

UPF Bonn, Germany: Who Was Marx Really? - Marx's 200th Birthday

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June 17, 2018



Bonn, Germany -- Karl Marx, who studied briefly in Bonn, was the topic of a UPF event titled "Who Was Marx Really?"

In recognition of the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth, on May 5, 1818, Herbert Giller, an author and philosopher from Vienna, Austria, was invited to Bonn to give a presentation

The date of the talk, June 17, 2018, was significant in that it was the 65th anniversary of the uprising against the communist regime in the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), where Marx was considered as an omnipresent father figure. UPF set up a small exhibition in the foyer of the hall to remind the approximately 50 visitors about the historical events connected with June 17, 1953.

To start off with, we watched several clips from a remarkable 2017 film directed by Raoul Peck titled *The Young Karl Marx*. Mr. Giller commented that Marx could be acknowledged as one of the greatest philosophers and national economists, "who was the first to create a consistent overall system of philosophy, social science and economy," he said.

However, he continued, the question had to be asked: What was the result of this? The focus of Mr. Giller's presentation lay in the incredible parallels and contradictions between Jesus Christ and Karl Marx, whose teachings both had a phenomenal effect on historical developments around the world.

Both were born as Jews and later baptized (Jesus by John the Baptist; Marx on August 26, 1824). They revolutionized the worldviews of the time, understood themselves to be the bringers of a message of salvation (from sin / from exploitation), and proclaimed the concept of an ideal world (the Kingdom of God / a class-less society). Both became public figures at the age of 30 and after about three years suffered extreme rejection, which in the case of Marx resulted in his fleeing to England. The teachings of Jesus and Marx were realized, not as expected in Israel or the industrialized countries, but initially in the Roman Empire (Paul) and the domain of the Russian czar (Lenin).

The essential message of Christianity (love of God and one's neighbor) contrasts with Marxism's message of dialectic materialism and development by conflict. While Jesus urged people to love their enemy, Marx proclaimed class struggle and the destruction of the enemy classes. Atheistic materialism fought, and leaves no room for, the love of God (Lenin!). Marxist dialectic sweeps away the love of neighbor and enemy.

Mr. Giller dealt with other signs that Karl Marx was a historical opposite to Jesus, mentioning personal experiences that had pushed Marx in that direction. One can repeatedly see a Faustian element, also during his short time as a student in Bonn. Beyond this, quotes from Marx show that he had no real empathy for the proletariat. Marxists (Lenin and others) fiercely fought "ethical socialism" so that faith in God could not return through the back door.

Several times Mr. Giller referred to the 1931 treatise written by Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, *Truth and Lies of Communism*. Berdyaev saw Marxism as having its origin in the failure of Christianity to realize its ideals in the social and economic areas. In 2017, Mr. Giller published a special edition of Berdyaev's writings.

The numerous comments and questions from the audience made it clear just how much we are still concerned with this topic. The writings of Berdyaev and other literature at our book table were soon sold out.