

CHAPTER 1



The Name of God

Is it possible that there is an actual name of God for us, a name that we can speak or evoke, and speak so as to name the nameless, or to evoke what we have been given as the most ultimate of mysteries? While there are innumerable names of God in our languages, mythologies, and traditions, we now know that there is no possibility whatsoever of reconciling these into a common name of God, or a universal image of God, or a universal concept of God. Hence every truly universal or natural theology has long since disappeared from our world, a disappearance which is also a disappearance of a common understanding or a common meaning of God. In our century there has not been a major philosopher who could think clearly or decisively about God, and at no other point is there a greater gulf between contemporary philosophy and all previous philosophy. There is no truly major work of twentieth-century art or literature which can openly envision God, or which can fully call forth a God who is not a truly distant, or empty, or alien God. To actually or fully to speak of God in our world is to evoke a wholly mysterious, or vacuous, or annihilating presence. And what is most manifestly missing in our world is an actual pronunciation of the name of God in a genuine moment of affirmation, or in a full moment of life and energy and body, or in a moment when we are truly awake.

Now it is true that a genuinely mystical naming of God has inevitably been a naming of mystery, and the deeper the mystical naming the deeper the evocation of nothingness, dark night, and abyss, so that a mystical naming of God is finally a calling forth of unknowing, and the deepest possible unknowing, or the deepest possible silence. While such silence truly can be known as grace, nothing is more rare in our world than such a silence, so that if the silence of God is indeed the grace of God, it would appear to be more absent from our world than from any other world, and absent if only because a pure silence has virtually disappeared from our world. If only at this point our

world truly is a Godless world, and perhaps most openly Godless in our very pronunciations of the name of God, pronunciations which are mispronunciations, and mispronunciations above all when firmly spoken as the name of God, or uttered as the name of God and the name of God alone. This is just what is impossible in the purest imaginative and conceptual languages of our century, for if the name of God and the name of God alone is now truly unspeakable, our pronunciations of the name of God will inevitably be mispronunciations, and mispronunciations precisely to the extent that they can be heard.

Yet it is overwhelmingly difficult for us to refuse to pronounce or to evoke the name of God, or to renounce a ground which is an ultimate ground. Even when groundlessness is truly comprehensive, as it is in the nihilism which has so dominated our century, an ultimate ground is evoked in calling forth an ultimate nothingness, and therein the name of God is inevitably called forth. For it is called forth in the very evocation of an ultimate or absolute nothingness, and thereby such nothingness becomes the name of names, and if only thereby the name of God. Is it simply not possible for us to escape or to transcend a necessity for the naming or the evocation of the name of names, not possible to erase or to dissolve our naming of God? For this occurs even in our deepest and purest atheism, an atheism surely impossible for anyone who is actually liberated from God. Our philosophers have inevitably, even if indirectly, evoked God when all conceptions of God are seemingly impossible, and our poets have inevitably called forth God even when envisioning an ultimate chaos or an ultimate nothingness, and our common language even in its most prosaic expressions has never been a truly Godless language (unless this is true in a new electronic language, or a truly new anonymous language, a language in which anonymity is all in all).

Now it could be said that our deepest twentieth-century images of God are images of the anonymity of God, the total anonymity of God. Here a new humanity is truly an image of the anonymous God, a nameless humanity even as an anonymous God is nameless, but a namelessness truly evoked in a uniquely twentieth-century imagery. So it is that our purer naming has named namelessness itself, thereby it has named the anonymous or the nameless God. This is manifestly not a mystical naming of God, for this naming precludes every possible mystical communion, or every possible truly mystical transfiguration. But it does not preclude something very like a mystical union, a union with the depths of abyss or of nothingness itself. While such a union is surely not a mystical union, it echoes the highest expressions of our mysticism in its call for a total transfiguration, and a transfiguration possible only by way of a full union with the depths of anonymity itself. Such a union is manifest for all to see in the greatest landscape paintings of Monet and Cézanne, and even in the late landscapes of Van Gogh, wherein the very

incarnation of chaos in the dazzling space before us poses an inescapable call for union with that chaos, a union wherein an exterior and an interior chaos are inseparable and indistinguishable, just as the interior and the exterior wholly pass into each other in all of the greatest expressions of truly modern painting. We greet such painting with joy. An ultimate call to full liberation is clearly present, and its very presence calls for a transfiguration of our interiors that dissolves every possible or every manifest "I," as a new seer is truly born, but a wholly anonymous seer, a seer transcending every possible center. A fully comparable transformation is present in our uniquely modern literature, as a uniquely modern center or subject is ever more decisively negated and reversed, but this negation is a fully transfiguring negation, even if it calls forth a centerless or anonymous subject. This is that new or anonymous subject that can only know an anonymous God, but in truly knowing and realizing anonymity, it realizes a truly anonymous God, and therefore a totally nameless God. This naming of namelessness is nevertheless a genuine naming, a naming of an ultimate and final anonymity, and thus a naming of the anonymous God.

Thereby the name of God itself becomes anonymous, even as it is in our deepest mystical naming. Just as each naming is a naming of abyss or of a dark night, each naming calls for an ultimate transfiguration, a transfiguration which is the deepest possible union, and the deepest possible union with the depths of abyss. This is a condition necessitating our mispronunciation of the name of God. Even as an actual name of God is absent in our deepest modern thinking about God, just as it is unseeable in our purest modern imagery of God, such namelessness is nonetheless the name of God for us, and one calling forth an ultimacy every bit as great as did our previous naming of God. So, too, this is a condition which has brought to an end everything that we once knew as metaphysics and theology. This is not the consequence of modern secularism or modern positivism, but rather the consequence of our deepest modern naming of God, a naming of an absolute anonymity or an absolute nothingness, and therefore the unnamings of everything that we once named as God.

What could an absolute anonymity possibly mean, and above all an absolute anonymity of God? How does it differ from a mystical apprehension of a divine nothingness, or from a simply literal anonymity? First, it is to be noted that the absolute anonymity which our world has come to know is a consequence of a long historical evolution, one beginning with the epiphany of Yah or Yahweh to wandering nomads in the ancient Near East, only gradually evolving to a full and genuine monotheism. That monotheism expressed itself in diverse and conflicting traditions, a diversity releasing profound conflicts between these traditions, a radical discord continually calling forth the most powerful religious orthodoxy in the world, but no less so continually

generating our most powerful religious heresies. Only in our own time are we coming to understand the integral and essential relation of heresy and orthodoxy in this radical polarity, one which is surely a decisive source of the immense power of this monotheistic tradition, and one which has been most overwhelming at those very points or moments when this tradition has realized its greatest power.

Radical breakdowns and transformations are also characteristic of this tradition, such as occurred in the first exile of Israel, or even in the exodus itself, for exodus and exile have been primal expressions of this tradition throughout its history. So, too, this tradition has generated deep orthodoxies and deep heresies which are truly paralleled by no other religious tradition. This is most manifestly true in Christianity, which is the only major tradition that begins with a profound internal opposition, one which we now know to be present in the earliest expressions of Christianity, and one which is dormant only in the weakest or least creative expressions of Christianity. Already in primitive Christianity there were deeply discordant forces, which generated the very advent of the Great Church or the Catholic Church, whose orthodoxy was born in response to what it could know as demonic heresies. While this orthodoxy only evolved gradually, it is fully paralleled in the evolution of Christian heresy, thus making possible the greatest conflict in ancient Christianity: an ultimate war between Christian Gnosticism and the Great Church.

Indeed, that conflict can be understood as an archetypal model of the opposition between heresy and orthodoxy, one illuminating the very identity of orthodoxy and heresy, for each only fully became itself by way of its opposition to the other, and each is inseparable from the other, and inseparable if only because each is finally meaningless apart from the other. In this perspective, heresy and orthodoxy are essential to each other, and if Gnosticism was overwhelmingly powerful in the ancient Christian world, a uniquely modern heresy is comprehensively powerful in our world, a heresy which can be understood as a genuine heterodoxy, and most clearly so in its very inversion or reversal of the orthodox Christian God. Nowhere is this so clear as it is in our deepest modern philosophical "atheists": Spinoza, Hegel, and Nietzsche, each of whom truly reversed the absolute transcendence of God. This reversal is impossible apart from a reversal of theological orthodoxy itself, yet it is a reversal of a uniquely Christian orthodoxy, a reversal of a transcendence of God known in Christianity and in Christianity alone. Only in Christianity is there a consciousness of the pure and total transcendence of God. This consciousness only gradually evolved, above all in Western as opposed to Eastern Christianity, as can be seen in the evolution of the consciousness of God from Augustine through Occamism and beyond. This culminates in a consciousness of the absolute transcendence of God which is pure transcendence and transcendence alone. Yet this is the very transcen-

dence that is open to being absolutely transformed into its very opposite, a transformation occurring not only in our deeper philosophical atheism, but far more luminously in the ultimate imaginative enactments of late modernity, one already beginning in Blake, and continuing even into our own time, imaginative enactments realizing an absolute abyss, and an absolute abyss which is apocalypse itself, even if a wholly negative apocalypse.

But this is that pure transcendence which is reversed in a uniquely modern atheism, an atheism impossible apart from this very transcendence, and hence an atheism essentially related to that transcendence, so that our atheism is a true heterodoxy, and as such inseparable from Christian orthodoxy. A full and actual atheism can only be found in the modern Western world. It is not realized here until the late sixteenth century, but then it ever more gradually becomes a comprehensive atheism, as fully manifest in the historical ending of Christendom. That ending impacted upon the world as a whole, initiating a new and comprehensive secularism, yet that secularism can be and has been understood as being in essential continuity with the Christendom that generated it, and just as it is only Christianity among the world religions which has released a true or full secularization, it is only Christianity which has embodied both interiorly and historically a deep and ultimate dichotomy. This is not only a dichotomy between “flesh” and Spirit, or between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, but also a dichotomy between sin and grace, wherein grace is realized as penetrating into the deepest depths of sin. Only thereby is it a uniquely Christian grace. Consequently, it is Christianity and Christianity alone which knows grace itself as a dichotomous grace, and dichotomous precisely by way of its integral and essential relation to its very opposite. If here a genuine *coincidentia oppositorum* occurs, this is one releasing the deepest power of each opposite, and only thereby can what Christianity knows as apocalypse occur.

In this perspective, it is inevitable that Christianity should have generated that secularism that is seemingly its very opposite, and if Christianity has historically transformed itself more than any other religious tradition, its own deep dichotomy can be understood as a primal ground of this transformation, a primal ground most decisively present in the uniquely Christian vision of God. Theologians have commonly affirmed the uniqueness of the Christian God, again and again affirming that this uniqueness lies in the absolute Yes of the Christian God. Yet that Yes in a deeper Christian consciousness and thinking is inseparable from the absolute No of God, hence the unique dichotomy of the Christian God, and one fully realized in the fullest historical expressions of Christianity. So it is that Christendom is the most dichotomous world in history, and the Christian consciousness the most dichotomous expression of consciousness itself, one realized in that subject which is a purely self-divided, or self-alienated, or dichotomous, subject, and precisely thereby

inseparable from its ground in the uniquely Christian God. While Buddhism can know selfhood itself as a pure nothingness, neither Buddhism nor any other non-Christian world can know selfhood as a dichotomous selfhood, or a center of consciousness which is a truly dichotomous center, for as Nietzsche knew so deeply this is a center that is a uniquely Christian center, even if Nietzsche could also know it as a universal center in its purely repressive power.

Thus Nietzsche could know the death of God as the ultimate source of an absolute Yes-saying or a total joy, a death realizing an absolutely new consciousness, for he could know an old consciousness, or all historical expressions of consciousness, as inseparable from a pure *ressentiment*, a *ressentiment* which is No-saying itself, and a No-saying which has only truly been named in the Christian naming of God. Nietzsche is deeply Augustinian in so comprehensively knowing the universality of a total guilt or a total alienation—indeed, at this point, more Augustinian than Augustine himself, for that alienation and guilt is only fully manifest with the death of God, a death hurling us into a universal abyss of nothingness. But it is precisely the transfiguration of that abyss which is the sole source of an absolute and total Yes. Perhaps in Nietzsche more than in any other thinker we can see the integral and essential relationship between an absolute Yes-saying and an absolute No-saying, and if only thereby Nietzsche is a full and genuine theologian, but a uniquely Christian theologian, and if no other thinker has more fully made manifest the universality of a total impotence and guilt, no other thinker has pronounced and enacted such an absolute Yes and Amen. So it is that Nietzsche can justly be known as a Pauline thinker, but a reverse or inverted Pauline thinker, as the Christian consciousness is now not simply torn asunder, but truly and purely reversed. Although Nietzsche could finally know his own time as the advent of a “second Buddhism,” it is so only as a pure nihilism, a nihilism which is the consequence of the death of God. Just as he could unveil the advent of Christianity in *The Antichrist* as the advent of nihilism, he could know the death of God as the historical fulfillment of that very nihilism, for this is that one expression of total No-saying which can be and is being transfigured into its very opposite. Now if Nietzsche is our purest heretic, or our most heterodox thinker, his very heresy is a genuine heterodoxy, inseparable from that orthodoxy which it reverses, just as it is inseparable from a Western and Christian world, or that world realizing itself in the most dichotomous consciousness in history. Has that world now truly ended, ended in its deepest ground, or is it now totally present as it never was before, even if invisibly so, and totally present in an abyss which is now seemingly invisible as such, but precisely thereby most integrally actual to us? Is it simply accidental that it is our time which has most fully known Nietzsche as a prophet for us, our time which is most comprehensively open

to our darkest seers, and our time in which joy itself is most fully manifest as a mirage? Is it only in our time that the very word "God," or its counterparts, is either wholly silent or wholly mispronounced, and is this a decisive sign or emblem of our world, one bearing our unique signature, and thereby unveiling, if only at this point, our very anonymity?

Yes, our most actual consciousness is an anonymous consciousness, but that very anonymity veils an ultimately dichotomous center, one manifestly called forth when our anonymity is dislodged, and one inescapable in either our speech or our action, so that ours is certainly not an innocent anonymity, even if it can induce a new and comprehensive passivity. That very passivity is another decisive sign of our unique condition, one not only manifest in our new and vacuous imaginative or fantasy worlds, but equally manifest in a new passivity of thinking itself, a passivity clearly embodying our new world, thereby foreclosing the possibility of genuinely challenging that world. For the first time in our history, no ultimate challenge now confronts us, or none which can engage our world. If such a challenge is occurring, this could be only in a subterranean mode, one invisible and inaudible, or virtually so, for it is in fantasy alone that deep challenge is now openly manifest, a fantasy inevitably sanctioning that which it seemingly challenges. Has there ever been a time when fantasy is so comprehensive as it is in our new world, or ever a time in which there was such an overwhelming gulf between the "real" and the imaginative? This gulf forecloses the possibility of that which we once knew as the imagination, just as it has ushered in a totality of reification which not even a Marx or a Kierkegaard could foresee.

That very reification is anonymous precisely as a new reification, for it is vastly distant from everything which we once knew as "matter" or "thing." "Matter" is now just as distant from us as is "spirit," and if this has ushered in a new Gnosticism, that very Gnosticism is inseparable from our new materialism; if this is a rebirth of an ancient or Hellenistic dualism, it wholly transcends that dualism by ending any possible relation between "matter" and "spirit." It could be said that a genuine or purely dualistic thinking is impossible in the West. It is certainly absent in any genuinely Western thinker. Yet dualism has dominated our Western tradition or traditions as it has no other tradition, as fully manifest in Christianity itself, and at no other point has Christianity more openly been at war with itself. Has all such dualism now truly ended, or is it even more powerful in a subterranean form? A dualism so pure that neither opposite is manifest as a real or actual opposite, as every echo of its own other here vanishes, but vanishes in such a way as to irrevocably seal this very opposition.

Perhaps a truly new, even if invisible, dualism offers us a way into what we have come to know as the anonymous God, a God so anonymous as to be unknowable or inactual to us as a true or pure otherness or transcendence,

yet precisely thereby inactual to us as a divine or ultimate immanence, and if Christianity and the West have known a deeper polarity between immanence and transcendence than any other tradition, that very polarity has seemingly disappeared for us, and disappeared in a new and comprehensive anonymity. Yet that very anonymity could veil an ultimate dualism, an ultimate opposition or dichotomy between immanence and transcendence, one so ultimate that it is invisible and silent to us, and invisible and unknowable just because neither transcendence nor immanence as such is truly manifest or actual to us. Now what our history has known as immanence, or as an ultimate or absolute immanence, is the immanence of a pure or absolute transcendence, so that when that transcendence is invisible and unhearable, so, too, is such an immanence, an immanence inseparable from its own transcendence, or from its own ground in an absolute transcendence. Even Nietzsche could only know an absolute immanence as a total transfiguration of an absolute transcendence, and even that late modern poetry and painting embodying the purest immanence is unhearable and unseeable apart from the echo or horizon of absolute transcendence, so that when that horizon or echo is stilled, a pure and total immanence likewise disappears and becomes silent.

A new silence is no doubt a decisive key to our world, and if what we once knew as both transcendence and immanence is now silent, this need not mark only an ultimate absence or void. It could well be the site of a truly new distance or chasm between immanence and transcendence, one so overwhelming as to dissolve or obliterate any possible relation between them, and therewith to dissolve any manifest presence or sign of either transcendence or immanence. Such a condition, and such an ultimate condition, could be understood as a truly new dualism, but a dualism so radical and so total that neither pole is now hearable or in sight, for when the chasm between these polarities is uncrossable, then so, too, becomes unspeakable and invisible the horizons of their respective poles. A genuine parallel to such a condition is present in ancient Gnosticism, when the name and the image of "God" becomes unhearable and unseeable as Godhead itself, and the name and the image of body and world passes into an abyss of chaos or nothingness. In the ancient world, only Gnosticism could purely know such an absolute abyss as the very center of both God and the world, or the Creator and body itself, an abyss alone making possible a passage into Godhead itself, or into a primordial pleroma that is absolutely distant from every other horizon. Here, true immanence can only be identical with absolute transcendence, and if no real difference is possible between them, no openness is possible to any other horizon, and therefore world itself becomes invisible and unhearable.

Innumerable critics know our world, or our uniquely new world, as a rebirth of Gnosticism. Yet it is a reverse or inverted Gnosticism, one knowing immanence and immanence alone, and therefore a new immanence, a new

immanence that is every bit as vacuous and unnamable as an ancient Gnostic transcendence, and one that is equally distant from any possible body or world. Therein it is profoundly different from that immanence celebrated and embodied in modern poetry and painting, for if that immanence is a truly incarnate immanence, the new immanence open to us is a truly disembodied one; or, insofar as it is embodied, it could only be so in a new vacuity or a new emptiness, one which is untouchable and unseeable, and only actually embodied as vacuity itself. Certainly that vacuity resonates with an ancient Gnostic vacuity, but it nevertheless deeply differs from it, and does so as a nameless vacuity, one invisible and unheard, or unheard and invisible as an actual vacuity, for its very namelessness is a true anonymity foreclosing all possibility of attention to itself. Gnostic naming is truly unique in the world in terms of the very violence of its naming. Only Gnosticism can know body itself as a truly bottomless abyss, or can know the Creator not simply as an absolutely alien abyss, but as a purely negative abyss, with no possible origin except a purely negative origin, and therefore no possibility whatsoever of transfiguration. Now this is just what our abyss or vacuity is not, and cannot be if it is a truly nameless or anonymous vacuity, and thus a vacuity with no possible origin, or no origin upon our horizon. And if ultimate origin has vanished for us, we know a truly new silence, and so far from being a pure or primordial silence, that silence is a truly actual silence, and an actual silence precluding the very possibility of a primordial silence.

Gnosticism can know an absolute gulf between a primordial plenum and the very actuality of the world. No such gulf is possible for us, we can hear no genuine echoes of a primordial silence, and cannot if only because we can hear an actual silence, and even if that actual silence is an actual anonymity, and an anonymity which is all in all, that very anonymity speaks or is actual as itself, thereby foreclosing the possibility of a hearing which is truly the hearing of a primordial ground, or the hearing of a primordial ground which is not fully empty and vacuous. So it is that our vacuity is not truly a Gnostic vacuity. Indeed, it is its very opposite, and its opposite if only because it is so finally closed to every opposite which is the opposite of itself, or every opposite which is an actual opposite. Gnosticism is the purest dualism that has ever appeared upon a Western horizon, and its very distance from us unveils the impossibility of such a dualism for us. Yet it does not preclude the possibility that ours is a truly new dualism, a silent and invisible one, if only because opposites as such are invisible to us, an invisibility which could mask their very presence in a new vacuity so vacuous and anonymous as to be without any trace of opposition itself. Could that disappearance of manifest or actual opposites be a decisive sign of the advent of a new God?

Late modernity can be understood as a longing for a new God. Just as a Gnostic Godhead was a truly new Godhead in its world, such an advent

could be possible for us, but it could occur only in a night just as deep if not deeper than a Gnostic darkness, and precisely because we have so irrevocably lost everything that we once knew as light. Nothing is more artificial and unreal in Gnosticism than its renewal of ancient mythological languages and imagery, and nothing could be more unreal in a new Godhead than its epiphany by way of any manifest symbolic languages or imagery. This is just what is impossible in any truly new epiphany, an impossibility which is fully manifest today. So it is that truly new epiphanies of the Godhead are inseparable from full and total negations or dissolutions of every previous divine or ultimate epiphany, negations which are fully actual both in the prophetic revolution of Israel and in Buddhism itself, and if this is a negation which truly occurred in that axial revolution which ended the primordial world, another axial revolution could be at hand today, but only insofar as it effects such a dissolution or negation. Here, we can understand the necessity of a new polar or dualistic ground, one not only establishing a chasm between old aeon and new aeon, but one realizing a dichotomous chasm in Godhead itself, a chasm between its primordial and its apocalyptic poles, and a chasm which is crossed in an absolutely new epiphany of the Godhead, an epiphany inevitably ending that chasm itself. Only that crossing could truly end this polar ground, and if that is a crossing which we can only await, until its advent for us we must inevitably know a deeply dichotomous ground, and know it even if it is invisible and unhearable to us.

Apocalyptic faith is a participation even now in an ultimate ending and an ultimate beginning, and hence a participation in a *coincidentia oppositorum*. Here omega is truly omega only insofar as it effects an absolute ending, and alpha is truly alpha only insofar as it embodies that ending. Thus absolute beginning *is* absolute ending, just as absolute ending *is* absolute beginning, as so luminously called forth both by Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and by Hegel's *Science of Logic*. If this pure coincidence could occur between our most ultimately discordant writing, that very coincidence is a primal witness to the continuity between ancient and modern apocalypticism, or between an original Christianity and its deepest inversions or reversals. So, too, there is an ultimate opposition both in the *Science of Logic* and in *Finnegans Wake*, and an opposition between true and truly absolute polarities, but an opposition which is finally realized in a transfiguration of these polarities, even if this is invisible and unheard apart from the horizon of this transfiguration. Indeed, this very transfiguration occurs only in a world that embodies an ultimate opposition, a world which can be known as a truly apocalyptic world, and apocalyptic precisely by way of this opposition. Both Blake and Hegel could know such an opposition as the very center of Godhead itself, but one which is revealed or is manifest only with the advent of a final apocalypse. Hence it is unknown not only in the pre-Christian world, but in Christendom itself, and is only released with the ending of Christendom.

So it is that there is a true coincidence between absolute beginning and absolute ending, or a true coincidence between apocalyptic beginning and apocalyptic ending, and just as an eternal movement of eternal return is a dissolution of every possible ending, a full and final apocalyptic movement is an ending of every possible beginning except an apocalyptic beginning. That is a beginning which dawns not only in ancient apocalypticism, but in modern apocalypticism, too, a dawning which is the dawning of a final ending, and a final ending only manifest in the most ultimate darkness. Hence apocalypticism and Gnosticism are truly parallel to each other at this crucial point, and even as a profound conflict between these polarities occurred in early Christianity, a fully comparable conflict is occurring in our world, but only insofar as a final darkness is manifest and real. That is a darkness foreclosing the possibility of an actual remembrance, recall, or renewal. Here the renewal of former epiphanies of God can only finally be empty and unreal, hence they only occur in retreats from this darkness, retreats annulling or reversing that ultimately new epiphany which is here at hand, as witness the dissolution or reversal of apocalypticism in ancient Christianity, a reversal effecting the most radical transformation of a new world which has ever historically occurred. Unless such a reversal has occurred of a uniquely modern apocalypticism, and if this has ushered in a truly new passivity, that passivity is nowhere more fully manifest than in our contemporary pronouncements of the name of God.

Yet if there is no possibility for us of an historical recall or renewal, the possibility is therein established of a truly new repetition, a repetition of that which lies truly beyond our history and consciousness, and above all beyond everything which we can know as consciousness and history today. Hence anonymity, and a total anonymity, could be an essential ground of such a repetition, an anonymity releasing us from all that we have been given as history and consciousness, and only thereby is the possibility realized of an ultimately new repetition. Nonetheless that repetition would truly be repetition, but now repetition in the Kierkegaardian sense of a truly forward movement. This is opposed to the backward movement of recollection, and it is only when a backward moving recollection is truly and finally foreclosed that such a repetition becomes possible. Thus if we cannot truly or actually remember or recollect God, this could make possible a genuine repetition of God, but only a repetition that is the opposite of every possible recollection, or the opposite of every recollection of an historical epiphany of God, and of every recollection of primordial Godhead itself. Now if this is just the recollection that has perished with the modern realization of the death of God, that death could be a repetition of the Godhead, and one itself effecting the dissolution of all recollection of God, a dissolution apart from which no absolute repetition would be possible.

A purely apophatic mysticism can know such a dissolution, but so, too, does full apocalypticism know that dissolution, and if apocalypticism is a forward moving repetition rather than a backward moving recollection, it is not only a reversal of the primordial movement of eternal return, but a reversal of every historical epiphany of God, or a reversal of every historical epiphany which can be recollected or renewed. A truly apocalyptic crisis inevitably effects such a reversal, and if Christianity dawns with apocalyptic crisis, Christendom ends with a rebirth of apocalyptic crisis, and a rebirth ending every genuine recollection of God. Yet that ending does not preclude the repetition of God or the Godhead. It far rather makes it possible, or makes it possible as an absolute repetition, and just as this occurs in the very beginning of Christianity, it could be occurring today, and occurring in the very invisibility of this repetition, or its invisibility apart from the center of this repetition itself. Apophatic mysticism can be known as a profoundly backward movement, a backward movement to primordial Godhead, but apocalypticism is inevitably a profoundly forward movement, and one possible only by way of a liberation from primordial Godhead, or a liberation from every undifferentiated primordial Godhead, or every primordial Godhead freed of a potentiality for its own ultimate transfiguration.

At no point is Christianity more unique than in its dissolution of an undifferentiated primordial Godhead. Even if such a Godhead was not manifest in the West until the advent of Christianity, as most purely apprehended by Plotinus, this is the Godhead that has continually posed the gravest and most ultimate temptation to Christianity, a temptation fully realized in Gnosticism, which is perhaps the purest of all challenges to Christianity. While that challenge has certainly been reborn in our world, it may well be most powerful when most fully disguised, as it can be disguised in a refusal to evoke or pronounce the name of God, and above all when this refusal occurs independently of a purely iconoclastic ground. But is this an actual possibility in our world? For even if our world has more comprehensively known the anonymity of God than any other world, such an anonymity is surely not an evocation of or a witness to an undifferentiated Godhead, and cannot be if only because the namelessness of anonymity is itself a form of naming, and is so in its very naming of namelessness. Hence it is a response to a void or an abyss, one impossible in an undifferentiated Godhead, a Godhead transcending all possibility of an actual naming, including the naming of namelessness itself. The very image of anonymity, or of a full anonymity, is a response to an actual emptiness, a response to an emptying that has actually occurred, therefore it could not possibly be a response to an undifferentiated Godhead, or to a primordial totality of any kind.

Now just as the symbol of an absolute Nothing is the deepest symbol of full or late modernity, and one which does not enter either conceptual think-

ing or the imagination until the advent of that modernity, this certainly cannot be understood as a symbol of a primordial and undifferentiated Godhead, and cannot be if only because it so forcefully calls forth the full actuality of absolute nothingness itself. Nor can this absolute nothingness be confused with a mystical absolute nothingness, just as it cannot be confused with a simple or literal nothingness, it rather can be understood as being truly unique to our world, or unique in its very epiphany or manifestation. All too significantly no such nothingness is actually known in any Western theological tradition, and while it has at least indirectly entered a uniquely modern Christian theology, it has never done so fully or decisively, and this despite its deep impact upon both Kierkegaard and Heidegger, to say nothing of Hegel, Schelling, and Nietzsche. So, too, an absolute nothingness has been deeply and comprehensively envisioned by Blake, Goethe, Dostoyevsky, and Mallarmé, just as it has purely and even totally been called forth by Joyce, Kafka, Stevens, and Beckett. Yet it has not yet been theologically understood, and not yet fully confronted theologically, and this despite the fact that those thinkers and visionaries who most fully engaged an absolute nothingness thereby clearly established truly new theological horizons.

We can also understand that nothing has more fully dislodged our apprehension or naming of God than has the epiphany of an absolute nothingness. Here lies another historical analogy with ancient Gnosticism, for Gnosticism could finally know the absolute nothingness of both the world and the Creator. But ours is a nothingness that is the very opposite of what Gnosticism knows as the Godhead, a Godhead and primordial Godhead which is the Pleroma or the All. So Gnosticism is vastly removed from what full modernity knows as the absolute Nothing. Neoplatonism and scholasticism can know evil as a pure nothingness or a privation of Being, and thus cannot know the actuality of evil, nor can they know absolute nothingness itself, a nothingness which does not enter Western thinking or the Western consciousness itself until the advent of full modernity. This was surely a revolutionary event, and it is inseparable from an eschatological or apocalyptic crisis of the West, a crisis truly known by every thinking and every vision which has been open to an absolute nothingness, and now a crisis fully embodied in a postmodern world. Hence nihilism is inseparable from that world, a full nihilism impossible apart from an embodiment of absolute nothingness, and a comprehensive nihilism unknown in every previous world.

So it is that the very name of God is more precarious in this world than in any other world, but is it possible that to know the anonymous God is to know the name of God for us, and is such anonymity inevitably a mask of absolute nothingness itself? Then we could understand that nothing is more forbidden to us than an actual or full pronunciation of the name of God, just as we could then understand that nothing could be more fully liberating for

us than a final release from every possibility of evoking God. Yet it is also possible that there is no hope for such liberation apart from a passage through absolute nothingness itself. Then the naming of God would be essential for us, and if the name of God for us could only be a name of absolute nothingness, that name could finally be liberating for us, even if it now inevitably calls forth a truly abysmal voyage. If such a voyage is now inevitable for us, even if fully disguised by the deep anonymity of our world, and even if seemingly impossible because of that comprehensive passivity now engulfing us, it is nevertheless evoked by the name of God, and by that very name of God which we have now been given.