

## PART 1

# APOCALYPSE AND REVELATION

## Introduction to Part 1

The inspirational writer, Charles Eisenstein, begins his book, *Sacred Economics*, with the single line: "In the beginning was the Gift". In this first chapter he suggests that "The Gift World" is the essential nature of all things. We are given the universe for free. Eisenstein quotes the poet, Hafiz:

*Even after all this time  
The sun never says to the Earth,  
"You owe Me".*

But it is as if we no longer accept the Gift. On the contrary we are doing our best to reject and kill all life, whether by instant nuclear holocaust or by the slower but equally catastrophic process of ecological devastation. Some think of this as our greatest crime, others, that it is simply the result of ignorance.

*Eschatos*, in ancient Greek, means "last things" and eschatology is commonly referred to as the study of "the end of the world" or "endtimes". According to the OED, eschatology is "the part of theology concerned with death, judgement, and the final destiny of humankind". But our godless, scientific age has left us with no way of feeling or realising it. Science can only warn us in scientific language - the language of measurement and calculation. It is dumb before the existential reality. Modern science lacks the power of mythology or the voice of poetry.

Apocalypse is as much about revelation or awakening. In our scientific age we have lost touch with who we really are. As Yeats famously wrote in his 1922 poem, *The Second Coming*, "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold:/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world". The disintegration of our modern culture must be linked to our lack of self-understanding and individual integrity. We are out of touch with the centre in ourselves. Apocalypse, as revelation, is the opportunity to discover a new integrity.

Prior to any awakening - to who we really are - comes awareness of the shadow within us we project onto the world. Hence the importance of understanding the place of nuclear power in the twentieth century and the existential implications of the bomb

dropped on Hiroshima. The nuclear arms race is not the irrational result of historical chance. It is at the heart of our disintegrating civilisation. Likewise, the ecological emergency. We are responsible for climate change and the threat - and current reality - of mass extinction. Before we can begin to hope for salvation we have to know them for what they are, and our responsibility for them. Revelation follows understanding.

Chapter 2 - "The Simplicity of Nothingness" - looks at the history of a potential nuclear holocaust. Chapter 3 - "The Sixth Mass Extinction" - considers the real prospect of ecological collapse. Chapter 4 - "The Life Hereafter" - discusses themes of apocalypse and salvation in our history, our literature and our imaginations.