

Historical Introduction

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From the beginning, and throughout its course, Thomas J. J. Altizer's theological stance set him apart from the other figures associated with the so-called death of God movement, which achieved its peak from 1965 through 1967, then subsided in the late sixties and early seventies. In truth, it was not organically a movement at all, but was generated as such by the media treatment. William Hamilton and Paul van Buren were the fellow travelers most often cited, while mention was made here and there of Richard Rubenstein, Gabriel Vahanian, Harvey Cox, and Langdon Gilkey.¹ In the media coverage, which often failed to make finer distinctions among their disparate positions, a number of outlooks were corralled together that did not have much in common. Some were using the phrase as a cipher for the secularization of society (Cox, Vahanian), others were concerned to examine the vacuity and impossibility of God language (van Buren) or the impossibility of believing in God in the wake of the Holocaust (Rubenstein), while others wanted to develop Bonhoeffer's notion of a "religionless Christianity" focused on ethics and Jesus as the man for others, pulling the mind of the age away from the God question as moot metaphysics (Hamilton).

Only Altizer among them was intent to focus on God and nothing but God. His concern lay not primarily with human existential need or the condition of society, but with *what God has done in history*. Beginning with his earliest writings, Altizer's position was theocentric and metaphysical. Far from intending, along with the secularists, to resolve all divine values

into a human ground, Altizer sought as a pure theologian to resolve all human values into a divine ground. In a sense, this gets to the heart of Altizer's project: unthinking the "God" of Christian history as a way of releasing Godhead qua actual reality from the "dead body of God" remaining to a collapsed Christendom. And this "releasement" of Godhead qua actual reality from Christendom's God would constitute, as Altizer understands it, a renewal of Christianity in its original form.

For as Altizer analyzes the early history of Christianity, the Christian church radically reversed the prophetic ground of original Christianity, giving it a wholly new identity, one radically discontinuous with its earliest manifestation. Christianity was born as an apocalyptic movement grounded in the prophetic and apocalyptic traditions of ancient Judaism; its leading figure envisioned an imminent transformation of the world by God, a transformation that would draw forth the full power of Satan in the process of realizing the Kingdom of God. The early church rapidly reversed this original manifestation of Christianity, essentially converting a radical prophetic faith into a neopagan mystery religion, a priestly religion focused on otherworldly salvation and sacerdotal participation, rather than on this-worldly apocalyptic transformation. In its most primitive form, original Christianity conceived salvation in an entirely different sense than did the mystery religion generated by the church, for this is a salvation event wholly committed to enacting the divine kingdom *here*, transforming this actual world, rather than one anticipating the transport of the "soul" into a "spiritual body" in a heavenly realm. For prophetic faith, salvation or salvific wholeness is achieved partly by present participation, which is actual, and partly by pure faith, which is eschatological and future-oriented. But both elements of faith—present participation and future expectation—are forward movements toward the divine transformation of history and world. Rather than transporting elements of earthly existence (the "soul") toward the divine (in "heaven"), this is a vision of the divine breaking in and enacting itself on earth, effecting an apocalyptic transformation of the earthly realm itself into a kingdom of God.

As European Christendom has collapsed in the modern period, so has the transcendent and otherworldly God of that collapsed Christendom 'died'—that is, become no longer real as a center of value and generative source of life and light. Precisely by virtue of this collapse, Altizer posits, the post-Christian reality of God, qua *actual* and *present* reality, is being released from the "heaven" generated by the Christian mystery religion to become all in all in the world through an eschatological process of *kenosis*.

The death of God is “good news” because God is no longer regarded from the point of view of a sacerdotal faith as the transcendent Other, alienated from the world, an object of religious worship, a Father and Judge infinitely distant from the world, but through the kenotic realization of death is experienced now by a prophetic faith as increasingly incarnate in our very midst as the “flesh,” or active embodiment, or actual eventfulness of the world. Altizer is not a simple atheist, then, but a post-theist—one for whom the metaphysical reality of God (theism) is dialectically and historically indispensable—for it is truly *God* who is overcome and transfigured by death, which is to say, by absolute self-sacrifice.

In his historic debate with Rev. Dr. John Warwick Montgomery in Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago on the evening of February 24, 1967, speaking *ex tempore* to an audience of thousands (the chapel was so crowded to overflowing that loudspeakers were arranged for the throngs on the lawn), Altizer affirmed:

‘God is dead’ are words recording a confession of faith. Let me be clear in emphasizing that as far as our intention is concerned, we intend to be speaking in faith. We do not intend to be speaking as unbelievers . . . I think that, if any attention at all is given to these words, it will be seen that they do not represent ordinary atheism. The ordinary atheist, of course, does not believe in God, does not believe that there is now or ever has been a God. But we are attempting to say that God Himself is God, and yet has died as God in Jesus Christ in order to embody himself redemptively in the world. In saying that God is dead we are attempting to say that the transcendent Ground, the ultimate final Ground of the world, life, and existence has died . . . to make possible final reconciliation of Himself with the world.²

To his credit, in confronting Altizer on this occasion, Montgomery, who was then professor of church history and history of Christian thought at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, recognized more clearly than did the general public of the period that he was debating not a “secularist” or “atheist,” but a passionately convinced *heretic*—someone laying claim to the title of “Christian” and advocating publicly a highly unorthodox reconception of the Christian faith. Montgomery therefore fought Altizer’s heterodoxy with all the power of orthodoxy he could muster, and perceptions of who “won” the debate depended entirely on which side you were on.

While Montgomery took Altizer seriously as an enemy of the faith, at least a handful of others were taking him seriously as a major religious thinker of our time. In 1970, as the death of God media blitz ebbed into yesterday's news, a book emerged entitled *The Theology of Altizer: Critique and Response*, edited by the prominent process theologian John B. Cobb Jr. of the School of Theology at Claremont, which acknowledged the abiding importance and influence of Altizer as a systematic theologian. The volume dubbed Altizer "the most original and creative American theologian of this period," whose writings offer "a coherent vision of great power." Of all American theological writing of the period, it went on to assert, "it is Altizer's that embodies the most vigorous and passionate faith," making him the "boldest evangelical theologian of our time." The volume also acknowledged Altizer as the "most influential" theologian of the day, although unfortunately that influence was almost solely a response to Altizer's negations, not to his affirmations, for his influence encouraged the emergence of "an ethical Christian humanism" that is far removed from his own theological project.³ This well-executed volume sought to address critically the significance of Altizer's affirmations, and as such it remains to this day an excellent and valuable resource for understanding the early phase of Altizer's career.

Another who took Altizer's affirmations seriously was Mircea Eliade, the distinguished historian of religions at the University of Chicago. In 1967, at the height of the media furor, the subject surfaced in Eliade's journal. Eliade comments on the death of God theme as it appears in Heidegger's work: "Have I noted these lines from Heidegger's *Holzwege* [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1950, p. 186] that Tom Altizer should meditate on? In any case I'm recopying them here: 'Hier stirbt das Absolute. Gott ist tot. Das sagt andere, nur nicht: es gibt keinen Gott.' (This is where the Absolute meets death. God is dead. And this means everything except 'There is no God.')"⁴ As noted by Eliade, Heidegger's reflection is crucial: "God is dead. And this means everything except [*andere, nur nicht*] 'there is no God.' If Heidegger is right in this claim, then the death of God does not mean the end of theological inquiry, but rather a new beginning in earnest, for there is still "everything" to be comprehended as a consequence of this absolute death. What is this "everything" (*andere*), positively analyzed? For Altizer this question was to become his vocation, and he went on to write a dozen theological books making his case for an answer: "God is dead" acknowledges a historical transformation of consciousness marking the

end of Christendom and Christendom's God, not the end of Godhead apprehended qua ultimate reality. The theologian's task is to speak of the ultimate reality now dawning in and through the death of God.

Eliade explores the subject more closely in a conversation with his colleague Claude-Henri Rocquet. In their exchange, Rocquet infers that atheism, just as much as theism, constitutes a part of the history of religions, and Eliade replies: "The theology of 'the death of God' is extremely important, because it is the sole religious creation of the modern Western world. What it presents us with is the final step in the process of desacralization. For the historian of religions its interest is considerable, since this ultimate phase shows the 'sacred' reaching a perfect state of camouflage or, more accurately, becoming wholly identified with the 'profane.'"⁵ Is the death of God theology truly the *sole* religious creation of the modern Western world? Is it the dark and restless heart of modern religious creativity? What does it mean to take what Eliade called "the final step in the process of desacralization"? Eliade goes on to point out that theologians of the death of God—and here he has Altizer primarily in mind—still hope, thanks to a dialectical *coincidentia oppositorum*, that this new awareness of the radically profane nature of the world and human existence can become the foundation for a new mode of religious experience; that the death of "religion" is not the death of faith, but its purification and revitalization. Some years later Altizer, responding to Eliade's work, construes this point explicitly: "What could be a greater camouflage for the incarnation than the death of God? Remembering that for Eliade the sacred hides itself in showing itself, we can only conclude that in the supreme theophany God is totally hidden, and totally hidden precisely in that theophany itself."⁶

It is significant that Altizer's own academic training was in the history of religions at the University of Chicago, where he later befriended Eliade, for his lifelong development as a theologian has shown the distinct impact of this formation. His outlook on Christianity—and on the death of God as a culminating event in the history of that religion—has always been fundamentally informed by a comparative perspective on religions, Eastern and Western; see *Oriental Mysticism and Biblical Eschatology* (1961) and *Mircea Eliade and the Dialectic of the Sacred* (1963). This comparative perspective emboldened him to explore Christianity's enormous cultural power and impact outside the bounds of traditional Christian institutions and teachings, which is to say, in disregard of the purview of the church. Taking a long and broad history-of-religions view of Christianity, Altizer grasped that no ecclesiastical theology would

ever be capable of recognizing the death of God as an event intrinsic to Christian history, whereas a radical theology taking its stand in the secular world—not constrained by the conservative and sectarian God traditions of the church—would be able to appropriate the death of God so widely attested in modern culture after 1789 (by Blake, Hegel, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Heidegger, Sartre, Joyce, Beckett, etc.) as the embodiment of a revolutionary new theological meaning and motive in Christian history, a meaning inescapably manifest in the most creative cultural developments of late modernity. It was his study of William Blake's prophetic vision, *The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake* (1967), that set Altizer decisively on this path. Judging by the gauge of cultural creativity, the "dead God" demonstrated as much power to inspire creative vision as "God alive," for negative experience of the sacred is nonetheless real and often overwhelming experience.

Assimilation of a highly creative secular theology was to become the heart of Altizer's systematic project. In the crisis of modern theology brought on by the critical dissolution of "God," Altizer discerned an either/or emerging, a decisive fork in the road that demanded radical decision: Either theology would make a forward movement into uncharted regions of heterodoxy, and in so doing embrace *becoming* as an act of God that transforms the Godhead itself, or theology would entrench itself in a conservative orthodox reaction, clinging to the God traditions of absolute transcendence, immutability, and impassibility, presumed secure on the basis of the two millennia (Kierkegaard's "1800 years"), thus preserving the transcendent God of Christendom. This fork in the road was articulated by Altizer as "A Wager" in the final chapter of *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (1966), which he hoped would communicate this either/or challenge to a popular audience.

What even now distinguishes Altizer's voice among late modern theologians is his appropriation of the death of God theme in modern culture to effect a radical renewal of systematic theology, producing a fully systematic theology entirely liberated from allegiance to God traditions of the church, and above all the church's essentially conservative claims to special authority in the knowledge of God. With the decisive fall of Christendom (occurring roughly from the early sixteenth century through the French Revolution, when the church was violently ejected from the political establishment), the question of who has the "authority" to speak of God becomes entirely open. Altizer's theological stance presses the Protestant Reformation to its radical conclusion and emancipates theology from the

domain and authority of the church once and for all. Technically, this is how Altizer defines the term “radical theology”; it is a theology whose “authority” stems from visionary witness alone, and not at all from validation by institutional authority or the established mandate of tradition. Radical theology is a totally free witness in living apprehension of the sacred, self-authorizing; it is a witness that unthinks every established theological ground in order to rethink the fundamental ground of theology anew.⁷ Not only does it unthink every established ground, but by its radical nature it resists being established as a ground. It speaks its affirmations with an intrinsic authority, and by its essence as free witness, this “authority” cannot be captured in transferable forms or sealed in dogmatic propositions. The apocalyptic Jesus provides a prime model of this radical witness, for when the spirit speaks in him it speaks with power, and its intrinsic “authority” can be heard (Mark 1:22, 27), but efforts to establish that authority transform it into something alien to its original form.

Altizer has always been serious about the implications of *death* in the phrase “the death of God,” and what this death does to transfigure the gospel or “good news” as a Word of life and light. His own criteria for recognizing the kenotic Word focus on the crucifixion to the virtual exclusion of resurrection. To know the death of God is to know crucifixion and the descent into hell. It is to encounter the consuming nothingness that is so acutely manifest in the full reality of our world—in its darkness and evil, its ungodly holocausts, its all too brutal and unaccountable forms of sacrifice. If theology does not have the power to illuminate and redeem *this* world’s evil, Altizer believes, it is not genuine theology but a form of escapism or wishful illusion, an evasion of reality.

This is above all so in the shadow of the Holocaust, where theology has no shelter from darkness. Altizer’s death of God theology has always been implicitly a Holocaust theology in its open-eyed witness to the inescapable reality of evil and horror in our world and the relationship of this evil to an ultimate divine responsibility. In a thirty-year retrospective article of 1996, Altizer reflects on the influence of human mass extermination on the genesis of the death of God theology: “History now first appears to the modern theologian as an arena of darkness and horror, and of ultimate and final horror and darkness. Although this may not be due to the Holocaust alone, it is the Holocaust alone that openly embodies such horror, and we may presume that the Holocaust was a generating cause of the death of God theologies, as it certainly was for this theologian.”⁸

Whereas earlier Christian theology could affirm a providential God, a God who acts providentially and even redemptively in history, the Holocaust blows the doctrine of providence out of the water. After the Holocaust, it is no longer possible to affirm providence, Altizer maintains, unless one affirms that God wills or effects ultimate evil; that is, unless evil itself is providential. "How can one accept the reality of the Holocaust and not accept the reality of an ultimate evil? And how can the Christian accept the reality of an ultimate evil and wholly divorce it from reality or God? . . . If the Christian knows that God is the ultimate origin of every event, then God is the ultimate origin of the Holocaust, even if we follow Augustine and orthodox Western theology and speak of God's 'permission of evil.'" The omnipotence and omniscience of God do not permit us to imagine that God is not ultimately responsible for the Holocaust, even if human evil is accepted as the proximate cause. For if the traditional attributes of omnipotence and omniscience are granted, then God knew it would happen and "permitted" it, and the Holocaust is of a piece with God's providence. "Certainly the God of Christendom died in the Holocaust," Altizer concludes, "or became theologically unthinkable and unimaginable," and this means that "the God of every church dogmatics is now unthinkable."¹⁰ So, as Altizer articulates it, the unprecedented theological challenge of our time becomes: Is a theology possible today that is not at bottom an erasure of the Holocaust?¹¹

Oposing the established religion of his day, Luther advocated a "theology of the cross" in opposition to any and every "theology of glory"; for similar reasons, Altizer has advocated in our age what we might call a "theology of darkness" in opposition to every "theology of light." Virtually all Christian theologies, by Altizer's rigorous standard, have to some degree or other given in to the temptation of light; that is, they deny the full reality of evil and embrace a "salvation" or "heaven" that is essentially an escape from suffering and darkness into a transcendent "happy" realm. Whereas the death on the cross, for Altizer, is the unique formula for taking the sacrifice of God with absolute and final seriousness. All that our natural being says "no" to is symbolized in the cross as that which we must pass into with Christ in the flesh, for this enacts the divine "yes" to incarnation, and this "yes" itself is crucifying.

This journey into flesh is what Altizer means by the "descent into hell" in his book by that title, *The Descent into Hell* (1970); it is a divine movement into a real earthly body, which in this theology of darkness displaces the offensive "ascent into heaven" of the quasi-Gnostic "spiri-

tual body.” This descent implies a total compassionate solidarity with the suffering body of the victim, who often cannot actually experience a light in the darkness but can believe in faith that it exists in the mercy of God (Job 19:25–26) or Christ (Mark 15:34) and can therein embody the light by faith alone. This theology refuses to abandon the suffering body in a quest for “heaven” and “light” but stands by the body in crucifixion, abiding with the crucified flesh as a flesh willed by God, a flesh actually loved by God into a condition of crucifixion.

This correlation of incarnation and crucifixion brings us to the core of Altizer’s mature understanding of God as an apocalyptic dichotomy: God as at one and the same time self-incarnating and self-annihilating. His fully apocalyptic understanding of God comes to birth in a highly compressed form in *The Self-Embodiment of God* of 1977, published when Altizer was fifty years old. Only with this work does Altizer break through to the pure dialectical ground of his theological vision and press it into a tight, terse, powerful, self-contained, seemingly airless capsule of a book—a book that acts as a primal seed for his later thinking, germinating many times over to express new dimensions of the same fundamental idea; each of his works thereafter systematically expands one aspect or another of the synthesis compressed in this book. By analogy, this was Altizer’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and indeed the spirit giving it birth was now far more Hegelian than Blakean. It remains the purest expression of Altizer’s vision, and truly to read this book is to read Altizer straight up, but for that very reason it is perhaps the least accessible of his works. Here a biblically grounded apocalyptic voice enacts the movement of spirit into flesh as a kenotic self-emptying of the primordial God into the full actuality of the body of the world; in so doing, it enacts genesis, exodus, judgment, incarnation, and apocalypse as an integral series of self-embodying transfigurations of the Godhead itself. The whole traces out a revelation history.

Just as a jazz musician may play for years before finding his signature “voice,” a voice that is purely his own because it speaks directly, one might say “bodily,” out of the inspirational source of originality and authenticity, so Altizer finds his theological voice in *The Self-Embodiment of God*, and suddenly in retrospect all his earlier books, however creative and thoughtful they may be, sound juvenile. Whereas all his published writings from 1958 forward set out to prosecute the same fundamental theological project with a truly remarkable consistency and tenacity, the earlier books are written in a talky, external, academic tone that simply disappears after 1977. One hears in the early Altizer certain phrasings and cadences of the

voice to come, but only in midcareer does the voice become whole and pure, no longer speaking *about* what it means to say, as if from outside, but now *enacting* what it means to say as it says it, unfolding a current event.

In this newfound oracular voice, the medium is the message, for voice is the medium of apocalypse. Now speech is event, uniting interiority and exteriority. And precisely as event, speech is shattering: an apocalyptic breaking in upon silence. The act of creation is this breaking in upon the silence of God. God before creation cannot be heard, for the primordial God constitutes a silence so pure, so total and quiescent that it has no voice. Creation shatters the primordial silence, annihilating it as silence so that for the first time it can be heard. Thus the “speech” of God in genesis is the genesis of a self-revealing God, a God revealing Godhead by embodying Godhead in actual event. The body of the world is “spoken” by God as the only way possible for the original silence of God to be heard, for “it is silence itself that passes into speech” (*The Self-Embodiment of God* 5). To be heard, the primordial reality of God must be sacrificed, must be shattered by the “speech” of creation. So it is that in every moment of actuality God is both embodied (posited in incarnation) and annihilated (negated in crucifixion) simultaneously; God *is* this dichotomy. God *is* this inbreaking occurrence, this apocalyptic shattering of quiescence, this ongoing transformative eventfulness of the world, in which Godhead continually negates Godhead in order to enact and embody Godhead.

Envisioning this negativity in the Godhead means that the absolute positivity of Godhead, or the plenitude of Being, is self-consumed in the act of creation; in turn, this self-consuming negativity releases God to every freedom of becoming. God is not constrained to an original or primordial form but is freed to change revelatory forms or epiphanies, and here again it seems likely that Altizer’s history of religions background influences his theological reading of Christian revelation history. Why should not ultimate reality reveal itself historically and progressively by means of changing epiphanic forms, forms distantly analogous to the *avatars* of the Hindu gods—but radically more comprehensive and absolute because they are identified with the ground of reality or actuality *per se*?

Altizer’s later works meditate on this dialectical ground of actuality—that is, the apocalyptic ground of eventfulness or actuality as the revelatory manifestation of the will of God—both historically and constructively. *Total Presence* (1980) examines the apocalyptic speech of Jesus in the para-

bles of the New Testament as an enactment of the Kingdom of God. *History as Apocalypse* (1985) explores the Christian epic tradition, from its historical and biblical origins through its ending in *Finnegans Wake*, as an apocalyptic revelation history. *Genesis and Apocalypse* (1990) articulates Altizer's most comprehensive systematic theology (making it *my* personal favorite), while *The Genesis of God* (1993) focuses more intently on the historical-dialectical logic of the relationship between apocalypse and genesis, a logic according to which only the genesis of God can make possible the death of God. *Godhead and the Nothing* (2003) ventures further into the eye of genesis as the sacrificial origin and primordial ground of creation. Finally, "Altizer on Altizer" should be mentioned here as a valuable reflection by the author in retrospect upon his own intentions in writing each of his major books up through *The Contemporary Jesus* (1997).¹²

Looking back on his own theological voyage as reflected in these writings, Altizer encapsulates his overall project thus:

The intention throughout this voyage is to seek a truly radical and yet nevertheless fully Christian theology, a theology with a genuinely Biblical ground but one nonetheless fully open to our world, a world here understood as embodying what Blake envisioned as the "Self-Annihilation of God." Moreover, and perhaps most deeply, there is the intention of renewing an original apocalyptic Christianity, and doing so with the recognition that Christian theology itself has truly reversed that origin, and only the most radical transformation of our theology can recover it.¹³

For all his controversial radicalism and heterodoxy, Altizer is a systematic and biblical theologian of an utterly classic type: one committed to systematically rethinking the core visionary truths of the Christian faith—creation, fall, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection—as these are historically transformed and radically reinterpreted from the point of view of late modern consciousness in a thoroughly "revolutionized" and "holocausted" world, an apocalyptic world of unprecedented beginnings and endings. The Christian vision is revealed as bearing a wholly new meaning that is actively generated by the death of Christendom's God and the savage extermination—forevermore—of human innocence. In our time, as we move out of the twentieth century toward who knows what kind of unprecedented global world order or world chaos, we have a pervasive new knowledge of Death and an unshirkable

new acquaintance with the Nothing, hence our theology of the future, if there is to be one, and if it is to be genuine, must contend with a dark exterior history and a dark interior history in terms that speak the whole truth of our devastation, including the new light that shines on that devastation.

This is what makes Altizer's "theology of darkness" one of the few live options, in my own view, for a reflective contemporary person of faith. It is a theology that fully engages the world we actually inhabit, the world to and for which we are called 'bodily' to be responsible. In repudiating false light, in boldly foreswearing every extrinsic or established "ground" validating theology—objective, rational, historical, institutional, scientific, scriptural, or otherwise—and in theologizing passionately and creatively on the basis of a groundless but deeply erudite and reflective Christian vision, Altizer has ushered theology out of the age of Newton and into the age of Einstein and beyond. Here theology realizes a new freedom from the "law" or *nomos* of extrinsic authority and a new liberty to respond spontaneously to intrinsic authority. If incarnation is the actualization of energy, and energy is eternal delight, it is at least possible we have a new and unfamiliar epiphany of Godhead emerging in our midst.

NOTES

1. No history of the death of God controversy has yet been published that would put the movement in critical perspective. The existing resources are relics from the period, many of which contain bibliographies: Charles N. Bent, S.J., *The Death of God Movement* (New York: Paulist Press, 1967); André Gounelle, *Foi vivante et mort de Dieu* (Tournon: Cahiers de Réveil, 1969); Lonnie D. Kliever and John H. Hayes, *Radical Christianity* (Anderson, SC: Droke House, 1968); William Robert Miller, *The New Christianity* (New York: Delacourte, 1967); Thomas W. Ogletree, *The Death of God Controversy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966); *The Death of God Debate*, ed. Jackson Lee Ice and John J. Carey (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967); *Radical Theology: Phase Two*, ed. C. W. Christian and Glenn R. Wittig (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967); *The Meaning of the Death of God*, ed. Bernard Murchland (New York: Random House, 1967); *The Death of God Debate*, ed. Gabriel Vahanian (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967); see also, Deborah Scerbicke, "A History of the 'Death of God' Theology in America, 1955–1969" (doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University, Department of History, 1994).

2. *The Altizer-Montgomery Dialogue: A Chapter in the God Is Dead Controversy* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), 7–8. For those seeking an accessible introduction to Altizer’s theology as a radical expression of faith, this spontaneous statement made in Rockefeller Chapel is as helpful as any. Audiotapes and transcripts of the dialogue are available from the Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy, ciltpp@cs.com (which, for the record, supports Montgomery’s stance against Altizer’s). I wish to thank Will Moore, president of CILTTP, for generously donating copies for my use.

3. *The Theology of Altizer: Critique and Response*, ed. John B. Cobb Jr. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); quotations are from the introduction by John B. Cobb and Nicholas Gier, 13–16.

4. Mircea Eliade, *Journal II: 1957–1969*, trans. Fred H. Johnson Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), entry of April 4, 1967, 297–98.

5. Mircea Eliade, *Ordeal by Labyrinth: Conversations with Claude-Henri Rocquet*, trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 151.

6. Thomas J. J. Altizer, “Mircea Eliade and the Death of God,” *Cross Currents* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1979): 267.

7. Thomas J. J. Altizer, “Doing Radical Theology,” unpublished manuscript, 1.

8. Thomas J. J. Altizer, “The Holocaust and the Theology of the Death of God,” in *The Death of God Movement and the Holocaust*, ed. Stephen R. Haynes and John K. Roth (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), 19. The editors of this volume are mistaken in asserting (p. xiv) that the *Time* cover story, “Toward a Hidden God,” in the Easter issue of April 8, 1966, which is reprinted in their volume, was the first major stir of the controversy; rather, the matter surfaced five and a half months earlier in an article in the *New York Times* on October 17, 1965, and it was the October 22, 1965 issue of *Time* magazine, containing the article “Christian Atheism: The ‘God Is Dead’ Movement,” that set off the flurry.

9. *Ibid.*, 21.

10. *Ibid.*, 20.

11. *Ibid.*, 22.

12. Thomas J. J. Altizer, “Altizer on Altizer,” *Literature and Theology* 15, no. 2 (June 2001): 187–94.

13. *Ibid.*, 187.