

Mediations

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Marxism and Eschatology Reconsidered

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Marxism is a secularized Jewish or Christian messianism — how often do we hear that claim? From the time of Nikolai Berdyaev (1937) and Karl Löwith (1949) at least, the claim has grown in authority from countless restatements.¹ It has become such a commonplace that as soon as one raises the question of Marxism and religion in a gathering, at least one person will jump at the bait and insist that Marxism is a form of secularized messianism. These proponents argue that Jewish and Christian thought has influenced the Marxist narrative of history, which is but a pale copy of its original: the evils of the present age with its alienation and exploitation (sin) will be overcome by the proletariat (collective redeemer), who will usher in a glorious new age when sin is overcome, the unjust are punished, and the righteous inherit the earth.

The argument has served a range of very different purposes since it was first proposed: ammunition in the hands of apostate Marxists like Berdyaev and especially Leszek Kolakowski with his widely influential three-volume work, *Main Currents of Marxism*;² a lever to move beyond the perceived inadequacies of Marxism in the hands of Christian theologians eager to assert that theological thought lies at the basis of secular movements like Marxism, however erroneous that theological basis might be;³ a means for a philosopher of the stature of Alasdair MacIntyre to seek rapprochement between Marxism and Christianity;⁴ or the basis of a creative reworking of Marxism through a "weak messianism" in the hands of Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida.⁵ Indeed, Fredric Jameson, Slavoj Žižek and lately John Roberts have argued that rather than the sparring partners they are so often represented as being, Marxism and Christianity both gain rather than lose from their affinities with each other, for "any comparison of Marxism with religion is a two-way street?"⁶

But is the basic charge correct? Do Marx as well as Engels really borrow from Christian eschatology, empty it of its theological content and provide a secularized narrative that looks all too much like its original? I shall argue that this charge is mistaken and I do so by considering two key elements in the development of their thought. The first deals with Marx's one-time teacher and close friend, Bruno Bauer,

who was not only one of Marx's teachers at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and close friend (at least initially), but also one of Germany's leading biblical scholars in the 1830s and 1840s. The second concerns Engels's continuing passion for the biblical book of Revelation, from his early days as a devout Reformed (Calvinist) Christian believer to his later re-engagement with that work from a very different perspective.

Before proceeding, I need to clear up the matter of the common distinction between what Marx and Engels themselves thought and the subsequent tradition of Marxism. Once this distinction is in place — encouraged by Marx's own comment when he encountered the French Marxists of the 1870s, "All I know is that I am not a Marxist" — it is easy to make a series of moves.⁷ Either Marxism is a distortion of Marx (and Engels) and therefore the charge that Marxism is a secularized eschatology misses the mark; or the critic in question has a distorted view of Marxism, seeing it as perhaps a type of belief or a prophecy of the end of capitalism. These moves are a little too ingenious, for they assume one can easily separate Marx and Engels from the subsequent tradition that continues to draw inspiration from their thought. On the contrary, it is impossible to speak of Marxism — which I understand here as both a mode of analysis often called historical materialism and as a political project — with recourse to the work of both Marx and Engels; hence the detailed examination of their thought in what follows.

Marx and Bruno Bauer

The first item that deserves close analysis is Marx's relation with Bruno Bauer, especially their early contact and close collaboration while both were at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. Bauer was a licentiate in theology and Marx a student, taking courses mostly in law. Their paths intersected when Marx took a course with Bauer in the summer of 1839 on nothing less than the prophetic biblical book of Isaiah.

Marx's Leaving Certificate from the university notes:

V. In the summer term 1839

1. Isaiah with Herr Licentiate Bauer, attended.⁸

For all its brevity, this entry threatens to explode with significance. Here we find Marx studying, with a controversial leader of the Young Hegelians, a major prophetic book of the Bible. Isaiah is one of the three great writing prophets (the other two are Jeremiah and Ezekiel).⁹ Even more, Isaiah has traditionally been read in Christian circles as one who foretold the birth of Christ.¹⁰ Add to this the fact that Isaiah is brimming full with eschatological themes, looking forward in poetic language to a restored Zion and renewed Jerusalem. Surely this is evidence that Marx was deeply influenced by biblical eschatology in his student days, evidence that he may well have been influenced by such eschatological language and ideas before his discovery of

historical materialism.

Not quite, for this approach to Isaiah was certainly not being taught to Marx by Bauer. However, in order to understand what Marx would have been taught, I need to work my way through some key ideas by Bauer and his context within German intellectual and public life at the time. Initially it may be surprising to find Bauer teaching the Hebrew Bible, for he was primarily a New Testament scholar and theologian and then later a political commentator. The works that got him into no end of trouble were those on the Gospel of John and the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).¹¹ Appearing during the first great wave of German critical work on the Bible that would launch German biblical scholars into a position of global leadership they would only relinquish with the Second World War, Bauer's work was at the edge of that work and beyond. For a time he was widely regarded as the leader of the Young Hegelians. Bauer's genius was to combine painstaking attention to biblical texts within their historical and cultural context with his own development of Hegel's philosophy. This combination led him to argue that Christianity only emerged in the second century C.E.; that the Gospels contain virtually no historical records, and indeed no record of an historical Jesus, being primarily the products of religious consciousness embodied in individual authors who composed them freely; that the Gospels are saturated with the spirit and thought of Hellenism (the key ideas may be traced to Stoic, Philonic, and neo-Platonic ideas); and that the crucial tension was between free self-consciousness and religious dogmatism. He took consistent aim at the ossified established church and the repressive state, especially in light of their dirty and corrupt hold on power — so much so that his book *Das Entdeckte Christenthum (Christianity Exposed)* was banned, hunted down, and destroyed until it was reprinted in 1927.¹²

So why was Bauer the radical New Testament scholar teaching Marx a course on Isaiah at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in 1839? It so happened that in the year before Bauer had published a two-volume work called *Kritik der Geschichte der Offenbarung: Die Religion des alten Testaments in der geschichtlichen Entwicklung ihrer Prinzipien dargestellt (Critique of the History of Revelation: The Religion of the Old Testament Explained According to the Principles of Its Historical Development)*.¹³ It was the only work he wrote on the Hebrew Bible, for the rest were concerned with the New Testament and politics. In the summer of 1839 Marx would have heard the full brunt of Bauer's theories on the Hebrew Bible and Isaiah in particular.¹⁴ In *Die Religion des alten Testaments* Bauer was developing his argument that religion, or rather, religious experience is the result of (a Hegelian) self-consciousness. Not only was such religious experience a transcendental affair, but one could also trace in a phenomenological fashion the development of the various forms of that experience. Following the assumption that the legalistic priestly material (designated by P) was the oldest literary source of the Hebrew Bible, he argued that this material lies at the earliest stage of such a development. Here we find an authoritarian deity who

demands a law-bound subordination. In contrast to this largely external relation, the later prophetic books mark a much higher stage: over against the crass and oppressive particularity of the earlier material, here the universal is immanent in community.

You may be forgiven for thinking that all this was a slightly odd interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, indeed that Bauer was a religious crackpot. Not at all, but some context never goes astray. Two features of this context are important for understanding what Marx was up against in Bauer's course: the rapid developments in biblical criticism at the time and the use of the Bible as the ground on which debates over religion, reason, secularism, democracy, and republicanism were fought.

As for biblical criticism itself, scholars had begun to undermine, often in the face of much resistance, many of the traditional assumptions concerning the Bible and its authors. They argued against traditional interpretations and appeals to divine authority by focusing on the literal and grammatical sense of the text (in opposition to allegory), the internal evidence of the text, and the desire to reconstruct historical situations in order to understand the Bible. Much of the early energy was focused on the five books of Moses — the Torah or Pentateuch. Characters such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, who published his three-volume introduction to the Old Testament in 1780-83, Wilhelm de Wette (1780-1849), Johann Vater (1771-1826), Heinrich Ewald (1803-75), and Hermann Hupfeld (1796-1866) had argued that the Pentateuch was really a compilation of different sources or fragments not written by Moses, if he existed at all. Amid much debate, they gradually came to agree, at least by the time Bauer was writing, that there were four sources that lay behind the Pentateuch — the Priestly (P), the Yahwistic (J), the Elohist (E) and the Deuteronomist (D). In what was called the documentary hypothesis, P was felt to be the earliest and responsible for most of the laws (613 of them), the Yahwistic and Elohist (based on two of the names of God) followed, with slightly higher views of religion, and D was responsible for Deuteronomy and the final editing of the first five books of the Bible. Only later, after Bauer's work, did Julius Wellhausen argue that P was the latest stage.¹⁵ In fact, it was in the second half of the nineteenth century that historical criticism (as it was eventually called) carried the day in German academic biblical criticism. Bauer came in at the earlier point, assuming that the Priestly material was the crassest and earliest. Religion struggles, they argued, to rise above this state until it reaches the prophets and then the New Testament. For these biblical critics, the prophets themselves comprise the high point of the Old Testament (Luther's great liking for the prophets as a model for Protestant ministers has an obvious influence here). Rather than predictors of the future, they spoke the will of God to their immediate context. They were, it would soon be argued, forth-tellers and not fore-tellers. And their message was nothing other than "ethical monotheism," of which Isaiah was one of the greatest exemplars. No longer were these texts of Isaiah concerned with foretelling the arrival of Christ or the age to come, but they told forth the great ideals of ethical life lived under monotheism. We couldn't be further from the idea that the

prophets were harbingers of the eschaton, that the end was nigh.

These concerns of biblical critics were not restricted to the rarified atmosphere of academic debate at far remove from public and political concerns. In fact, book after book — such as David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* and Bauer's books — on biblical criticism produced uproar and widespread debate.¹⁶ But why had theology and especially biblical criticism become so important in Germany at the time, so much so that it was a central feature of public debate? The reason may be found in the distinct nature of German political and cultural life in the first half of the nineteenth century. German philosophy and criticism were never as stridently anti-religious or anti-clerical as its Anglophone and Francophone cousins. In contrast to the radical anti-clericalism of the Enlightenment in France or the Deism of English intellectual culture, Germany fought its cultural battles on a different ground, namely that of theology.¹⁷ Or rather, theology was crucial to all three, but in very different ways. While the French radicals either rejected it and its institutions or developed a rather Christian form of communism, and while the radicals in England tended to slide from religious Dissent to Deism (with a good dose of anti-establishment polemic against the Church of England), in a Germany still saturated with the Pietistic revival of the 1810s and 1820s, the Lutheran doctrine of *sola scriptura*, the entrenched tensions between Protestants and Roman Catholics, as well as the well-known German backwardness in economics and politics, German intellectuals could hardly avoid fighting their battles with and through theology.¹⁸ Actually, it was more specific than that: they waged furious controversies over the Bible, especially the New Testament and its Gospels, but also the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). In short, the biblical stories were political gunpowder, precisely because political and ecclesiastical power hinged on theological claims made on the basis of these texts. To offer a critical and immanent analysis of these texts, one that made no reference to God as cause or agent was a fundamental challenge to the structures of power which relied on transcendent justification. So the Bible was the terrain of battle for the knot of political struggles in nineteenth-century Germany — over the state, politics, freedom of the press, secularism, immanence and transcendence, reason and religion. Instead of dismissing the Bible as a document of outmoded superstition, German critics worked out their theories with the Bible itself.

This is the volatile context within which Marx entered his university years. But let us return to the ever-active and fertile mind of Bauer. He gave these developments in biblical criticism and public debate his own spin. As far as the Hebrew Bible was concerned, he argued that even the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible had not yet arrived at the moment of overcoming the estrangement of externalized and legalistic religion. That, of course, would come with the New Testament, to which he was to direct all of his critical concerns from the beginning of the 1840s. At this point in his thought he argued that the difference between the Old and New Testaments was that Christianity managed to free the religious consciousness from its limited and particular form in the Old Testament. What his work on the Hebrew Bible enabled

him to do was define his key idea of religious consciousness, namely the unmediated identity of particularity and the abstract universal, which he translated in terms of the immediate identity of the universal with a particular subject or community.

Now, while this position — the immediate identity of particular and universal — may seem like a positive assessment of Christianity, Bauer was soon to argue that it is in fact the core of the problem. Already in *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg*, published in the year he taught in Berlin, he had come to argue that the oppressive and narrow-minded sectarianism of the Church — especially the German Lutheran Church — lay in this claim by the particular to the universal.¹⁹ The logical core of his argument, which developed over his various works on the Bible, was that Christianity was a “hubristic particularism” which made an unmediated identity between a specific subject (in this case Jesus Christ) or a community (the church) with the universal. What happens then is that the universal becomes completely other, divorced from communal and individual life. God and heaven become alienated and abstracted universals from human existence. This meant that any claim by a specific individual or group to be the exclusive representative of this universal inevitably produced a brutal, sectarian monopoly that excluded any other particular, whether religious or political. In short, Christian monotheism is an exclusive rather than an inclusive universal. This ultimate hubris of particularism, characteristic of the state Church at the time and of the reactionary Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1840-61), let alone of both Christianity and Judaism, is in fact the essence of religion as such. The Prussian state was only the latest manifestation of this brutal universal, for Bauer traced it all the way back to the polis of ancient Greece. Needless to say, Bauer’s radical biblical criticism and theology went hand in hand with a radical political republicanism.

The twenty one year old Marx, then, encountered Bauer at a highly charged time in his career. About to be sent off to Bonn for his polemic against Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg at Berlin, at the crest of a wave of prolific and original work after he had honed his idea of religion in the 1830s, about to become the intellectual leader of the Young Hegelians, we can get a fair idea of what Bauer taught Marx.²⁰ Apart from bringing Marx up to speed on the rapid developments in that first wave of German biblical criticism at the time, Bauer had already come to hold that all religion was problematic. By definition, religion was a hubristic effort by a certain particularism — be that individual, group, or institution — to lay claim to the abstract universal. As soon as it did so, it became a crass sectarian monopoly that brooked no opposition. One should not be surprised that the Church had become close-minded and authoritarian. Even Isaiah, who was far better than the Priestly material that lay (as scholarship held at the time) at the earliest layers of the Hebrew Bible, succumbed to this problem. Isaiah might have moved past the law-driven externality of the priests, he might even have expressed that ethical monotheism in which the universal was immanent in the community, but he still held to religion as such, and that was the problem.

In all this ferment and close work with Bauer (Marx and he would become

collaborators for a time afterwards), I can find little, if anything, of the supposed eschatology or messianism that Marx might have acquired in his university studies. Now it may well be argued that Marx picked up this eschatological interpretation of the Hebrew prophets from either his assimilated Jewish background, the general assumption within the churches, and indeed within the Christian culture of Germany at the time. This proposition simply cannot be proved. What can be proved is that the biblical criticism with which Marx came into contact was arguing against that assumption. Bauer certainly wasn't writing about it in his study of the Hebrew Bible, biblical scholarship at the time was busily negating the prophets as foretellers of a future, and theological critics worked overtime to offer an immanent analysis of the Bible that implicitly undermined the transcendent claims of the imperial Prussian throne and the churches. Bruno Bauer was not teaching Marx about prophetic eschatology in that summer of 1839 at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin.

Engels and the Book of Revelation

Did Engels then provide historical materialism with an eschatological dimension? On a superficial reading it may well be possible to argue that he did. After all, he was brought up as a believing Reformed (Calvinist) Protestant, was able to read the New Testament in the original (common) Greek and kept abreast of the latest developments in biblical criticism. In his early texts we find extensive discussions and treatments of the Bible, especially the letters to his close friends, the pastors Friedrich and Wilhelm Graeber, and the amusing and rather well-written poem, "The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible."²¹ Any reader of these works soon notices an abiding fascination with the biblical book of Revelation. Known to biblical scholars by its Greek title, the *Apocalypse*, this New Testament book, along with the book of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible, has been an eternal favorite of all manner of Christian movements for the last two millennia, many of them quite revolutionary. Full of the rich imagery of the final battle of good and evil, the beast and the whore of Babylon, the four horsemen and the seven scrolls, the lamb and the new Jerusalem, it remains a rich resource for those who expect an imminent end to the world, who are oppressed, or who are keen to proclaim themselves prophets and gain a follower or two.

Perhaps here lies the source, via Engels, of Marxism's own more apocalyptic tendencies. Unfortunately — at least for those keen to find in Marxism a secularized eschatology — a close reading of these texts reveals that Engels did not use the book of Revelation as an inspiration for apocalyptic speculation about the end of history and the coming of his Lord on the clouds. In other words, none of the reasons I listed above for interest in Revelation count for Engels. In fact, his solid Calvinist upbringing would not have emphasized this text so much. Suspicious of enthusiasm and millenarian frenzy, Calvinists prefer to focus on predestination, the task of the elect, the evils of the damned, and matters such as justification by faith through grace. Of course, God would eventually destroy the damned and Jesus would return. But they did not need

him to do so now in order to save them from an intolerable situation.

So what does Engels do with the text of Revelation? He uses it in a number of quite creative ways — playfully, as critical satire, and as the positive celebration of his own intellectual awakening. Let me examine these texts carefully to see how he does so. As for the first use, a sustained play with Revelation appears in two letters to Friedrich Graeber, one from the beginning of his correspondence on 19 February 1839, and the other from the last letter to Friedrich Graeber on 22 February 1841.²² In the first letter, Engels expresses mock horror at the news that his good friend the pastor actually plays cards. Engels throws a few biblical curses at him and then portrays a vision like that of John the Divine (or for that matter the old prophet Ezekiel).²³ What does he see? It is a great final battle between the King of the Orient, the Prince of the Occident, and the Prince of the Sea — a rather more homely version of the battle between the archangel Michael, the Devil, and the Beast of the Sea in Revelation 12-13. Seven spirits appear — modeled on the seven angels of Revelation 8-10 and 14 — but they turn out to be a little more earthly: Faust, Lear, Wallenstein, Hercules, Siegfried, Roland, and Mio Cid (with a turban). The whole parody becomes even more complex with the crisscrossing of Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) allusions — the children of Anak (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:10), letters on the door in Hebrew (Daniel 5:5, 24-28), and being struck dumb (Ezekiel 3:26). The point of it all: even though they may have brought the world to an end, nothing will stop the card-players in their evil pastime.

All this is good fun. The second letter is different, for its playfulness is a rather poor camouflage for a more serious tone.²⁴ Engels and his childhood friend from Wuppertal have become estranged since they began their epistolary debates two years earlier, since they had begun to take different theological directions. In a curious intersection where the apocalyptic battle at the end of the age wraps up a friendship, we return in this letter to the final battle between good and evil, between God and the devil. On one side stand evil Straussians and Hegelians (the side Engels had joined), while on the other are the less capable orthodox — names we hardly recognize now, such as Tholuck, Hengstenberg, Neander, Nitzsche, Bleek, and Erdmann (Friedrich Graeber's preferred theologians). And yet, despite portents of the great battle — such as the earth's eclipse and the storm raging through the forest — Friedrich has not yet stirred himself for battle with the "critical-speculative devil" and his enormous following.²⁵ The problem, it seems, is that Friedrich Graeber has already disengaged from their debates. Engels berates him for his "calm and detached" writing, as if nothing can stir the calm of his orthodoxy. Engels, on the other hand, wants a battle and Strauss is the super-weapon with which he will knock down Friedrich and any other orthodox champion. But Friedrich, it seems, has already declined the struggle.

I have already slipped from the playful use of the final apocalyptic battle to a more polemical use. The next one is more fully polemical, and the humor starts to have some bite. It is the long poem, *The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible*.²⁶ For one who decided to give away his aspirations to be a poet in favor of direct political

writing, it is not too bad. It is a narrative poem written with Edgar Bauer, brother of Bruno, and its satire owes much to the style of Young Hegelian polemic.

The poem sets a cracking pace and the reader is drawn into the story (or at least I was). And that story begins with a Job-like opening (although not without some influence from Goethe) in which Satan slinks his way into heaven, upsets the heavenly chorus and demands access to none other than Bruno Bauer. God asserts that for all Bauer's research into the Bible, for all his doubts, he still remains faithful and will come through to truth as he sees the flaws of philosophy. The devil is not so sure and secures a chance to test Bauer's faith. Unlike the prologue to the book of Job, Bauer does succumb to Satan, although it takes some persuasion. By the time Bauer begins lecturing again he is a servant of the devil and sets the pious and atheistic students against one another. All of which eventually leads to a final confrontation between Hegel (who is a confidant of the devil), the Young Hegelians, and some French *philosophes* such as Voltaire on one side and the pious defenders of the faith on the other. Steeped in terminology from the book of Revelation, this final apocalyptic battle sways back and forth. The Young Hegelians build a fortress out of the books they have written, using them as missiles against the attacks of the pious believers. Despite many heroics and pinpoint accuracy with their projectiles, the Young Hegelians fare badly until they dump the weak-kneed devil — he is all talk and no action — and call for reinforcements. Voltaire, Danton, Edelman, Napoleon, Marat, and Robespierre appear, Bauer takes charge, and they route the pious who now flee heavenward. Hegel urges them to attack heaven itself and he leads the charge. But just as they are about to succeed, a small piece of paper floats down, coming to rest at Bauer's feet. Its message: he is redundant, having been sacked from his teaching position. In dismay the forces of chaos flee and the host of heaven pursues them with glee.

Much more developed than the two letters to Friedrich Graeber, this last great battle of Armageddon is a send-up of the conservative reaction to the challenges of the Young Hegelians who called themselves "The Free." Now, while all of this lighthearted play with the Bible may seem relatively innocent, for someone with Engels's upbringing the very act of making fun of the Bible was potentially blasphemous. For Calvinists the Bible is serious business. There are — apparently — no jokes to be found within the Bible, and one should in no way joke about it. After all, it deals with matters of life, death, sin, salvation, and the future of the universe. So also for Engels: what seems like some harmless joking has a more significant undercurrent of protest.

There is still yet a third use of this biblical apocalyptic material that indicates the complexity of Engels's interactions with the Bible. I think in particular of the closing pages of one of his three pamphlets on Friedrich Schelling — *Schelling and Revelation*.²⁷ While most of the text is an effort to report on the content of Schelling's lectures in Berlin in 1841, interspersed with some critical commentary, the closing pages comprise a paean to the new directions of theological and philosophical ideas.²⁸ Engels had just read Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* and it obviously

set the adrenaline pumping.²⁹ The framework is, once again, the book of Revelation: heaven has come down to earth (Revelation 21:1); its treasures lie scattered for whoever wishes to pick them up (Revelation 21:18-21); the great final battle has been fought and won (Revelation 18-19; see also 1 Timothy 6:12); the thousand-year reign of freedom has begun (Revelation 20:6). Engels evokes the vast celebration in heaven after the victory of Armageddon: “And this crown, this bride, this holy thing is the *self-consciousness of mankind*, the new Grail round whose throne the nations gather in exultation and which makes kings of all who submit to it, so that all splendor and might, all dominion and power, all the beauty and fullness of this world lie at their feet and must yield themselves up for their glorification.”³⁰ As is his wont, Engels draws on other texts in building his picture, but the focus has shifted from his previous apocalyptic visions.³¹ Now we are in the millennium, after the great battle, and he looks forward to the unfolding of the new age on earth.

What are we to make of such a passage? It seems as though Engels’s eyes have been opened, that a way out of the stifling conservatism of his youth has now shown itself. The language of revelation gives voice to his own sense of intellectual and spiritual awakening — away from his devout religious convictions. It is the closest Engels would come to any form of apocalyptic sensibilities and he does so in a very personal register. We can write this enthusiasm off as youthful exuberance, or perhaps too much beer and fine tobacco (of which he was very fond), but I would like to put in a word for Engels. Over against the world-weary cynicism of age, is there not still room for that sparkle in one’s eye at a new discovery, a zeal and enthusiasm that really fires one up?

Engels obviously had a soft spot for the glorious apocalyptic language of the book of Revelation. The youthful Engels uses the book in various ways — to make fun of and attack those who would hold him back, to tease his friend Friedrich Graeber, and to celebrate his own awakening. Is this early fascination with the book of Revelation the origin of the infamous secular apocalypticism of Marxism? I have already argued that Marx did not pick it up from Bauer when he studied Isaiah with Bauer at the university in Berlin. What of Engels? For one thing, Engels’s use of that text is quite idiosyncratic. He uses it for humor, polemic, and to provide a language for his own self-discovery — not quite what one would expect in terms of historical expectations, especially as the glorious march of history to an eschatological moment. Further, the explicit use of the language of Revelation peters out by the time of *The German Ideology*, where Engels uses it in a satirical way to speak of Bauer and Stirner.³² Further, in later life, especially in light of the parliamentary success of the German Social Democrats, Engels became more wary of insurrection. It still has a valid role to play, but in his later letters there are more cautions against untimely acts that would provide the authorities with any excuse to crush all forms of the left. His own bitter experience in the revolutions of 1848-50 made him think deeply on these matters.

Above all, in the years that followed this early fascination with the book of

Revelation, there is a marked change in Engels's approach to the book of Revelation. Instead of manifesting itself in an apocalyptic Marxism, his interest in Revelation follows another line, one that would eventually contribute to his argument that early Christianity was a revolutionary movement that was co-opted by the Roman Empire. In order to see what Engels does with Revelation, I would like to consider what he makes of early Christianity.

Revelation and Early Christianity

Although he had been thinking about it for many years (since 1841!), *On the History of Early Christianity* appeared months before Engels died and may well be seen as the final coming to terms with his Christian past.³³ It has also had an abiding influence on New Testament scholarship, especially the argument that the early Church appealed to the lower classes of Roman society. It is really the mature form of an argument with which Engels had been toying for years, namely that Christianity began as a revolutionary force. However, what is significant for my purposes here is that the final pages deal with the book of Revelation. It may be exactly the same biblical text, but the way he uses it is vastly different from the writings of his youth. Basing his research on some contemporary biblical scholarship, especially that of Ferdinand Berner of the University of Berlin and Bruno Bauer, Engels argues that Revelation is the earliest Christian document. Now he can use it as a purely historical source, mining it for information about the beliefs and practices of the early Christians. Above all, he seeks to decode Revelation and show that all those who use it for speculation about the end of history are simply misguided. Yet these arguments are expanded from an essay Engels wrote and published eleven years earlier called simply "The Book of Revelation."³⁴ So let us have a look at this earlier text.

Published in 1883 in *Vorwärts*, Engels seeks to introduce the still relatively new German critical approach to the New Testament. Today it goes by the name of historical criticism, for its two main drives are to reconstruct the history of the literature of the Bible as well as the history behind it. And today it is a tired orthodoxy, zealously defended by a dwindling number of practitioners. In Engels's day it had a radical freshness, since it undermined many of the traditional positions regarding the Bible held by the churches. All the same, he is after the most critical work of the lot, bypassing those who sought to reconcile historical criticism with religious belief. So he settles on the work of none other than Bruno Bauer.³⁵

For some strange reason he does not mention Bauer in the essay on Revelation. Part of the reason was that the year before (1882) he had written a piece called "Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity."³⁶ Written on the occasion of Bauer's death, it is an appreciative essay that goes to great lengths to show how the form of Christianity that has come down to us has little, if anything, to do with its earliest forms. Of course, once you have taken such a position, the next step is to account for that well-known final form. Following Bauer, Engels argues that what we know as Christianity now is the result

of a combination of vulgar and popularized versions of the neo-Platonism of Philo of Alexandria, Seneca's stoicism, and Roman imperial beliefs about the emperor as son of God. But why did Christianity catch on? Here Engels moves beyond Bauer to offer a materialist analysis spiced with some Darwinian observations: the class structure of the Roman empire (the rich, including the last few patricians; propertyless freemen; and slaves), along with crumbling cultural and religious options, opened the way for a system of belief that answered one's despair by offering an other-worldly solution that was open to anyone and everyone. It was a case of survival of the fittest. By contrast, what lay behind all of this, back at the earliest moment, was very different.

Now all three essays converge, for Engels takes up Bauer's argument that Revelation is the best window into early Christianity. Assuming a date of composition between late 68 and early 69 C.E., it presents a group of Jews (not Christians) who believed the end would come soon. There is no Trinity, for Jesus is subordinate to God, and certainly no Holy Spirit. There is no doctrine of original sin, no baptism or sacrament of communion, no justification by faith, and no elaborate story of the death and resurrection of Christ. And there is no religion of love, for the author preaches "sound, honest revenge" on their persecutors.³⁷ The author is unknown (certainly not the legendary disciple by the name of John) and all of the "visions" find precursors in the Hebrew Bible and other apocalyptic documents that preceded it. To top it off, Engels recounts a theory by Ferdinand Berner that the infamous number 666 (or 616 in a textual variant) can easily be deciphered through some deft playing with numbers: given that Hebrew used letters of the alphabet for numbers, all we need do is add up the value of *Neron Kesar* (Greek *Neron Kaisar*) and we have 666. So Revelation predicts the end of the "beast," Nero, at the hand of God and ushers in the new age.

How has Engels's reconstruction stood the test of time? It is easy to dismiss it as reliant on out-of-date scholarship, that Bauer was too extreme in his scepticism and that Berner's numerical theory is implausible. We can hardly blame Engels for using the biblical scholarship available at the time. Nor can we accuse him of complete ignorance of biblical criticism, for he recounts at greater length in the early Christianity essay the positions of the dominant Tübingen School (Ferdinand Christian Bauer, Heinrich Ewald, Friedrich Lücke, et al.), where David Strauss also began, and the popularizing work of Ernst Renan.³⁸ I would be in a similar situation if someone a century from now were to read a position I take today in relation to contemporary biblical scholarship, especially if I was dependent on that scholarship rather than developing my own position. The strange thing is that the underlying assumptions of Bauer's work — and thereby that of Engels — are the same in the historical critical scholarship of the Bible today (which no longer has the hegemony it once had). The tides of some forms of scholarship may come and go, but the basic assumptions remain unchanged. One must be very careful with using the Bible for any historical reconstruction, since it is unreliable to some degree (Engels actually opts for a median position between Bauer's scepticism and the Tübingen School's

optimism regarding reliability); the overwhelming concern is with origins, whether that of early Christianity or early Israel; archaeology plays a crucial role, since it provides evidence external to the text; and one spends an inordinate amount of energy discussing authorship and dates, which, like the fashion in skirts, can go in only one of two directions — up or down. Engels, Bauer, the Tübingen School, and historical critical scholars today all share the same assumptions. Further, some of Bauer's concerns are still very much alive in biblical criticism, such as the influence of Stoicism and the relation with Philo.³⁹ His argument that the letters of Paul predate the Gospels, which come from the second century C.E., still holds water, although his theory on Revelation as the earliest document has little credibility. However, his radical scepticism has returned to biblical scholarship, especially through the so-called “minimalist school” which finds little that is historically reliable in the texts of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament concerning Jesus.⁴⁰

As for Engels's long interest in the book of Revelation, his later studies seem like a complete turnaround from his earlier interest in this biblical book. Once he took up and often mocked the speculation concerning the Last Judgment, but now the book is useful as a window into the earliest form of Christianity. As he puts it at the close of his essay on Revelation, “All this has now lost its interest, except for ignorant persons who may still try to calculate the day of the last judgment.”⁴¹ In fact, although Engels is still interested in this fascinating biblical text, he never tried to estimate the day of judgment. He may have interpreted the text playfully and polemically, or as a way of expressing his own growing self-awareness, or indeed as a historical window into early Christianity, but he did not use it to give historical materialism any apocalyptic framework.

Conclusion: Moses Hess and Eschatological Communism

In light of this exploration of the influences on Marx and Engels, it is difficult to maintain that they held to some form of secularized eschatological framework in developing historical materialism. While Marx found anything but an eschatological interpretation of the Hebrew prophets when he studied under Bruno Bauer, Engels effectively diffused the apocalyptic effect of the book of Revelation through his own extended engagement with that text. However, it may well be objected that even though Marx and Engels obviously do not appropriate an eschatological perception of history from Judaism or Christianity, they may have absorbed it through a process resembling osmosis, unaware that this was taking place. By way of conclusion, let me deal with this objection through three final points.

First, as I have argued above, Marx and Engels developed their position in a context where theology and especially the Bible provided the language of public debate. A whole range of topics — reason, republicanism, democracy, the state, and secularism — passed through this medium. Marx and Engels were fully aware of such debate, as their early journalistic pieces show so well. In response to this debate, which really

forms the crucible of their thought, they set out to develop a system of thought and action that was at odds with its deep theological assumptions.

Second, the form of socialism they first encountered, filtering over the border from France, was of a distinctly Christian type. These early socialists argued that the original form of Christianity was communist — as found in the legendary accounts of Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-35 where the early communities had “all things in common” — and sought to transform Christianity’s teachings into codes of ethics without all the supernatural trappings. So we find Saint-Simon’s critique of capitalism tied in with an argument that both the Protestant Reformation and medieval Catholicism had distorted the nature of early Christianity, which was really a religion of brotherly love and not a dualistic one that elevated heaven and debased earth. The communities that formed after his death established themselves as a “church” replete with a priesthood that proclaimed Saint-Simon himself as the messiah. Despite the inevitable fractions in the movement, the defections to Fourier who had until then managed to attract only a small band of followers for his phalansteries, and even the much-ridiculed venture to the Middle East to find a female messiah, this type of early socialism washed over the border to affect some German radicals. It was the moral vision and sense of progress in human society towards brotherly love that inspired thinkers and activists like Heinrich Heine, August von Cieszkowski, and an early collaborator with Marx and Engels, Moses Hess.⁴² It also influenced some of the early leaders of the German communist movement, such as Wilhelm Weitling, Hermann Kriege, Karl Grün, and Gottfried Kinkel. It cannot be stressed enough that Marx and Engels worked overtime to denounce and excise this very Christian element from the communist movement.⁴³ Indeed, Marx could be scathing about this French socialism, which “sentimentally bewails the sufferings of mankind, or in Christian spirit prophesies the millennium and universal brotherly love, or in humanistic style drivels on about mind, education and freedom.”⁴⁴

The third point is the most telling of all, for Marx and Engels consciously opposed the apocalyptic flavor of this early communism, especially as it entered Germany through Moses Hess. In his *Die Heilige Geschichte der Menschheit* and *Europäische Trierarchie*, Hess both introduced communism to Germany and gave it a distinctly apocalyptic tone.⁴⁵ His widely read *Europäische Trierarchie* proposed that the fusion of the Young Hegelian criticism of theology, French socialist politics, and English industrial materialism would bring about the total collapse of the existing order and usher in a new age. For Marx and Engels this approach to communism was off with the pixies and had nothing to do with the realities of political organization. In fact, those who charge Marx and Engels with a secularized apocalyptic framework have the wrong target in their sights. The charge applies not to Marx and Engels, but to the likes of Moses Hess and other early communists to whom Marx and Engels were opposed.

Notes

1. Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, trans. R. M. French (London: G. Bles, 1937); Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1949).
2. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P.S. Falla, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981) 372-5. For a more Jewish angle, see Dennis Fischman, *Political Discourse in Exile: Karl Marx and the Jewish Question* (Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1991) 94-108. Perhaps the most dreadful version of this argument came in the context of a paper I once gave on Christian communism in the work of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky. Someone stood up and argued that because religious belief was so deeply ingrained at the time, Marx and Engels were hedging their bets in case Christianity proved to be right.
3. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 177-205.
4. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).
5. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," *Selected Writings: Volume 4: 1938-1940* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2003) 389-400; Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).
6. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 285; Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971a) 116-18; Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute, or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000), *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001), *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2003); John Roberts, "The 'Returns to Religion': Messianism, Christianity and the Revolutionary Tradition. Part I: 'Wakefulness to the Future,'" *Historical Materialism* 16.2 (2008): 59-84, "The 'Returns to Religion': Messianism, Christianity and the Revolutionary Tradition. Part II: The Pauline Tradition," *Historical Materialism* 16.3 (2008): 77-103.
7. Quoted in Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Conrad Schmidt, 5 August, 1890," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 49 (Moscow: Progress, 2001 [1890]) 7. The original text by Engels cites Marx in French: "Tout ce que sais, c'est que je ne suis pas Marxiste."
8. "Leaving Certificate from Berlin University," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1926]) 704. Marx's performance, it must be admitted, is not stellar. All he receives is "attended"; no "diligent" or even an "exceptionally" or "extremely diligent," the grades (if we may call them that) for nearly all his other subjects. These include a variety of law subjects, where we also find ecclesiastical law, some in philosophy and the classics (Euripides shows up).
9. The term "writing prophet" indicates that the biblical books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel purport to be written by the prophets themselves. Their authorship is highly unlikely, although some snippets may be traced to the mouths of the prophets mentioned, recorded perhaps by disciples.
10. As a small sample, Isaiah 7:14 famously mentions the "young woman" (translated as "virgin" in the Greek and older English translations) who will "conceive and bear a son." Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 contains the text of one of the "servant songs," which speaks of undeserved suffering by God's chosen servant on behalf of others. These texts and others like them were mined heavily by early Christian authors in their depictions of Jesus, for they were eager to make connections with the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and thereby claim that Christ had been foretold in that text.
11. Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Des Johannes* (Bremen: Karl Schünemann, 1840); Bruno

- Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1841); Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker Und Des Johannes, Dritter Und Letzter Band* (Braunschweig: Fr. Otto, 1842); Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelien Und Geschichte Ihres Ursprungs*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Gustav Hempel, 1850-51); Bruno Bauer, *Die Theologische Erklärung Der Evangelien* (Berlin: Gustav Hempel, 1852).
12. Bruno Bauer, *Das Entdeckte Christenthum. Eine Erinnerung an Das 18. Jahrhundert Und Ein Beitrag Zur Krisis Des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843); Bruno Bauer, *Christianity Exposed: A Recollection of the Eighteenth Century and a Contribution to the Crisis of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Esther Ziegler and Jutta Hamm (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2002).
 13. Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Geschichte Der Offenbarung: Die Religion Des Alten Testaments in Der Geschichtlichen Entwicklung Ihrer Prinzipien Dargestellt* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1838). At the time Bauer was also editing the *Zeitschrift für spekulative Theologie*, which ran only to three issues, and writing for the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*. Here he tried to develop an alternative theology that categorized Christian doctrines in terms of logical categories.
 14. Marx would have been reasonably well prepared for a course on the Bible, since in a typical Gymnasium curriculum of the time he studied German, Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew, as well as the “sciences” (religious knowledge, mathematics, history, geography, and physics). Or rather, he didn’t study Hebrew, if the absence of any comment on his “Certificate of Maturity” is any guide. In the other two biblical languages, Greek and Latin, he was quite proficient — as he was in religious knowledge: “His knowledge of the Christian faith and morals is fairly clear and well grounded; he knows also to some extent the history of the Christian Church.” See “Certificate of Maturity for Pupil of the Gymnasium in Trier,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1925]) 644.
 15. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel, with a Reprint of the Article Israel from the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1994 [1885]).
 16. David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, Kritisch Bearbeitet* (Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1835); David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902). Strauss argued that the Gospels were deeply and inescapably mythical and that Jesus was no different from any other human being, except in the way he embodies the possibilities for us all to rise to transcendence. This implicitly democratic argument threatened the exclusive claims of the Prussian state and the churches, for whom Jesus’ divine singularity underpinned their exclusive claims.
 17. Or, as Engels puts it, “the battle for dominion over German public opinion in politics and religion” is in fact a battle “over Germany itself” (Frederick Engels, “Schelling on Hegel,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 [Moscow: Progress, 1975 {1841}] 181; Friedrich Engels, “Schelling Über Hegel,” *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 [Berlin: Dietz, 1985 {1841}] 256). So also Marx: “There are two kinds of facts which are undeniable. In the first place religion, and next to it, politics are the subjects which form the main interest of Germany today. We must take these, in whatever form they exist, as our point of departure” (Karl Marx, “Letters from the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 3 [Moscow: Progress, 1975 {1844}] 143; Karl Marx, “Briefe Aus Den „Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbüchern” *Marx Engels Werke* [Berlin: Dietz, 1974 {1844}] 344). Marx often becomes exasperated at the backward religiosity and piety of bourgeois German economists and political theorists, especially compared to those in England and France (Karl Marx, “Draft of an Article on Friedrich List’s Book *Das Nationale System Der Politischen Oekonomie*,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 4 [Moscow: Progress, 1975 {1971}] 266, 284-85).

18. The Pietistic revival in the 1810s and 1820s was a confluence of the longer history of German Pietism and revivalist waves that rose across Europe in response to Enlightenment rationalism, “Godless” revolutionary republicanism, and the social dislocation produced by the inroads of industrial capitalism. The emphasis was on recovering one’s walk with God, the inner life of faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the all-important role of God’s word, the Bible. The big difference from earlier moments of Pietistic fervor in the eighteenth century was that the nobility and intellectuals took it up with not a little enthusiasm. This combination of the aristocracy and bourgeois intellectuals meant that it was not merely a revival from above, but that it also took a distinctly conservative turn. The controversies of the 1830s and 1840s provided yet another turn in the rumbling history of the Reformation. From Luther’s defiance (and assistance by the Duke of Saxony) in the sixteenth century to the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) between Protestants and Roman Catholics that raged over the German states, Italy, and the Low countries, Protestants in the north and Roman Catholics in the south had dug themselves in to become deeply conservative. The Catholics looked to the pope, while the Protestants (a mix of Lutherans and some Calvinists in the far north) drew upon conservative streams of Pietism, marrying an inner walk with God to a tenacious hold on the Bible as the “word of God.” Despite all the best efforts of the state to keep both Protestants and Catholics in a civil if often fractious relationship, the mutual antagonism ran deep.
19. Bruno Bauer, *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg: Ein Beitrag Zur Kritik Der Religiösen Bewußtseins. Kritische Briefe Über Den Gegensatz Des Gesetzes Und Des Evangeliums* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1839). This position developed over Bauer’s studies of the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John (written over an intense period from 1840 to 1842), only to receive full expression in his *Christianity Revealed* of 1843. See Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Des Johannes*; Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker*; Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker Und Des Johannes, Dritter Und Letzter Band*; Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelien Und Geschichte Ihres Ursprungs*. For an excellent discussion that traces the way Bauer’s position developed over these works, see Douglas Moggach, *The New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 59-79. Unfortunately David Leopold skips by the importance of Bauer’s biblical criticism in *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) 101-105.
20. Bauer would soon find himself without a post at all. This one-time favorite of Hegel, who recommended Bauer for a royal prize for an essay on Kant in 1829, was initially dismissed from his post as licentiate at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in the same year he taught Marx. His crime: his attack on a colleague in *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg* (Bauer, *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg: Ein Beitrag Zur Kritik Der Religiösen Bewußtseins. Kritische Briefe Über Den Gegensatz Des Gesetzes Und Des Evangeliums*). Hengstenberg happened to be a leading Pietistic theologian, colleague, and former teacher. Bauer, it seems, could not suffer fools gladly. Fortune was with him, for the Minister of Culture, Altenstein, was favorable to the Hegelians and moved him out of harm’s way — or at least so he thought — to Bonn. But fortune did not smile on him for much longer. Altenstein died in 1840, the same year Friedrich Wilhelm III gave up the ghost. Along with the new king came a new Minister for Culture — or as his title was known in full, for Religious Worship, Education and Medicine — by the name of Eichhorn. This enlightened bureaucrat had no time for the Hegelians and was certainly not going to protect the young radical. Bauer had lasted five years in Berlin (1834-39), but he lasted barely three in Bonn. At the end of March in 1842 his *licentia docendi* was revoked by Eichhorn and he was dismissed by direct order of the new king. With no options left in a university,

he purchased a small farm, ran a tobacco shop and wrote — as prolifically as ever — in the evenings until his death in 1882. I hesitate to use the designations of “left” or “right” Hegelians, not merely because Bauer refused to see himself in these terms, but above all because the distinction was invented by David Strauss in his *Streitschriften Zur Verteidigung Meiner Schrift Über Das Leben Jesu Und Zur Charakteristik Der Gegenwärtigen Theologie* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1980 [1837]); David Friedrich Strauss, *In Defence of My Life of Jesus against the Hegelians*, trans. Marilyn Chapin Massey (Hodgson: 1983). Strauss used it to return fire against Bauer’s (and others’) criticisms of his original *Das Leben Jesu, Kritisch Bearbeitet* (*The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined*), characterizing Bauer as a “right” Hegelian and himself as a “left” Hegelian.

21. Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, April 8, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1913]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Barmen, Bremen, November 20, 1840,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1913]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1913]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, February 19, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, About April 23-May 1, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, About April 28-20, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, May 24-June 15, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, June 15, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, July 12-27, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, July 30, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, October 8, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, October 20-21, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, October 29, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, November 13-20, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]), Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, December 9, 1839 - February 5, 1840,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]). The German originals may be found in Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 8.-9. April 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1913]), Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 20. November 1840,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1913]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1913]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 19. Februar 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, Um Den 23. April - 1. Mai 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, Um Den 28.-30. April 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 24. Mai - 15. Juni 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 15. Juni 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 12.-27. Juli 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 30. Juli 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008

- [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Wilhelm Graeber, 8. Oktober 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Wilhelm Graeber, 20./21. Oktober 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 29. Oktober 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Wilhelm Graeber, 13.-20. November 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 9 Dezember 1839 - 5. Februar 1840," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]). Frederick Engels, "The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible Or: The Triumph of Faith, to Wit, the Terrible, Yet True and Salutory History of the Erstwhile Licentiate Bruno Bauer; How the Same, Seduced by the Devil, Fallen from the True Faith, Became Chief Devil, and Was Well and Truly Ousted in the End: A Christian Epic in Four Cantos," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1842]); Friedrich Engels, "Die Frech Bedräute, Jedoch Wunderbar Befreite Bibel. Oder: Der Triumph Des Glaubens. Unter Mitwirkung Von Edgar Bauer," *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1985 [1842]).
22. Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, February 19, 1839"; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 19. Februar 1839"; Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841"; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841."
 23. "On the nineteenth day of the second month of 1839, on the day when midday is at twelve o'clock, a storm seized me and carried me afar and there I saw them playing cards" (Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, February 19, 1839," 414; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 19. Februar 1839," 361) is playfully modelled on the beginning of Ezekiel's vision: "In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month ... the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 8:1, 3).
 24. Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841"; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841."
 25. Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841," 527; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841," 479.
 26. Engels, "The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible"; Engels, "Die Frech Bedräute, Jedoch Wunderbar Befreite Bibel."
 27. Frederick Engels, "Schelling and Revelation: Critique of the Latest Attempt of Reaction Against the Free Philosophy," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1842]) 238-40; Friedrich Engels, "Schelling Und Die Offenbarung. Kritik Des Neuesten Reaktionsversuchs Gegen Die Freie Philosophie," *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1985 [1842]) 312-14.
 28. Schelling had been called out of retirement by the Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, to come to the university in Berlin in order to refute the Hegelians. Engels attended his opening lectures.
 29. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1989 [1841]); Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen Des Christentums* (Stuttgart: Reclam, Ditzingen, 1986 [1841]).
 30. Engels, "Schelling and Revelation: Critique of the Latest Attempt of Reaction Against the Free Philosophy," 239; Engels, "Schelling Und Die Offenbarung. Kritik Des Neuesten Reaktionsversuchs Gegen Die Freie Philosophie," 313. Compare Revelation 19-20.
 31. They include: renouncing the world (John 12:25; 15:18; and the whole of chapter 17); what was formerly obscure is now clear (1 Corinthians 13:12); the jewel that was found after a long search (Matthew 13:44-46); giving up everything to follow the truth (Luke 9:57-62); it is stronger than everything in heaven and on earth (Romans 8:35-39); it provides a firm confidence that it can never waver or yield (Hebrews 11:1).

32. See the section called “The Critical Last Judgment” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “The German Ideology: Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to Its Various Prophets,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Progress, 1976 [1932]) 210-11; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Die Deutsche Ideologie. Kritik Der Neuesten Deutschen Philosophie in Ihren Repräsentanten Feuerbach, B. Bauer Und Stirner Und Des Deutschen Sozialismus in Seinen Verschiedenen Propheten,” *Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels - Werke*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1969 [1932]) 222-23. The other samples come from early pieces, such as an account of the struggle between the Hegelian Michelet and the Pious Leo (Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, About April 23-May 1, 1839”; Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, Um Den 23. April – 1. Mai 1839”); the street fight between the supporters of the two ministers in Bremen, Krummacher and Paniel, (Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Barmen, Bremen, November 20, 1840”; Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 20. November 1840”); and his anticipation concerning the overcoming of Hegel (Frederick Engels, “Engels to Marx in Paris, Barmen, 19 November 1844,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 38 (Moscow: Progress, 1982 [1913]); Friedrich Engels, “Engels an Marx 19. November 1844,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 27 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1913]). He also makes use of the same language laced with biblical quotations and allusions to blast the close ties between the German nobility and an arrogant Roman Catholic Church (Frederick Engels, “Requiem for the German *Adelszeitung*,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1840]) 66-67; Friedrich Engels, “Requiem Für Die Deutsche Adelzeitung,” *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1985 [1840]) 98-99).
33. On 28 July 1894, Engels wrote to Kautsky: “There is no hurry about printing the article. Once I have seen to the proofs you can print it when you wish, in September, say, or even October. I have been mulling over the thing ever since 1841 when I read a lecture by F. Benary on *Revelation*. Since then I have been in no doubt that here we have the earliest and most important book in the New Testament. After a gestation period of fifty-three years there is no great need to hasten its emergence into the world at large” (Frederick Engels, “Engels to Karl Kautsky in Stuttgart, London, 28 July 1894,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 50 (Moscow: Progress, 2004 [1935]) 328-29; Friedrich Engels, “Engels an Karl Kautsky 28. Juli 1894,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 39 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1935]) 276.
34. Frederick Engels, “The Book of Revelation,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 26 (Moscow: Progress, 1990 [1883]); Friedrich Engels, “Das Buch Der Offenbarung,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 21 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1883]).
35. Engels’s relationship with Bauer moves in the reverse to Marx. While Marx gradually became estranged from his one-time friend, Engels moved from satire and dismissal to a deep appreciation of Bauer’s contribution to biblical and philosophical thought.
36. Frederick Engels, “Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress, 1989 [1882]); Friedrich Engels, “Bruno Bauer Und Das Urchristentum,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 19 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1882]).
37. Frederick Engels, “On the History of Early Christianity,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 27 (Moscow: Progress, 1990 [1894-95]) 462; Friedrich Engels, “Zur Geschichte Des Urchristentums,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 22 (Berlin: Dietz, 1972 [1894-95]) 465.
38. Engels is not overly keen on Renan, since he feels that Renan borrowed and distorted German biblical scholarship. See also the short review of Renan’s *The Antichrist*: Frederick Engels, “Note on a Review of

- E. Renan's L'antéchrist," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress, 1988 [1873]).
39. For example, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Michael V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006); Bruce W. Winter, ed., *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).
 40. Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1988); Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1998); Niels Peter Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past: Background and Beginnings of Israelite History and Identity*, trans. E. F. Maniscalco (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic, 1999); Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Messiah Myth: The Near Eastern Roots of Jesus and David* (New York: Basic, 2005); Philip Davies, *Whose Bible Is It Anyway?* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1995); Philip Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1995); Philip Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Philip Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History - Ancient and Modern* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008).
 41. Engels, "The Book of Revelation," 117; Engels, "Das Buch Der Offenbarung," 15.
 42. See especially Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 131-76.
 43. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Circular against Kriege," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Progress, 1976 [1846]) 46; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Zirkular Gegen Kriege," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Dietz, 1972 [1846]) 12; Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology," 484-530; Marx and Engels, "Die Deutsche Ideologie," 473-520; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Great Men of the Exile," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress, 1979 [1930]); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Die Großen Männer Des Exils," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1930]).
 44. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress, 1979 [1852]) 142; Karl Marx, "Der Achtzehnte Brumaire Des Louis Bonaparte," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1852]) 153. And of course Engels's popular work, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, argued that this type of socialism was fine for the early, crude stage of socialism, but it really was not going to help mature socialism all that much; Frederick Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress, 1989 [1880]) 285-97; Friedrich Engels, "Die Entwicklung Des Sozialismus Von Der Utopie Zur Wissenschaft," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 19 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1880]) 189-201.
 45. Moses Hess, *Die Heilige Geschichte Der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: 1837), Moses Hess, *Die Europäische Trierarchie* (Leipzig: 1841), Moses Hess, *The Holy History of Mankind and Other Writings*, ed. Shlomo Avineri (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004). See the excellent discussion of Hess in Stathis Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2003) 121-66.