

1997

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Thomas J. J. Altizer

State University of New York at Stony Brook, jonathanjackson@ns.shscomputer.com

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Recommended Citation

Altizer, Thomas J. J. (1997) "Apocalypticism and Modern Thinking," *Journal for Christian Theological Research*: Vol. 2 , Article 3.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/jctr/vol2/iss1997/3>

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Apocalypticism and Modern Thinking

[Thomas J. J. Altizer](#)

Professor of Religious Studies, Emeritus
State University of New York at Stony Brook

1. While the power of apocalypticism in our history is now acknowledged, we have little sense of its power or even meaning in thinking itself, and this despite the fact that so many of our primal modern thinkers, such as Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, have manifestly been apocalyptic thinkers. Indeed, the very advent of modernity can be understood to be an apocalyptic event, an advent ushering in a wholly new world as the consequence of the ending of an old world. Nowhere was such a new world more fully present than in thinking itself, a truly new thinking not only embodied in a new science and a new philosophy, but in a new reflexivity or introspection in the interiority of self-consciousness. This is the new interiority which is so fully embodied in the uniquely Shakespearean soliloquy, but it is likewise embodied in that uniquely Cartesian internal and radical doubt which inaugurates modern philosophy. Cartesian philosophy could establish itself only by ending scholastic philosophy, and with that ending a new philosophy was truly born, and one implicitly if not explicitly claiming for itself a radically new world. That world can be understood as a new apocalyptic world, one which becomes manifestly apocalyptic in the French Revolution and German Idealism, and then one realizing truly universal expressions in Marxism and in that uniquely modern or postmodern nihilism which was so decisively inaugurated by Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God.

2. Yet a truly modern subject or "I" is a doubled or self-alienated center of consciousness, and is so in a uniquely Cartesian internal and radical doubt, one never decisively present in previous cognitive or philosophical thinking, although its ground had been established by Augustine's philosophical discovery of the subject of consciousness. Even as Augustinian thinking had been deeply reborn in the late Middle Ages, thence becoming a deep ground not only of the Reformation but also of Cartesian thinking, this new modern subject which is now established and real is an interiorly divided subject, and so much so that its internal ground is a truly dichotomous ground. Nothing else is so deeply Augustinian in modern thinking and in the modern consciousness itself, and if Augustine discovered the subject of consciousness by way of his renewal of Paul, it was Paul who discovered the profoundly internal divisions and dichotomies of consciousness and self-consciousness. This is the Paul who is so deeply renewed in the dawning of modernity, but also the Paul who was the creator of Christian theology, a theology which if only in Paul is a purely and consistently apocalyptic theology, and Paul's realization of the ultimate polarity or dichotomy of consciousness is an apocalyptic realization, one reflecting an apocalyptic dichotomy between old aeon and new aeon, or flesh (*sarx*) and Spirit (*pneuma*).

3. Descartes himself acknowledged that his *cogito ergo sum* is already fundamental in Augustine's philosophy (letter to Colvius, 14 November, 1640), and he believed that his philosophy was the first to demonstrate the philosophical truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and could go so far as to claim that scholastic philosophy would have been rejected as clashing with faith if his philosophy had been known first (letter to Mersenne, 31 March, 1641). Indeed, nothing is more revolutionary in modern philosophy than its dissolution of the scholastic distinction between natural theology and revealed theology. This initially occurs in Descartes and Spinoza, but it becomes far more comprehensive in Schelling and Hegel, and so much so that the whole body of dogmatic theology undergoes a metamorphosis into pure philosophical thinking in Hegel's system. So it is that in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (par. 11), Hegel can declare that ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era, for Spirit has broken with the world it has previously imagined and inhabited, and is now submerging it in the past, and doing so in the very labor of its own transformation. While the new Spirit has thus far historically arrived only in its immediacy, it is destined soon to transform everything whatsoever, a transformation that is clearly an apocalyptic transfiguration. Just as we can now know that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who proclaimed and enacted the actual dawning of the Kingdom of God, a comparable dawning occurs in the advent of a uniquely modern thinking, each promises a finally total transformation, and each calls for a total break from an old aeon or old world.

4. Such an ultimate break is already manifest in the birth of modern science, a revolutionary event issuing in the realization of an infinite universe, a universe in which the *physica coelestis* and the *physica terrestris* are unified if not identified, and also a universe in which every formal and final cause has disappeared. Descartes' was the first philosophy to incorporate this revolutionary transformation, but Descartes believed that God is the universal cause of everything in such a way as to be the total cause of everything (letter to Elizabeth, 6 October, 1645), and such a totality of God is profoundly deepened not only in Spinoza but throughout German Idealism. Thus we discover the paradox, most purely in Spinoza but most comprehensively in Hegel, of a deeply pantheistic philosophy which is nevertheless a deeply atheistic philosophy, atheistic in its dissolution of the absolutely transcendent God, but pantheistic in knowing the absolute totality of God, and a totality of God which is inseparable from a negation of the pure transcendence of God. Twentieth century Protestant theology will discover such an atheism in every philosophical theology, but this is clearly a reaction to a uniquely modern philosophy, and a modern philosophy which is implicitly if not explicitly an apocalyptic philosophy, and is so in its very calling forth of a new totality.

5. Nothing is so unique in apocalypticism as is its enactment of a new totality, an absolute novum that is the polar opposite of a primordial totality, but a novum in full apocalypticism that is already dawning or near at hand, just as it is in Jesus' initial eschatological proclamation that the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is immediately at hand (Mark 1:15). Nowhere in modernity is apocalypticism more open and manifest than it is in our great political revolutions, and if these begin with the English Revolution, this was our most apocalyptic revolution until the French Revolution, a revolution which innumerable thinkers at that time, and above all Hegel himself, could know as the ending of an old world and the inauguration of a truly new and universal world. This is an apocalyptic ending which here, too, is known as the end or the consummation of history, an ending which is comprehensively embodied in Hegel's philosophy. Nothing so clearly unveils Hegel's system as an apocalyptic system as does this ending, but such an ultimate ending is unique to apocalypticism, for even if it parallels archaic visions of eternal return, it wholly differs from all primordial vision in knowing an absolute and final ending, an ending which is apocalypse itself. This is that unique ending which is not only a repetition or renewal of genesis, but far rather an absolutely new beginning, a new creation or new aeon, and absolutely new because it wholly transcends not only an original creation but an original eternity as well. All of the major German philosophers of the time responded to the French Revolution as just such a beginning, and the French Revolution is the deepest historical ground of German Idealism, thereby giving it an historical actuality found nowhere else in the world of philosophy. Here, apocalypticism is profoundly historical, just as it was in the time of Jesus, but now incarnate historically as it never was in the ancient world.

6. It is well known that Hegel could conclude his lectures on the philosophy of history by speaking of the last stage of history as our own world and our own time, but it is not well known that this apocalyptic ground is absolutely fundamental to his two most ultimate works, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. Hegel's *Phenomenology* is often judged to be the most revolutionary of all philosophical works, and it is clearly revolutionary in understanding consciousness itself as a consistently and comprehensively evolving consciousness, evolving from the pure immediacy of sense-certainty to absolute knowing, and this evolution is internal and historical at once. Here, the primal events of our history are reenacted philosophically, and now we can understand them as being absolutely necessary to and in the evolution of absolute Spirit, which is modern idealism's philosophical renaming of the most primal of all New Testament categories, the Kingdom of God. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the work in which Hegel first fully realized his most fundamental and original thinking, one centered in a radically new philosophical method of pure dialectical negation (*Aufhebung*), a negation which is negation, preservation, and transcendence simultaneously, and which is the deepest driving power not only of consciousness and history but of absolute Spirit itself. There can be little doubt that this revolutionary work culminates in apocalypse, an apocalypse unveiling an absolute knowing, and an absolute knowing which is the inwardizing and the Calvary of absolute Spirit, a Calvary which is the actuality, truth, and certainty of the kingdom of Spirit, without which Spirit would be lifeless and alone.

7. Unfortunately this conclusion is extraordinarily brief and abbreviated, probably being little more than notes for a full conclusion, but it does reveal the deep ground of the *Phenomenology* in the Crucifixion, and not insignificantly this work is the first full philosophical realization of the death of God. Indeed, if only here, we can understand the Crucifixion as a full and pure apocalyptic event, one shattering all ancient horizons and worlds, and ushering in an absolutely new world. It is to be remembered that at this time New Testament scholarship had little if any awareness of the apocalyptic ground of the New Testament, the transformation of New Testament scholarship entailed by this realization did not occur until the end of the nineteenth century, but already the original apocalyptic ground of Jesus and of primitive Christianity was profoundly recovered and renewed in the radically new imaginative vision of Blake, just as it was in the radically new philosophical thinking of Hegel. One word is deeply revealing here, and that is the Pauline word *kenosis* (Philippians 2:5-8), a word which Hegel explicitly employs in many of the most crucial and difficult passages of the *Phenomenology*, and that calls forth the theological meaning of *Aufhebung* as a divine and ultimate self-emptying or self-negation. This is the *kenosis* which fully and openly occurs in the Crucifixion, but

which Christian orthodoxy from its very beginning had affirmed to occur only in the humanity and not in the divinity of Christ, an orthodoxy reversed by Luther, and if only here Hegel was a deeply Lutheran Christian.

8. A philosophical reenactment of the Crucifixion could well be said to be the very center of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and not only its center but its deepest ground, or its deepest theological ground, and here far more than previously in modern philosophical thinking theological and philosophical thinking fully coincide. Surely nothing else gives this work a deeper ground in the actual consciousness of Hegel's time, one which was profoundly even if largely unconsciously shaped by a uniquely modern realization of the death of God, which both Blake and Hegel could understand as occurring in the French Revolution, and not only in the dechristianization of that revolution, but in each of its deepest breakthroughs and transformations. The French Revolution, for Hegel, is a world-historical event, and it issues in a truly new world in which secular life and history is the positive and definite embodiment of the Kingdom of God. Accordingly, this is a glorious mental dawn, all thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch, for a new spiritual enthusiasm thrilled the whole world, as if the final reconciliation between God and the world was first accomplished. Now Spirit historically realizes itself as absolute freedom, for now self-consciousness realizes that its certainty of itself is the very essence of the real world, and the world for it is simply its own will, and this is a "general will" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, par. 584). This will is the will of all individuals as such, so that now the self-consciousness of each and every individual is undivided from the whole. What appears to be done by the whole is at bottom the direct and conscious deed of each individual, and every truly individual consciousness is universal consciousness and will.

9. But the greatest antithesis to this universal freedom released by the French Revolution is the freedom and individuality of all actual self-consciousness, for here universal freedom is a cold and abstract universality, a universality bringing with it a new "self-willed atomism" of actual self-consciousness. And this new and modern atomism of the existing individual is the consequence of this new universal freedom, for an abstract universality gives itself to the destruction of all human and historical traditions, thereby reducing the individual to a bare integer of existence. For Hegel the French Revolution is precisely that time and world in which Spirit is first fully manifest and real in its full and final opposition to and alienation and estrangement from itself. Now there occurs the advent of a fully abstract and objective consciousness which is inseparable from the birth of a radically new subjective and interior consciousness, a new "I" or pure self-consciousness which is only and purely itself, and is so by virtue of its antithetical relationship to a new objective and universal consciousness that is the intrinsic and necessary otherness of itself. Moreover, the interior depths of this new subjective consciousness are inseparable from their ground in the universality and totality of a new objective consciousness, for a universal consciousness can fully realize itself objectively and actually only by negating its own subjective ground or center. Now, and for the first time, and above all so in the terror of the French Revolution, death is objectively meaningless and insignificant, a new death with no inner significance whatsoever. For what now perishes is the empty point of the absolutely free self, and this is the coldest and cruelest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, par. 590). Such universal freedom is wholly an abstract freedom, and its ground and object a wholly abstract existence, so there is left for it only negative action, and one realizing the fury of destruction. Absolute freedom becomes explicitly objective to itself in this fury, for in itself absolute freedom is a purely abstract self-consciousness, and it is objective to itself in a new terror of death, a terror which is an actual vision of its own negativity.

10. Therefore this absolutely free self-consciousness is an absolutely empty self-consciousness, and absolute freedom as the pure self-identity of the universal will can realize itself only in a pure negativity, a negativity which is the ultimate abstraction of the universal will, but a pure negativity which here and now becomes all in all. Here lies the modern historical origin of a pure and total negativity, one actually and historically realized only in the modern world, that very world which is the final stage of world history. Ours is truly the final age of the Spirit, but it is actually so only in the universal realization of pure negativity, one released by the advent of a pure and total abstract universality, which is itself the very opposite of Spirit. Yet it is vitally important to realize that the advent of a full abstract universality is itself an apocalyptic event. Only now does God become manifest and real as a vacuous Supreme Being, and only now does an absolute contradiction become fully real and realized in history and consciousness, a final contradiction which by an ultimate dialectical necessity must explode into apocalypse. This is the apocalypse which initially appears and is real in a purely negative actuality, an actuality which is the consequence of the real and historical advent of a final and total abstract universality.

11. So it is that the French Revolution is precisely that time and world in which Spirit is first fully and wholly manifest and real in its full and final opposition to and alienation and estrangement from itself. And the very advent of a fully abstract and objective consciousness is inseparable from the birth of a new subjective and interior consciousness, an "I" or self-consciousness which is only and purely itself, and is so by virtue of its antithetical relationship to an objective and universal consciousness that is the intrinsic and necessary otherness of itself. Moreover, the interior depths of this new subjective consciousness are inseparable from their ground in the universality and totality of a new objective consciousness, for a universal consciousness can realize itself objectively and actually only by negating its own subjective ground or center. If death is for the first time objectively meaningless and insignificant, it is subjectively more real than ever before, and thus death itself becomes the one and only portal to a full and final subjective and interior resolution and fulfillment. Hegel's term for this form of consciousness that realizes itself by losing all the essence and substance of itself is the Unhappy Consciousness, a consciousness which realizes itself by interiorly realizing that *God Himself is dead* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, par. 785).

12. Spirit alone, for Hegel, is finally actual and real, yet this is only because world or substance finally and fully becomes and realizes itself as "Subject." Historically, this does not actually occur until the full birth of the modern world, and then it subjectively or interiorly occurs in the realization that God is dead, a realization inaugurating a new universal self-consciousness, which is the very center and ground of an apocalyptic explosion and transformation of the world. Thus Hegel, even as Blake, correlates and integrates the death of God and apocalypse, for the French Revolution is the historical advent and embodiment of the death of God, yet this is the death of a wholly abstract and alien form or manifestation of God, an epiphany or realization of God which does not occur or become real until the full and final birth of the modern world. Consequently, the death of God becomes possible and actually real only when Spirit has realized itself in its most negative mode and epiphany. Only when Spirit exists wholly and fully in self-alienation and self-estrangement from itself can it undergo an ultimate movement of self-negation or *kenosis*, a movement in which a real end or death occurs of a wholly alienated and estranged form and mode of Spirit (Blake's Urizen or Satan). Thus it is dialectically and apocalyptically necessary that Spirit become wholly estranged and alienated from itself before it can realize and effect its own death or self-negation. Yet this is the ultimate apocalyptic event, one finally releasing an absolutely new world, but only insofar as it is the actual death of God.

13. That crucified God which is absent from all pre-modern Christian thinking, now undergoes its ultimate conceptual realization, and it is precisely that realization which makes possible what Hegel knows as pure negation, an absolute negation which is an absolute affirmation, and is so precisely because it is the absolute negation of absolute Spirit. Now even if there is no direct exposition of the "death of God" in the *Science of Logic*, every movement of this purely forward moving logic is an abstract realization of this "death," for not only is a metaphysical transcendence here dissolved, but every trace of a truly and finally transcendent God has vanished, and this vanishing is the realization of a pure and total immanence. Nowhere else is such a total immanence so purely and so comprehensively enacted, but nowhere else is the totality of God so purely conceived, and even conceived as the pure subject of pure thinking itself.

14. Nothing is more important in Hegel's logic than its purely and totally forward movement, this is its greatest innovation in the perspective of all other logics, just as at no other point is the modern consciousness itself more clearly distinct from virtually every other mode or form of consciousness. Until the advent of modernity, all pure thinking as such was closed to the possibility of the truly and the actually new, then the future could only finally be the realization of the past, for history itself is ultimately a movement of eternal return, and even revelation or a divine or ultimate order is a movement of eternal return. Only one tradition challenged the universality of eternal return, and that is Israel's, and above all the prophetic tradition of Israel, and even more specifically the apocalyptic tradition of Israel, which already in Second Isaiah envisions not only a radically new future but a truly comprehensive and universal future. This is the tradition which is reborn and renewed in primitive Christianity and the New Testament, but unlike Buddhism, Christianity never realized a pure thinking or pure logic incorporating its deepest ground, or did not do so until the full advent of the modern world. Even if only implicitly, this is the deepest theological claim of a uniquely modern idealism, and for the first time, the deepest ground of the Bible and of Christianity itself is apprehended as becoming incarnate in a purely conceptual expression.

15. Only in modern idealism is there a full and pure conceptual realization of the total immanence of God, a conceptual realization which in Hegelian logic culminates in an enactment of an absolute mediation that here and now is all in all. This is that absolute mediation which Hegel declares is the final liberation of all and everything, a mediation that is apocalypse itself, and yet a totally immanent apocalypse. And only here is apocalypse realized in pure thinking itself, for even if this seemingly occurs in ancient Eastern Christian thinking, the apocalypse which Orthodox Christianity knows is an apocalypse of eternal return, or an apocalypse of an original or primordial eternity, whereas a uniquely modern apocalypse is an absolutely immanent apocalypse, and precisely thereby an absolutely new apocalypse. If only through this perspective, we can know that the deepest movement of orthodox Christian thinking is a backward movement of return, a return to an absolutely primordial Godhead, a movement which is inevitably the reversal of an absolutely forward apocalyptic movement, so that the very victory of ancient Christian orthodoxy was inevitably the reversal of an original Christian apocalypticism.

16. The twentieth century has embodied a violent rebirth of nineteenth century apocalypticism, one most clearly occurring in the totalitarian political movements of the twentieth century, but no less so in our deepest imaginative vision, and even in the very advent of a seemingly total electronic and technological revolution, one apparently issuing in the birth of postmodernity. And if the pure subject of consciousness is the deepest center of nineteenth century thinking and vision, now that subject is violently disrupted, as most deeply understood by Nietzsche himself, and in the wake of that disruption there has occurred the advent of a truly anonymous consciousness and society. America is clearly a primal site of this advent, and perhaps thereby an original America is now being reborn, for the American Puritans believed that they were inaugurating a new apocalyptic world, and it is not insignificant that the first imaginative vision of the death of God occurs in Blake's *America* (1793), a vision which inaugurated Blake's full apocalyptic vision. America may well be the primal site of contemporary apocalyptic thinking, and it is America that has given us our purest and deepest contemporary apocalyptic thinker, D. G. Leahy.

17. Leahy is a deeply contemporary and a deeply Catholic thinker, and his first book, *Novitas Mundi* (1980), intends to be a revolutionary breakthrough to an absolutely new thinking, and while conceptually enacting the history of Being from Aristotle through Heidegger, at bottom this book is an apocalyptic calling forth and celebration of the absolute beginning now occurring of transcendent existence in pure thinking itself. For the dawn of the Day of Yahweh is now occurring, and it essentially occurs in pure thinking as the "glorification of existence itself" (395), a glorification which Leahy names as the *missa jubilaea*. *Novitas Mundi* is radically Catholic precisely by being apocalyptically Catholic, celebrating an absolutely new thinking which is the unleavened bread of existence itself, as over against the essential finitude of past thought: "What happened before now in the Mass exclusively (*missa solemnis*) now happens in the Mass inclusively (*missa jubilaea*)" (347). At the end, *in extremis*, and even by an Hegelian irony of history, it becomes the destiny of the Eucharist to be the substantial experience of the world at large: "What now occurs in thought for the first time in history (transcending in fact the end of the world in essence) is the perception itself of the body--God in God in essence--the Temple of the New Jerusalem--effected now in essence inclusively in the *missa jubilaea*, the center of an essentially new consciousness in the conversion of the universe into an entirely new stuff" (348). The *missa jubilaea* is the infinite passover of God, and precisely thereby the death of God in Christ, and therefore: "God is in fact (being there) in the absolute nullification of God" (364). This apocalyptic nullification of God is the blood of the Lamb, or the blood of the God who is absolutely Christ, and thus it is the resurrection or glorification of existence itself, a glorification which is the resurrection of the body.

18. *Novitas Mundi* is our most intrinsically difficult book since the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but Leahy's next book, *Foundation: Matter the Body Itself* (1996) is even more difficult and complex, even if it is in full continuity with *Novitas Mundi*. Once again there is a purely conceptual embodiment of the end of modernity and the absolute beginning of a new world order, an order which is an actually universal new world consciousness, and an absolutely new consciousness in which the body itself is nothing but existence itself. Now, and for the first time, an explosion of reason has occurred in the form of faith, so that in the thinking now occurring for the first time faith has raised reason itself to the level of faith. Of course, this is a claim fully embedded in German Idealism, and above all so in Hegel, but now what is at hand is a Catholic universal reason and a Catholic universal faith. And if German Idealism was inaugurated by the French Revolution of 1789, and culminated in its reversal in Marxism, this new world order only becomes "a clearly visible fact" in 1989, the "Year of the Beginning," which is not only the year of the public ending of Marxism but the year of the final ending of modernity itself.

19. Moreover, America is a deep site of this ending, for America is the furthest extension of modernity, and whereas the historical limitations of European self-consciousness precludes in fact the realization of its own demand that God actually die, the complete actualization of the death of God occurs for the first time in the American consciousness (*Foundation*, 596). Once again this is a death of God releasing apocalypse itself, and an absolute apocalypse which is the identity of the new world now beginning. As opposed to *Novitas Mundi*, now American pragmatism is the true prelude to the thinking now occurring for the first time, and most immediately so the uniquely American theology of the death of God, a theology which while voiding pragmatism is the last gasp of modernity, and it in these death throes that a final apocalyptic thinking is born. And this is a truly new apocalyptic thinking if only because of the primacy here of the body itself, a new body which is an apocalyptic body, the apocalyptic Body of Christ, and a body calling forth an absolutely new thinking in which "the body itself is the totality of life for the first time" (104).

20. Matter, the body itself, is the apocalyptic beginning of an absolutely new universe, a matter precluding the present possibility of that abyss which is the ultimate ground of modernity, for the body itself is nothing but an absolutely apocalyptic thinking. This is that thinking now giving birth to the new creation, and history is transcended for the first time by the death of death itself, in the absolute inconceivability of either a potential or an actual nothingness. If now there is no existence which is not "foundation" itself, no grounding of Being which is not the proclamation of the body itself, this body is Christ, or the apocalyptic body of God, revealing itself in the absolute freedom of personality saying itself, hearing the voice of the absolute freely speaking of itself: "I am Christ absolute existing for the first time--I am the absolute temporality of existence" (165).

21. Indeed, there never was a nothing, because in every now is the beginning absolutely. Christ is that beginning, an absolute beginning which is an absolute ending or apocalypse, for in every now begins the transcendence of consciousness, in every now begins the body itself, and this is the beginning of the end of the world in essence, the beginning of the end of time itself (423). Consequently, Leahy can identify the absolutely new essence of thought as the passion of Christ or Christ absolute. His is a transcendence which is the transcendence of transcendence itself, an absolute passion repeating itself for the first time in history in the essence of thought, existence itself for the first time the passion of Christ (197). But this passion of existence is the absolute creation of the world: the creation *ex abysso*. And this absolutely passionate creation of the world is the "foundation," and the foundation of an absolute world society now beginning to exist for the first time. This world is constructed *ex futuro*, after the future, and *ex nihilo*, after non-existence, after the pure Nothing which modernity knows as total presence. For modernity can only know apocalypse in its most abysmal form, its absolute idealism is the idealism of the Nothing, and here and here alone God becomes the Nothing in an absolutely reverse and inverted thinking. Nor is the death of God which it knows the actual death of the Living God, but only the actual death of the God of Death, or that Satan who is only fully born in the fullness of modernity. So it is that modernity culminates in an historically inevitable and eschatologically ultimate nihilism, that nihilism which Nietzsche enacts most profoundly, but this very nihilism necessarily calls forth its reversal and transcendence in an absolute apocalypse.

22. Both *Novitas Mundi* and *Foundation* pose an ultimate challenge to Catholicism, and not only to Catholicism but to Christianity itself, and nothing is newer here than a purely philosophical thinking and a purely theological thinking which wholly coincide, one which is manifestly the calling forth of a truly new world. At no point is this challenge more overwhelming than in that radically new understanding of matter and the body itself which is incorporated here, just as nothing is more ultimately new than an enactment of the body itself in pure thinking. This is the very point at which Leahy is most manifestly a truly new thinker, just as it is precisely here that Leahy can be understood to be an authentically Catholic thinker, and perhaps the first purely Catholic thinker in history. Surely this is the first time that the Incarnation has been absolutely central in Catholic thinking, the first time that matter and Spirit have been so deeply and so purely united, and so much so that now Spirit is the body itself (96), and even as this thinking intends to be an apocalyptic consummation of the totality of history, never before has such a Catholic consummation actually been conceived, although there are those who would see it as having been imaginatively enacted in Dante's *Paradiso* and Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

23. A deep question to be asked of modern apocalyptic thought is its relationship to ancient apocalypticism, and more particularly its relation to the apocalypticism of primitive Christianity and the New Testament. Here, Paul, is extraordinarily important, for he is our first purely apocalyptic thinker, and so far as we now know the first ancient thinker fully to draw forth the subject of consciousness, an "I" or subject which he could know as a dichotomous subject, a subject wholly divided or doubled between an old "I" of "flesh" (*sarx*) and a new "I" of Spirit (*pneuma*). Paul could know this dichotomous subject as a consequence of the ultimacy of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, or even of the Crucifixion alone, a transformation which even could be understood as the full and final advent of self-consciousness. This is a subject or self-consciousness which becomes deeply reborn in early modernity, thence being renewed in a uniquely modern apocalyptic thinking, only to be absolutely negated in Nietzsche's apocalyptic dissolution of the "I," an "I" which he could know as the creation of *ressentiment*. Leahy's absolutely apocalyptic thinking is also a pure negation of interiority and selfhood, a negation issuing from the advent of an absolute exteriority, or absolute body itself. But all of these thinkers are reborn or renewed Pauline thinkers, and are so precisely in their apocalypticism, an apocalypticism inseparable from an enactment of absolute ending, but that ending is absolute beginning itself.

24. Now even as ancient Jewish apocalypticism profoundly challenged the orthodox guardians of the Torah, a challenge which is profoundly renewed in Paul, modern apocalypticism profoundly challenges Christian orthodoxy. Indeed, this is the greatest challenge which Christianity has ever faced, as witness modern apocalypticism's ultimate enactment of the death of God, and one also occurring in the radically Catholic thinking of Leahy, even if it knows the death of God as the apocalyptic resurrection of God. So that if a pure enactment of the death of God occurs throughout all of the full expressions of a uniquely modern apocalyptic thinking, does this movement fully and finally distinguish ancient and modern apocalypticism? Or is modern apocalypticism a genuine recovery and renewal of an original Christian apocalypticism, one which had perished or become wholly transformed in the victory of an ancient Christian orthodoxy, then only to be renewed in profoundly subversive and heretical expressions? Surely apocalyptic thinking and apocalyptic vision have been ultimately subversive and heretical throughout their history, and if modern apocalyptic thinking is totally subversive and

heretical, it may well be an authentic renewal of a seemingly invisible or hidden apocalyptic tradition. But if a uniquely modern apocalypticism is inseparable from the death of God, a death of God which it can know as apocalypse itself, could this be the first purely conceptual realization of the Kingdom of God? Or is it the first purely conceptual expression of an absolute atheism or an absolute desacralization? Or could it be both at once? And could this be said of the whole world of modern apocalyptic thinking?

25. There are guardians of orthodoxy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam who know all forms of apocalypticism as assaults both upon revelation and upon the majesty and sovereignty of the absoluteness of God. And there is good reason for this, apocalypticism is inevitably subversive, and perhaps the most purely subversive force in history, all of the great political revolutions in modernity have been apocalyptic revolutions, and even the advent of both Christianity and Islam can be understood as the consequence of apocalypticism. So, too, all full forms of apocalypticism have assaulted both social and religious orthodoxies, and Jewish, Christian, and Islamic orthodoxies have arisen only by way of dissolving the apocalypticism upon their horizons. We can also understand modern political conservatism as having arisen to assault and reverse the apocalypticism ushered in by the French and Russian revolutions, and if modern theology in virtually all of its expressions is deeply anti-apocalyptic, this, too, could be understood as a uniquely modern conservatism. But if a uniquely modern thinking is at bottom an apocalyptic thinking, or is so in its deepest and purest expressions, it is finally a theological thinking, and a theological thinking which therein could be understood as a rebirth of an original Christianity, an original Christianity which from this perspective was most deeply negated and reversed by the very advent of an orthodox theological thinking and faith.

26. Nothing is more essential in a full and genuine apocalypticism than the *coincidentia oppositorum* which it realizes between an absolute No-saying and an absolute Yes-saying, one inseparable from the final advent of an absolute darkness and an absolute light. This is luminously clear in Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God, already the madman's proclamation of the death of God (*The Gay Science*, par. 125) reveals that we are now straying as through an infinite nothing, night and more night is coming on all the while, a night of the world which is an apocalyptic night, and one which is the deepest ending in history. Here, the death of God is not only an ultimate historical event, it is the most ultimate event that has ever occurred, one wiping away our entire horizon. But even if this is the darkest of all nights, it is nevertheless the most glorious of all possible dawns, for it releases an absolute and final Yes-saying, a Yes-saying which is the very opposite of *ressentiment*, and a Yes-saying whose revelation is Nietzsche's ultimate calling. Now and only now a history inaugurated by *ressentiment* is ending, an ending that is the ending of the actuality of every possible subject, and is that ending precisely because it is the death of God. Yet this is the very death releasing a final and ultimate nihilism, a nihilism which is the tomb of God, and a nihilism which is the very arena of the ecstatic affirmation of a uniquely modern or postmodern Eternal Recurrence. So, too, Paul could celebrate an apocalyptic grace that is the consequence of the ending of an old creation, an old creation that ends in the Crucifixion itself, and just as Paul declares to the Corinthian Christians that he had decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified (I Corinthians 2:2), this is what makes possible his celebration of the absolute love of Christ, a love that is fully and finally actual in the Crucifixion alone.

27. Despite the centrality of the Crucifixion in the New Testament, a centrality inseparable from its enactment of the final triumph of the Kingdom of God, Christian theology throughout virtually all of its history has most resisted the theology of the cross, and done so most clearly in its continual affirmation of the absolute sovereignty and the absolute transcendence of God, thereby refusing the Crucifixion as a divine event, or as an enactment or embodiment of Godhead itself. This is a refusal which is continually and comprehensively reversed throughout a uniquely modern apocalypticism, and at no other point is there such a clear unity between all of the radically divergent expressions of modern apocalyptic thinking and vision, and if that is a unity deriving from a uniquely modern realization of the death of God, nothing is more fundamental in modern apocalypticism, just as nothing is more fundamental in the New Testament than is the Crucifixion itself. So that if an original Christian apocalypticism is truly reborn in the modern world, that rebirth is inseparable from the death of God, even as a uniquely Christian apocalypse is inseparable from the Crucifixion.

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CTRF@apu.edu

1/2/1997