Soviet man” — fully formed by the collective. Personality, values, even family loyalty are contingent products of economic conditions, re-formable through the right social engineering.

Source: Marx, Theses on Feuerbach

Collectivism & the Expendable Individual

When man has no inherent dignity, he becomes expendable. The logic of Marxist anthropology produces the gulag.

The Gulag System (USSR)

At peak, 1.5–2 million prisoners per year in Soviet labor camps. Inmates were economic units — their labor value calculated against food cost. Solzhenitsyn: prisoners were "not people" in official Soviet categories.

Maoist Struggle Sessions

Public self-criticism rituals in which individuals were forced to denounce themselves and their "bourgeois" thoughts before crowds. Designed to annihilate individual conscience and remake the self in the image of the collective.

Khmer Rouge: Year Zero (1975)

Pol Pot declared history reset. Cities emptied, families separated, all pre-revolutionary identity erased. Wearing glasses could mean death — a sign of "bourgeois intellectualism." ~2 million killed (25% of Cambodia).

The Individual as Means, Not End

Kant's "categorical imperative" (greatest good for greatest number): treat persons as ends, never merely as means. Marx inverts this principle: the individual exists for the collective, the class, the revolution. Personhood is always instrumental, never intrinsic.

Source: Solzhenitsyn, Gulag Archipelago

The Biblical Doctrine of Man

Imago Dei • The Fall • Liberty of Conscience

Imago Dei: Made in the Image of God

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."… So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." — Genesis 1:26–27 (ESV)

Rational	Man thinks, reasons, speaks, names — reflects God's own rationality. Unlike animals, man has language, logic, philosophy, and theology. (Col. 3:10)
Moral	Man is a moral agent with a conscience (Rom 2:15). He knows good and evil and is accountable to the God who gave the law.
Relational	"Male and female he created them" (Gen. 2:18, 21-25) — the image includes relationality, as the Trinity is relational. Community is gift, not just economic necessity.
Creative and Ruling	Dominion over creation (Gen. 1:28). Man participates in God's creative and governing work through art, science, culture, and stewardship over the earth's resources.

Bavinck: The image of God is "the essence of human nature."

WCF IV: Man created "with reasonable and immortal souls" — intrinsic, inalienable dignity.

Source: WCF Chapter IV, Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics

Sin, the Fall & the Problem of Evil

"From this original corruption… we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." — WCF Ch. VI, §4

Marx on Evil

- Evil is structural, not personal
- Caused by class oppression and unjust economic relations
- Solved by revolution: abolish the class system, abolish evil
- The new man is possible — human nature is fully malleable
- *No sin, no forgiveness, no redemption — only liberation*

Christian View (WCF Ch. VI)

- Evil is first personal — rooted in the human heart (Jer 17:9)
- Original sin corrupts every faculty: intellect, will, affections
- No political system can create a new heart (Ezek 36:26)
- Man fallen but not worthless — the image remains, marred
- *Solution: redemption through Christ, not revolution through class*

Source: WCF Chapter VI

Liberty of Conscience: God Alone Lord of the Soul

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to His Word; or beside it." — WCF Ch. XX, §2

"The most important thing in this world is individual liberty." — J. Gresham Machen, Christianity and Liberalism (1923)

Freedom of Thought

The soul's reasoning and believing are answerable to God, not the state. No party may compel belief, mandate confession of false doctrine, or punish honest dissent.

Freedom of Worship

The first table of the law governs man's duty to God alone. Caesar has no jurisdiction over the sanctuary of the soul. Communist anti-religion campaigns violate this directly.

Freedom of Speech

When God is Lord of conscience, speech that flows from conscience is protected. Struggle sessions, show trials, and the gulags all depend on coerced public speech — the annihilation of honest expression.

Source: WCF Chapter XX, Machen, Christianity and Liberalism

Discussion Questions

Take 10–12 minutes. Use these questions to apply today's material.

1 Marx defines the human person as "the ensemble of social relations." How does Genesis 1:26–28 challenge this definition? What does it mean, practically, that you bear the image of God?

2 Communist regimes justified mass atrocities by categorizing victims as "enemies of the people," "socially harmful elements," or "counterrevolutionaries." How does dehumanizing language connect to a denial of the Imago Dei?

3 Marx located the root cause of evil in unjust economic structures. The Bible locates it in the human heart (Jer 17:9). What difference does this make for how we evaluate political solutions, including well-intentioned progressive ones?

4 WCF Ch. XX says "God alone is Lord of the conscience." Where do you see this principle being tested in contemporary culture? What does faithful obedience to the principle look like for a Christian today?

WEEK 4 OF 6

Coming Next:

Property, Work, and the Eighth Commandment

You shall not steal — and what that means for economics