

## Text: various

Last week I started talking about Communism and Christianity. The topic might be a little surprising. Why should we talk about it?

1. Although most Christians oppose communism, most of us only think about it as something we are “agin,” but don’t know why.
2. Despite the collapse of Soviet communism, Marxism is still alive as an idea and affects some professing Christians.
3. One aspect of communism, its economic theory, is socialism which is very attractive to many Christians.

I think the philosophy, socio-economic theory, and revolutionary ethos of communism is directly opposed to God’s word, so we ought to have some idea of why that is so, in each of these areas.

Last week I gave you this summary from Encyclopedia Britannica:

“His theory has three main aspects: first, a materialist conception of history; second, a critique of capitalism and its inner workings; and third, an account of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its eventual replacement by communism.”<sup>1</sup>

Today we are going to take a brief look at materialism in general and show how the ideas of materialism create the description: “godless communism.”

I don’t have one specific text for this, as we will cover several in this message.

**Proposition:** The philosophy of materialism is entirely at odds with the Bible picture of reality. Any movement (including communism) that rests on materialism cannot be true.

## I. Summarizing materialism

### A. Definitions

1. OED: “The theory or belief that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications; (more narrowly) the theory or belief that mental phenomena are nothing more than, or are wholly caused by, the operation of material or physical agencies.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Communism - Marxist Theory, Class Struggle, Revolution,” Encyclopedia Britannica, August 9, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/communism>.

<sup>2</sup> “Materialism, n.,” Oxford English Dictionary, accessed August 12, 2023, [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/materialism\\_n?tab=meaning\\_and\\_use#37804075](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/materialism_n?tab=meaning_and_use#37804075).

2. **“Materialism**, as a philosophical theory, can be defined by two claims:
  - a. “Material matter is the only thing in our reality that truly exists;
  - b. “Nothing else exists apart from material matter.”<sup>3</sup>

## B. Contrasts

### 1. Idealism vs. materialism

“Despite the large number of philosophical schools and their nuances, all philosophies are said to fall into one of two primary categories, defined in contrast to each other: *idealism* and *materialism*.”<sup>4</sup>

- a. Idealism is the opposite of materialism
  - b. Some forms of idealism insist matter is an illusion, there is no matter
- ### 2. Two fundamental questions
- a. What is reality?
  - b. How did it get there?
- ### 3. Third category: dualism
- a. Reality = ideal (spiritual) and material (physical)
  - b. Christianity is a form of dualism (the correct form!)

## II. Supporting Biblical dualism

### A. The whole universe is subordinate to (and created by) God

Jn 4.24 “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

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<sup>3</sup> “Materialism,” The Decision Lab, accessed August 19, 2023, <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/philosophy/materialism>.

<sup>4</sup> “Materialism,” in *Wikipedia*, August 17, 2023, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Materialism&oldid=1170763282>.

Jn 1.1-3 ¶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.<sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Col 1.16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him.

1. All things were made by God, “visible and invisible”
2. God created all spiritual realities outside himself (angels)
3. God created all material reality (physical universe)
4. God is above and beyond and superior to all he made

#### B. God created man as a dualistic being

Gn 2.7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

1. Man is obviously physical
2. But man is also spiritual: “living being” = *nephesh*, soul

Ecc 12.6-7 *Remember Him* before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed;<sup>7</sup> then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

#### C. God entered the material universe to redeem sinful man

1. God is a spirit (see Jn 4.24)
2. God (the Word) became flesh

Jn 1.14 ¶ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

All of this is sufficient to give the basics of Biblical dualism.

- Essential to our understanding of reality
- Essential for any hope of redemption from our sinful condition

### III. Evaluating godless materialism

#### A. Inevitable consequences of materialism

1. Denies the existence of God (or any other spiritual phenomena)

“Materialism states that what cannot be perceived does not exist, which includes ghosts, spirits, God, or any immaterial content of the mind.”<sup>5</sup>

This reminds of the scene in *A Christmas Carol* where Scrooge says to Marley’s ghost, “I don’t believe in ghosts, you’re just a bit of undigested beef.” Whereupon Marley simply shrieks and him and Scrooge cowers, saying, “I believe, I believe.”

2. Denies the reality of a sin nature (or accountability for sin)
3. This leads to the modern understanding of materialism as “get all you can” in which all that matters is the physical (whether there is a spiritual reality or not)

#### B. Karl Marx heavily influenced by German materialist, Ludwig Feuerbach

1. Marx went beyond Feuerbach, evaluating his work in a book “Theses on Feuerbach”
2. Marx insisted that “philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is to change it”<sup>6</sup>
3. Vladimir Lenin took the ideas of Marx and Engels further as he applied these ideas to practical communism in the Soviet Union

The consequence of this was a break with traditional morality, justifying the slaughter of millions of people in the Soviet state.

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<sup>5</sup> “Materialism.”

<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” contained in the *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*: Volume 5, p. 8, quoted in “Karl Marx,” in *Wikipedia*, August 18, 2023, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Karl\\_Marx&oldid=1170991635#cite\\_note-84](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Karl_Marx&oldid=1170991635#cite_note-84).

### C. Materialism is essentially anti-God and anti-Bible

1. The aim of many (most) human philosophies is to eliminate God from any discussion of reality
  - a. This frees you from accountability for your actions (denies sin)
  - b. This frees you from responsibility towards God, our master and Lord
2. Materialism does this by reducing reality to only that which can be perceived by the physical senses: no room for God in such a world
3. Materialism lies behind many destructive ideas
  - a. Most evolutionists are materialists
  - b. Materialism removes accountability for any reality: denies nature (gender bending, etc)

### Conclusion:

Our message today wasn't about communism directly, but about one of the pillars of communism: materialism.

**Proposition:** The philosophy of materialism is entirely at odds with the Bible picture of reality. Any movement (including communism) that rests on materialism cannot be true.