

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Seventy-One

Karl Marx

LESSON IDEA

To describe the background and character of the man known as the "father of Communism" and to dispel the myth that the *Communist Manifesto* was the product of his "brilliant" mind.

PREPARATION

Read "During the Week" and adapt the project suggested to the needs of your family. Also, look up in your family *Bible* some of the teachings of the Book of Proverbs or the New Testament gospels which deal with parental discipline and an individual's character and training.

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«JENNY! IF WE CAN but weld our souls together, then with contempt shall I fling my glove in the world's face, then shall I stride through the wreckage a creator!" Thus read the impassioned proposal of marriage from a pretentious college student of a respected middle-class German family to the daughter of the aristocratic Baron von Westphalen. The student's name was Karl Marx; and although he never succeeded in his lifelong ambition of striding through the world as a creator, he did fling his glove of contempt in the world's face by serving a revolutionary movement that has brought untold suffering, misery, and death to millions of human beings.

Karl Heinrich Marx was born in Treves (or Trier), in what is now the Rhineland of Germany, on May 5, 1818. His ancestors had been outstanding scholars and rabbis. And although his father had broken with the Jewish faith, the story that Karl Marx was born in squalor and poverty is a colossal fraud — like so much that is accepted as fact by both his supporters

and his opponents. His father was a successful lawyer who could never understand or discipline his egocentric, ruthless son, but who did send him to the finest schools and universities of the day and who continued to supply him with money, like a schoolboy, even after Karl was an adult with a wife and children.

In his youth, Marx was known as an assertive, opinionated, and obstinate boy who, through his arrogance and cold indifference, drove away everyone who tried to be his friend. His father often apologized for Karl's behavior by saying the boy was "gifted" and, therefore, naturally "different," but do you think this excuses rudeness in a young man? What does this tell us about the character of Karl's father? [*Encourage a discussion of parental responsibilities. Raise the question of whether more or less discipline is needed for those of above average mental abilities.*]

Young Marx was a top student through the lower grades of school. By the time he entered college, however, his success in discussions and debates outshone his scholastic abilities. And once he discovered his talent for persuading others, he became a voracious reader, devouring huge quantities of books on almost any subject that could prove useful in arguments — regardless of their value to his classroom studies.

Although he was quickly accepted at the University of Bonn, almost immediately upon his arrival he began skipping classes and ignoring the required studies. He preferred, instead, the company of bohemian companions at local taverns. Although his father was suffering a terminal illness that drained

the family finances, Marx continually demanded money – allegedly to support his studies, but in fact to buy more drinks for himself and his new “friends.” After repeated warnings by the college authorities that he was about to be expelled for “nocturnal drunkenness and riot,” Marx decided to leave the campus at Bonn and enroll at the University of Berlin.

But his habits remained the same. Instead of seeking a stimulating, challenging course of study, he gravitated to the group of “intellectuals” who met informally under the name of the “Professors’ Club” at any beer parlor that would tolerate them. Marx’s ability to discuss at length the thoughts, writings, and philosophy of others – always modifying their ideas and parading them as his own inspired thinking, of course – made his new associates think they were in the presence of a true genius. No matter what the subject – Christianity, the profit motive, marriage, or the need to abolish private property – Marx’s prodigious memory, wide reading, and debating skills enabled him to present his warmed-over stew of radical statements as the latest in revolutionary thought.

AS A RESULT, the young parasite from Treves came to the attention of some of the most seasoned and sophisticated revolutionaries in the university. It was these men, in fact, who finally convinced Marx of the importance of getting a diploma instead of remaining a perpetual student and beer parlor debater. Realizing that his superiors at the University of Berlin might not be too enthusiastic about his revolutionary ideas – or his credentials for a degree in philosophy – his new mentors suggested he apply at the University of Jena. This institution was notoriously so lax that a degree could be obtained by correspondence; so Marx simply mailed his doctoral thesis to the school, and his degree was promptly returned to him. It is significant that the theme of the “learned” paper that earned for him the title of “Doctor” was anti-religious. In fact, he chose for its motto the cry of Prometheus: “In one word – I hate all the gods!” And now the mail-order Doctor Marx was ready to be introduced formally to some of the most important Socialists in Europe – the professionals who would guide him in the radical movement, teach him the philosophy of Com-

munism, and support him as a promising apprentice in revolution.

Can you see the connection between Marx’s anti-religious sentiments and his lack of responsibility and self-discipline? What do the Scriptures teach about self-discipline? [*Recall some of the teachings of the Book of Proverbs or the New Testament gospels which deal with an individual’s character and training.*]

Soon after receiving his degree, Marx was accepted on the staff of a leftist newspaper in Cologne, Germany. Within twelve months the twenty-four-year-old radical had been made editor of the publication; but after five months, he was once again unemployed; his articles and editorials were so subversive and revolutionary that the paper was closed by the government authorities. So far as historians have been able to determine, this was the only regular job Marx held in his entire adult life.

IT WAS ALSO AT THIS TIME that Marx met Friedrich Engels, the wealthy Socialist who would guide, defend, assist, and support him financially for the rest of his life. The devotion of the older Engels to Marx was so complete that he actually considered it an honor to be allowed to assume responsibility for Marx’s financial support – even borrowing from his own father to aid the younger revolutionary.

Within a few more months, Marx had firmly established his reputation as one of the most dedicated and enthusiastic revolutionaries in Europe. He had been forced out of Germany and expelled from France for proclaiming the need of violent revolution. For a short while, he and his wife – for he had finally won the consent of Baron von Westphalen to marry Jenny – made their home in

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

Karl Marx, The Red Prussian by Leopold Schwarzschild is one of the books we would recommend for a deeper study of this mail-order doctor of philosophy and his revolutionary ideas. Another is *World Revolution* by Nesta Webster and *The Naked Communist* by W. Cleon Skousen. *World Revolution* (\$4.00 paperback) and *The Naked Communist* (\$3.50 paperback) are available at most American Opinion Bookstores, or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.

