

## The Apocalyptic Jesus

Nothing has been more revolutionary in New Testament scholarship than the unveiling of the original historical Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet, and not only an apocalyptic prophet but one whose own words and acts were profoundly grounded in an ultimate and final apocalyptic enactment, an enactment even now of the advent or dawning presence of the Kingdom of God. We know that the New Testament title "Kingdom of God," with the exception of its occurrence in the Gospel of John (3:3-5), is an apocalyptic title, one wholly absent from the Hebrew Bible. It occurs rarely or never in all Jewish literature through the time of Jesus, even including the apocalyptic texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>1</sup> At no point is the language of Jesus more clearly original than in its primary centering upon the Kingdom of God, and just as Jesus was the first prophet to proclaim and enact the actual advent or dawning of the Kingdom of God, that is an advent that here and here alone in biblical language is an ultimate and eschatological enactment. True, such an enactment is certainly present in the eschatological proclamation of Second Isaiah, a proclamation which is the very birth of Biblical apocalypticism, but neither here nor elsewhere in Jewish apocalypticism, with the possible exception of John the Baptist, is there an open enactment of the actual and final advent of apocalypse itself. Yet the language of apocalypse either perished or was deeply

transformed in ancient Christian tradition, just as it was suppressed or wholly sublimated in medieval theological traditions, and even in the great body of Protestantism, so that the discovery of Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet came as a profound shock to the Christian world.

Now we know that the birth of apocalypticism gradually but decisively effected a profound transformation of Biblical traditions, and while we have little real knowledge of apocalypticism until the second century B.C.E., we can be assured that apocalypticism was as powerful as any other force in Israel. Although it assumed multiple and conflicting forms, it exercised a decisive role in Jewish rebellions against the new universal imperialism of the Hellenistic world. Ever since, apocalypticism has been a profoundly revolutionary force in Western history, perhaps our most purely revolutionary power. Just as apocalypticism played a decisive role in all of the great political revolutions of the modern world, from the English Revolution to the Russian Revolution and beyond, nothing has been more revolutionary in world history than apocalypticism, which not only made possible the original triumph of Islam, but also has been a fundamental ground of Marxism, and even of Asian Maoism. Moreover, it was Christianity that introduced apocalypticism into world history. Even if Hellenistic Christianity profoundly transformed the original apocalyptic ground of Christianity, it was Christianity that first actually embodied the universal horizon of apocalypticism, and if only thereby we can see that Jesus is the most revolutionary prophet in history. All too naturally, ancient and orthodox Christianity was impelled to disguise and transform the apocalyptic Jesus, a process that was already beginning in the earliest Christian tradition, and even in the New Testament itself, so that the historical

discovery of the apocalyptic Jesus was truly a revolutionary event.

Nothing has been more alien to Christian theology than apocalypticism. Christian theology was created by Paul, as an apocalyptic theology, but apocalypticism very quickly moved to the periphery of the Pauline tradition itself, as it did in the Johannine tradition, so that by the second century of the Christian era apocalypticism virtually disappeared in a new Catholic Christianity. Thereafter it appears in Christian history only in deeply heretical expressions. Despite the dominance of the apocalyptic title "Kingdom of God" in the synoptic traditions, such a "Kingdom of God" has never truly entered Christian theology. Even today New Testament scholars commonly speak of the "Kingdom of God" as the "reign" or the "kingdom" of God, thereby repudiating the very possibility that Jesus broke away decisively from ancient Biblical traditions. But this break is already manifest in all genuine Jewish apocalypticism. The very possibility of eternal life is alien to all biblical traditions until the advent of apocalypticism. We know that apocalypticism, and this as early as Second Isaiah, could truly know God only by way of the advent of a total historical transformation. This transformation becomes a cosmic transformation in full apocalypticism, and hence a transformation truly and finally ending everything which we can know or name as "kingdom" or "reign." To insist upon knowing the "Kingdom of God" as the "kingdom" of God is surely to repudiate Jesus, or to refuse everything that is distinctively and originally his own.

Of course, ever since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls virtually all historians know Jesus and early Christianity as arising out of the world of Jewish apocalypticism. But ever since the historical discovery of the apocalyptic Jesus, New Testament scholars and theologians have all too

commonly engaged in the process of “de-eschatologizing” or “demythologizing” both Jesus and the New Testament, thereby clearly recognizing the subversive power of apocalypticism, and also thereby clearly renewing or repeating an ancient Christian transformation of Jesus. Even when such de-eschatologizing is seemingly anti-Christian, as in contemporary interpretations of the original Jesus as a Cynical Jesus, understanding the historical Jesus by way of a radical wisdom tradition, as present in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas and a presumed early wisdom stratum of Q or the sayings source of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, such interpretation not only profoundly distances Jesus from his own deeply Jewish world and identity, but precisely thereby reveals itself as a deeply antihistorical interpretation. But flights from the apocalyptic Jesus are also thereby flights from the revolutionary Jesus, or flights from any kind of historical revolution, as so purely present in Christian Gnosticism itself. Gnosticism not only dissolves every possible humanity of Jesus, but also, and even thereby, dissolves every possibility of historical or even human transformation.

Inevitably, Christian fundamentalism, both Protestant and Catholic, is profoundly distant from the world of biblical scholarship. Indeed, modern fundamentalism came into existence as a rebellion against such scholarship, and even neoorthodox theology, which first arose in the second edition of Barth’s commentary on Romans (1921), rebelled against the apocalyptic interpretation of the New Testament, and all neoorthodox theology, both Protestant and Catholic, has been deeply and consistently antiapocalyptic. This is most purely expressed in a Bultmannian demythologizing, which arose from Bultmann’s critical acceptance of the apocalyptic identity of the historical Jesus, an acceptance demanding that an apocalyptic horizon be “de-

mythologized," a de-mythologizing essential to the possibility of a contemporary expression of faith. Now we know that such demythologizing has occurred throughout the history of Christianity, and for Bultmann this fully begins with the Gospel of John, which he could interpret as being the most loyal of the four canonical gospels to the deepest "intention of Jesus." Nevertheless, for Bultmann, we can know nothing of the original person of Jesus, except insofar as we accept the Gospel of John and know that "*his word is identical with himself.*"<sup>2</sup> Of course, that "word" is here a wholly demythologized word, one stripped of every possible mythical, cosmological, and metaphysical meaning. Only such a loss of every possible "objective" meaning makes possible the purely existential expression of faith. But just as apocalypticism wholly disappears in such a purely subjective faith, so likewise disappears every Word of God save that which is identical with Jesus himself, and in the end Jesus as the Revealer of God "*reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer.*"<sup>3</sup>

While it is true that there are many forms of ancient apocalypticism, ranging all the way from a messianic expectation of a Messiah or sacred king to a fully apocalyptic expectation of the immediate coming of the end of the world, all of these are united in passionately opposing this world or this historical era or aeon, an opposition intending a full and actual inversion or reversal of the world, and such a reversal is the very essence of apocalypticism. As apocalypticism historically evolved, it moved ever more fully into an "other-worldly" direction, as manifest in the Qumran community or communities, and even more clearly manifest in a uniquely apocalyptic redeemer—that "Son of Man" whose coming will usher in the final judgment and the resurrection of the dead. Although it is now doubtful that Jesus identified himself as the Son of Man, or even

spoke of the "Son of Man" at all, there can be little doubt that Jesus expected an immediate transfiguration of everything whatsoever, a transfiguration that even now is dawning. For the gospel, or "good news," of Jesus is the eschatological proclamation that the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand (Mark 1:15). Nor can this proclamation be confused with the ancient Israelite belief that Yahweh or the Lord is the true "king" of the world, for Jesus not only proclaimed but enacted a total transformation of everything that is manifest or given as actuality or the world, a transformation which is the advent of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God for Jesus is certainly not a royal sovereignty, not an imperial nor even a messianic reign, but rather a full abolition or reversal of all given conditions. This is fully manifest in the authentic parables of Jesus, all of which are parables of the Kingdom of God. Nothing is more striking about the authentic words and acts of Jesus than their reversal of all human expectations whatsoever, and just as a methodological rule has been formulated to the effect that a gospel account of an act or saying of Jesus can be judged to be authentic to the degree that it embodies just such a reversal, the original Jesus has now been unveiled as a totally radical Jesus, and truly radical to the religious and social orthodoxies of his time and world. But no less so to our time and world, or to any historical or human world whatsoever, for the original Jesus is and was a revolutionary Jesus, even if not a revolutionary in the common sense. Nothing has been more problematic than our attempts to understand Jesus as a revolutionary figure, these have inevitably fallen short of understanding Jesus as a total revolutionary, except insofar as they have occurred in our deepest thinking and vision. The Jesus of Christian orthodoxy is surely not a revolutionary, or not as

a truly human "son of man." But the Jesus of Christian heresy has commonly been a revolutionary, and the deeper the heresy, the deeper the apprehension of the revolutionary Jesus, and if a total Christian heresy has been realized only in full modernity, nowhere else is a vision of a revolutionary Jesus more fully or more totally at hand.

Christianity is unique in the history of religions in having undergone such a profound transformation in its very beginnings, and so much so that it is now impossible to apprehend any full or genuine continuity between primitive Christianity and Hellenistic and Catholic Christianity, even if such an orthodox Christianity is already at hand in the New Testament itself. At no point is there a greater chasm between radically different expressions of Christianity than there is between an apocalyptic and a nonapocalyptic Christianity. If we know that apocalyptic Christianity dominates the New Testament, by the second century of the Christian era, apocalyptic Christianity has become heretical, and all genuine apocalyptic expressions of Christianity have ever since been heretical. Often apocalyptic and orthodox forms of Christianity have warred within an individual figure or movement, as they did in Luther and early Protestantism, or in Milton and seventeenth-century Puritanism, thus effecting a fissure between the Magisterial and the Radical Reformation, and such fissures have occurred again and again in Christian history, and not least so in Catholicism itself. Apocalypticism has been most powerful, moreover, at the great turning points or crises of Christian history—as is true in primitive Christianity, in the later Middle Ages, in the early Reformation, in the deepest Christian movements of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, but most clearly so in the twentieth century itself.

Kierkegaard could know and realize an apocalyptic ending of Christendom, and do so in his revolutionary



recovery or discovery of faith. So, too, Dostoyevsky could know or discover both Jesus and Christianity only by way of the apocalyptic ending of history. If Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky are authentic prophets of our world, they are most clearly so as apocalyptic prophets, or prophets of the deepest ending. Certainly such prophetic judgments are not unique to the modern world. They have occurred again and again throughout Christian history, even as they have also occurred in Judaism and Islam. In the English Revolution they inaugurated modern political revolution, thence playing a decisive role in both the French and the Russian revolutions. In the twentieth century, however, apocalypticism has been universal as it has never been before, occurring not only throughout the world as a whole, but also decisively occurring throughout the whole spectrum of thinking, culture, and society, as Western history is truly manifest as coming to an end, a Western history that in full modernity became a universal history, so that the ending of Western history is thereby manifest as the ending of history itself. This was an ending which was already enacted in each of the great revolutionary thinkers and visionaries of the nineteenth century, including not only Kierkegaard and Newman, but also Blake, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, each of whom were not only prophetic visionaries of our world, but apocalyptic enactors of a final and total ending, an ending which is nothing less than apocalypse itself.

How ironic that, in a world as apocalyptic as our own, theologians have been impelled to demythologize the apocalyptic ground of the New Testament, transforming the apocalyptic Jesus into a mysterious and humanly empty Word. Even if this is in full continuity with Christian theology throughout its history, only in the twentieth century has what the theologian knows as "myth" been so



overwhelmingly real to humanity as a whole, and most real as an apocalyptic ending. Doubly ironic is the fact that Bultmannian demythologizing was fully created only in Nazi Germany, albeit by anti-Nazi theologians, and at the very time when the Holocaust was occurring, a holocaust which was surely an apocalyptic event. Even as Nazism itself was a profoundly pathological apocalyptic movement, occurring in the most deeply theological, if not the most deeply Christian, nation in the modern world. Certainly Nazism cannot be understood apart from apocalypticism, and just as Nazism is the most deeply negative or pathological apocalyptic movement that has ever occurred, it nonetheless enacted a truly apocalyptic ending, an ending which has even more comprehensively been enacted by twentieth century Communism, and with no less devastating results. The truth is, moreover, that a democratic and bourgeois world has realized a comparable ending, and while this has not been a violent and overtly catastrophic ending, it has nevertheless been a genuine ending. Not only is it the end or disruption of art, philosophy, and literature, but even more deeply the ending or abatement of our actual moral traditions, an ending inseparable from what we are realizing as the dissolution of a uniquely Western self-consciousness or a uniquely Western individuality.

It would be difficult if not impossible to name a truly major twentieth-century visionary or thinker who is not apocalyptic. Even twentieth-century theologians, who are overtly nonapocalyptic, and even antiapocalyptic, have nonetheless thought in the context of an apocalyptic ending, or at the very least in the context of the ending of Christendom. Our uniquely contemporary theology was generated by the ending of a Christian world, and employed as its conceptual ground the apocalyptic thinking of a Kierkegaard, a Nietzsche, or a Heidegger, each of whom

enacted the ending of our Western conceptual and historical traditions. Thus we face the fact that twentieth century Christian theology has been apocalyptic and antiapocalyptic at once, apocalyptic in its contemporary horizon and modern ground, but antiapocalyptic in its refusal of New Testament apocalypticism, despite the fact that the apocalyptic Jesus is the original and primal ground of our apocalyptic century and world. Only one New Testament scholar and theologian has realized this primal truth, and that is Albert Schweitzer, who not only gave us our purest and most powerful apocalyptic interpretation of the New Testament, but it was in this very context that he made his deepest commitment to Jesus, a commitment that is unique among our theologians. Accordingly, he can conclude *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* with the affirmation that what is eternal in the words of Jesus is due to the fact that Jesus' words are grounded in an apocalyptic worldview, and contain the expression of one for whom the contemporary world with its historical and social circumstances no longer had any existence: Jesus comes to us as one unknown, without a name, he commands, and to those who obey him, he will reveal himself in their labors conflicts, and sufferings, and as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience "Who He is."<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the deepest scandal posed by Schweitzer lies in his understanding of Jesus' ethics as a truly revolutionary ethics made possible only by the immediate advent of the Kingdom of God. This advent will bring the world to an end, so that Jesus' radical ethics could only be an interim ethics, an ethics possible and real only in a truly apocalyptic situation. Thereby the radical commands of the Sermon on the Mount are occasioned and made real by that brief interim between the present moment and the immediate coming of an apocalyptic Kingdom, a Kingdom whose

actual advent will bring the world to an end. But this ending releases the follower of Jesus from all obedience to the world, and only that freedom makes possible an actual following of Jesus. Schweitzer forcefully shows how Christianity lost this ethics, losing it already in the Gospel of John with its ground in a mystical regeneration, and then losing it also in the post-Pauline Hellenistic churches. All of this occurred because of the delay of the Parousia, the failure of the Kingdom of God to realize itself at once, and as that delay stretched into generations, Christianity abandoned its original apocalyptic ground. Consequently, it inevitably and necessarily abandoned the ethics of Jesus, transforming Jesus' revolutionary way into new ways making possible an accommodation to the world, and such de-eschatologizing of Jesus was deepened and expanded in virtually all of the subsequent expressions of Christianity.

Now it is true that apocalypticism poses a deep offense to all of us. But the deeper expressions of Christianity have always known the offense of faith, and thinkers such as Luther, Pascal, and Kierkegaard have even correlated the depth and truth of faith with the very degree and power of its ultimate and inevitable offense. Such offense has always been known by the Christian as being embodied in Jesus, and not only in Jesus as the full incarnation of God—the *coincidentia oppositorum* of time and eternity and of the finite and the infinite—but also in an all too human Jesus, who is nonetheless, and even thereby, the way, the truth, and the life. Why should it be inconceivable that "the way" is originally an apocalyptic way, one that has undergone profound transformations throughout its history, but also one which has returned again and again as an apocalyptic way, and most manifestly and universally so in our own time and world? What the theologian has failed to grasp is that apocalypticism is not simply an isolated

and sectarian phenomenon, but rather an ultimate force and power that has realized itself in the fullness of our history, and in our most advanced and creative movements. How can one ignore the apocalyptic ground of Marxism? This ground is already and even more comprehensively and profoundly present in Hegelian dialectical thinking, and then bursts forth in Nietzsche, and after Nietzsche in the great body of our most ultimate and creative enactments. Apocalypticism is also a primal ground of the Christian epic tradition, as initially realized in Dante, and then expanded into ever more comprehensive apocalyptic expressions in Milton and Blake. This epic tradition becomes ever more fully and more finally apocalyptic as it evolves. Nothing could be clearer than the apocalypticism of Blake, who profoundly knew the apocalyptic Jesus long before this discovery occurred in New Testament scholarship. Blake renewed if he did not discover the purity of apocalyptic vision as a universal vision, and it is just as such that it is a breakthrough into truly new imaginative worlds.

Almost by necessity our theology is closed to such worlds. This is ironic, if such worlds are renewals and rebirths of the original apocalyptic Jesus, a Jesus whose enacted parables and eschatological proclamation called forth the very dawning of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom which can truly be known as an apocalyptic kingdom, and thereby as an absolutely new totality, a totality whose very dawning makes everything new. For an apocalyptic kingdom is a total kingdom, one whose realization brings an end to everything else, an ending which is itself an embodiment of the Kingdom of God, and an ending occurring so that God may be "all in all" (I Corinthians 15:28). Such an apocalyptic consummation is not only celebrated by both Jesus and Paul, it is at the very center of their primal

words and acts, acts and words which simply cease to be themselves apart from such an apocalyptic ground. Apocalypticism is not simply an ancient phenomenon, or an isolated and sectarian world, for it has been renewed continually in ever more universal forms and expressions, until it becomes a truly universal world in late modernity. Everywhere apocalypticism has been grounded in an ultimate and final ending, and at no other point is there such a clear coincidence between our world and the world of Jesus. Even if Jesus proclaimed and enacted a Kingdom of God that is wholly opaque to us, ending as such is not opaque to us, an ending which he enacted as the triumph of the Kingdom of God.

Yet full modernity has known our apocalyptic ending as the death of God, an ultimate ending of our deepest ground, and therefore an ending that could only be an apocalyptic ending. It was precisely as such that it was celebrated and enacted by our deepest modern apocalyptic thinkers and seers. Although modern apocalypticism is certainly unique in centering its vision and enactment upon the death of God, it is not unique in enacting an ultimate ending, an ending that is a primal center of all apocalypticism. For just as apocalypticism can know a "new aeon" only by knowing an "old aeon" that even now is coming to an end, the depth and ultimacy of that ending is in precise accordance with the degree of totality of that "new aeon" that even now is at hand. So it is that an apocalyptic enactment of ending is thus ultimately and finally an ecstatic celebration of total joy. This is most clearly present in modernity in the total Yes-saying of Nietzsche and Blake, a Yes-saying that in some deep sense we know to be present in the beatitudes of Jesus. The beatitudes are an expression of his gospel or "good news," but they are meaningless apart from a total and final enactment. Nothing is more vacuous

in New Testament scholarship than its exegesis of the beatitudes, at least when it knows them apart from an apocalyptic enactment, and just as both Blake and Nietzsche could know the gospel of the church as *dysangel* or "bad news," our nonapocalyptic understandings of Jesus have been wholly alien to the possibility of total joy, as most clearly manifest in a uniquely modern pietism and evangelicalism.

The death of God is the deepest event in modern apocalypticism, apart from which there is no possibility whatsoever of a truly new world. Is this an ultimate chasm between modern apocalypticism and ancient apocalypticism, or between our apocalypticism and the apocalyptic Jesus? Let it be confessed that Christianity has always known the death of God, and known it as occurring in the crucifixion of Jesus. Even if orthodox theology knows this death only as the death of the human Jesus, it is nevertheless an ultimate death and the sole source of redemption. Athanasius could defeat Arianism with his passionate argument that only the incarnation of a fully divine redeemer could be an actual source of our redemption, so that a Chalcedonian orthodoxy dogmatically proclaiming the true union of a fully divine and a fully human Christ is inevitably a witness to the death of God, even if this is not theologically realized until Luther. Nothing is more revealing about Christian history than the profound transformation Christianity underwent in its vision of the crucifixion. Images of the crucifixion do not truly enter Christian iconography until the end of the Patristic age. They are not a center of Christian art until the end of the Middle Ages, and poetic enactments of the Crucifixion do not fully occur until the seventeenth century. Nothing more clearly distinguishes Dante and Milton than the virtual absence of the Crucifixion from the *Commedia*, as opposed to its being the primal center of *Paradise Lost*. With

Blake, the Crucifixion is all in all, thus necessitating Blake's comprehensive enactment of the death of God, but a death of God is equally universal in Hegel's dialectical philosophy, which is certainly a crucial philosophical foundation of Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God. If this ultimate and final event truly is an apocalyptic event, then it clearly has a Christian origin and ground, and one which Christianity at bottom has always known in knowing the ultimacy of the Crucifixion.

Christianity has undergone a profound transformation in its historical enactment, paralleled by no other religious tradition, with the all too significant exception of the transformation of pre-exilic Israel into post-exilic Judaism, which in its apocalyptic expression was the womb of Christianity. Profound transformation appears to be the very essence of Christianity: occurring not only in the first century of its history, but again and again throughout its history. In this perspective, a radical or even an apocalyptic transformation could be known as the very center of Christianity, and if Jesus is the true center of Christianity, an apocalyptic Jesus could be manifest as being that center, and even that center if he comes to us as one "unknown," and most deeply unknown in his very enactment of the Kingdom of God. Hegel could know an apocalyptic Kingdom of God as the totality of Absolute Spirit that enacts itself only by way of a pure and total self-negation or self-emptying, a kenotic self-emptying wherein Spirit realizes itself as the very opposite or "other" of itself, and does so through a logical and historical *Aufhebung* that is simultaneously the movements of negation, preservation, and transcendence. Hegel could know the depths of that *Aufhebung* as the Crucifixion or the death of God, a death that is the sole way to the absolute realization of Absolute Spirit, or to the final apocalyptic triumph of the Kingdom of God. Apocalypticism is reborn simultaneously in Blake



and Hegel, but only through an apocalyptic, though now universal realization of the death of God. If Blake, and Hegel, and the whole world of modern apocalypticism, are deeply absent from modern theology, that may well be because even if only unconsciously modern theology knows all too deeply, that a contemporary apocalypticism could only be an enactment of the death of God.

Could it thereby be a repetition or renewal of the apocalyptic Jesus? Does an ultimate and final ending occur in the words and acts of Jesus, and an ending inseparable from a final realization of the Kingdom of God, an apocalyptic ending that is the true ending of everything which we can know and name as God? Such an ending is manifest for all to see in a uniquely modern apocalypticism, and is that a profound reason why we are so deeply closed to the apocalyptic enactment of Jesus, and so deeply alienated from an apocalyptic Kingdom of God? Nothing is more unique in Jesus than the centering of his acts and words upon the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of God that is present and future simultaneously, or fully realized and vastly distant at once, or totally unveiled and totally mysterious simultaneously. Is such a Kingdom so purely opaque to us because we compulsively insist upon knowing it as the absolute sovereignty of a totally transcendent Godhead? Certainly that is a sovereignty, just as that is a Godhead that is wholly reversed in a uniquely modern apocalypticism. But if such a reversal is a rebirth of the apocalyptic Jesus, and a rebirth of his unique apocalyptic enactment that culminates in crucifixion, could that be the rebirth of a uniquely apocalyptic crucifixion, and a uniquely apocalyptic crucifixion that is finally a uniquely apocalyptic resurrection?

There may well be a far deeper continuity and even unity than we can imagine between an original Christian apocalypticism and a uniquely modern apocalypticism. Each

is grounded in an ultimate and apocalyptic ending, just as each calls forth an absolutely new life and joy. And that apocalyptic joy or "resurrection" is inseparable from a final or apocalyptic ending or death, a death which is the death of God in modern apocalypticism, and a death that Blake could already know as an apocalyptic "Self Annihilation of God," a death embodying an absolute forgiveness of sin that is nothing less than a new creation, and a new creation which is an absolute love or compassion. Surely Paul knew such a compassion, and knew it as the consequence of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. And for Paul, as for the Fourth Gospel, crucifixion and resurrection are one event, just as they are for both Nietzsche and Blake, both of whom could know the death of God as the final advent of apocalypse itself. The death of God in modern apocalypticism is finally an absolutely redemptive event, just as the death of Christ is throughout the New Testament. But it is a death of cosmos or world in Christian apocalypticism, just as that death is the advent of an absolute chaos in modern apocalypticism, a chaos that is a uniquely modern nothingness or void. But both New Testament apocalypticism and modern apocalypticism can know that chaos as the consequence of an apocalyptic transfiguration. Each can know an apocalyptic ending as an apocalyptic transfiguration, and therefore finally know absolute death as absolute life. Now if that death is an apocalyptic death, and a totally apocalyptic death, it cannot be dissociated from the apocalyptic Jesus, a Jesus who was the first purely apocalyptic prophet, the one who first enacted a total apocalyptic ending—but an apocalyptic ending that is absolute beginning, a beginning that has been renewed again and again by those who embody him, or those who embody his acts and words.