APOCALYPSE AND TEMPTATION IN WALTER M. MILLER'S *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ* (1959)

Master's Thesis

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Tiivistelmä

Tutkielman tarkoituksena on osoittaa, miten ihmiskunta päätyy toiseen maailmanloppuun lankeamalla kolmeen kiusaukseen Walter M. Millerin romaanissa *Viimeinen kiitoshymni* (*A Canticle for Leibowitz*, 1959). Millerin tieteiskirjallisuuden klassikkoromaani on ns. vaihtoehtohistoria, jonka lähtökohtana on ajatus, että Kylmän sodan seurauksena maapallo tuhoutui laajalti ydinsotaiskuissa. Romaanissa ydintuhosta niukasti selvinnyt ihmiskunta ajautuu tieteen kehityksen alkuvaiheisiin ja kulkeutuu uuden keskiajan ja renessanssin kautta huipputeknologiseen avaruusaikaan vain päätyäkseen uudestaan ydinsodan partaalle. Romaanin temaattisena taustana on apokalyptinen mytologia ja syklinen ajankäsitys ja se nojaa pitkälti raamatulliseen rakenteeseen siten, että se etenee viitteellisestä luomiskertomuksesta Johanneksen ilmestykseen ja Apokalypsiin.

Tässä tutkielmassa romaania tarkastellaan kahdella tavalla. Kuvakieltä, sanomaa ja rakennetta heijastetaan apokalyptiseen mytologiaan sekä lineaariseen ja sykliseen ajankäsitykseen. Lisäksi romaania analysoidaan tarkemmin Raamatun otteen kautta, joka on Kristuksen kolme kiusausta (Matt. 4:1-11). Tässä Raamatun otteessa Jeesus paastoaa 40 päivää ja yötä erämaassa, jonka jälkeen paholainen esittää hänelle kolme kiusausta. Nämä kiusaukset koskevat fyysistä, psyykkistä ja henkistä kestävyyttä. Tämä tutkielma väittää, että näissä kiusauksissa piilee syy ihmisen kyvyttömyyteen oppia virheistään. Tutkielman hypoteesi on, että Millerin *Viimeisessä kiitoshymnissä* ihmiskunta lankeaa yksi toisensa jälkeen jokaiseen kolmesta kiusauksesta ja aiheuttaa siten toisen maailmanlopun.

Romaania analysoidaan kronologisessa järjestyksessä siten, että fyysistä kiusausta tarkastellaan kirjan ensimmäisessä osassa *Fiat Homo* (*Let there be man*), psyykkistä kiusausta kirjan toisessa osassa *Fiat Lux* (*Let there be light*) ja henkistä kiusausta kolmannessa osassa *Fiat Voluntas Tua* (*Thy will be done*). Tutkielman johtopäätös on, että apokalyptinen sykli toistuu, koska ihmiskunta lankeaa kolmeen kiusaukseen eikä hyväksy Jumalaa ihmistä korkeampana tietoisuutena. Romaanissa yhteiskunta kehittyy teknologisesti, mutta ei henkisesti yhtä aikaa eikä kykene estämään toista maailmanloppua, koska ei pysty hallitsemaan haluaan käyttää ydinaseitaan. Oletettavasti Millerin mielestä tieteen kehitys ja uskonto eivät ole täysin antiteettisiä, vaan tarvitsevat toinen toistaan oikeassa suhteessa tukeakseen ihmiskunnan kestävää kehitystä maailmassa, jossa ydinaseet ovat pysyvä poliittinen vaaratekijä.

Asiasanat: Apokalyptinen mytologia, apokalyptinen kirjallisuus, tieteiskirjallisuus, ydinsota, Kristuksen kolme kiusausta.

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Muita tietoja:

Science sans conscience n'est que ruine de l'âme.
RABELAIS, *PANTAGRUEL* (1972: 129)

[Science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul.]

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959) is a science fiction classic and bestseller published at the heart of the Cold War when humanity was still living in the aftermath of nuclear attacks and in fear of future devastations. The entrance into the nuclear age provided humanity with the new possibility of total self-annihilation as well as the frightful awareness of such apocalyptic potential. Miller's personal trauma as a soldier of World War II, the consequent nuclear arms race and its psychological impact on citizens, gave him grave apprehension regarding the future success of humanity in a world with nuclear weapons. The word 'canticle' means a religious song of praise and Miller's novel, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, is a combination of myth and religion in a science fiction setting with Apocalypse[1] as its thematic basis. In his book, Miller speculates on the capacity of humanity to rebuild itself after a near destruction of the world, to resist temptations that cause humanity's failure and to achieve and maintain spiritual maturity required for sustainable and peaceful development.

The concept of Apocalypse remains central to myth, religion and literature. The enigmatic Apocalypse looms in our ancient texts, in our cultural as well as moral inheritance, and it has puzzled scholars, both religious and secular, across the ages. Through centuries some have waited for the actual manifestation of Apocalypse, others experience it in the commotion of social change – a revolution, rather than revelation. According to Leeming (1990: 76), 'apocalypse' literally means unveiling of reality in the world of illusion, its purpose soul searching. Most mythologies have an Apocalypse myth associated with them; most often it is a renewing of the ages, the passing of the old world and the birth of a new heaven and earth. Western civilization looks toward the Apocalypse of John in the *Book of Revelation*, but visions of apocalyptic myths in the West as in the East follow a similar pattern: a periodic cleansing of a world gone astray. (ibid.76.)

[1] Apocalypse is written with a capital A when referred to the actual mythic Apocalypse, otherwise it is written with a small a. The capitalisation of the word differs among writers, this is the choice of this thesis.

Although it seems that due to products of popular culture, apocalypse has been lately associated with a violent end of the world, the writings of apocalyptic authors are not simply and bleakly end-directed, and should not be considered on such narrow terms. According to Ketterer (1974: ix, 10), visionary writers have viewed events from the French Revolution to the nuclear age in apocalyptic terms, as upheavals of social processes and existentialist ponderings, not merely as ends of the world. He writes that apocalyptic literature should be understood as drawing upon surrealism, metaphysical poetry, the pastoral tradition and the poetry of the romantics, particularly William Blake. Ketterer states that it was Blake's philosophical formulations during the Romantic period (1789-1832) in English literature that brought about a positive apocalyptic charge, meaning not visions of horror, but a dazzling splendour of the epochal and triumphant social transformation. (ibid. 10.) Similarly, according to Ahearn (1996), visionary writers search for personal ways to explode the normal experience of reality with the help of prophecies, fantastic tales and surrealistic dreams. They express rebellion against the values of Western civilization: religious, moral, societal, political and scientific. And, although their writings are anti-realistic, they react to modern reality and involve radical transformations of how we see the state of society. (ibid. 1996: 2-3.)

The mastery of nuclear technology half way into the 20th century caused a turning point in societal discourse rearranging much of the way people saw the world from then on. According to Boyer (1994), the atomic bombing on Japan reflected on every aspect of life and altered the entire basis of our existence. Boyer investigates the effects of the atomic age, particularly on American thought and culture and writes that it was surprising how quickly contemporary observers understood that "a profoundly unsettling new cultural factor had been introduced" (ibid. xxi). Particularly in American and British science fiction literature, nuclear power inspired a genre where humanity's destructive power, instead that of God's, could bring about total annihilation - an Apocalypse. Reilly (1985: 4) notes that science fiction works written prior to 1945 regarded science uncritically and enthusiastically proclaiming that progress is our most important product; and what is more, generally agreed on the idea that science would help man to understand and control the painful reality of his ordinary existence. Furthermore, Kievitt (in Reilly (ed.) 1985: 170) writes that in the aftermath of the mushroom cloud some science fiction writers began to wonder if

the faith in science was misplaced and searched for another object of faith, introducing religion into science fiction. Among the authors to react to this new potential was science fiction writer and engineer Walter Miller.

Walter M. Miller Jr. (1922-1996) remains an enigmatic figure among the 20th century science fiction writers. This is due to his highly secluded life, relatively small oeuvre, and yet the amazing popularity of his work, particularly *A Canticle for Leibowitz* [2], (1959, hereafter also *The Canticle* or CFL). *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is a story of humanity starting from an atomic destruction at the end of the Cold War. The book begins after a near-annihilation of the earth, when a handful of men, later the Brethren of Leibowitz Abbey, had gone to monasteries to preserve the remaining knowledge of the 20th century. Centuries pass and the knowledge preserved gradually loses its meaning to its recorders as the world becomes detached from knowledge and scientific power. Only the devotion of the monks to the purpose of their Order keeps them at the task. With time, however, men of science accelerate the development of society, surpassing the accomplishments of the 20th century and the world gradually faces yet another daunting destiny, the recurring consummation of the apocalyptic cycle, another nuclear war.

This thesis examines Miller's book from two perspectives. First, the thematic basis and the imagery are reflected on the myth of Apocalypse. Secondly, in addition to the reference of the Apocalypse, this work specifically examines the novel through the concept of temptation from the biblical account of the three temptations of Christ (Matthew 4:1-11, see Appendix), when Christ is tempted three times by the devil in the wilderness. These include the physical, mental and spiritual temptations. The hypothesis of this thesis is that each part of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* explores the failures of mankind to overcome the three temptations when trying to recreate civilization, which causes a second Apocalypse in the end. Since religion is omnipresent in Miller's book, the temptations and hence a biblical approach fits well with the style of the novel and there are some references to this biblical passage in the text itself.

[2] Finnish translation *Viimeinen kiitoshymni*, first edition published in 1962 by WSOY. This study uses the 1993 English edition published by Orbit.

This thesis begins with an introduction of Walter Miller and his novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. Secondly, in order to provide the reader with the proper mythological and religious frame of reference of *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, this study looks at apocalyptic mythology, cyclical and linear time and the notion of eternal return. What is more, this work then proceeds to apocalyptic literature, biblical Apocalypse and apocalyptic tendencies in American literary tradition, where incidentally, Walter Miller is placed. Furthermore, the use of apocalyptic and nuclear themes in science fiction is explained. The temptations of Christ are introduced before going into the analysis. The novel is analysed in three main context chapters that follow the chronological order of the three parts of the book. The analysis begins with the physical temptations of *Let there be man*, then continues to the temptations of the mind in *Let there be light* and concludes with the spiritual temptations in *Thy will be done*. Through self-selected themes and excerpts from the novel, this study examines why humankind's failure to overcome the three temptations results in a second Apocalypse. Lastly, for reasons of clarity in a thesis with two perspectives, the apocalyptic significance of the novel will be specified in the end.

Senior (1993: 329), states that *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is a critic's dream book "rich with symbols and metaphors, open to many conflicting interpretations". Over the years, and particularly in the post Cold War era, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* has been studied by several authors, such as in "Medievalism in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*" (Griffin 1973), "Song Out of Season: *A Canticle for Leibowitz*" (Rank 1969), "The Theme of Responsibility in Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*" (Bennett 1970) and in "Walter M. Miller Jr." (Ower 1982). I studied *A Canticle for Leibowitz* for the first time on a literature course where the book's mythological and religious aspects were briefly introduced (Malafry 2001, Transformations of myth). I was later inspired to write my Proseminar paper on the post-apocalyptic world view in *The Canticle* before extending to the mythological and religious dimensions in this thesis. I have developed this research idea by first drawing the long trace of Apocalypse from mythology and the Bible to American literary tradition and all the way to science fiction. Then I have connected Miller's book to the three temptations based on the structure of the novel as well as the philosophical message.

Extracting and revealing various messages and interpretations from this somewhat cryptic novel has been the happy guesswork of many researchers, none of them exhaustive, exclusive or insuperable over others. Compared to the studies on *A Canticle for Leibowitz* reviewed for this work, this study addresses the book more as an entirety and places much focus on the structure of the book. Furthermore, the reference to the temptations and the Apocalypse is unique although researchers inevitably touch on the book's religious themes and constantly call it apocalyptic. Moreover, since most research on this novel is relatively old by now, and while the book remains a science fiction classic, this study contributes to recent Miller research. The themes of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* strike at the core of contemporary political discussion. Ever since the Cold War nuclear discourse remains a steady undercurrent in political and societal concerns, for instance, in the recent proliferation of nuclear technology in North Korea and Iran. Although it is a science fiction story written during the pinnacle of nuclear fears, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* deals with recurrent themes, and can be interestingly and rewardingly studied into the 21st century.

2 WALTER M. MILLER JR. AND *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ* (1959)

2.1 Walter M. Miller Jr.

Roberson and Battenfeld's (1992) bio-bibliography on Walter Miller provides important information and rare quotes from the author. Walter Michael Miller Jr. was born January 23, 1922 in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. Although encouraged with his writing in high school, Miller entered University of Tennessee and studied electronic engineering but never took his degree. In 1942 Miller enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps and served as a Technical Sergeant, radio operator and gunner, participating in several combat missions over Italy and the Balkans. One of these missions was the bombing of the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy, which was the oldest monastery in the western world and considered one of the most sacred Christian sites. This event had a meaningful effect on Miller's life and literary production, even though the writer did not realise it at first. Later reflection led

Miller to see the connection between the war, Monte Cassino and *A Canticle for Leibowitz.* (Roberson & Battenfeld 1992: 1.) Miller wrote:

> It never occurred to me that Canticle was my own personal response to the war until I was writing the first version of the scene where Zerchi lies half buried in the rubble. Then a lightbulb came on over my head: "Good God, is this the abbey at Monte Cassino? This rubble looks like south Italy, not Southwest desert. What have I been writing? (ibid. 2.)

The story adopts a cyclical view of history similar to that of the Monte Cassino monastery, which was attacked several times over the centuries. Furthermore, similarly to the fictional characters of *The Canticle*, the monks of Monte Cassino also persistently preserved and copied aged texts which might have otherwise been lost. (ibid. 2.) While Miller grew up outside organised religion, and called himself an atheist in school, he converted to Catholicism in 1947 after his experiences in the war. Though many researchers easily get caught up in Miller's religiousness, he immersed himself in Catholic traditions for less than ten years although he remained deeply interested in religions. Miller published some forty short stories in science fiction magazines from 1951 to 1957, among which some scripts for television. He received two Hugo Awards (the oldest and highly respected science fiction award), for his novella *Darfsteller* in 1955 and for *A Canticle for Leibowitz* in 1961. (ibid. 3-4.)

Miller lived in isolation in his later years, avoiding publicity and after decades of depression, he committed suicide in 1996 (Samuelson 1976). Prior to his death, he had started working on a sequel to *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* which was finished by writer Terry Bisson, who recalls his assignment to finish *Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* (1997) in a text titled *A Canticle for Miller* (Bisson 1997). Because of his poor health, Miller had agreed that someone else do the job and had accepted Bisson though never having heard of him. Unfortunately, Miller died before they could meet. Don Congdon consoled Bisson, informing him that he had been Miller's agent for forty years and they had never met in person. The manuscript included 592 pages before stopping abruptly and Miller had left instructions for the end of the novel. Experienced in editing, Bisson says he knew how to make his contribution transparent and completed the last hundred pages. Perhaps this book, which has never been a big success, is forever destined to come second to its famous predecessor, although its editor Terry Bisson called it nearly Tolstoyan, a picaresque

novel that is much more ambitious and mature than *The Canticle* (Bisson 2000). *Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* has not been translated into Finnish.

Garvey recalls his encounter and later correspondence with Miller in a eulogy written after the author's death. Garvey (1996) calls him "a complicated, difficult and deeply compassionate man" and notes that by the 1980s, Miller, disappointed by the post-Vatican II Catholicism, had shifted more towards Eastern religious philosophies. Garvey also elaborates on Miller's difficulties with writing. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* was written during a painful time: shattered marriage, preoccupation with the Church, and opposition to his anti-Semitic father are reflected on *The Canticle* and his further work, he was not able to complete another novel. Miller later wrote to Garvey:

> I think my case of stifled creativity came from a sudden loss of the power to tell my own story, a disability which began afflicting me during and just after the Leibowitz years. All fiction is autobiographical. All fictional characters are the author himself, in various roles, accepted or rejected, conscious or otherwise. If I felt too ashamed of my own life to tell my own story, how could I tell any man's story? (Garvey 1996)

In order to clarify Miller's stylistics, it is appropriate to remark briefly on the themes of his fiction. As Roberson and Battenfeld (1992: 4) point out, Miller intended to avoid the science fiction label with *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* since science fiction rarely received reviews in major media those days. However, the novel received a good deal of notice in mainstream publications, mostly enthusiastic and favourable. His future worlds have been criticized for not being innovative enough, but as Roberson and Battenfeld point out, his stories are mostly concerned with psychology of characters, humanity, and the resiliency of the human spirit, rather than speculative futures and science. Miller is known for his many antitheses: church and state, faith and reason, good and evil, pride and humility, all of which provide a route to human problems, the main concern of his writing. Furthermore, his fiction does explore man's relation to modern science and technology, but it is misleading to say, as some have, that he chooses faith over science. For Miller, the peril is not from technology but from man's neglect over his responsibility for that technology. (ibid. 5-6.)

2.2 *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

A Canticle for Leibowitz was originally published as three short stories in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1955-1957) before Miller revised it into a book form (Roberson & Battenfeld 1992: 3). While most writers clearly prefer the novel and almost never mention the novellas, Brians (1987: 80) considers the story best in the original form and thinks the novel is uneven. Olsen (1997: 135), on the other hand, points out that although critics have explored the numerous areas offered by *The Canticle,* they have not really touched that area which involves the relationship between the original novellas and the novel itself. Olsen shows convincingly that the changes Miller made in the novel are very important and revealing when interpreting the book. For instance, Miller made several changes to deepen his characters and gave them carefully considered names. He added religious and theological density throughout, in fact, for Olsen, he engaged the entire tradition of Judaeo-Christian writing and encourages the reader to take the religious imagery seriously (ibid. 136). Dowling states that Miller is at home with small, discrete units, short stories or 'canticles', which he weaves together "to create something of a church service, its various moods and responses all circling around the central question of man's place in the universe" (1987: 194).

It is true that the characters' names and the religious, literary and historical references seem very carefully chosen and skilfully included into the narration. The entire novel, and each of the three parts individually, are meticulously written and the depth of the religious atmosphere as well as the sense of fatality are very impressive. In fact, For Kievitt (1985: 169), the novel is nearly a third testament. Having the information that Miller remained a Catholic for only about a decade, though he remained intrigued by religion in general, at first hand it is difficult to imagine his novel being a missionary tract for the Catholic faith. After all, the novel's messages can be quite easily seen as attempts at universal truths about humanity and its challenges without reference to the Bible. It can also be argued that the writer is able to use biblical sources, allegory and other literary techniques very effectively in order to create a powerful text without necessarily the intention of writing a pro-Christian novel. Most any reader aware of the nuclear referent can read the book solely in the light of societal concern, since much of the story is about technological and most

importantly, nuclear development. However, without the author's biographical information, and supposedly for reader's sensitive to the religious references, the reading experience is undeniably rather straight-forwardly influenced by the book's religiousness and fatalism. In this sense, it can also be argued that for Miller, the solutions to society's problems at the time of the novel may have been found in the teachings of the Bible and that *The Canticle* is indeed a pro-Christian novel. Miller might have felt that the invention of the nuclear bomb gave godlike power to humanity, which was about to lose humility and respect for life. In order to point to this lack, he included in the novel both the structure and the message of the Bible, as if to bring western readers back to their source.

The Canticle is divided into three parts, separated from each other by roughly 600 years. The first part, titled *Let there be man*, is set 600 years after a nuclear near-annihilation of the Earth resulting from Cold War tensions. In a neo-Medieval age in the post-holocaust America nearly all earlier knowledge is gone and the land is a barren desert. In the middle of this wasteland, the Brotherhood of Saint Leibowitz Abbey tries to restore whatever little is left of 20th century knowledge into a *Memorabilia*, a large body of still indecipherable texts, while they wait for the Messiah. As noted by Dowling (1987: 193), "such is the trauma of the disaster that the main problem is not in maintaining civilization but in re-discovering what civilization was and even what the word means". The semiotic system of written and oral language is an enigmatic collection of signs whose references disappeared in the atomic blasts or have been changed into strange new forms. (ibid. 193.) Prior to the nuclear war, among the men to enter the monastery was Isaac Edward Leibowitz, an atomic technician, who became a priest and later founded the Abbey of Leibowitz in honour of Albertus Magnus, patron of men of science, for the task of preserving human history.

In the second part, *Let there be light*, the Order of Leibowitz is confronted with a new Renaissance, rise of science and technology and the world is headed towards a level of development far more advanced than that of the 20th century. The abbey of Leibowitz harbours documents of the past that now, after decades of darkness, become the interest of a ruthless secular scholar Thon Taddeo. While the records are open to study, abbot Dom Paolo offers them to science with deep apprehension since

he recognizes the march of science as philosophically threatening. For Scholes and Rabkin, in this vigorous Renaissance period the church and the state strike a kind of dynamic balance, one attending to the spirit and the other to the body, and during rich times they do not seem to conflict each other (1977: 223).

In the last part, *Thy will be done*, the Order has lost prestige in a new scientific age and the world is on the verge of yet another nuclear destruction. The monks are quietly preparing a spaceship to send a selected group and the Memorabilia to another planet hoping to save a remnant of humanity. Scholes and Rabkin (1977) note that the titles of the three sections (*Let there be man*, *Let there be light*, *Thy will be done*) move from a hopeful Genesis to a resigned *Revelation*. They add to the notion of cyclicism the idea that humanity's oldest myths, like the Bible, may contain the persistent truths describing the universe to which we are born and against which, by searching for wealth, power and even science, we struggle vainly. At the deepest level, this "canticle", religious song of praise, investigates the character of humankind's epic struggles as well as the possible sources of both its self-destruction and its greatness. (ibid. 221.)

What is more, in *The Canticle* Miller employs a technique called *alternative history*, a subgenre of science fiction (Scholes and Rabkin 1977: 177). This means a historical sequence parallel to ours that we can recognise in fiction but which nonetheless, is not our time stream. At its most serious, the alternate time stream raises questions about history and progress that are not that accessible to any other fictional form and most interestingly, it emphasizes the way that actual historical events have moulded cultural values that we rarely question. (ibid. 177.) In Miller, history takes a different direction starting from the Cold War, and the world is largely destroyed in nuclear attacks between nations.

Hellekson (2001: 2) categorises alternate histories into four: 1) *eschatological* (ultimate destiny of humankind or history); 2) *genetic* (history concerned with origin); 3) *entropic* (history as disorder and randomness); and 4) *teleological* (history has a decided design). In Miller, curiously, the eschatological and the teleological models are slightly intertwined. His historical account is clearly eschatological, that is, about ultimate destiny in the way he draws from the mythological and biblical

Apocalypses and uses them in the structure and meaning making of the novel. In addition, his view on history is also teleological, which means it has a decided design. The suggestion of the book is, for instance, that man is designed to invent and re-invent atomic weapons and technology and to have problems with them, unless, mankind is able to resist the temptations of character. Furthermore, Hellekson argues that alternate histories question the nature of history and causality, make readers rethink their world and offer narratives a role to play with the constructions of history. (ibid. 4-5.)

One of the many admirers of Miller and *The Canticle*, is writer Walker Percy. In his essay on the novel, published in *Rediscoveries* (1971), Percy articulates on the depths and meanings of *The Canticle* in a unique way. Percy (1971: 263) notes that *The Canticle* is not for every reader since "it is a cipher, a coded message, a book in a strange language", a secret ruined by telling. He continues his cunning discouragement: "… the book cannot be reviewed. For either the reviewer doesn't get it or, if he does, he can't tell". (ibid. 263.) Percy's emotive comments are partly right, *The Canticle* does have an atmosphere that cannot be explained or academically reviewed, much of its magic is in Miller's crafty wording. Percy calls it a sense of neck-prickling that the reader experiences or does not. Percy's comments are duly noted, a certain discretion and carefulness should be applied to a study of *The Canticle*, just like any piece of literature, it can never be grasped completely to produce a single interpretation. However, it would be a waste of a great novel to leave *The Canticle* unexplored. But, as Percy might agree, the novel will always retain its untranslatable dimensions without suffering from its many readings.

2.3 Previous studies on *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

Those who have turned to *The Canticle* for interpretation have chosen from a wealth of topics and have most often written with a very particular thematic approach to help sharpen their analyses and avoid extrapolation. The researchers of *The Canticle* have written from scientific, societal, religious, linguistic, historical, philosophical and comparative literary perspectives, often combining many of these. Most, but not all, cannot help but engaging at some point in Miller's compelling theme of

mankind's destiny and the complex wickedness and problems of human nature. The novel has been mostly reviewed in numerous articles and essays, most of which are understandably rather old by now, but some relatively new ones have also been done. Among the recurrent article accounts on *The Canticle* are studies by Rank (1969), Bennett (1970), Percy (1971), Griffin (1971), Samuelson (1976), Spector (1981) and Ower (1982). Further search on the novel lists articles by Senior (1993), Seed (1996) and Olsen (1997). Due credit and reference is often given to the bio-bibliography of Miller by Roberson and Battenfeld (1992), and most latest searches indicate Secrest's *Glorificemus: A Study of the Fiction of Walter M. Miller Jr.* (2002), unavailable for this study. In addition, there are endless entries on Miller and *The Canticle* in science fiction anthologies, encyclopaedias and the like.

In order to show the variety of different approaches taken on *The Canticle*, a brief summary of a few of them is appropriate. A much-quoted study by Rank (1969: 219) titled "Song out of Season" treats *The Canticle* in the context of Catholic writing and as "a book which combines satire on contemporary society and religious practises with a 'reverse utopia' presenting a grim vision of a possible future". For Rank, Miller's book defies narrow categories and includes elements of satire, science fiction, fantasy and humour as well as religious and apocalyptic visions. In Rank's view, the book reflects well the confused cross-currents of the era. According to Bennett (1970), the major theme of the book is individual responsibility which is the destiny of each man. His article, "The Theme of Responsibility in Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*", discusses this subject through several characters who each at their time either accept or reject their responsibilities. What is more, Spector's (1981) article "Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*: A Parable for Our Time?" juxtaposes science and religion in the book and argues that although Miller clearly wishes for the two to act together to serve the future, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to do so.

For Ower (1982), the thematic basis of the novel is the perennial tension and balance in human life, which revolves around contraries such as good and evil, creativity and destructiveness, original sin and God's redemptive work. What is more, according to Ower, although the outlook in *The Canticle* is basically ironic and pessimistic, the cycles of rise and fall are still connected to the author's positive apocalyptic vision

and there are hopeful signs towards the end of the book. Seed's (1996) article "Recycling the Texts of the Culture: Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*", focuses on how meaning is transmitted and how the nature and understanding of texts shifts from period to period, since they are historically bounded. Seed points out how there is a need to retain history and a recognition of how history is vulnerable to constant process of revision and distortion.

Lastly, an article titled "*A Canticle for Leibowitz*: Song for Benjamin" by Fried (2001) claims that Miller treats Judaism as a relic and is unable to view Judaism as an ongoing tradition. According to Fried, in the book Judaism is superseded by Christianity, which is portrayed as the legitimate opposition to the madness of imperial violence, whereas old Benjamin (one of the central characters introduced in the analysis) has returned to his early biblical role of tent mender and his character remains mythic in the novel. Fried (2001: 366) also writes that Miller's view is true to a Christian vision of the agony of the spirit, and that humanity by itself, in the novel this is the humanity without Christ, who is not able to escape its flawed nature. Furthermore, he notes that the novel borrows from the lexicon of apocalyptic literature giving the novel the framework and vocabulary of myth. This study continues from Fried's idea of both revealing the apocalyptic and mythic frame of the novel and more precisely by focusing on humanity, which struggles with its flawed nature and the temptations.

These six studies show very well the variety of study perspectives used to analyse *The Canticle*. What many of them, and many others not listed here, have in common is societal and scientific criticism, concern for moral and religious guidance and the long lasting question will we ever learn to balance our life regardless of the many tensions and pitfalls of our character. The major connecting idea in most Miller studies are naturally the various views on the future; in which way and shape our future unfolds for us and is it possible that at some point there is no future anymore. This study is in the same lineage with the referenced studies since it touches on many similar issues of science and religion and the destiny of humanity. What is particular of this work is the explicitly biblical reference used for the analysis, which is used to reflect not only moral and philosophical, but also literary and allegorical issues from the novel. What is more, this study includes a detailed research also of the nuclear

and science fictional issue so closely connected with Miller's book, which I have not seen extensively introduced in other articles.

As this study now moves to explore the mythological aspects required for this work, it should ne noted that mythology is an enormously vast and complex area and within the limits of a thesis, any part of it can only be introduced very briefly and selectively. What is more, Apocalypse is a particularly difficult mythological and religious topic, but the information provided here is enough for the purposes of this study. Later in the study similar brief introduction is provided for the three temptations.

3 MYTHIC APOCALYPSE AND ETERNAL RETURN

3.1 Apocalyptic myths

According to Leeming (1990: 3), ancient myths were stories with which our ancestors were able to understand mysteries that happened around and within them, and in this sense, myth is related to metaphor, a direct ancestor to what we today think of as literature. Myths were forms of history, philosophy, theology and science, and helped ancient societies understand phenomena such as the change of seasons and the nature of the gods. Furthermore, myths served as a basis for rituals by which the ways of humanity and those of nature could be psychologically reconciled. Many of these myths still function in some of the world's religions. Leeming (1990: 4) continues to argue that the early poetic mythmakers told stories that the collective mind already knew, and that the modern artist is a direct descendant from them, exploring the inner myth of life in context of other experiences, such as in different works of art.

Leeming (1990: 8) writes that myths are divided into four types: 1) *cosmic*, 2) *theistic*, 3) *hero and place* and 4) *object* myths. The cosmic myths are concerned with the great facts of existence: the Creation, the Flood and the Apocalypse. The word 'apocalypse' comes from the Greek *apocalypsis* which means 'revealing', a prophetic vision. Apocalyptic myths are eschatological; the Greek *eschata* translates 'the last things', and the study of the end of things is called eschatology. (ibid. 76.)

Furthermore, the idea of a catastrophic end of the world is a constant throughout human cultural history and exists in most world mythologies in some form. In general, the Apocalypse marks the end of an old world and the birth of a new one, with an emphasis on the end of the current order of things. (ibid. 77.)

Boyer (1995: 21) states that the apocalyptic genre has complex sources. Historians of the ancient world trace mythic outlines of history, conflicts between good and evil, and eschatological visions in several ancient literatures including Ugaritic, Akkadian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Canaanite, Greek, Hellenistic, Roman and Persian. The Greek poet Hesiod thought that man's only hope lay in absolute submission to the gods and imagined history as a divinely-ordered chain or worsening events and the end of which Zeus destroys humankind for its wickedness. According to Fukuyama (1992: 55-56), Aristotle did not assume the continuity of history but believed that the cycle of regimes was embedded in a larger natural cycle and that cataclysms like floods will periodically eliminate not only human societies but all memory of them as well, forcing humankind to start the historical process all over again. Fukuyama writes that the first truly Universal Histories in the West were Christian. While there were Greek and Roman attempts to write histories of the known world, Christianity was the first to introduce the idea of equality of all men in the sight of God, and thereby conceived of a shared destiny for all the peoples of the world. Saint Augustine, for instance, emphasized the redemption of man as man, which would constitute the working out of God's will on Earth. (ibid. 56.)

According to Stookey (2004: 17), just as creation myths explain the birth of a world, eschatological myths envision its end. Apocalyptic stories provide revelations and prophecies, large scale destructions of the cosmos. In many narratives, the destruction of the universe results in a birth of a better world, in others, the world returns to its original state of chaos or ends completely. Furthermore, in some accounts the Apocalypse marks the end of earthly life and the beginning of eternity. Similarly to other types of apocalyptic literature, the myths that describe the end of the world use suggestive images and symbols, the world's imminent destruction is interpreted from signs and recurring themes. Typically, myths of the end include disintegration of the world's society, such as decline in morality, increase in violence, warfare, and furthermore, degradation of the environment and

natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions, storms and earthquakes. In some stories monsters emerge towards the end and some myths depict the Apocalypse as a battle between the forces of good and evil. Many myths illustrate a final reckoning on a Day of Judgment. (ibid. 18.)

Stookey points out that in some myths of Apocalypse from Central Asia, Mesoamerica, and Native American the world is not reborn after its destruction and there is no vision of the afterlife (2004: 20). Furthermore, the Jews speak of the Day of Yahweh, when the dead return to be judged and the enemies of God will be destroyed before the establishing of the true Kingdom. The Old Testament prophets, such as Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Joel created a common mode of Apocalypse in their writings, which was later taken into its full use by John in the New Testament *Book of Revelation*. (Leeming 1990: 77.) These Apocalypses are *linear*, as the temporal world ends, time ends too and after the battle of good and evil, the wicked are condemned and only the righteous will spend eternity in paradise (Stookey 2004: 19-20).

On the other hand, one of the most known apocalyptic stories is the Norse myth of Ragnarök, where even the gods are doomed at the end of the world. Ragnarök involves many typical events such as earthquakes, rising monsters, and destructive fire followed by renewal of life as Lif and Lifthrasir survive on the branches of Yggdrasil, the tree of life. (Leeming 1990: 85.) What is more, in Indian tradition, as in that of the Norse, the cosmos is reborn after its destruction. The Indian worldview involves an endless cycle of recurring events, Apocalypse for the Hindu is the natural ending of the world in the fourth age, called the Kali Age. The Norse and Indian tradition of Apocalypse, among others, are therefore *cyclical*: the world is destroyed and reborn in eternal cycles. (ibid. 18-19.)

This chapter briefly introduced the idea of apocalyptic myths and showed how the genre has complex sources, yet exists in most world mythologies and thus connects the moral and literary heritage of many civilisations. Many of the typical features of Apocalypse listed here will be found in *The Canticle,* such as violence, warfare, decline in morality and destructive fire.

3.2 Cyclical and linear time

According to Eliade (1991), the meanings acquired by history are most clearly revealed in the theories of cosmic cycles and it is within these cycles that the idea of cyclical time and linear time are defined. In most of these theories, the age of gold, the paradise stage, occurs in the beginning of the cycle. Cyclical creation and destruction of the world and the belief in the perfection of the beginnings is mostly a pan-Indian tradition. The Indian speculation, compared to, for instance, the Norse Ragnarök, amplifies the rhythms that determine the periodicity of cosmic cycles. The complete cycle, the Mahayuga, is composed of four *yugas*, 'ages', of unequal duration, the longest at the beginning of the cycle and the shortest at the end, lasting altogether 12 000 years. Each yuga ends in a phase of darkness and as the last of the four yugas, the Kali Yuga in which we are today, approaches, the darkness deepens and complete cycle is terminated by a Pralaya, a dissolution. (ibid. 113-114.)

As explained by Eliade (1991: 115), for all Indian speculation, time is limitless and there is an eternal repetition of the cosmos. Nevertheless, all of this has also a function of salvation; awareness of having to endure the same endless sufferings repeatedly results in an intensifying will to escape and to transcend man's condition of living being for good. According to Eliade, the Indian view of cyclical time reveals a refusal of history and the return to the beginning is not an effective solution to the problem of suffering. Karma, the law of universal causality, which functioned as consolation for the pre-Buddhist Indian consciousness, has with time become a symbol of man's slavery; and for this reason, every Indian metaphysics and technique concerning man's liberation, seeks to destroy karma. (ibid. 117.)

However, the four yugas provide a new element to the renewal of the cosmos, that is, an explanation and justification of historical catastrophes, progressive decadence of humanity biologically, sociologically, ethically and spiritually (Eliade 1991: 117.). This explanation is time, that continually aggravates the state of the cosmos and hence the state of man. According to Indian understanding, since we are now living in the Kali Yuga, the age of darkness, it is our fate to suffer more than men during the preceding ages and thus cannot expect anything else. At most, we can wrest ourselves from cosmic servitude. The Indian theory of the four ages consoles man

under the terror of history: firstly, because the sufferings he has to endure fall on him since he is contemporary with the end times, which helps him to understand the precariousness of human condition and eases his liberation. Secondly, the theory validates and justifies man's suffering since he surrenders to his faith conscious of the dramatic epoch which has been given to him to live in, or rather, to live in again. (ibid. 118.)

To modern man, or at least to most westerners, this idea of refusing history through total periodic cleansing or living in a predestined phase of darkness, is rather foreign. We think of ourselves as results of a certain historical background, both societal and personal, which are irreversible. Although we also live in the cyclic rhythm of years, decades and centuries, there is, nonetheless, an understanding that our deeds follow us and history cannot be erased, forgotten or determined as inevitable. Christian believers carry the collective responsibility of their actions toward a final weighing. The Judaeo-Christian Apocalypse is therefore linear, meaning that the end of the world will occur only once and as Eliade (1998: 64) points out, the cosmos that reappears after the destruction will be the same cosmos that God created, only purified and eternal and allowed for those who are true to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Concerning apocalyptic expectation in recent centuries outside the mythological realm, Weber (1999: 7-9) reminds that time and its divisions are mostly social constructs. We think of our chronology in terms of BC and AD which is as good a way of placing events as any other, but the Christian perspective was never the only one. The Chinese, the Hindu, the Egyptians, the Greek and the Arabian all calculated time differently. The seven-day week was established in the Roman calendar in AD 321 when Emperor Constantine designated Sunday as the first day of week, dedicated to rest and worship, the day of the Lord. As Weber (1999: 25) summarizes, a mentality that took calendars and centuries for granted developed in the seventeenth century and affirmed itself in the eighteenth century when it started to connect temporal progress with decay and decline. From this position it was only a step to associating material and social progress with obsolescence. Once the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries started to use century in the modern historical and chronological sense, the usage became natural, then unavoidable and reflected attraction to round numbers. What is more, sooner or later, beginnings suggest ends,

and ends suggest decline. So thoughts of *fin de siècle*, end of century, are related to natural evocations, but also to long millennial tradition that contributes images, language, stereotypes and attitudes which suggest that end of an age can be linked to the end of a world, and perhaps of *the* world. (ibid. 25.)

This idea of cyclical and linear time is very important in Miller's novel. However, it is difficult to state which one is more influential, the writer seems to effectively combine both. While the story adopts a Christian view on Apocalypse and the timeline appears to lead to one destruction of the Earth like in the Bible, there are still many ideas of humanity's cyclical repetition not only in the mistakes made but also in the new chances we seem to get as regards of resisting destruction and being born again.

3.3 Eternal return

Eliade (1998: 49-50) comments on something that is essential for the present study, that is, the idea of falling from societal and psychological order and trying to regain that order.

> -- the ritual renewal of order runs through the history of mankind from the Babylonian New Year festival, through Josiah's renewal of the Berith and the sacramental renewal of Christ -- because the **fall from the order of being, and the return to it, is a fundamental problem in human existence**. (emphasis added)

Eliade (1998: 75) writes that many eschatologies and myths of the end of the world retain a certainty of a new beginning. This type of thinking is particularly typical of archaic people, who place exceptional value on the knowledge of the origins and through this knowledge, are able to bring back things that are lost through rituals and rites. Eliade explains that it is this "movability" of the origin of the world that expresses man's hope that his world will always be there even if it is periodically annihilated. In fact, the concept of the end of the world is not essentially pessimistic; the world wears out with time and must be recreated. (ibid. 76.) In general, then, mythologies and religions include a belief in the possibility of recovering the absolute beginning. However, Eliade remarks that there is another significant idea,

the idea of the perfection of the beginnings, the expression of a deeper religious experience sustained by the imaginary memory of a Lost Paradise or a state of bliss that preceded the human condition. Eliade speculates that the idea of a new year, or a new beginning, has become such an important part of human history because through ensuring renewal of the cosmos, it offers hope that the state of bliss can be recovered. (ibid. 50.)

Eliade (1991: 129) writes that it is a curious fact that the traditional doctrine of periodic regeneration of the world has not been completely abolished. Some vestiges of this doctrine survived among the Persians until the Middle Ages and, as for the pre-Messianic Judaism, that thought was never completely eliminated since the rabbinic circles were reluctant to be specific concerning the exact duration of the world. Instead they declared that the Day of Judgment will certainly come one day. In Christianity, then, according to the evangelical tradition, the paradisiacal state is always accessible for those who believe through *metanoia*, a fundamental change of their beliefs. Christianity, therefore, translates the periodic regeneration of the world into a regeneration of an individual as a result of which history can cease and be recreated by each individual believer even before the second coming of Christ. To conclude, even three great religions, Persian, Judaic and Christian, which have limited the duration of the cosmos to a certain number of millennia, retain marks of the ancient doctrine of the periodic recreation of history. (ibid. 130.)

In the case of cyclical time as in that of finite time, some type of destruction and cleansing of the world, be it repetitive or absolute, is destined to happen. The most important difference is in the way history is regarded: archaic societies believe that history can be erased and that through rites it is possible to return to the beginning, whereas in the Indian imagination, people live in the eternal repetition of progressive cycles, marked with a destined quality they cannot escape. The western linear view appears at first to be the most strenuous and darkest. Whereas the previous views on time still offer hope and consolation, the Judaeo-Christian, as the Persian, versions are more judgmental and inescapable. Nonetheless, even if the apocalyptic views worldwide and throughout times have taught us to dread and anticipate the end in some form, what they also have in common is refusal of ultimate endings, hope of resurrection and an eternal return.

It is also worth noting (Mircea Eliade, n.d.), that Eliade began to write *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (much quoted in this study) just after World War II, which had a traumatic influence on him as well as on Walter Miller. His book deals with humankind's relationship with history and particularly with the idea of myth and reality. For Eliade, modern people have lost their contact with natural cycles, which archaic societies were very much in touch with. He thought that the inner, unhistorical world of people is very important. What is more, according to the linear perspective on history, typical of the Christian world view, the tyranny of history is faced through the concept of God, whereas in archaic cultures the recurrent tyranny of history is accepted. Furthermore, an essential point with Eliade's work is that in the archaic religions the world is sacred differently than for modern man, perhaps much more deeply so, and that by understanding the relationship between the sacred and the profane, we can better understand the past. (ibid.)

Eliade has written extensively on myth, reality, religion and understanding of history. Most of the sources concerning myth consulted for this study turn at some point to his research and while he is also criticized, for instance for his favourable take on religion rather than science, no scholar in the field would deny his influence. Among his critics is Strenski (1987: 70-71), who writes that many scholars avoid Eliade's work altogether since it is largely marked by evasive thinking and that instead of resolving difficulties directly, Eliade often resorts to paradoxes, metaphors and other literary devices and his style is very "labyrinthine". However, Strenski realises that Eliade's style is deliberate and Eliade himself has said that "one mustn't provide the reader with a perfectly transparent story". (ibid. 71.)

A Canticle for Leibowitz spells out the reference to the great myth of Apocalypse and uses it as a thematic background. The book reflects on issues connected with Apocalypse: destruction of the old world by fire in atomic destruction, moral decadence of society, despair, hope or hopelessness and the survival of humanity. The apocalyptic timeline in the book is both linear and cyclical; the structure of events follows a biblical pattern by moving from *Genesis* to *Revelation* but the end does not seem to be final even in this book and there are references to eternal return. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and the myth of Apocalypse revolve around the same idea: humankind's relationship with its own existence as well as destruction and the

existence of a higher power. What is more, the notion of eternal return in myth as in Miller's book contribute to man's hope in the movability of his origins and the hope that his world, though periodically destroyed, can be recovered.

What is more, similarly to Eliade, Miller also seems interested in mythological and religious depths of humankind. Whereas Eliade is strongly driven by his religious sensitivity, Miller, on the other hand, seems to be searching for a balance between man's religious depths and his intellectual and technological possibilities as well as responsibilities. Furthermore, as Eliade (1998: 49-50) points out, "the fall from the order of being and return to it, is a fundamental problem in human existence". This thought is very influential in Miller; the whole story is wrapped around the dilemma of the fallen humanity trying to relocate itself in the world. The idea of the return to paradise or to a Golden Age, so essential in apocalyptic myths, is also very visible in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*; it seems that according to Miller's philosophy, humanity's problems may derive all the way from original sin once committed in paradise. In addition, Miller is concerned for humankind's attempts to return to that paradise once lost since, for him, the world, with all its wickedness, can never be Eden again.

4 APOCALYPSE IN PROPHETIC LITERATURE

> This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.
>
> (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

4.1 Defining apocalyptic literature

According to Kievitt (1985), even if the variety of genres in literature is somewhat infinite, the main classification of literature can be divided into two major categories: literature as art and literature as prophesy. While most writers have aimed at works of art, others, like Dante and Milton, have gone beyond that and produced works with a purpose to attempt to justify the ways of God to man. Furthermore, in Kievitt's opinion, when in the post-1945 world God was introduced into the

apocalyptic world of science fiction, this new approach provided the basis for a return to the literature of prophesy. (Kievitt 1985: 169-170.)

Evidently apocalyptic literature therefore falls into the category of literature as prophesy. Prophetic writing automatically refers to religious texts and to westerners the most known apocalyptic text is *The Book of Revelation* in the Bible. White (1999), points out that the history of apocalyptic writings, however, dates back to the early Jewish tradition where it emerged as a literary genre some time in the third century BC. The conquest of the Babylonians over Israel changed the tone of apocalyptic writings and gave rise to oracles calling for the restoration of the nation and punishment for its enemies by God. As noted by Boyer (1995: 22), the apocalyptic genre reached its apogee with the Jews. The Jewish apocalypticists were learned stylists who consciously created a literary genre which relied heavily on symbol and allegory in order to reveal the underlying divine plan of events. By taking the entire scope of history as their subject, they portrayed in metaphorical language the future of the Jews, the fate of Israel's enemies and the ultimate fate of humanity and the universe itself. Whereas the prophets saw the struggle between good and evil as an individual matter, the apocalypticists viewed it in cosmic terms. (ibid. 23.)

Even though apocalypse as a literary genre originates from the Jewish tradition, it has in the course of time been extended beyond strictly religious use, for instance, to science fiction where, incidentally, Ketterer (1974: 15) claims that the apocalyptic imagination is at its best. Ketterer forms a definition of apocalyptic literature accordingly:

> Apocalyptic literature is concerned with the creation of other worlds which exist in a credible relationship (whether on the basis of rational extrapolation and analogy or of religious belief) with the "real" world, thereby causing a metaphorical destruction of that "real" world in the reader's head. (ibid.13.)

In other words, apocalyptic literature is concerned with replacing an old world of *mind* with a new one that either destroys the old one or turns it into a part of a larger understanding. So apocalyptic literature is not only concerned with the fate of the world and its inhabitants in a cosmic scale but also with renewing the mind of an individual reader. However, as Ketterer (1974:14) writes, the fulfilment of the

apocalyptic imagination requires that the destructive chaos makes way to a new design. So even though at its most exalted level, apocalyptic literature is religious, it can be employed on other levels of literature as well, depending on whether an author adopts a religious, secular, societal or deeply personal perspective. However, the ultimate goal seems to be the same: all apocalyptic literature aims to explain, understand, challenge and develop the meaning we attribute to life and the world and our place within them.

Just as apocalyptic mythology involves the notion of eternal return, apocalyptic literature seems also to refuse ultimate endings. According to Berger (1999: xi), apocalyptic thinking is almost always also post-apocalyptic. Berger explores the term 'Apocalypse' in three senses. First, it is the actual imagined end of the world as presented in the New Testament Apocalypse of John. Secondly**,** it refers to catastrophes that resemble the imagined final ending, a way of life or thinking, such as the Holocaust or the use of atomic weapons against Japan. Thirdly, Apocalypse has an interpretative function in its etymological sense, as revelation or uncovering. The apocalyptic event, in order to be truly apocalyptic, has to in its destructive moment clarify and illuminate the real nature of what has been brought to an end. (ibid. 5.) What remains *after* the end and how the remainder has been transformed is usually the true object of the apocalyptic writer's concern. Furthermore, "post-apocalyptic discourses try to say what cannot be said (in a strict epistemological sense) and what must not be said (interdicted by ethical, religious or other social sanctions)", and nuclear war among others has been considered unthinkable in both these senses (ibid. 14). Apocalyptic desire coincides with a total critique of the world and a longing for the aftermath - this combination has characterized apocalyptic writings since their first recorded instances (ibid. 34).

4.2 Biblical Apocalypse: *The Book of Revelation*

> And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, not crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.
>
> (Revelation 21:4-5, *Holy Bible*, Authorized King James Version)

The Book of Revelation, written in rich symbolism, is a highly complex text, which can be read, as a university professor once said, "in an hour or over a lifetime" (Malafry 2006, personal communication). *Revelation* is the last book of the New Testament and hence the whole Bible. Revised briefly, in *Revelation*, Christ tells John to bring warnings to the seven churches of Asia. God gives Christ a scroll, the Book of Life, tied up by seven seals that hold the secrets of the future. A series of calamities appear upon the breaking of each seal and when the seventh is broken, there appear seven trumpets for seven angels which, after being blown, herald yet seven more disasters and the process starts all over again. What follows is the reign of the Antichrist, the emergence of two beasts, destruction of Babylon and the return of Christ to defeat the beasts at the battle of Armageddon. Satan is bound to allow the thousand-year messianic kingdom on Earth and at the end of this epoch Satan is loosened, which results in the destruction of the world by fire and finally, the Last Judgment. In the end, the new heaven and earth and the New Jerusalem appear. Furthermore, (White 1999), *Revelation* has five major visions (in 22 chapters) with a prologue and an epilogue regarding how it came to be written. Each vision has a literary device that leads to the next vision, and the length of these visions become longer one by one, causing a cumulative effect, where opening a box leads to another one. (ibid.)

Based on my reading of *Revelation*, this last book of the Bible has been a major source of conflicting interpretation and confusion throughout the times, among both religious and secular scholars, not to mention the Christians believers themselves. McGinn (1987: 523-525), points out that the absolute end story of the Bible has caused just as much controversy as the Bible's notion of the absolute beginning in Genesis. McGinn continues, *Revelation* has been interpreted as a literal blueprint for the approaching crisis with the assumption that the structure and events are linear and prophetic, revealing the course of history, or at least, the events imminent to the end

times. Although it has often been attempted, the complex structure of *Revelation* has made it difficult to correlate its symbolism with actual historical events. (ibid. 525.)

Explained by Harwell and McDonald (1975: 267), *The Book of Revelation*, often referred to as *John's Apocalypse*, is generally believed to have been written by John living in exile on the Greek island of Patmos sometime in the last decade of the 1st century. This was during the reign of Emperor Domitian and time of cruel persecution for the Christians who witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and suffered penalties for opposing Caesar worship. It was a difficult time for the infant Church and for the people, who waited for Jesus to return and were terrified by rumours of the allegedly dead Nero coming back to power. For Harwell and McDonald, as many scholars agree, John wrote *Revelation* to strengthen the new Church, to offer hope and solace to its suffering members and to urge them to persevere and assure them of ultimate victory. To do this, he used the literary form of Apocalypse, introduced by earlier Jewish writers, which characteristically involved angelic guiding, description of future bliss and the suffering of the enemies, all this in a figurative language that was part of the apocalyptic tradition and familiar to readers at that time. In fact, Harwell and McDonald (1975: 268) claim that the first readers of John did not take the images of *Revelation* literally.

May (1972: 17) claims, similarly, the real reason of Apocalypse, and hence the message of *Revelation*, is to deny a fast-approaching and easy salvation from Jews and Christians, to make them accept the agony of history. For May, the very structure of *John's Apocalypse* confirms this interpretation; the progressively-expanding rhythm and the ever-retreating horizon of fulfilment are meant to create a sense of genuine hope in the middle of frustration. The Apocalypse declares awareness of man's painful fall into history, a recurrent theme with Eliade, but the final salvation is not near, so the purpose of *Revelation* is to help achieve mature faith, to make one work out the salvation in the ambiguity of irreversible time. In May's view, the closer man gets to God and to an imminent revelation, the more intensely he will anticipate a deliverance from the terror of existence. (ibid. 17.)

According to Malafry (2006, lecture notes), *Revelation* is best understood in the biblical canon as the recapitulation of themes and symbolic patterns of *Genesis*. The design of the Bible begins with *Genesis* and consummates in *Revelation*, and in between there is the story of humankind, which begins with creation, temptation, fall and loss of paradise and the subsequent redemptive journey, and continues to the last days when reality is unveiled and the world restored to the divine state. As Malafry continues, *Revelation* is a compression of the main themes of the Bible put into a core vocabulary, an intense poem, which in return is the lexicon to the whole Bible. Malafry emphasizes that *Revelation*, like all allegory, can be read on at least four levels: the personal, interpersonal, social collective, and the cosmic level. (ibid.) The scale of the Apocalypse in *The Canticle* moves rewardingly within all these dimensions and can be easily read through any of these approaches, but in this study is perhaps best viewed from the personal toward the social collective. This is because much of Miller's discourse is a call for responsibility and action directed at the personal level, which he then reflects on the whole society.

For D.H. Lawrence, the symbols of *Revelation* revealed fundamental truths about human psychology; he believed that Apocalypse was a revelation of initiation experience which showed symbolically the way to liberation of the self beyond rational or scientific explanation. (Kalnins in introduction to Lawrence 1995: 12) What is more, Lawrence's writings on *Revelation* were not nostalgia for a golden age, but rather an active inquiry into ancient beliefs which seemed to offer a vital way of conceptualizing the universe and man's place in it. (ibid. 17.) Lawrence felt, similarly to Eliade and possibly Miller as well, that modern man, with his emphasis on reason and science, has almost entirely lost the connection to the mytho-poetic imagination, sense-awareness and sense-knowledge of the ancients. For this reason, the value of interpreting apocalyptic texts, which contain archetypal symbols valid for all ages and places, lies in their achievement as literature and in the stimulus it offers to the imagination, rather than in their validity as historical documents. (ibid. 20-21.) In this sense, the analysis of *The Canticle* and therefore this study as well, has definite value in interpreting the symbol play of the book and bringing about very powerful existentialist ideas. According to Lawrence, our rational age which diminishes the importance of the mythic consciousness in art and religion has

impoverished human existence, and, by denying that anything has or can have numinous significance, we limit our understanding of reality. (ibid. 23.)

4.3 Apocalyptic tendencies in American literature

American literature has always had apocalyptic tendencies. As explained by May (1972: 25-26), the history of Apocalypse in the American tradition starts with the Puritans, English reformers of religion, who came to New England between 1620 and 1640 on a mission to follow through with the covenant they had made with God. May claims that the mission of the Puritans failed, which reflected in their writings and sermons as emphasis on decline and imminent judgment and God's wrath and made them consider their new world as the beginning of the end of the world.

The next important development in the American apocalyptic thought came with the Great Awakening in the 18th and 19th centuries, which emphasized the effects of Christ's kingdom in men's hearts and inner harmony and contributed to the American tendency of millenarian anticipation (May 1972: 28). Furthermore, the Quaker movement highlighted not only the Apocalypse of human sin but also the reign of love that would spread among people along with the growing experience of the kingdom of Christ. Although American Christians still expected heavenly bliss, the hope of radical transformation of their earthly life was being exaggerated. Hope was taken out of its religious context and placed in a more secular one, that of human sovereignty, natural freedom, national superiority, manifest destiny and eventually it was confused with progress of industrialism and American belief in a chosen nation. (ibid. 29.)

Even though the early settlers believed they were a part of the end times, the first centuries of American expectation of the Apocalypse finished with a growing secularism (May 1972: 29). The Manifest Destiny, belief in the destiny to expand across the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, led the way to exploitation of land and natives and the myth of easy success and unlimited progress developed that became "the background for the literary rebirth of genuine Apocalypse" (ibid. 31). What is more, a literary mode of American Apocalypse

developed by novelists, from the middle of the 19th century onwards that reflected a strong opposition against the easy optimism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This opposition reached into a powerful reaction to the successive global wars and the century of unrestrained technology, which is one of the main preoccupations of Walter Miller.

May (1972: 33-35) suggests three elements that are characteristic of an apocalyptic work: *catastrophe*, *judgment* and *renewal*, from which at least two should be found in an apocalyptic story and which can all be specified as primitive, Judaeo-Christian or secular. This study briefly considers only the Judaeo-Christian elements. *Catastrophe* translates into signs of warning and imagination of the end, which may be microcosmic or macrocosmic, but nonetheless, are to be read in a greater scale, since even an individual is typical of a greater representation. Degrading moral standards, the end itself, be it of humanity or a phase of history, are typical of all cyclic myths of Apocalypse. Water and fire are the main symbols of Judaeo-Christianity. The notion of *judgment*, (ibid. 36-37) means images of mythic norm of judgment against which the actions of the characters are mirrored, for Judaeo-Christianity it is the coming Messianic kingdom. As for *renewal*, for the Judaeo-Christian renewal is real growth and development. All of these elements are easily found in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. The warning signs of a catastrophe are evident and the sense of an end concerns the whole humanity, in addition, the novel adapts a biblical structure that moves toward a final judgment. Lastly, the theme of renewal and of growth is ubiquitous in the book. *The Canticle* is, therefore, a truly apocalyptic story.

The American tradition of literary Apocalypse can be divided into three phases. (May 1972: 204-206) The first is the *social* phase, which is a reaction against the romanticism and liberalism of the 19th century American tendency, represented by, for instance, Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), which May calls the most apocalyptic novel in American literature. The second phase, represented, among others, by Faulkner and West, emphasizes the *individual*, focusing on the period of isolationism, introspection and the Great Depression. The third phase is a phase of *angst*, roughly limited to the period after 1950 and involves writers such as Ellison, Pynchon and Vonnegut. This phase involves many themes: national awakening,

racial injustice, alienation resulting from the human displacement of the last world war, Cold War tension and also nuclear potential. In other words, as May calls it, "a period of technological plenty amid mythological poverty". It is in this last period where Walter Miller and *A Canticle for Leibowitz* are placed. Miller obviously brought his experience of the Second World War into his novel; memories of battles, loss of hope in humanity and a sinister view to nuclear armament. The novel is indeed representative of this period of angst, written during a century of the two World Wars and the Cold War juxtaposition. In fact, for Ower (1982: 448) as well, *The Canticle* is a product of a deeply disturbed century. To conclude, ever since the beginning, the American tradition for literary Apocalypse has used traditional symbols for the same purpose that Apocalypse was meant for originally, for conquering despair during devastating times (May 1972: 22).

From apocalyptic tendencies in American literature, this study now moves to exploring the nuclear, apocalyptic and religious themes in science fiction. The next chapter will illustrate in detail how science fiction as a genre has developed into an effective medium for apocalyptic and nuclear discourse. Furthermore, this chapter shows how science fiction has even taken in religion and how biblical imagery, in fact, is a natural part of apocalyptic science fictional narratives.

5 SCIENCE FICTION: NUCLEAR POWER, APOCALYPSE AND RELIGION

5.1 A brief definition of the term *science fiction*

The growth and development of science fiction stories has been strongly connected to the magazines that published them and more importantly, the editors that shaped them (Scholes & Rabkin 1977: 26). The term *science fiction* was coined by Hugo Gernsback, editor of the first science fictional magazine, *Amazing Stories*, founded in 1926 and the oldest science fiction award, the Hugo award, granted since 1953, is named after Gernsback. In Europe, science fiction was of better quality than in America, where the so called *pulp fiction*, low standard stories printed on cheap cellulose (pulp), became very popular due to increased flows of immigrants who had

to learn the new language. However, the bad reputation of science fiction caused by pulp in the 1930s was improved by a new editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine, Joseph W. Campbell in 1937, who started to pay much needed attention to the inner logic and literary quality of science fiction stories. (ibid. 13-14.)

Towards the end of the 1950's, atomic weapons cast a shadow on the worldview of science fiction. In 1964, the new editor of the British *New World* magazine, Michael Moorcock, shifted the focus of science fiction to a phenomenon named New Wave, meaning that the world was now living that future which earlier science fiction stories had anticipated. (Sisättö & Jerrman 2004: 15-16.) In recent decades, science fiction has been subcategorised and blended with other genres. The popularity of fantasy literature has affected science fiction as many writers have mixed themes from both. In fact, in the recent years there has been talk about New Weird, a subgenre combining features of science fiction, fantasy and horror. Curiously, even the term science fiction is under renovation, since many writers feel that it is mostly connected to television, cinema and the computerised entertainment and prefer the term *speculative fiction*, which covers the literary genre with its many fantastic, absurd and surrealistic subgenres. (ibid. 17-20.)

5.2 Nuclear power in science fiction

According to Brians (1986: 193), the logical place to begin study of nuclear fiction is Clarke's *Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984* (1966, unavailable for this study). Furthermore, articles by Berger (1976, 1979, 1981, see Bibliography for detailed references) on the subject of nuclear war have proved useful for researchers. (ibid.193.) During my reading, there has often been reference to Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending* (1967) for anyone conducting study in chaos, crisis and the end of the world. The Kermode book was interesting but proved too complex reading for my work. Many articles and book-length studies quoted in this study are often mentioned as early studies on nuclear fiction, these list, for instance, studies by Wolfe (1979), Dowling (1987), Boyer (1985, this study quotes the 1994 edition) and Brians (1987). In fact, Brians' *Nuclear Holocausts: atomic war in fiction* (1987) is a very concise survey of the history of the field as well as a useful anthology. In

addition, any researcher on nuclear fiction will enjoy the 1986 volume 13 of *Science Fiction Studies* magazine entirely dedicated to articles on nuclear discourse. Recent studies on nuclear fiction seem to have shifted from the anxieties of the Cold War towards more ecological concerns.

Science fiction has struggled to be regarded as respectable literature. This has mostly to do with its anti-realistic thematic history, the pulpy period and the inconsistency in the quality of its early writers. In 1977 Scholes and Rabkin still justified the importance of studying science fiction as a valuable feature of contemporary culture. According to Herbert (1990: 160), classical science fiction has a capacity of serving as a medium for an innumerable amount of philosophical issues regarding, for instance, the nature of space, time, matter, and of man; mind and reason, problems concerning nature and social existence, history and morality. Furthermore, Seed (1999), emphasizes science fictional capacity of encoding and tackling issues that at any given moment preoccupy society, for instance, the overwhelming anxieties of the Cold War discourse in the 1950s and 1960s.

Seed (1999: 8) even pinpoints the moment in history that changed the standing of science fiction by quoting science fiction writer Isaac Asimov: “the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 made science fiction respectable”. Furthermore, also quoted by Seed, the philosopher Jacques Derrida takes a more moderate standpoint; the bombs of 1945 ended a classical, conventional war, they did not set off a nuclear war and thus nuclear conflict exists only through what is said of it, mere opinions of writers (1999: 4, 6). What must be acknowledged, however, is that even if another nuclear conflict has not occurred so far, the fear of future bombing became so strong worldwide that it made nuclear war seem real. Since the Cold War changed the role of science fiction into a mouthpiece of drastic social changes, the nuclear discourse is one of its most important themes, at least during the 1950s, which is when Miller wrote *The Canticle*. What is more, if Derrida rather redefines than denies the nuclear referent, and if nuclear war can only be approached speculatively, his argument only highlights the equal ability of literature to approach nuclear war to sociological, strategic and other modes of speculation (1999: 4).

Furthermore, Franklin (1984) takes the role of science fiction even a little further. Apocalypse itself was nothing new to science fiction literature even before the war years. In fact, science fiction included stories with "atomic" bombs and mass destruction for decades prior to the invention and use of the actual bomb. According to Franklin (1984: 12-13), H. G. Wells published *The World Set Free* (1914), the first novel of the atomic age, just before World War I. In the novel several world cities are bombed with atomic bombs, the old civilization is destroyed, and from the wreck rises a new organization of mankind led by a handful of farsighted elite who establish science as the new master of the world. It was the reading of *The World Set Free* that inspired physicist Leo Szilard, one of the later scientists of the Manhattan Project, in his work with the patent of the chain reaction. (ibid. 14-15.)

Franklin writes that the history of nuclear weapons is unavoidably connected to the imagination of science fiction and it may be partly responsible for creating nuclear war. On the other hand, he argues, science fiction may have also prevented nuclear attacks, and since it can offer insights into the magnitude of the nuclear threat; the role of science fiction is to help us find our way out of this mess it has partly created. (Franklin 1984: 11-12, 28.) Furthermore, noted by Dowling (1987), the nuclear possibility forces late twentieth century man to face his nature and his place in the nature of things by imagining possibilities previously preserved for theology and metaphysics. Literature of nuclear disaster, when written intelligently, reminds science fiction of its roots in man's technological investigation of himself and, what is more, of science fiction's very nature as symbolic meditation of history itself. (1987: 1.)

According to Morrissey (1984: 199), the incredibility of nuclear war is both a practical and aesthetic problem; atomic war is a bit hard to take in, and just like the biblical Armageddon, it is somehow distant, beyond our imagination. Atomic war combines real potential with mythic improbability and until it is made real, it slips into the realm of metaphor. It took dramatic events to make nuclear power a perceived threat and to invite books about it: the bombing of Japan, the end of American monopoly on atomic weapons and the Cuban missile crisis. The literary responses to Hiroshima and Nagasaki echoed for twenty years. The early works on the nuclear threat include, for instance, Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence* (1948),

Judith Merril's short story "That Only A Mother" (1948), Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo* (1952), Philip Wylie's *Tomorrow!* (1954), Neville Shute's *On the Beach* (1957), Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959), Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz (*1959) and Eugene Burdick's and Harvey Wheeler's *Fail-Safe* (1962). (ibid. 198) For Morrissey, the three major experiments in describing the seemingly inexpressible are Huxley's *Ape and Essence*, Miller's *The Canticle* and Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980). Although separated by over thirty years, these nuclear devastation stories are so similar for the concern they express that "each seems like a link in an evolutionary chain" (ibid. 197-199). In summary, these three novels explore the issue of whether or not human love, divine love, or art have any future in the aftermath of nuclear war. (ibid. 212.)

During the two decades following World War II, science fiction produced a great many works of an apocalyptic nature; some stories have been termed awful warnings of nuclear holocaust with a precise theme: man would destroy himself if he continued to escalate the military use of atomic weapons. Science fiction's focus shifted from essentially optimistic to a hopelessly pessimistic one. (Wolfe 1979: 125.) However, the icon of the actual bomb so apparent on the surface is not that apparent in the literature itself. Wolfe argues that several science fiction novels that seem to deal with nuclear holocaust seldom do, at least not in the sense of a political or social warning. Instead, nuclear disaster quickly became incorporated into science fictional devices used as means to a theme rather than as the theme itself. This is the case, for instance, in Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* where nuclear war is used as a part of the exposition for a narrative of life that takes place centuries after such a war. (ibid. 127-128.)

For Wolfe (1979: 128), the meaning of the full body of nuclear holocaust literature is somewhat complex. First, it has to do with the theme of alienation: these stories are preoccupied by humanity's quest for the unknown space and universe, which bother us because of their unfamiliarity. In order to know the unknown space and universe, we have created technology and moved far from our own origins to an environment from which we now try to get out of because it is not natural for us anymore. This cycle is visible in *The Canticle*: technology created nuclear weapons that destroyed the world and now humanity has to get back on its feet again. In many stories

humankind continually redefines the limits of the known and unknown and creates new arenas for its activity, until a point is reached where extrapolation merges into mysticism and the only possible ending is an eschatological one. According to Wolfe, in opposition to such works are works with a cyclical view of history, which is beneficial to science fiction writers working on a large canvas because they can build their extrapolations on past history, like Miller does in *The Canticle*. (ibid. 128.)

5.3 Apocalypse and religion in science fiction

According to Frye (1963: 21), myth is an essential part of much of contemporary thought; it underlies anthropology, psychology, religion, sociology and literary criticism. Myth has always been an important part of literature; it provides the main framework of a verbal universe, later occupied by literature. Although literature employs this universe more flexibly and thoroughly, myth merges with literature in every culture. Myths are often used as allegories of science, religion or morality, but since myths are stories, their meaning is inside them, which can never be translated into conceptual language. (ibid. 32-33.) What is more, as any student of literature quickly learns, most, if not all, classic literature is referenced on elements of mythologies, epics, ancient stories and religious themes and the awareness of those themes contribute essentially to the understanding of a particular work of fiction.

Even to begin to understand western literature the reader must, at least to some extent, be familiar with the Greek, Egyptian and Norse mythologies, but, most importantly, with the Bible. Frye (1983: xi) states that "the elements of the Bible have set up an imaginative framework, a mythological universe, within which *Western* literature has operated down to the eighteenth century and is to a large extent still operating". Scholes and Rabkin (1977: 165) point out that also science fiction makes heavy use of myths: archetypal stories that provide us with the symbols that help us shape our world. The richest source of myths in our culture is the Bible and because science fiction writers can presume their readers' knowledge of these myths, their stories have a sense familiarity and thus plausibility. This might not be true of modern readers any more, but literary scholars and real literary enthusiasts

still certainly know the Bible. Scholes and Rabkin (ibid. 42-44) argue that since science became science in fact, not just in fiction, the relationship of science and religion has been difficult, though not unconditionally, since many great scientists, for instance Newton and Einstein, were very religious men.

What is more, science fiction has always had a metaphysical and eschatological dimension, so biblical imagery as well as the language of biblical Apocalypse came naturally and effortlessly to it, making it a literature of anxiety. In particular, the biblical reference contributed to the description of twentieth century angst and the secular menace of nuclear destruction. (Dowling 1987: 115.) However, biblical imagery is appropriate for science fiction since what is contemplated is not so much the end of the physical world, as proof of man's degeneracy. (ibid. 116.) Fiction of nuclear disaster shares many of the preoccupations of the biblical apocalyptic, such as limitation and inadequacy of language, since they both use similes, parodies and analogies in their attempt to describe the indescribable, often leaving symbolic images enigmatic. Furthermore, a common feature is the notion of secrecy; the speaker of *Revelation*, for instance, has secret sources and nuclear fiction often involves secret manuscripts or books from the pre-disaster world (as in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*). Finally, the imagery of Apocalypse is ubiquitous in the Bible and often in eschatological stories as well in addition to the reference to religion; people turn naturally to religion during and after destruction because it offers a framework within which they can comprehend the devastating events around them. (ibid. 121-124.)

Scholes and Rabkin (1977: 49) make a good point: science fiction has created a matrix inside which the values of science can be explored and the information regarding the cosmos that science has generated may be brought into contact with human behaviour. Furthermore, fiction that extrapolates from the present to explore the possible results of contemporary decisions becomes a cultural necessity. According to them, this is the challenge for writers, that, for instance, Wells understood. Most books and articles touching on religion in science fiction reviewed for this study list only two significant works from the early decades of science fiction: James Blish's *A Case of Conscience* (1958) and Walter M. Miller Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959). All of them prefer *The Canticle*, Scholes and Rabkin

no exception, who call it "probably the finest work of religious science fiction in the canon" (ibid. 50).

Frisch and Martos (1985: 12-13) write about using religious imagination in science fiction and group such writing in three: *fundamentalizing*, *ultimatizing* and *moralizing*. Fundamentalizing means reducing reality to its most essential features, ultimatizing is concerned with the ultimate meaning of human existence; and moralizing is the way religious imagination seeks to describe the ethically good life. The article also introduces the term *religiosity*, meaning trivialized religion, such as insights into the nature of the cosmos turned into oversimplification of reality, gods turned into idols, and teachings to dogmas. Science fiction writers often reject religiosity as unworthy of imitation by in turn satirizing religion or some aspect of it. (ibid. 13.) In their article, Miller's book falls into the category of *ultimatizing* since it is deeply preoccupied by the true meaning of life and what is more, *The Canticle* is also curiously viewed as a parody of an institutionalised religion. According to Frisch and Martos, the Church in *The Canticle* is more interested in religiosity than religion, since they give primary importance to formality and ritual rather than to the inner development of individual and the moral salvation of society. Furthermore, just like in Medieval Europe, the Church is cooperating with political systems while keeping an eye on its self-preservation. However, Frisch and Martos conclude that Miller is not bluntly antagonistic toward institutionalized religion and in the novel religion helps save just enough truth and information that is needed for scientific development. And even for Miller, they argue, religion offers hope for individual importance in the middle of the apparently condemned humanity. (ibid. 18-19.)

This idea of Miller making a parody of the Church in *The Canticle* can be criticized. The formality and the insistence on ritual in the Abbey is an attempt for much needed discipline and structure as well as a reflection of the inability of the monks to fully experience their faith in a world which is very dislocated. What is important, is their genuine effort to rebuild the faith and thus participate in the moral salvation of both the individual and of society. And the monks, at least most of them, do believe in helping the individual build a better society. The Church, in general, is also operating in a dislocated world. It can be counter-argued that Miller is examining the complex co-operation of the religious and the political systems and not showing that the

Church is trivialized because they cooperate with the state. It is doubtful that Miller was antagonistic toward institutionalized religion, nothing in the novel supports this conclusion. Instead, he may have wondered about the ability of the Church to cope in the future alongside secular governments and scientific societies. What is more, there is no absolute proof that Miller believed humanity to be condemned; he left plenty of evidence in the book to suggest otherwise.

However, incorporating religion and mysticism into works of science fiction is not without its critics. Ketterer (1974: 44) states that among those resisting mystical reality in science fiction is Suvin, an academic and critic best known for his work on the literary history of science fiction, who has argued that:

> The rational extrapolative and analogical technique of science fiction does not allow for the presentation of a mystical realm … all attempts to transplant the metaphysic orientation of mythology or religion into sf in a crudely overt way such as C.S.Lewis … or in more covert ways in very many others, will result only in private pseudo-myths, in fragmentary fantasies or fairy tales.

Suvin goes on to mention, for instance, Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, "where the ideological attraction to myth as world view and not as formal pattern got the best of the sf writer" According to Ketterer, if we follow Suvin's purist distinctions, no consistent work of science fiction could exist since they all mix realistic, science fictional and fantastic elements. Though plausibility is important in science fiction, this plausibility is connected to logical processes and is therefore not inconsistent with other matters that are plausible, since they are of religious belief. Ketterer continues to claim convincingly that surely the immensity and apparent infinity of the universe, which science fiction always invokes, gives basis for that awe associated with man's response to God and for "confusing the heavens with Heaven". (ibid. 45.) For Ketterer, science fiction is at home in all forms of apocalyptic imagination, and the distinction between religion as world view or as subject matter in literature does not apply to the decision as to whether a specific work is science fiction or not. He even asserts that with the growing tendency to consider religious systems as similar to mythology in search of mapping the same metaphysical reality, science fiction is now often assumed a species of mythology. (ibid. 48.)

If religious themes were relatively rare during the hay-day of science fiction and the few ones encountered critique and confusion, there seems to have been a change of trend on the twenty-first century. Winston (2001) quotes Collins, a professor of English, who sees science fiction as a very fertile ground for religious themes, since both are interested in final answers. Collins says that some of the best science fiction books, among them Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, have incorporated the two worlds. Furthermore, he specifies that the ingenuity of SF stories that deal with religion lies in the exploration of how religious impulses shape our destiny and in the way the supernatural can intrude upon the natural. He speculates that the favourable response to such stories is connected to the change of the millennium and the growing sense that science alone will never give sufficient answers. Collins makes a good point; the sense of an Apocalypse in religious history as well as in literary production has always surfaced at certain intervals of time, specifically at the turns of millennia (see for example Weber 1999). In Winston's article many writers and publishers have the same point of view: religion adds a layer to science fiction and this genre tends to go into the great myths of human existence which lodges into our consciousness in ways that an overt doctrine might not (2001)

This chapter has shown how the nuclear referent is deeply connected to science fiction: not only did nuclear bombing change the respectability of science fiction, but science fiction has also a role to play in the invention of such weapons as well as in illustrating the potential results. The incredibility of nuclear war has only been possible to deal with within the medium of science fiction. The chapter also explored the connection of myth and apocalypse to science fiction and how even biblical imagery fits in science fiction since metaphysical and eschatological dimensions are natural to the genre. What is more, attraction to apocalyptic stories seems to be often connected either to eras of despair or, for instance, to the latest change of the millennium. People react to certain intervals of time in their quest for final answers concerning questions of life. We have also seen how Miller's novel is strongly representative of a science fictional work, which deals with all the nuclear, apocalyptic and religious concerns introduced by this chapter and is thus perhaps the best example in the genre. Moving forward from the Apocalypse, this work now proceeds to the second perspective of the research question that is the three temptations of Christ.

6 THE THREE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST AS TEXTUAL REFERENCE FOR A SECOND APOCALYPSE IN *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*

6.1 The three temptations of Christ in Matthew 4:1-11

The temptations of Christ are found in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew (4:1-11), Mark (1:12-13) and Luke (4:1-13), *synoptic* referring to the fact that these texts have considerable similarity in content, narrative arrangement, language, sentence and paragraph structures. The texts describe how Jesus spends 40 days and nights in the wilderness after being baptized and before assuming the task he was called to, during which he is tempted by the devil three times to prove his divinity. There are, however, differences in the three descriptions of the temptations; Mark's account is very short, whereas Luke and Matthew provide detailed conversation between Jesus and the devil. This study uses the account of Matthew since it the best as regards of the style and content and, also because the order in which the temptations are presented fits the order of the analysis. Christ's temptations described by Matthew (4:1-11) can be found in the Appendix of this study.

The issue of temptation has two meanings in the Bible (Temptation, n.d.). First, it is the "trial, a being put to test"; and secondly, it means solicitation to that which is evil and for this reason Satan is called "the tempter". This temptation is not internal but imposed by a real, active being. The temptations of Christ are to be seen in this second meaning of the word as the devil tests Christ's obedience. (ibid.) Moreover, Jesus' fasting is paralleled to the story of Israel in the Bible. According to Grant (1998), Jesus is led to the wilderness by God in the same way as Israel coming through the water of the Red Sea after their miraculous rescue from Egypt. Jesus had just experienced God's favour at his baptism and the Israelites had witnessed God's power at work at the Red Sea. What follows is a period of wandering and starving in the wilderness, forty years for Israel and forty days and nights for the Christ. (ibid.) However, Jesus succeeds in following the Lord whereas Israel failed and consequently, in all his responses to the devil, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Old Testament, which was given to Israel in the wilderness as it was preparing to enter the land of promise. In this way, Jesus obeys God in a place where Israel did not and fulfils God's design for Israel. (ibid.)

Described by Matthew (cf. Appendix), Christ is fasting in the wilderness for forty days and nights after which the devil appears to him and provides him with three temptations. The first temptation concerns **physical life**, it is the temptation of hunger. The famished Jesus is told by the devil to turn stones into bread to feed his hunger if he truly is the son of God to which Jesus replies that "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God". The temptation is to put physical needs above spiritual needs and take advantage of being the son of God. According to Grant (1998), in the first temptation Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 8:2-3 as the Lord speaks to Israel through Moses:

> And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, **to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart**, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know **that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live**. (Deuteronomy,n.d. emphasis added)

Just like Israel, the Christ is also led to the wilderness to be humbled, to prove himself, to know what is in his heart and to learn that man does not live by bread only but that he has to trust in God's word. The answer of Jesus to the first temptation means that our physical needs must be met with God's way and not by fast and easy human solution. What is more, Jesus resists the temptation to play Messiah and turn stones into bread when hungry and when pushed to do so. Spiritual development begins with humility and self-inspection and learning to control our physical needs and not letting them control us; in other words, there is a higher law than physical desire. Jesus refuses the temptation to use his own power in turning stones to bread to feed his hunger and chooses to trust in God. The first temptation means that man does not live by bread only, while bread is essential for survival, we must also seek for things beyond physical satisfaction, in biblical view, that means spiritual capacities and faith.

The second temptation deals with **mental life**. The devil takes Christ high on the pinnacle of a temple and urges him to cast himself down, since God will surely send his angels to carry him when he falls. Christ replies that you shall not tempt the Lord. Christ is tempted to prove his place in the world and his relationship to God, to let his mind be manipulated to get what it wants. According to Grant (1998), in his response Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:16, which reads: "Ye shall not tempt the

LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah" (King James Version, Deuteronomy, n.d.). This passage refers to the Israelites' forcing God to act when they were thirsty at Massah in the wilderness. In other words, in his response to the second temptation Jesus means that he will not force and manipulate God to do what he otherwise would not do and make God prove himself. Once again, Christ refuses the temptation of testing his divinity and chooses to trust in God.

Finally, the third temptation is **spiritual**. The devil takes Christ on a high mountain showing him all the kingdoms of the world that he can have if he kneels down and worships the devil. The temptation is of authority and wordly glory. Christ rebukes the devil by answering that you shall worship the Lord and only Him. The temptation is to be as God and to gain godlike powers in exchange for worshipping the devil. Here Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:13: "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name" (Deuteronomy, n.d.), which refers to the mistake of Israel to worship other gods (Grant 1998). The Christ's answer means that we are to choose God at every turn instead of picking and choosing our way between world powers for personal gain.

6.2 Christ's temptations and *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

The original idea of applying the temptations to *The Canticle* is credited to Professor Hugh Malafry who has given the permission to take the idea further in this thesis. This approach was introduced in the study notes of Professor Malafry's literature course Transformations of myth in the English Department in 2001 where I first studied the novel and was thus available for all the students on the course. However, on this course the book was never analysed according to the temptations. Apart from the research idea, all the sources, organisational solutions and interpretative techniques and style have been mine to discover and execute in the way I saw best. I have developed the research idea further by first drawing the long and complex trace of Apocalypse from mythology and the Bible to American literary tradition and to science fiction. I have connected Miller's book to the three temptations of Christ through my own examples and analysis, and showed the apocalyptic frame and significance in Miller's novel. What is more, the philosophical as well as the more

technically literary and allegorical findings of this study hopefully carry even more research merit than organisational solutions.

According to Malafry (2006, lecture notes), the temptations are important because they describe the challenges of human nature and what has to be overcome for the divine design to emerge in the individual, and consequently in humanity as a whole. These temptations have to do with the **physical**, **mental** and **spiritual**. The threefold temptations of physical, mental and spiritual life correspond fittingly with the organisation of *The Canticle*, each of the three sections of the book exploring the impact of the temptations on the cycle of human progression. What is more, there are some references to the temptations in the novel.

Myths begin with creation and consummate in Apocalypses when the cycle is complete and the return to the First Time is achieved. The Judaeo-Christian version of the apocalyptic myth is linear and ethical and the Apocalypse is a grand redemption that brings the world back to its Edenic state. According to Malafry (2006, lecture notes), similarly to myths of Apocalypse, *The Canticle* is a journey from creation to destruction, a cycle that comes full due to failure of humankind. What is more, this journey is similar to the redemptive journey of Israel in the Bible. The structure of *The Canticle* therefore follows a biblical pattern, even the names of the three sections pointing in this direction. As Brians (1999) notes, *Let there be man* refers to *Genesis* and tells the story of how man starts his journey in the novel. *Let there be light* similarly refers to *Genesis*, but in the novel describes the newly discovered science and electric light. *Thy will be done* refers to Luke 22:42 when Jesus facing crucifixion prays to God to be spared but concludes, “Nevertheless, let Thy will be done”.

In the Bible, the temptations are spelled out in chapter 3 of *Genesis*. The first temptation deals with physical life with its needs and appetites (eating the fruit of the tree); the second temptation concerns the mind (to become wise from the fruit of the tree); and the third temptation addresses the spirit (in the day you eat thereof your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods). The same temptations are repeated throughout the Bible (for instance in the Old Testament by Moses in the Exodus) and

in every story the issue of temptations and human nature is in focus. They appear once again in the New Testament in the three temptations of Christ. (Malafry 2006)

Described by Matthew, at each temptation Christ refers to the Word of God and furthermore, to Deuteronomy, which links him to the mistakes Israel made that he now has to make right. In the three temptations of physical, mental and spiritual Christ describes the pitfalls of human appetite, concept and will before he begins to teach (Malafry 2006, lecture notes). The temptations and the reference to Israel's redemptive journey can be paralleled to the journey of humanity in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and the temptations humanity faces during this journey. Curiously, the entire story takes place in the desert, as if humanity in 'crossing over the desert', is being humbled and tested from the beginning until the end.

In *Let there be man*, young novice Francis is sent for his Lenten fast in the wilderness much in the way that Christ in the temptations. Similarly, the fasting is a time of solitude, prayer and clarity of mind as well as physical, mental and spiritual testing for the innocent faith of both Francis and the Christ. Just like Christ, Francis encounters an old man during his fasting who gains devil-like characteristics and acts as the tempter who launches the story. The whole society, with Francis in the spotlight, embodies the physical temptation in the sense of hunger, poverty of mind and the hesitation to follow the word of God. What is more, in *Let there be light*, humanity is being metaphorically brought to a pinnacle to tempt its luck of being safely caught. This is portrayed in the form of scientific advances without proper responsibility over its consequences, the mental temptation of humanity is to be wise without regard to God. In *Thy will be done,* vengeful humanity is faced with a spiritual temptation as it is offered to rule the kingdoms of the world. The question remains whether or not humanity will acknowledge God as the higher power or will they be tempted to play God themselves.

The three parts of the book will be addressed in respective chapters. At the beginning of each chapter, I will provide the appropriate passage from the three temptations to be carried along with the analysis of each part of the book. The subsections will look at one specific theme at a time in order to interpret how it contributes to the temptation at hand and consequently to the apocalyptic direction of humanity. I will illustrate my points with excerpts from the novel. Some subsections may grow longer

than others if there is more material to discuss. Incidentally, the first part of the novel, *Let there be man*, will be analysed in lesser detail than the two others since it offers less material for a lengthy discussion.

7 THE PHYSICAL TEMPTATIONS IN *LET THERE BE MAN*

The physical temptation of Christ reads as follows:

> Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, **command these stones be made bread.** But he answered and said, It is written, **Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** (Matthew 4:1-4, emphasis added)

The first book of *The Canticle*, entitled *Let there be man*, opens into a desolate and barren desert where a young novice, Brother Francis Gerard of Utah, is in the middle of his Lenten fast, a vocational vigil testing his capacity to become a monk of the Leibowitzian Order. This is the post-holocaust America, a new Dark Age, 600 years after a near-annihilation of the world. The structures of the 20th century society have largely vanished along with standard language, technology and general knowledge, replaced by return to medieval beliefs, superstition, rejection of the past, and a struggle toward restoration. The land is sparsely populated, with illiterate and violent tribes controlling designated areas, simple clanfolk living in communities by primitive agriculture and a city called New Rome has become the papal capital of a new, medieval Catholic faith. This generation has no exact details as to how and why a nuclear war destroyed their world back in the 1950s, since, along with that civilization most books and records were lost first in the war itself and then burned during the subsequent persecution of scientists, teachers and men of knowledge.

In the middle of this exhaustive wasteland, the only ones to take an interest in the previous world is the Albertian Order of Leibowitz, a brotherhood of monks whose sworn task is to quietly collect, restore and interpret old texts and manuscripts with little or no understanding of the contents, but full understanding of their mission: one day to help create civilization anew. The brotherhood and the abbey, which functioned as an asylum for men of learning persecuted after nuclear war, never

participated in the chaotic tearing down of society but instead, always kept their mission of education and preservation of knowledge and hope for the future.

The first temptation in the analysis is the physical temptation. In the following sections this work analyses first the physical similarities and implications between the character of Francis fasting in the wilderness and looking for his vocation and the fasting of Christ in the desert as described by Matthew in the Bible. Secondly, in the following, this study also looks at physical temptations of society during the time that Francis and the Abbey of Leibowitz are living in the beginning of the book. At the end of this chapter the full meaning of resisting or failing the physical temptation on the road toward Apocalypse is explained.

7.1 Francis and the Tempter in the wilderness

While fasting in the drought and heat of the wilderness, young Francis encounters an old hermit dressed in burlap and their meeting proves epochal for Francis and for the outcome of the whole story. The fact that the book begins with the Lenten vigil connects the storyline straight to the temptations and Christ's fasting in the wilderness since there are many similarities in these two events. What is more, it can be argued that the Lenten vigil is important because its desert setting is familiar from the Bible and creates the atmosphere of difficulty, trial and struggle. The introduction of the character of Francis in such a post-holocaust setting strengthens the biblical scenery because it makes Francis a reference of not only Christ fasting but somehow also Adam, the first man, and hence the whole of humanity, since this is the beginning of the new story for man.

When the hermit first appears, he turns over a rock and kills a snake residing under it with his staff, thus connecting the beginning of the novel also to Edenic scenery and the temptation of the snake that hissed in the ear of Eve. The first pages into the novel where young Francis and the old hermit meet in the desert are marked by other clear biblical symbols as well as reference to the first temptation. Francis' fasting is very similar to Christ's fasting for forty days and nights, and just like Christ, Francis is weak, hungry and delusional and tempted by the hermit's offer to share his bread and cheese. Curiously, referenced to the first temptation, it is exactly *bread* that the

hermit offers, but which Francis is unable to accept despite his hunger, much like the 'hungred' Christ refuses to turn stones into bread. What is more, Francis feels as if a *demon* commands his muscles to move toward the offered bread, and at the last moment he shudders and hisses 'Begone, Satan!' (CFL 12), sprinkling holy water on the old man calling him the devil. The entire imagery in the desert is that of rocks and stones; the drought, the heat and the exhaustiveness in addition to the snake, stones, bread, demon, temptation and the fasting not only bring the reader into a religiously-charged beginning but to a physically suffering world. Somehow, it can even be argued that Miller begins the story in a kind of Eden, which is not a paradise, but a place of beginning, just like in myths of Apocalypse. Even the title of the first part of the book *Let there be man* is from *Genesis* and refers to the creation of humanity on Earth and for this reason Francis can be seen as a reference to Adam.

The purpose of Francis' fasting is to seek for clarity of mind, vocation and faith. In many ways, Francis' test is like that of Christ, to be humbled, to prove his vocation to God and the strength of his character, for innocent faith to become strong faith it has to be tested. There is no divinity or Christ-like comparison to Francis, since Francis, though sweet and innocent, is in many ways a flawed character, but there is the significance of the setting and atmosphere of the fasting in the wilderness as well as the testing of the spiritual strength and calling. As Spencer (2008) points out, the desert is a familiar motif in the Bible, it was the experience of deliverance from Egypt and the conquest of the Promised Land, as well as a place for cleansing and purification through testing and trials. Furthermore, the desert is also the place for demons, and from the beginning, the path of Christ is not just to heavenly glory but also a conflict with evil (ibid.). Similarly in *The Canticle*, the story begins in the desert, through Francis' testing and conflict with evil, which is representative of the conflicting beginning for the whole humanity. The old hermit can be seen as a tempter who tries to make Francis fail his vigil, he is a clear reference to the devil of the temptations and in addition to Francis, he is the one who launches the story.

Upon noticing that Francis is building himself a shelter, the hermit offers to find him the last missing stone to complete the rock-made abode. The timid and humble Francis, still bothered by the old man's presence on his Lenten solitude, tries to discourage the attempt:

> He continued to sit in the sand, and, by silence and by his lowered gaze, he hoped to tell the old man that he was neither free to converse nor free to accept willingly another's presence in his place of Lenten solitude. The novice began writing with a dry twig in the sand: *Et ne nos inducas in*…(And lead us not into…[temptation]) **'I've not offered to change these stones into bread for you yet, have I?** the old traveller said crossly. Brother Francis glanced up quickly. So! the old man *could* read, and read Scripture, at that. (CFL 15, Latin translation and emphasis added)

This passage from the novel is a direct reference to the first temptation, safely assumed, intentional by Miller at least to some extent. Francis feels that he is tempted by the devil and though he is hungry and exhausted, he manages to resist the temptation of the bread. In the sun-dazed mind of the novice, the hermit becomes indistinguishable from the devil himself and although the assumed devil fails to "explode into sulphurous smoke" (CFL 13) much to Francis' surprise, he is not able to come to terms with the identity of the old man. It could be argued that Miller's design for the order of the book intentionally follows Christ's temptations, starting here with the physical state in which the body suffers and while it yearns to satisfy physical appetites, the mind has to remember that we do not live by bread alone but that we need to be, more importantly, strong in faith as well.

The fasting, the search for spiritual calling, the drought, the hunger and the tempter with bread altogether suggest that such a comparison with Christ's fasting is very possible. According to Ower (1982: 447), this grim era of *Let there be man* is in fact connected through Francis' Lenten vigil to four analogous periods of mortification: the Hebrews' forty years in Sinai (portrayed by the old Jewish wanderer), Christ's forty days of testing in the wilderness, the forty days of Lent and the forty days and nights of the biblical flood (the Flame Deluge), all of which prepare for a positive spiritual outcome. For Ower, Miller is saying that even the downfall of civilization and the rough aftermath has a regenerative function for humanity. (ibid. 447.) In this sense, the opening setting of the book is not only connected to many biblical events, but can be seen in hopeful apocalyptic light.

The Lenten vigil of Francis is central to the storyline of *Let there be man*. Francis' trial is long, as is that of Jesus, during which he is trying to achieve inner peace and test his vocation, pray for a sign from God that he has chosen the right path.

> Meanwhile, Brother Francis rested. He prayed for the recovery of that inward privacy which the purpose of his vigil demanded that he seek: a clean parchment of the spirit whereon the words of a summons might be written on his solitude . . . While his starved body heaved, strained, and staggered under the weight of the rocks, his mind, machinelike kept repeating the prayer for the certainty of his vocation: . . .Set me free, O Lord, from my own vices, so that in my own heart I may be desirous of only Thy will, and be aware of Thy summons if it come. (CFL 16-17)

Francis' mind is confused, it is a mixture of superstitious beliefs, religious faith and human good will, he is looking for meaning and purpose for his humble life, hoping to find it with the brotherhood. Francis appears to be a lost soul, desperately and machine-like doing his vigil, repeating prayers, but not necessarily understanding the thoughts inside his head. The quote contributes to the first temptation: the starving Francis is hoping to be freed from his vices and weaknesses and to follow the word of God only. His vigils are extremely heavy on him physically and spiritually and in fact, on one occasion he allows himself to be overcome by temptation and eats a lizard. Finally he is allowed to takes his vows and become a monk only after completing his vigil seven times. It is important to note that Francis' Lentel vigil has him starving on purpose, by choice, with the intention to achieve physical and mental strength over natural impulses like hunger, thirst, fatigue or comfort. He is in the wilderness to build himself a follower of God while the surrounding society is spinning out of control and giving in to physical temptations of killing, stealing and cheating to satisfy their needs. This creates the contrast between Francis, whose spiritual building and trials are very much in focus in the beginning of the book, and the savage land around him which lacks control and most importantly, the Judaeo-Christian moral taught by the Bible, accessible only to the brotherhood for the moment.

The delay of Francis becoming a monk is also due to something that results from his meeting with the hermit. When the hermit finds the last fitting stone for Francis' shelter, the removing of the stone reveals an underground crypt, a fallout shelter, which dates back to the time before the nuclear devastation. Francis is not able to resist the temptation to search the contents of the crypt and discovers some personal items of the Blessed Leibowitz himself (the founder of the abbey), among which, an ancient blueprint, an allegory for a nuclear device. The discovery of the crypt is one of the most important events and the nuclear blueprint is similarly one of the most striking symbols in the book. The implied cruelty of the nuclear blueprint examined

by the sweet Francis, who cannot understand what kind of device is portrayed, juxtaposes the archaic and innocent society of Francis with the violence of Leibowitz' society. The blueprint is a powerful metaphor for a single, isolated object, which, however, implies so much more than it represents on its own.

> Brother Francis wasted no idle logic in leaping to his immediate conclusion: he had just been granted a token of his vocation by Heaven itself. He had found what he had been sent into the desert to find, as Brother Francis saw it. He was to be a professed monk of the Order. Forgetting his abbot's stern warning against expecting a vocation to come in any spectacular or miraculous form, the novice knelt in the sand to pray his thanks and to offer a few decades of the rosary for the intentions of the old pilgrim who had pointed out the rock leading to the shelter. (CFL 35-36.)

The identity of the old pilgrim and the discovery of the Leibowitz artefacts set in motion rumours among the brotherhood and cause a great deal of friction between Francis and abbot Arkos. Since Francis is the only one to have seen the old man, and after the rumours have it that the old man might have been an angel or a saint or perhaps Leibowitz himself, abbot Arkos decides that Francis' calling is not about to come so swiftly. If Francis had encountered Leibowitz that would make him very exceptional among the brethren and Francis is just a simple novice. The Order is eagerly waiting the canonization of their founder, for Leibowitz to become to real Catholic saint, but abbot Arkos does not want to jeopardize that by encouraging crazy rumours, exaggerated appearances and miracle working by their founder. Nor is he willing to accept the story of a seventeen-year-old Francis who believes to have received his true vocation. However, the important point is the following: Francis, who himself never claimed to have met an angel or Leibowitz, and who continues to be puzzled by the hermit's identity, refuses to ascertain time and time again the identity of the person he saw in the desert despite abbot Arkos' fierce attempts.

> 'I want to know if you—*You*!—are sure *beyond a doubt* that he was just an ordinary old man?' This line of questioning was puzzling to Brother Francis. In his own mind, there was no neat straight line separating the Natural from the Supernatural order, but rather, an intermediate twilight zone. . . The abbot, by raising the question at all, had formulated the nature of Brother Francis' answer, which was: to entertain the question itself, although he had not previously done so. . . *Was* he or was he not, an ordinary flesh-and-blood person? The question was frightening. . . If the question was important enough for an abbot, then it was *far* too important for Brother Francis who *dared not* be wrong. (CFL 59-61.)

The conclusion of the quote is that Francis has a mind for detail in an age of faith, the problem is that he is starting to think for himself. Abbot Arkos realises that although it would be easy to command Francis *not to think otherwise*, by allowing the boy to

see that a question was possible, he had rendered such a command ineffective before he uttered it (CFL 61-62). Though Francis desperately wants to find his vocation among the brethren, and though he himself is not able to explain the events in the desert, he refuses to deny what he saw and is sent to the wilderness seven times. This condition of doubt and the development of a curious mind created through the character of Francis, is the first feature of human mind that starts to distort the obedience of the world where the word of God is put first. The labour of the brothers this far has been repetitive and of long duration, during which they have not doubted the materials they have copied, nor have they been accustomed to doubt or disobey that much of anything else either.

In conclusion, Francis' testing in the wilderness, clearly referenced to the first temptation of Christ, sets the tone for the story; the temptation of the physical and of faith is portrayed very descriptively in Francis' fasting and the meeting with the hermit but can be read as describing the whole society of this grim era. In fact, the character of Francis already combines the threefold temptations of the physical, mental and spiritual as he is seeking to be freed from his physical vices and to become strong in mind and in faith. The desert scenery is dry and fruitless. There are physical difficulties, savage acts, starvation, pain, endurance and insecurity that have to be overcome first in order for humanity to continue towards restoration. Feeding the hunger is essential for survival, but more important is the spiritual aspect of life, learning to control the temptations of the physical and to stay strong in faith. Even the religious community does not transcend physical temptation completely: although they stay strong in faith, they also lead a life of mechanic repetition without intellectual or even ultimate religious illumination and purpose. The brotherhood is lost like the rest of society as regards of making sense with the contemporary world, but their disciplined life keeps them controlled and motivated for a good purpose, to labour with the remnants of the earlier society and putting their faith in God's word.

What is more, the physically suffering world in *Let there be man*, which will not go forward in its development from the present static state unless it wakes up, is shaken by the newborn curiosity of Francis. Morrissey (1984: 206) notes how, in the first part of the novel, faith without intellectual curiosity threatens to slow down the reawakening of learning. Paradoxically, then, it seems that society cannot go forward

without curiosity; and in following intellectual curiosity, it is difficult to keep up the faith as well. And if curiosity is the first step to knowledge, are we finally tempted by weakness or by natural curiosity?

The old hermit appears in all the three parts of the book and though each part is separated by hundreds of years, it is suggested that he is the same person, even if his character adopts a new personage each time. In the first part he is the old wanderer, in the second part he is Benjamin, and in the third part he identifies himself as Lazar. This character has caused perhaps the most trouble among researchers and readers. Based on my reading, most researchers have interpreted the hermit through the myth of the Wandering Jew (Wandering Jew, n.d.), the Jew that did not let Jesus rest on his doorstep while he was carrying the heavy wooden cross toward his crucifixion, but instead urged him to walk on. This legend from the Middle Ages has it that Jesus would have spelled the Jew to walk on endlessly, until he returns.

Other sources, noted by Garvey (1983: 36-37), suggest that he is Elijah from Jewish folklore, the angel of the covenant who dresses in burlap and goes around doing good deeds. Miller claims in an interview (Garvey 1983) that he was not aware of such a myth while writing CFL, but that it may have sprung from some collective memory. He also denies having intentionally implemented the Wandering Jew metaphor in the story and speculates that the character might be himself, or even God, a sort of letter to his anti-Semitic father with whom he disagreed on matters of faith. The idea of the old man being the writer himself works; this character is the philosophical truth-teller, always disconnected from the events and lives of the other characters in a way that he could be Miller in disguise. Furthermore, particularly in the second part of the book, much of the novel's philosophy is being spoken through Benjamin, the character of the old man in *Let there be light*, in a way that the writer's voice can be heard.

However, he also resembles the classic literary figure of the wise old man (Wise old man, n.d.), a father-type figure or a mentor who offers help and guidance and is often somehow "foreign", from a different time and place than those he advises. Perhaps this character is better seen as the wise old man archetype rather than the Wandering Jew because he is a positive and helpful character, who is there to observe and guide.

The old man can also be seen as the book's hero, since there is no main character in the novel except for him and he is the only recurrent one. Most of the other major characters are more antiheros, even Francis, who plays a bitter-sweet role as the launcher of the new civilization. What is more, since *The Canticle* is a redemptive journey, the old wanderer can even be seen as Adam or as 'every man' on the journey from fall to redemption.

7.2 Physical temptations of society

Since the war that largely destroyed the world, humanity has sunk into a state of amnesia: the past is rejected, forgotten and displaced. People believed that by forgetting the past, and by erasing all records of it, the world will begin again; they assumed that such mistakes would not be repeated once the remains of the past civilization were destroyed. What happened instead was that the will to erase the past got out of control, hatred against the learned was expanded into hatred for the merely literate. There is a hysterical response to nuclear war, which leads to a collective trauma and amnesia, since the past is too painful for the mind.

Just like the physical temptation is the first in *Genesis*, it is also logically the first in Christ's temptations and consequently in *The Canticle.* Physical temptation is the *primus inter pares*, the first in the chronology, since it is connected to basic aspects of survival. There is no place for mentality or spirituality before the physical is in order since hunger blurs all our senses and brings us on the level of animals. Perhaps this is also the most difficult of the temptations since it is connected to resisting hunger; without answering to our basic physical needs, we die, but mental and spiritual needs may stay unanswered without endangering our existence. Physical temptation is also related to our barbaric capacities, to bestiality, since hunger and poverty brings out the worst in us.

After 600 years have passed from the near-annihilation of the world and erasing of records, the collective memory has suffered greatly, it has become mythologically charged, fables and superstition are confused with reality. The mind is traumatized by its past and this injury has made it unable to distinguish between fact and fiction.

Even those who seek to solve the puzzle of the ancients are victims of this amnesia. The Memorabilia, the depository of ancient books, texts and scraps of knowledge that the monks compile and study, is mostly undecipherable. However, the monks cannot afford to neglect anything they find, since they do not know what is important.

> The monks waited. It mattered not at all to them that the knowledge they saved was useless, that much of it was not really knowledge now, was as inscrutable to the monks in some instances as it would be to the illiterate wild-boy from the hills; this knowledge was empty in content, its subject matter long since gone. Still, such knowledge had a symbolic structure that was peculiar to itself, and at least the symbol-interplay could be observed. . . So time mattered not at all. The Memorabilia was there, and it was given to them by duty to preserve, and preserve it they would if the darkness in the world lasted ten more centuries. (CFL 75-76.)

The society outside the abbey is a society of anarchy where communities live by primitive agriculture, experience physical deformity due to nuclear radiation of the past, starvation, poverty, hard labour, and brutal violence. The physically suffering world that is searching for its direction is placing physical needs above spiritual ones. The rejection and hatred for the past is logical; in this mythological mind, the world can be destroyed once it has arrived at the end only to be created anew without the burden of the past, just like in apocalyptic myths. What they neglect to understand, and what Miller claims, is that traces of collective memory cannot be completely erased since the tendency to do things resides inside us. What is more, according to Fukuyama (1992: 82-83) the dominance of modern natural science over human life is not likely to be reversed under any foreseeable circumstances, even under extreme cases, not by choice nor by involuntary circumstance, such as nuclear war. He argues that the memory of the method cannot be eliminated due to unification of civilizations and, what is more, science for military purposes will always give advantage to states that have it over those who do not, so even the good states will have let the technological genie out of the bottle. Fukuyama states that even pointless war will not necessarily teach men that no military technology can be used for rational purposes, since they may invent even new reasons to justify their actions. (ibid. 88.)

From the start Miller is concerned with the same idea as Eliade: “the fall from the order of being, and the return to it, is a fundamental problem in human existence”. The first pages of *The Canticle* already present this problem: having fallen from that

order, where to look for orientation and how to move from the hunger and physical suffering towards spiritual capacity? The society lacks the proper motivation to seek for that spiritual capacity since they choose to forget the past destruction. It is essential to know the past in order to build the future, society needs the *devoir de mémoire*, the duty of remembrance, the responsibility to know and remember past events even when not contemporary with those events. The learning process is cumulative and the basic structure of civilization will not disappear in time and for this reason, if the acquisition process is undisrupted, it permits man to go forward. Man will always make mistakes, but by learning from examples, he might make less and less.

What is more, the raging society has killed all the elite in their murderous persecution of men of knowledge after the nuclear war, and hence there remains no intellectual leadership over the land. There is certainly also a denial of the need for intellectual rulers and this has severe consequences on the development of society. The remaining order comes from the Church which is not strong enough to take over the lands, and the hierarchy of the monastery does not reach beyond the limits of their fortifications. What is more, it can be argued that the Church has a certain interest in the development of knowledge which does not contradict religious dogmas and might not therefore be beneficial for development of society. For this reason, since the society in the beginning of the book is not governed by anyone, it is not really progressing. There is a need for building the basis of society which cannot be provided without intellectuals. Only a stable and progressive society may answer the physical needs of its citizens and then proceed to fulfilling other needs. A similar example can be taken from anti-intellectualist politics which had catastrophic consequences on societal development such as the Red Khmers in Cambodia in the 1960's, which could be Miller's reference in the book.

At this stage when the masses are uneducated, the Church is the only place where social order and Judeo-Christian moral taught by the Bible could come from. Curiously, also the Church has ulterior motives, having laboured so hard at saving books they now want credit for this task. The Church is also afraid of losing power as they are obliged to share the information they safe-guard with the rest of the world, since the sworn task of the Abbey is to save knowledge for the rebuilding of society.

There is therefore a dilemma of knowing that knowledge must be spread in the world even if there is a risk that society will not be ready for it and losing power once the masses are educated. The monks at the Leibowitz Abbey calculate that the fourth or fifth generation will take an interest in their heritage again, and once that happens, the information they have preserved will be of use. What the monks did not consider, was that a new cultural heritage could be created in a couple of generations if the old one has completely disappeared, "to generate it by virtue of lawgivers and prophets, geniuses or maniacs; through a Moses, or through a Hitler. . . a cultural inheritage may be acquired between dusk and dawn, and many have been so acquired" (CFL 75). So, although a culture is being built on the ruins of the old civilization with little or no regard for the details of the old world, there is the rise of nomadic infiltration, tribal violence and illiterate rulers, contempt for education and social order.

The physical temptation of society also seals the fate of Francis. As he returns from his meeting with the Pope in New Rome, he is killed and eaten by robbers on the desert road. It is ironic that such a central character discovers and revives a nuclear blueprint which ends up acting as a catalyst for the new society and finally dies over it, murdered by the wild and illiterate. Francis' death is sudden in the book and very brutal for the reader who does not expect him to die. Like a martyr, Francis dies because of the physical temptation of the barbarian society that lacks mental strength over its physical impulses, seeks to satisfy only immediate needs, and does not have moral guidance. At the end of *Let there be man*, just before Francis is killed on the trail in the desert, he sees the old man appearing again in the distance. A while later, the old wanderer finds the buzzard-torn body of Francis and buries him. It is only appropriate and necessary for the old man to appear, his arrival closes the cycle of the first part. There is something bleakly destined in his taking care of Francis. Somehow Francis is dead because of the old man, (since the discovery of the crypt led to the finding of the blueprint which took him to see the Pope) and the fact that the old man buries him is ironic. Francis dies like a martyr for the old Leibowitz blueprint, a catalyst for nuclear technology and the new civilization.

The state of the physically torn society is also well described through the arrival of the buzzards. Miller makes heavy use of buzzards also elsewhere in the book; he uses them in the closing sentences of both the first and the second part of the book.

> One bird finally landed. It strutted indignantly about a mound of fresh earth with a rock marker at one end. Disappointed, it took wing again. The flock of dark scavengers abandoned the site and soared high on the rising currents of air while they hungrily watched the land. There was a dead hog beyond the valley of the Misborn. The buzzards observed it gaily and glided down for a feast. . . The buzzards laid their eggs in season and lovingly fed their young: a dead snake, and bits of a feral dog. The younger generation waxed strong, soared high and far on black wings, waiting for the fruitful Earth to yield up her bountiful carrion. Sometimes dinner was only a toad. Once it was a messenger from New Rome. (CFL 129-130.)

This is only a part of Miller's play with the buzzard imagery but it suffices to make following observations. The buzzards serve as a multifaceted metaphor: although there is the cruel and satisfactory strutting and soaring of these actual birds over the struggling land, they also function as an effective symbol for the following decadent direction of society and its people. The buzzards are given humanlike actions and feelings; they are delighted, thankful and lovingly feed their young, they enjoy the plentiful carrion of the earth in a beast-like manner and in the end replenish the earth many times with their kind. In the closing pages of each part, here the ending of the first one, Miller uses some words or phrases repetitively, thus creating emphasis and rhythm towards the end. For instance, the phrase 'buzzards who lovingly feed their young' is repeated twice and it comes again at the end of the second part. Miller paints a frightful scenery in the last lines of the first book, a city-state arises and there are rumours of war.

Considering the apocalyptic imagery of *Let there be man*, already in the beginning of the book there is a sense of fatality, a bleak view of future events even if the new civilization is starting to wake up. The first part of *The Canticle* implies that there is an inevitable course of events and judgment hanging over this generation which, nonetheless, seems quite innocent. The discovery of the crypt, the blueprint, which is a springboard for future science, all heralds the ill-omened events of the second part. As in myths of Apocalypse, the world's imminent destruction is interpreted from signs, such as decline in morality, violence, warfare, all of which exist in the first part of the book in addition to buzzards and vultures, in both physical and metaphorical meaning. Civilization has advanced from the new Dark Age, but not in a promising direction; a culture has been haphazardly built on the ruins of the old one, past mistakes are rejected and forgotten. The society is struggling in disorder, both physically and spiritually; this is portrayed in the Lenten fast of Francis and in the struggles of the Order to stay at their task as well as in the surrounding deserted

land and its people. The mind is searching for the transcendent but gets caught up in the effects of cultural amnesia, loss of memory, knowledge and reference.

In terms of the first temptation, choosing bread over faith, it is more physical needs that are addressed rather than the spiritual ones. The basic structure of society is undone; there are problems with health, nourishment, governance, security and education. The role and the spiritual purity of the Church are somewhat ambiguous throughout the novel. Even though the Church tries to put the word of God first, it is not sure if they fail or not in the first part, since they do valuable work in preserving knowledge, but end up revering the nuclear blueprint and making a saint of Leibowitz, one of the main nuclear scientists of the war. In the end it all boils down to Francis, his character embodies the key elements of the first section: a mind for detail in an age of faith, learning to question and doubt, all of which is good if society is balanced. Francis resists the temptation in a sense that he does survive his vigils but his faith is blurred as he is looking to belong somewhere through that faith in a world where there is nowhere to go. In this sense Francis' faith is not completely pure. In his desperate quest to receive his vocation and to become a monk, he also ends up discovering a blueprint, which will cause harm on society.

However, since the past has not been met with, the struggle toward restoration cannot succeed and the result is traumatic repetition. What is more, there is an ambiguous relationship to the books and knowledge of earlier generations; even though they must be studied in order to reach that duty of remembrance which has been lost, they also start humanity on the road toward desire for wisdom which is dangerous since they are not spiritually balanced. In other words, in *Let there be man* humankind fails the first temptation and cannot stay innocently in life putting the word of God first.

8 THE MENTAL TEMPTATIONS IN *LET THERE BE LIGHT*

The mental temptation of Christ reads as follows:

> Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, **cast thyself down**: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and **in their hands they shall bear thee up**, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, **Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.** (Matthew 4:5-7, emphasis added)

The second temptation addressed by the analysis is the mental temptation. In this chapter, the study first examines the ideological separation of the church from the state sponsored scientific research. As the progress of science accelerates, the monks of Leibowitz Abbey realise they cannot keep us with growing secularism. The main character is scientist Thon Taddeo, whose mental temptations are at focus. Secondly, this chapter includes a philosophical approach concerning the burden of human nature and the concept of original sin. The study shows how two central characters of *Let there be light*, abbot Paolo and his old friend Benjamin, discuss the pessimistic idea that people will not become wiser even given the second chance of life and will therefore use available knowledge to serve their interests, cause further harm and thus fail their mental temptation. Thirdly, this chapter deals with the rejection of history and responsibility mostly through Thon Taddeo, who questions the credibility of historical records and refuses scientific responsibility.

8.1 Light of mind vs. divine light

By the beginning of *Let there be light*, another six hundred years has passed and the world is embarking on a new Renaissance period with promises of remarkable scientific advances, although shadowed by regional commotion and a brewing war. The rumours of the Leibowitz Abbey keeping in its vaults a considerable body of ancient knowledge becomes the immediate interest of an eminent scholar, Thon Taddeo Pfardentrott, whose name “was being spoken in the same breath with names of natural philosophers dead a thousand years and more” (CFL 137). Thon Taddeo suspects the knowledge at the abbey to be a hoax but decides that the material must be studied at once if it proves helpful for the purposes of scientific development and his personal work. The attitude of the monks towards the books they guard is also

peculiar; on many instances they claim their library to be open to anyone, but in fact, the usage of the books seems secondary to perpetual preservation. In fact, for Wolfe (1979: 140), the goal of the monks has even become to hide the books and not use them, thus causing an opposition between the abbey, where knowledge is preserved, and the world, where it is needed.

It becomes clear very fast that there is a separation between the world of abbot Dom Paolo and that of the scientist. According to Wolfe (1979: 140), this meeting between the two supposedly opposed approaches to knowledge and learning, the abbot's medieval attitude and Thon Taddeo's Renaissance attitude, is the crux of the novel; the first part provides the background for it and the third part shows the result of this meeting. In the second part of the novel, the Church and science are the two clashing paradigms; the Church gradually gives way to secular, mercantile culture driven by political interests. Thon Taddeo is a kinsman of the feared conquerer Hannegan, whose ambition is to take over lands to unite them under his majestic rule, and whose court finances the collegium in which Taddeo is making his groundbreaking scientific discoveries, or rather rediscoveries. Abbot Dom Paolo is at first unsuspecting of the dangers of allowing a secular scholar study at the abbey, but gradually senses the foreboding direction of Taddeo's work. Though abbot Paolo and Thon Taddeo set off with a seemingly courteous collaboration, they soon find themselves in opposite camps as the abbot realises that the information they have painstakingly preserved over centuries will be exploited by an intelligent scientist, who is driven by his own interests for development, fame and fortune.

In a discussion between Thon Taddeo and abbot Dom Paolo, the separation of the Church from science is clearly stated. Furthermore, there are apocalyptic omens in Paolo's words.

> Let's be frank with each other, Father. I can't fight the prince who makes my work possible . . . If the collegium prospers, mankind will profit from our work. [Paolo] 'The ones who survive perhaps.' [Taddeo] 'True ─ but that's always true in any event'. [Paolo] 'No, no ─ Twelve centuries ago, not even the survivors profited. **Must we start down that road again?** . . . 'What you really suggest,' said the scholar, 'is that we wait a little while. . That we save it all up for the day when Man is good and pure and holy and wise. . .**If you try to save wisdom until the world is wise, Father, the world will never have it**. . . [Paolo] 'To serve God first, or to serve Hannegan first ─ that's your choice.' 'I have little choice then,' answered the thon. 'Would you have me work for the Church?' The scorn in his voice was unmistakable. (CFL 237-239, emphasis added)

The claim of this excerpt is that there is a separation between the Church, the state and science because science is financed and studied by secular rulers and scientists who strive for development and profit without regard to the consequences of their actions. Taddeo's words are striking, he is willing to accept the necessary casualties of this new world order, as long as his work is financed. For Taddeo, the survivors will benefit from his work, but Paolo tries to remind him that during the last destruction not even the survivors profited and expresses his concern for 'starting down that road again', which he suspects will lead to society's demise. Furthermore, for Taddeo there is no development of the human mind, man is as he always has been and will never change to truly merit this wisdom. Thon Taddeo has lost his faith in humanity, even though he might be sincere in his will to bring society forward. As Senior (1993: 334)states, Thon Taddeo has become a caricature, a figure of the scientist at his worst, who has no interest in other people, no commitment to people as human beings since he is only obsessed with his own pursuit of theory and soulless machines.

However, Taddeo might also be partly right about man never being pure, holy and wise enough to receive the things science can provide. For example, nuclear power was definitely a scientific discovery that required an expansion of thinking from society at the time it was discovered and it still does. What is more, nuclear power in the wrong hands is a frightening thought, when it may prove very important and useful in the future for various purposes of technology. Miller poses Taddeo as a very cruel, black and white character, but it does not mean that he is always wrong. What his character does, very effectively, when contrasted to Dom Paolo, is the clash between religion and science posing the question of how much can they collaborate in order for society to be balanced.

Why is Miller suggesting that there must be a separation between the Church and science? It can be argued that religion and science should be separated and are naturally diverse entities; while religion is a realm for spiritual values, science is one for intellectual conquests and understanding of the physical world. In the book they separate because man's spiritual and intellectual development does not proceed in harmony, one must give way for the other. Reflecting on the novel, Miller might be saying that these two paradigms need each other for progress to be reasonable.

Supposedly Miller is also imagining a failure in the Church during a new age to keep up with science or to serve as the sole saviour of humanity, just as science is not able to do this task either. Furthermore, the ambitions of the Church are slightly naïve; already in *Let there be man* it is clear that though the monks are treasuring past knowledge with the best intentions, it will be eventually be used to create more wars. Similarly in the second part, the fact that Dom Paolo is thinking that with the help of the Memorabilia things could be done right this time, is helplessly naïve as is the wish that the efforts of the Church would be remembered and rewarded this time. According to Brians (1987: 82), the Catholic Church in *The Canticle* cannot save civilization by itself, only a revived science tempered by the values of religion can do that and Miller's sympathies rest in the middle ground between pure science and religious dogmatism.

Already the defining theme of *Let there be light*, the separation of faith and science, the light of mind and the divine light, leads into the second temptation. The mind's desire for wordly wisdom is detached from its desire for spiritual wisdom, and forgets that some things should be resisted, as Christ replied in the second temptation: you shall not tempt the Lord thy God. In the illusion of safety and denial of the past, intellectual human mind, portrayed in the book by Thon Taddeo, is so eager to accelerate the pace of development and step into the light from the centuries of darkness that it forgets to be cautious. Enough time has passed from the previous destruction for the mind to take it seriously anymore. Even though Thon Taddeo believes in his task, he is refusing to learn and accept the failures of the past civilization. He seems to have a too strong belief in the past generations, for him they could not have destroyed themselves so completely. Along with the re-emergence of natural science, doubt and desire appear as well. This is also best described in the character of Thon Taddeo, for instance, in this excerpt from a discussion he has with a New Rome priest, Marcus Apollo, looking down at a struggling peasant from a window.

> [Taddeo] Can you bring yourself to believe that that brute is the lineal descendant of men who supposedly invented machines that flew, who travelled to the moon, harnessed forces of Nature, built machines that could talk and seemed to think?. . . How can a great and wise civilization have destroyed itself so completely? 'Perhaps', said Apollo, by being materially great and materially wise, and nothing else.' 'You reject all history, then, as myth? [Taddeo] 'Not "reject." But it must be questioned. Who wrote your histories?' [Apollo] 'The monastic Orders, of course. During the darkest centuries, there was no one else to record them.' [Taddeo] 'There! You have it. And during the time of the antipopes, how many schismatic Orders were fabricating their own versions of things, and passing off their versions as the work of earlier men?. . . You can't *really* know. (CFL 139-140, parentheses added)

Taddeo refuses to believe that humankind, in the corrupt condition he sees it now, once commanded a mighty civilization since there are only vague legends to testify to that. Similarly, he does not want to regard the names of former scientists that supposedly invented great things, for him, historians list nothing but trivia and he would prefer to forget such scientists ever existed. Furthermore, Taddeo not only questions the fact that a great civilization could have destroyed itself, but also the credibility of recordings of that past civilization done by monks during the new Dark Age. For him, doubt is a powerful tool and should be applied to history. There is nothing wrong with questioning history or the work of the ones who wrote it down, even today research is conducted in that way to make it as reliable as possible. However, it may be argued that even science, as any human endeavour, is subject to ambition, distortion and manipulation of data. Taddeo is a scientist, who does not take things at second hand, but nevertheless, certainly ends up committing similar scientific manipulations as those before him. In addition, he is driven by additional motives than just scientific objectiveness. Taddeo is struggling with his own traumatic past; he is a bastard son of the emperor, and was forced to grow apart from the court and his brother, the rightful heir to the throne. Instead, he was raised and schooled by the Church which he hated, and though he triumphed in his studies, this experience has left him bitter and revengeful, and most importantly, anti-monastic.

Senior (1993: 335) claims that Taddeo's cynicism and eagerness to disavow any moral burden mark the severity of his willful blindness and self-delusion. In conclusion, Taddeo does not trust the Church as a safe keeper of knowledge, nor does he trust that knowledge which would insinuate the world's past greatness. He cannot bear to be a mere *re*discoverer of science, so he disregards references to former inventors, blurred by his pride, envy and desire for fame. To come back to the second temptation, Taddeo is willfully casting himself down and relying on being

caught: he refuses to apply caution because he does not think anything bad will happen. The mental temptation and challenge of Taddeo is to give room for doubt in his own work and allow himself also to be wrong. This would prevent him from making mistakes and false conclusions and therefore would not bring scientific development in the wrong direction.

What is more, one of the key issues of the novel can be extracted from the previous quote: the priest Apollo suspects that 'a great civilization could have destroyed itself by being materially great and wise and nothing else', suggesting that this is where they went wrong. This is a striking idea. Naturally, this notion has the similar prophetic and cautionary tone as the rest of the book, a stern warning against society getting too far from spiritual values. It can also be seen as an apocalyptic reference, our societies are doomed because they are spiritually poor. Samuelson (1976) notes that religion in *The Canticle* suggests a kind of wisdom, traditional, irrational, and humane, which knowledge alone cannot reach. A kind of wisdom, which divorced from social, technological and even aesthetic reality, is however, also inadequate as a guide for conduct. Perhaps Miller is talking about spirituality that is not necessarily even religious; more a sense of maturity towards the threats that material superiority has against the race when spirituality does not develop in the same pace. Given the circumstances of society during the publication of this novel, it is no wonder Miller was so concerned. For many people living in that day and age, things could have gone either way; there could have easily been further nuclear devastations. Although Miller lived well into the 1990s to see no further bombing, still in 1980s he feared for future 'Hiroshimas' (Garvey 1983: 36).

As indicated in the name of this second part of the book, *Let there be light*, there is a powerful light imagery and symbolism throughout the pages. Already at the end of *Let there be man*, as Francis makes way from New Rome back to the abbey, he is referred to as "the small keeper of the flame of knowledge" (CFL 127) thus connecting him to *Let there be light*. Perhaps most efficiently the light symbolism is portrayed through the reinvention of electric light at the abbey which coincides with Thon Taddeo's arrival. After long and careful study, among which work of Thon Taddeo and possibly the blueprint of Leibowitz, Brother Kornhoer manages to build a dynamo in the abbey's basement. Once the first testing is at hand, they arrive at a

problem of where to hang the lamp. Quite strikingly and symbolically, the only suitable place seems to be the hook of a large crucifix, and despite fierce objection, the abbot allows the removal of the crucifix for the time being. The moment in the abbey when the monks test this incredible device is very impressive; it is nearly impossible to imagine the world without electrical light.

> "FIAT LUX! said the inventor in a tone of command. . . 'CONTACT!' said Brother Kornhoer, as Dom Paolo, Thon Taddeo and his clerk descended the stairs. . .A sharp *spffft*!─and blinding light flooded the vaults with a brilliance that had not been seen in twelve centuries. . .Thon Taddeo gasped an oath in his native tongue. He retreated a step. . . The abbot made a sign of the cross. 'I had not known!' he whispered. . . 'Bright as a thousand torches,' breathed the scholar. 'It must be an ancient─but no! Unthinkable! . . . 'A lamp of electricity,' he said. '*Why* have you hidden it?'. . . Complete confusions stopped him. . . 'You misunderstand,' the abbot said weakly, catching at Brother Kornhoer's arm. 'For the love of God, Brother, *explain*!' But there was no balm to soothe an affront to professional pride [Taddeo's] ─then or in any other age. (CFL 203-204.)

Metaphorically, divine light is substituted by the light of mind; electrical light ends generations of darkness and serves as a metaphor for all subsequent scientific discoveries as well as a turning point in the book. Now that there is light again in the world, nothing will stand in the way of progress. Furthermore, there are obvious biblical references in this passage: 'Let there be light' is from *Genesis* when God created light on the dark earth on the first day. Here, light is generated by man and to a society dwelling again in darkness, literally and figuratively. This milestone event in the story is once again slightly ambiguous. Miller is not against scientific development as such; he is not for mankind wandering in darkness, and without science there would not be so many positive inventions either. But to give powerful tools in the hands of those whose motives are selfish or vengeful may, again, result in the demise of society.

According to Seed (1996: 262), in the second part of the book, the analogy between the novel's present and the Dark Ages establishes an expectation of cultural change, a stepping into the New Renaissance, but this expectancy is written negatively as the imminence of war. Seed continues that, while most action of the first part takes place in bright, clear light, many of the second part occur in semi-darkness and even the location of the electric lamp is a basement where bright light causes a hellish effect. To conclude, an incautious monk exclaims at the moment when the lamp sheds its light 'Lucifer!' which can be interpreted as a sign for destructive technological

knowledge since the literal meaning of ‘light-bearer’ has become marked with satanic connotations. (ibid. 262.)

Thon Taddeo’s name carries a peculiar meaning to the researcher. According to McVann (2005), Taddeo means ‘God’s gift’ and curiously this meaning is a two-edged sword: the Thon is eager to play God with his great gift of intellect, but the abuse of such a gift can lead to the same pride that caused Adam and Eve’s expulsion from paradise when they ate the forbidden fruit and attempted to become like God. In *Genesis*, Adam and Eve get the opposite of what they intended, they become subject to death and alienated from God, each other, and nature, and unleash chaos on the creation. Thon Taddeo is faced with a similar path of unleashing chaos, as described in Dom Paolo’s thoughts when Taddeo is about to leave the abbey:

> The answer was near at hand; there was still the serpent whispering.: For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods. . How shall you ‘know’ good and evil, until you have sampled a little? Taste and be as Gods. But neither infinite power nor infinite wisdom could bestow godhood upon men. For that there would have to be infinite love as well. (CFL 252.)

Paolo’s thoughts are inspired by *Genesis*, the same serpent that whispered in the ear of Eve is still whispering to mankind tempting them to be as Gods. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is always there, the challenge is to let its fruit be. But, as Miller’s speaks through the lines, leaving the fruit alone seems to be very difficult, man has to taste in order to know good and evil, to fall to the temptation in order to learn. Paolo’s thoughts then link to the issue of mental temptation of *Let there be light*, Taddeo is taken over by his temptation to be wise without regard for God. His need to be a great scientist is so powerful that it overcomes his sense of scientific responsibility. However, Miller has a further bleak remark on human character – even with infinite power and wisdom man would not rule godlike, since he would still always lack the infinite love, divine love that only God can have, meaning that the body, mind and spirit would still not be in harmony.

Concerning the second temptation of the mind, with the separation between the Church and science, society starts on a dangerous path, the gap between the monks of the religious order and the scientist deepens and is marked with scorn and contempt for the efforts of the brethren. The ruthless and anti-religious scientist,

scarred by personal trauma, embarks on a fierce journey in the name of progress. Human curiosity for wordly wisdom leads the way for development without regard for the past or to a higher divine power and the warning sign reads: science should not be politically driven. In other words, the temptation is to cast yourself down in the false sense of security instead of applying caution to scientific advances and carrying the responsibility that follows. This is shown in the character of Thon Taddeo who does not believe that previous generations could have made fatal mistakes or that their historical recordings are correct. Furthermore, this cut between science and the Church is the crux of the novel and hence the deciding factor on the way towards Apocalypse and away from the word of God. The road to Apocalypse becomes clearer from this point on and the apocalyptic signs are evident: decline in morality, societal commotion and rumours of war.

8.2 The burden of human nature

This part of the study is referred to chapter 16 in *The Canticle* that could be called the book's essence, since it has perhaps the thickest philosophical resonance. Just prior to Thon Taddeo's arrival at the abbey, abbot Dom Paolo decides to pay a visit to his old friend Benjamin, who resides in a hermitage in the desert. The character of Benjamin, the old Jew, brings us back to the old hermit theme that started in *Let there be man*, where his character served as the tempter. Benjamin is famous at the abbey for claiming an amazing age of 3209 years, which is a ludicrous joke to abbot Dom Paolo and a forever mystery to the monks. The reader is once again left to decide who the old wanderer is in this part of the story, but there are clear indications that he is the same man who buried Francis after his death. The approaching arrival of Thon Taddeo has made the abbot very worried so he seeks for clarification from his encounter with old Benjamin. Dom Paolo is concerned that the work the abbey has done with the Memorabilia over centuries will soon be finished, and even if he realises that it has been a thankless task to save knowledge for future generations, he is discouraged in thinking their work is soon unnecessary.

> Benjamin smirked. 'I have no sympathy for you. The books you stored away may be hoary with age, but they were written by children of the world, and they'll be taken from you by children of the world, and you had no place meddling with them in the first place. . . it's merely an assertion of faith in the consistency of events. The children of the world are consistent too—so I say they will soak up everything you have to offer, take your job away from you, and then denounce you as a decrepit wreck. . . It's your own fault. The Book I gave you should have been enough for you. (CFL 186-187.)

Miller imagines that the monks in abbeys would be the safe keepers of knowledge in this new Dark Age, much like the monks of Christian Europe, who wrote down and copied texts of our history after the fall of the Roman Empire, and who similarly understood little of the manuscripts they guarded (Brians 1999). The efforts of the Leibowitz monks at this task is the grounding factor in the novel, the story begins and ends with the Memorabilia, our history, be it incomplete and partly misinterpreted. The attitude of Paolo towards this task is ambiguous: he feels that it was an inevitable and necessary task for them to complete, at the same time, they would like to be credited for it and while they are not, they have somehow tried to keep up with the seculars, just like Benjamin claims. Paolo is bothered by the idea that the work they have done has been a thankless task and that although they have come this far, it is not their role to compete with the speeding world. Furthermore, the crucial point here is that the knowledge must now, however reluctantly, be returned to 'the children of the world', whether or not they are worthy of it, when the only thing the brotherhood has ever hoped, is to use that knowledge to create a better and wiser civilization. This contributes to the overall sense of melancholia and poignancy characteristic of Miller's narration. In the same time, it has to be agreed that the books do belong to the world and cannot be kept in the monastery, no claim can be made on the ownership of any knowledge and no gratefulness is to be expected for saving it. The only thing to hope for is that the world will grow wiser.

Benjamin reminds Paolo of the consistency of the world to take back the knowledge that belongs to them and appears surprised that Paolo is not aware of this. He criticizes Paolo for interfering with the books in the first place when *the Book* should have been enough, most likely referring to the Bible. Benjamin thinks that the Church should not have involved itself with the preservation of worldly knowledge since it started them on doing physics at the abbey; instead, they should have stayed in their realm of spiritual guidance. Paolo's fears are met with, he realizes there will be no changing the course of events, once humanity is back on its feet, it will take

back the books that belong to them. According to Wolfe (1979: 142), for Benjamin neither of the opposing visions on knowledge, that of Paolo nor that of Taddeo, is acceptable. Benjamin sees in Catholicism the beginning of corruption and dispersion of faith that results in the amorality of scientists such as Taddeo (ibid. 143). What is more, Miller seems pessimistic regarding man's ability to use the knowledge of previous generations wisely when given a chance to start over; there is something in the human psyche that drives this behavior. Miller seems to suggest that without regard to God, our worst characteristics surface, such as creed, instead of humility and consideration. Man is a conqueror by nature and there might be no way to change that, we want to be wise without regard to God. Miller asks: will we eternally create the same thing? In his opinion, supposedly, yes, unless we manage to change something at the heart of what we are.

It is conspicuous that the two characters here are a Jew and a Christian monk, this seems deliberate and has caught the attention of other researchers as well. Benjamin is not the only Jew in the novel, Leibowitz converted from Judaism to Catholicism prior to the founding of his abbey and later in the last part there are at least two major characters to be met with, Brother Joshua and Rachel. According to Percy (1971: 266), the employment of Jewish-Christian coordinates is highly unusual to a science fiction work, almost a contradiction in terms, since most often sci-fi is written on a single coordinate, a timeline that runs from past to the future and the questions have to do with the other's location on that timeline. For Percy (1971: 267), the Jewish and Christian coordinates in *The Canticle* intersect and cause a radical challenge of one set of coordinates by another. What is more, Percy notes, that some have found this absurd, and some pleasantly dislocating. Scholes and Rabkin (1977: 223) also note on the Jewish theme and state that Miller is not writing an anti-Christian book, but by using Christianity and Judaism, he shows that nobility lies within the faith of men and not in the objects of their faith.

What adds to the obscurity of the character of Benjamin, is that in *Let there be light* he is described as a representative of the whole Israel, the last Jew, who is waiting for the *one-who-isn't-coming*, meaning the Messiah. Having lived some odd 3209 years, Benjamin declares that the burden of people was pressed upon him by others

and he cannot refuse to take it. He seems to be doing penance for Israel in his desert hermitage, which starts Paolo thinking and he tests the weight of such a thought:
"I am a Christian monk and priest, and I am, therefore, accountable before God for the actions and deeds of every monk and priest who has breathed and walked the earth since Christ, as well as for the acts of my own" (CFL 183). Paolo shudders under the thought of such a burden, but in the same time he realizes that the burden has been there since the time of Adam, on every generation, but rarely carried. Instead, man accepted ancestral glory, virtue and triumph, having done nothing to earn them other than being born in the race of man. Paolo leans on his faith:

> His own Faith told him, too, that the burden had been lifted from him by the One whose image hung from a cross above the altars, although the burdens imprint was still there. The imprint was an easier yoke, compared to the full weight of the original curse. . . Benjamin was looking for Another. And the last old Hebrew sat alone on a mountain and did penance for Israel and waited for a Messiah. (CFL 183-184.)

Benjamin, the Jew, and Paolo, the Christian monk, are united in carrying the burden of human nature that man since the beginning, has refused to carry. Miller emphasizes that destiny is always here and right now, that each generation has a responsibility to the collective inheritance, but that unfortunately, our burden is marked by the original sin, the fallen state of humanity. Here Miller is once again very biblical, he is recalling the first sin committed by Adam and Eve in *Genesis* when they eat the forbidden fruit and after the expulsion from paradise, are forced to live as responsible human beings. However, Miller seems to believe that human nature is incurably destined to fall since the burden has not been carried from the time of Adam, but instead we happily accept virtues that are not ours to claim. In this view, *The Canticle* is a series of inevitable and destined events from one fall to another. Paolo feels that his burden, the burden of original sin, has been mostly lifted by Christ, who reconciled man's sins to God, but Benjamin's burden of being Chosen, has him doing penance for Israel and waiting for the Messiah. Nevertheless, they feel they are at the same task since the implied responsibility for humanity is the same, since it is something "that isn't really meant in words at all – but in the dead silence of a heart" (CFL 184). Perhaps Miller's employment of the Jewish and Christian collaboration is just that: to highlight that the burden of human nature should be collectively carried.

What is more, it seems that Miller needed a character like the Old Jew mostly for the purpose of creating his message through him. Whenever the character appears, he is always above the pettiness of the world, he is wise and calm and he seems to have some truth or some treasure inaccessible to the other characters, as if he has seen it all before. Even in *Let there be light*, Benjamin is the "tempter", he is the voice of religious conscience and the truth teller who sharply points to the folly of the world. For Herbert (1990: 165), since the Old Jew has stopped wandering in the second part of the book and resides at the mesa, he believes that the Messiah is near. Twice he rushes to look closely at a person only to declare in disappointment "It's not Him!". The two men whom he gazes are Taddeo and Paolo, as if to say that man's salvation will not come from either science or religion. (ibid. 165.)

The name Benjamin Eleazar Bar Joshua naturally carries a meaning, even several meanings, similarly to other characters in Miller's book. According to McVann (2005), the name of Benjamin may refer to the tribe of Benjamin in the Bible, which was almost destroyed in inter-tribal warfare and from which the survivors escaped to Rock Rimmon in the wilderness, referring to the rocky desert mesa on Benjamin of *The Canticle*. The name Eleazar means "God's help", which for McVann refers most likely to old man Eleazar in II Maccabees, who refuses to give up Judaism for a new kind of life, much like old Benjamin Eleazar of *The Canticle*. Furthermore, Eleazar in Greek means Lazarus, which connects Benjamin of *Let there be light* to the old man Lazar in *Thy will be done*. It seems that Miller has created links for this enigmatic character that lead through the book although none of them clearly spell out the mystery. What is more, Bar Joshua means "son of Joshua", connecting him with Brother Joshua in *Thy will be done*, a central character who ends up leading the exodus from Earth with the Memorabilia. (McVann 2005.)

This chapter has a heavy sense of inevitability of events as well as a bleak view into the capacity of man to change the direction of society. Benjamin says that the children of the world will always take the knowledge back whether or not they are ready for it and that the Church cannot regulate that knowledge by any means. There is the pessimistic idea that man will not use that knowledge any more wisely even the second time around and Miller speculates that this inability derives all the way from original sin, the fact that man has never lived responsibly after the first fall. Miller

deepens his biblical reference by mixing even the paths of the Old Jew and the Christian monk; Benjamin is doing penance for the failure of Israel while Paolo is relieved of his burden by Christ. All in all, the idea is that men, regardless of their faith, are on this path together. Concerning the mental temptation, people seem to also collectively fail, if they have never carried their responsibilities and have relied on the false security of thinking that all will be well.

8.3 Rejection of history and responsibility

The refusal of responsibility is a much larger theme in *The Canticle* than became apparent from the previous chapter and therefore deserves more attention in the light of the focus of this study. There is, in fact, not only a rejection of responsibility, but also of history as such, portrayed through the character of the scientist Thon Taddeo. This fierce scientist is so strongly driven by his own agenda to reveal the great scientific truths unknown to man and to bring mankind out of its darkness and ignorance, that he refuses to consider he might be a mere rediscoverer. For Thon Taddeo, it is not possible for mankind to be in its present crippled stage had it once been a booming civilization of technological plenty. The idea of rejecting responsibility is strongly connected to the second temptation because by rejecting responsibility, humanity, or here Thon Taddeo, is 'casting himself down' in the false sense of security that he will be caught, that is tempting his luck and hoping nothing will go wrong.

Miller is skilful in providing counterparts to his characters as well as the many antitheses that define *The Canticle.* In *Let there be light*, the counterpart for Thon Taddeo is the enigmatic character called the Poet-Sirrah, a strange, irritable writer-philosopher who resides in the abbey, but who is not exactly an ordinary monk. The Poet is the trickster in the story; in literary terms that is a character, who is a joker, a truth-teller, a wise-fool; someone who rebels against authority, points to the flaws of society, makes fun of the overly serious, exists to question and to make us question as well. The trickster is often associated with symbols such as keys, clocks, masks or mythological images. (The Trickster, n.d.) The Poet is a highly symbolic character; his appearance in the book is short but carefully constructed, he shows up

at the arrival of Thon Taddeo, and disappears just before his departure. The arrival of the scientist symbolises an important moment in the book, it is the moment when events take a turn for the worse and hence it is time for the trickster to show up to point to the mistakes that Taddeo characterizes. The Poet starts to tease Thon Taddeo from their first encounter and their reciprocal arm twisting lasts until the end of *Let there be light*.

The Poet is the first to force responsibility on Thon Taddeo. He plays the fool for a long time but in the end cannot hide his concerns and true opinions; he is the truth-teller who never quite tells the whole truth, but speaks in symbols and metaphors. The Poet, like Benjamin, is very concerned about Thon Taddeo's ruthless character, he senses the forebodings of future events and plays tricks with the scholar, trying to make him understand the consequence of his actions. The trickster Poet is not a healer or an authority; he is more a prophet, a projection, a mirror, if you will, of the trouble in society that the story addresses at large. The Poet is insulted by the Thon's ruthless abuse of the Leibowitz records that he uses as a stepping stone to greatness, 'to the light that is rising', without giving the material itself or its preservers the respect they deserve. Furthermore, the Poet states that since Thon Taddeo is writing equations that will one day remake the world, somebody will have to be blamed for the darkness that is past. The Poet feels that the one who will be blamed is Leibowitz, as a scapegoat, that way Taddeo will not have to face the consequences of his actions.

There is a curious symbol connected to the Poet that plays an important part in his relationship with the Thon and contributes well to the theme of the trickster. The Poet has a glass eye, a talisman, that he sometimes removes at will to make a point; the brothers call it the Poet's removable conscience since he claims he can see much better when he is wearing it, that he needs it 'for the perception of "true meanings" although it gives him blinding headaches when he wears it'(CFL 236). At a dinner, the Poet places this glass eye on the table in front of the scientist and orders it to watch him carefully, symbolically placing the conscience on Thon Taddeo. Later the Poet tries to reclaim the eye several times but the Thon lies about having it; the Poet answers by yelling that the Thon needs it more than he does, meaning that he'll make good use of a removable conscience, the irresponsible person that he is.

Later the Thon tries to return the glass eye only to notice that the Poet has vanished from the abbey; the abbot sees this as a bad sign. Poet's disappearance probably signifies the malediction falling over the land, the truth-teller is gone and there is nobody to question the direction of humanity anymore. The Poet's departure is only appropriate; the trickster has played his part and leaves. Later he appears in the last chapter to *Let there be light*, which ends with his death in the desert, just like *Let there be man* finished with the death of Francis. The difference is that there is nobody who comes to bury the Poet, like the old man buried Francis, instead the buzzards eat him. Metaphorically, this could also be seen as a sign of worsening events for society.

According to Herbert (1990: 165), the Poet's glass eye points symbolically to the gap between what religion and science intend and what they actually accomplish, as well as to the failure of religion and science to acknowledge that fact. For instance, the scientist co-operates with a tyrant to keep his collegium going and the priest remains neutral to political struggles to maintain the sanctity of the abbey. Both religion and science need the help of political authority in order to become true benefactors of man but in doing so their ideals are corrupted. As Herbert continues, just as the limits of science create mysteries that turn men back to religion, the limits of the authority of religion turn men back to politics. In this way, the political union becomes the medium within which religion and science can spread in the world. However, political union will not produce peace and security, for that we need religion and science. (ibid.)

In the world of the novel, Herbert's comments seem to strike to the point, both religion and science end up in the wheels of the political system thus corrupting their ideals and neither one alone seems to be enough to create a balanced world. It seems that the book does not have a final solution to this problematic co-existence but Miller is rather posing the question for the reader. In fact, these two realms might be intrinsically antagonistic and will never really work together. While science is in perpetual evolution, the principles of religion are more static and levels of innovation are much more open and frequent in science than the levels of reform in religion. Perhaps, then, the sense of spirituality or humane values to tame scientific development are to come from elsewhere than religious dogmas. Science needs to

grow responsibility from its history and earlier experiments and thus form a conscience of its own.

In order to clarify the theme of rejecting responsibility, let us continue with Thon Taddeo. His disposition can be seen from the following scene when he addresses the monks of the abbey by giving them a lecture concerning his work and the direction of society.

> Eyes burning, he looked around at them, and his voice changed from casual to fervent rhythms. 'Ignorance has been our king. Since the death of empire, he sits unchallenged on the throne of Man. . . Tomorrow a new prince shall rule. Men of understanding, men of science shall stand behind his throne and the universe will come to know his might. His name is Truth. His empire shall encompass the Earth. And the mastery of Man over the earth shall be renewed. . . There will be buildings of thirty stories, ships that go under the sea, machines to perform all works. . . It will come to pass by violence and upheaval, by flame and by fury, for no change comes calmly over the world. (CFL 227-228.)

Taddeo's contempt for the ignorant society is clear; he has little respect for the education or work of the monks, for him the world in its entirety is groping in the dark and needs to be saved by science, and by men of *understanding*, as he puts it, which the monks could take as an insult. He is so close to scientific breakthrough that he accepts progress at any cost, however violently it will come to pass. There is a striking antithesis between the speech of the scientist and its monastic audience; for Taddeo science is the only truth, he is looking for a governance of the world by reason, intellect, and for man's mastery over the entire creation, whereas the monks represent a spiritual realm characterized by faith, compassion and quiet contemplation. The truth for the monks resides with God and he is the ruler of creation in which man plays a minor part. What Taddeo neglects to notice is that the monks are not ignorant of scientific advances even if they do not make science the centre of their lives, instead they seem rather indifferent to his remarks and contempt.

Dom Paolo concludes that out of the choices Taddeo has, to approve or disapprove of the scientific advances pushed by his monarch's military power, he has chosen to regard those advances as inevitable phenomena "like flood, famine and whirlwind" (CFL 229) to avoid having to make a moral judgment. Dom Paolo is saddened in thinking that although man of the previous civilization learned how to destroy the world with the help of science, God also told them how they may save it through

faith, but as always, let them choose for themselves and perhaps they chose as Thon Taddeo, to wash their hands of it.

History books tell great stories from different eras of human development that have changed society in tremendous ways, often by violent flames and fury. We list countless great scientists who were fervent in their research, determined and convinced by their work and the beneficial effect on society, some of them were even men of faith in addition to intellect. In the view of our history, who could claim that change does not often in fact come with flame and fury and by revolution; but as to the necessity of such upheavals we cannot be certain either. Is violence always necessary in bringing about change in society or is it just that we have not learned another way? Perhaps Thon Taddeo is right, perhaps the often stagnant constructions of society can only be moved by revolution. But since he refuses to believe in the books of his own history, he does not learn from them.

However, there can be no doubt as to the benefits of science, or of the natural and apparently inevitable feature of mankind to constantly drive itself forward. Miller was certainly not against scientific advancement, but he was concerned for that advancement in the hands of people with ulterior motives. This all boils down to evolution; if humanity evolves scientifically, it must also evolve emotionally and spiritually in the same time in order for man and his world to stay together constructively. This was certainly one of Miller's main concerns as he participated in World War II and witnessed the consequent nuclear development. Man can have technology but needs to know how to use it wisely. If it was not for the potential wickedness of the human psyche, we could all store nuclear weapons in our garages.

Perhaps the most appalling example of Thon Taddeo's rejection of history and responsibility is when he tries to rethink man's origin and thus explain many of the events he cannot account for otherwise. Taddeo's theory is that man had not been created until shortly before the fall of the last civilization by a preceding race which itself became extinct during the Flame Deluge. He deduces that the created servant species, that is, his own ancestors, would have rebelled against the original creator species and thus caused the violent persecution of men of learning. For Taddeo, this

theory explains why present-day humanity seems so inferior to its ancestors. Needless to say, abbot Dom Paolo is furious at this bold claim.

> 'God have mercy on this house!' cried Dom Paolo, striding toward the alcove. 'Spare us, Lord─we know not what we did.' 'I should have known,' the scholar mutted to the world at large. The old priest advanced like a nemesis on his guest. 'So we are but creatures of creatures, then, Sir Philosopher? Made by lesser gods than God, and therefore understandably less than perfect─through no fault of ours, of course.' 'It is only conjecture but it would account for much,' the thon said stiffly, unwilling to retreat. 'And absolve of much, would it not? Man's rebellion against his makers was, no doubt, merely justifiable tyrannicide against the infinitely wicked sons of Adam, then.' (CFL 246-247.)

Thon Taddeo's misleading reference is a fragment from Karel Čapek's 1921 play *R.U.R.* (*Rossum's Universal Robots*), in which a scientist creates artificial humans, robots, whose only purpose is to labour (Brians 1999), but he neglects to notice that the book has been already classified under "probable fable or allegory" in the Memorabilia. This oversight does not surprise the abbot; he remarks that Thon Taddeo would rather explain the extinction of the past civilization with such a theory than accept the fact that man is subject to making mistakes. Conveniently, as Taddeo cuts off the lineage of the human race from the very beginning to the present day, he erases its traces and features, such as the theme of original sin so repetitive in *The Canticle* and present in this passage as well. Furthermore, a rebellion of the robotic slaves against their makers is a much more suitable explanation for the destruction of the world than man's rebellion against each other, among equals, which is a deeply troubling thought. Dom Paolo is enraged by the scientist's unmoving determination to resort to such theories, which absolve him from having to face mankind with all of its imperfections. Furthermore, in this way, Taddeo removes guilt from man of the present day and place it on the shoulders of the 'infinitely wicked sons of Adam', and to blame them instead.

When Thon Taddeo shifts responsibility away from humanity, he opens a way for progress; science must have its own myth. It is the myth of progress that drives him into creating his own truths about the world instead of accepting himself as a humble descendant of a once mighty civilization that now needs to rebuild itself. Keeping with the Edenic theme, the enraged Dom Paolo orders a brother to read *Genesis* out loud to Thon Taddeo, who in turn tries to speak out his reasons for scientific speculation. What results is a fast tempo dialogue between the monk reciting *Genesis*

and Thon Taddeo justifying his attempts to bring the world out of its black ignorance. In the heat of the moment, Dom Paolo addresses the scholar.

> The 'account' that I was quoting, Sir Philosopher, was not an account of the manner of creation, but an account of the manner of the **temptation** that led to the Fall. Did that escape you? . . . 'Yes, yes, but the freedom to speculate is essential─' 'No one has tried to deprive you of that. Nor is anyone offended. But to abuse the intellect for reasons of pride, vanity, or escape from responsibility, is the fruit of that same tree. 'You question the honor of my motives?' asked the thon, darkening. . . I accuse you of nothing. But ask yourself this: Why do you wish to discredit the past, even to dehumanizing the last civilization? So that you need not learn from its mistakes? (CFL 248-249, emphasis added.)

Once again there is the theme of temptation. Though this is not a direct reference to the second temptation precisely, it is nonetheless clear evidence that Miller was implementing the idea of temptation in his book. Dom Paolo is trying to make the Thon see that even the brethren in this age does not take *Genesis* as a story of creation, but as an allegory of the temptation that led Adam and Eve to eat from the tree, so that their eyes will be opened and they will be as Gods, knowing good and evil. The abbot thinks that the Thon is falling for that same temptation by allowing his pride, vanity and denial of responsibility to overrule his better judgment. The Thon retaliates by offending the abbot in calling the monks incompetent to handle the records of the Memorabilia. However, the points that Thon Taddeo makes are easy to agree with. He emphasizes his right to speculate in trying to bring the world out of ignorance and struggle, to overcome famine, miscarriage, disease and make the world a better place than it has been for twelve centuries. According to Thon Taddeo, this cannot be done if every speculation is to be closed off, since this is how science works.

Abbot Dom Paolo, though not wanting to deprive the scholar of his right to speculation, feels that the world "never *was* any better, it never *will* be any better, it will only be richer or poorer, sadder but not wiser, until the very last day" (CFL 248). This is a very bleak note, but perhaps what Dom Paolo means by it is what has been discussed all along, that the world has never been better because we have never been true at heart and have neglected our responsibilities. Most of the advances in society benefit the rich but not the poor, and even when they are rediscovered in a new age, the masses will not benefit this time either and things will end up in the same way because our spirituality has not improved. Paolo's view on humanity is different

from Taddeo. While the scientist wants to bring society forward with science, the abbot seems to have lost his faith in human development with the chances and choices that humanity now has.

The light symbolism integrated in *Let there be light* comes to a proper end towards the last pages of the second part, Miller is always careful in tying loose ends. As the debate of Dom Paolo and Thon Taddeo comes to an end, the electrical light that has blazed mercilessly in the basement library suddenly dies out.

> The light sputtered and went out. The failure was not mechanical. The novices at the drive-mill had stopped work. 'Bring candles,' called the abbot. Candles were brought. . . Brother Kornhoer slipped into the room again. He was carrying the heavy crucifix which had been displaced from the head of the archway to make room for the novel lamp. He handed the cross to Dom Paolo. 'How did you know I wanted this?' 'I just decided it was about time, Domne.' The abbot turned and called down to his monks. 'Who reads in the alcove hence forth, let him read *ad Lumina Christi*! (CFL 249-250.)

The shutting down of electrical light and the replacement of the crucifix bear important metaphorical meaning; although science will keep going forward and bring society to a high level of development, the abbey decides to go the other way and return to its old task of working and preserving the Memorabilia and serving God 'in his light' only. Perhaps the abbot now realises that they cannot keep up with secular scholars nor is it their job to do that, they will be much happier in their own realm providing people with spiritual values and comfort, even political asylum, as he hints to Thon Taddeo, should he ever need it. He even welcomes the fellow scholars of Thon Taddeo to come and read the records of the abbey "in spite of the poor lighting", a small remark to the scientist. This is where the Church and the science go different ways; Miller writes in a manner that makes us grieve for the future of the Church and worry for the future of science without conscience. However, even if Miller rather convincingly makes a case against the dangers of having secular rulers, it may work within the limits and thematical approach of this book, but would not convince western society at large today. However, Miller's concerns and the points raised in *The Canticle* are directed at humanity in general, at our weaknesses and temptations, rather than on specific orderings of government. As for the role of the Church and religion in society, Miller seems to be looking for that harmonious co-existence.

Let there be light ends with a thickening rhythm of temptation portrayed in the last dialogues of Thon Taddeo and abbot Dom Paolo, there is even the biblical serpent whispering as Paolo contemplates on man's temptation to "taste and be as Gods" (CFL 252). In the closing lines of *Let there be light* the buzzards arrive again, this time to devour the remains of the Poet, killed by a cavalryman somewhere on a desert road. Miller pulls the story together, the Poet is killed and eaten by the "wild black scavengers of the skies" (CFL 257) much in the way than Francis at the end of *Let there be man*, two central characters dead in the merciless desert. This time, though, the buzzards are accompanied by wolves, Miller writes that there is plenty for all; a metaphor for the accelerating pace and number of the scavengers as well as carnages in society. At the end of the second part, the generations of darkness make way for the generations of the light, and call it the Year of Our Lord 3781, a year of His peace, they prayed (CFL 257).

According to McVann (2005), the character of the Poet-Sirrah refers to poets such as Dante, Boccaccio and Chaucer, who like the Poet, saw the medieval world of perfect social order and what they believed was of divine ordain, being corrupted and ruined by ruthless rulers and chaos. The Poet is troubled by his glass eye which represents conscience, not solely his own, but also that of others, so easily ignored by some people, mainly by Thon Taddeo. Curiously, and ironically, hundreds of years later the Poet's eyeball is enshrined in Hannegan's court as a talisman obviously brought there by Thon Taddeo. McVann points out that Thon Taddeo's substitute for a conscience is his honour; he reddens when the abbot accuses him of using his intellect in order to reject responsibility. As a gesture, Taddeo returns the drawings of the abbeys fortifications the soldiers have secretly made "as a matter of honour", but will not make any promise to help keep the abbey out of Hannegan's war plans. This is probably because through a potential invasion he will have rightful and honourable possession of the abbey's records. Compared to the Poet, who has no honour at all, but only his fidelity to conscience, Thon Taddeo and his honour look very small and cheap. (McVann 2005)

The second temptation to cast yourself down in the safety of being caught is visible throughout *Let there be light* as humanity puts the needs of the mind, the intellectual conquests, before God. Divine light makes way to the light of mind as the intellectual

world gradually overwhelms the world of faith. There is a loss of the immediate knowledge of God in favour of the mind's efforts to be wise without regard to that higher power. The light of mind is kindled at the abbey as well but the brotherhood cannot continue on this path once they see where it is headed. The scientist, instead, will continue on his decided journey toward discovering worldly truths. Old Benjamin and Dom Paolo contemplate on the burden of human nature and conclude that all the knowledge of the previous civilization belongs to the children of the world who will take it and exploit that knowledge. There is even an idea that the problems of mankind derive all the way from Adam and that the collective responsibility has been always ignored. In this sense, original sin plays a part in leading humanity towards that second Apocalypse. Thon Taddeo, who represents science and government, is not afraid to cast himself down, that is take brave leaps in his scientific work without regard for scientific responsibility, since he trusts the angels to bear him up. Taddeo decides not to trust the historical records he is given because they lack scientific certainty. He also disregards the depths and potentials of the human psyche in lack of proper evidence. In conclusion, the mental challenge in *Let there be light* is to control the impulses of the mind as science becomes available again and not to be overtaken by new possibilities at the risk of ruining humane values of society.

9 THE SPIRITUAL TEMPTATIONS IN *THY WILL BE DONE*

The spiritual temptation of the Christ reads as follows:

> Again, the devil taketh him up into exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, **All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me**. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve**. (Matthew 4:8-10, emphasis added)

In the last part of *The Canticle*, titled *Thy will be done*, the story has continued another 600 years and the year is now 3781. The style of narration and the tone of language change between all the parts of the book but perhaps the most drastically in the last one. *Thy will be done* is very grim and banal; it is also the shortest of the three parts, which gives the impression of the pace accelerating towards the end of the book and the end of humanity as well. This is similar to the last and the 4th yuga, Pralaya, of Indian mythology discussed in the beginning of this work, which is the

shortest and the darkest; the period when humanity is supposed to suffer. In *The Canticle* this is the modern era of will; human will is raised high on a foundation of material prosperity, intellectual development and brutal military force. These have created a situation where one government wants to have ”all the kingdoms of this world”. This is the last chance for humankind to turn things around but will it succumb to the last temptation? The abbey has survived into this new era of spaceships but not intact, the role of the Church has changed a lot during the last centuries. As the passing speedy highways agitate the ancient constructions of the Leibowitz monastery, the Church remains a sanctuary of only a few in addition to the brethren. The rumours of war become the immediate concern of the brotherhood, which still compiles the Memorabilia and prays for the salvation of humanity.

The third temptation of spirit for humanity is to separate between the power of man and the power of God. This last chapter discusses the nature of the vicious circle of humanity to end up in Apocalypse again despite the potential hopes there were for this second chance. Are we destined to destroy ourselves repeatedly, since we are able to do it and if we are, then why? Secondly, this chapter deals with the issue of fear of suffering and society’s solution to handle such fear, which in the book is euthanasia. Once again, Miller asks what is in our power to do ethically even if we are able to do it technically. Thirdly, this chapter finishes in biblical atmosphere with Miller’s paradise imagery and expulsion of humanity from Earth at the eve of Apocalypse.

9.1 Humanity caught up in a vicious circle

Thy will be done is largely recapitulative; it is the consummation of the apocalyptic cycle and it draws the storyline together by reflecting on the past and going through this new history of humanity that Miller has created as well as the history of mankind in its entirety. The last part of the book also reveals the outcome of the Apocalypse, but Miller’s symbol play concerning the end is ambiguous. The tone is sad and bitter and the frustration of the characters, who now face this recurrent end of the world, is compelling. The main theme of this last part of the book is the vicious apocalyptic cycle humanity seems to be caught up in and, most importantly, how could the

destructive cycle repeat itself? Naturally the old man is present in this last part as well, this time referred to as Lazarus and connected to the old man Benjamin Eleazar in *Let there be light* both by his name (Eleazar means Lazarus in Greek) and by narrative character. Once again he is here to witness the folly of the world, still clad in burlap and still the unknown observer.

The central character in *Thy will be done* is abbot Zerchi, much like his predecessors, abbot Arkos and abbot Dom Paolo, also a man of faith and principle, a deeply dedicated leader of the brotherhood of Leibowitz. Most of the philosophy in the last part of the book is presented through him; he is in fact the final Z to the alphabet, where abbot Arkos in *Let there be man* represented the A, the beginning (McVann 2005). In the following excerpt, abbot Zerchi is discussing the approaching war with Brother Joshua.

> [Zerchi] The government *must* know. . .And yet we hear nothing. We are being protected from hysteria. The world's been in a *habitual* state of crisis for fifty years. *Fifty*? What am I saying? It's been in a habitual state of crisis since the beginning─but for half a century now, almost unbearable. And *why*, for the love of God? What is the fundamental irritant, the essence of tension? Political philosophers? Economics? Population pressure? Disparity of culture and creed? Ask a dozen experts, get a dozen answers. Now Lucifer again. Is the species congenitally insane, Brother? If we're born mad, where's the hope of Heaven? Through faith alone? Or isn't there any? (CFL 275.)

In this passage there is once again the idea of the world being in crisis since the beginning, though Miller passes it this time without going into deep Edenic scenery. Zerchi seems very pessimistic, he is angry at government leaders who lie to the public and he is not able to come terms with the essence of this destructive tension. This is a society which has lost desire for the truth, the politicians are superficial and evasive, the public ignorant and vengeful. Unlike the abbots before him, abbot Zerchi has to guide his flock on the verge of a war, and as a spiritual leader he has to have some answers as to why these things are happening again. The list that he gives is familiar, these are some of the issues the international society talks about every day; here they do not suffice to answer the abbot's question and to console his desperation. Zerchi wonders if the species is congenitally mad, then there is no hope of heaven waiting for us, and hence no salvation. Since there appear to be no steady societal structure, there should at least be that of spirit and faith; he is thinking that our heaven exists only through our faith in it and that, perhaps, in fact, there is no

hope at all. That would mean that there is no spiritual structure either and only that repetitive cycle which determinatively spins around. Nonetheless, Zerchi is unable to surrender to such gloomy conclusions; he has to have his hope, for if hope is lost then everything is lost and the book is not finished yet.

What follows is probably the most famous quote from *The Canticle* and for many researchers the main question of the book in short; consequently, also one of the defining questions of this work. Abbot Zerchi is listening to the snide and evasive comments of the defense minister in an interview concerning the prevalent dangerous political situation where nothing is said and everything is denied, although the missiles are nearly in the air. As Zerchi tunes off, he finds himself with the following thought:

> Listen, are we helpless? Are we doomed to do it again and again and again? Have we no choice but to play the Phoenix in an unending sequence of rise and fall? Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Carthage, Rome, the Empires of Charlemagne and the Turk. Ground to dust and plowed with salt. Spain, France, Britain, America─burned into the oblivion of the centuries. . . *Are we doomed to it, Lord, chained to the pendulum of our own mad clockwork, helpless to halt its swing?* This time, it will swing us clean to oblivion, he thought. (CFL 280-281.)

This strongly apocalyptic passage is very significant; it not only defines the point of the book very articulately but it also takes a thought-provoking look at our past and our many historical empires. Beginning with the symbol play, the abbot's metaphor is the phoenix, the mythical and immortal bird that lives for a certain period of time, sets itself on fire and is reborn from the ashes. More specifically (Phoenix, n.d.), the phoenix lives for 500 years and symbolizes the sun, immortality, resurrection and life after death. What is more, like all good myths, the phoenix has many versions and interpretations and it exists in ancient Egyptian, Greek, Arabic and Chinese mythology. It is no coincidence that Miller uses the phoenix metaphor in this passage, the stories in *The Canticle* have some 600 years between them and now society is about to set itself on fire, literally and figuratively, what remains uncertain, is whether it will be reborn from its ashes.

The phoenix metaphor can be read rather positively despite the apparent desperation that hangs over these sentences. Perhaps the world has no choice but to play the phoenix, but the phoenix is not a bad symbol, after all, it is immortal and symbolises

only good things. If society is to repeat its mistakes inevitably, it is comforting to know it may be born again. What is more, in this context the phoenix means one further thing: even if society perishes in cycles and returns, the point is also to recycle, renew and evolve the essence of what man is each time, to break the status quo during which he stops being critical of himself. All of this falls into the same idea of the purifying rebirth that the apocalyptic mythologies and world religions talk about. Then again, maybe civilizations are not meant to last eternally despite learning from their mistakes, perhaps they are constructions of cyclic repetition. According to Manganiello (1986: 165), the phoenix metaphor has two meanings: since it is reborn from the ashes it has been traditionally associated with Christ's resurrection, but could also signify the atomic fires as purifying the human race from sin.

What can then be read from the long list of empires, that have all dominated at their time and been led by ambitious leaders, but collapsed and been replaced by others? Miller starts with the ancient empires of Assyria and Babylon, but he arrives as close as to America of the 1950's, which in his day was not even close to its present power. Most, if not all, of these empires were grand and fierce, maintained by violence, force and military power which then vanished or shrank considerably from their former might. The meaning of this reference could be that man-made empires that are governed by ruthless leaders, oppress others and gain material prosperity will not survive but are destined to rise to a temporary glory and fall into their own creations.

Man's enthusiasm for conquering land is probably unending, as is his failure to maintain such structures and therefore his empires are of limited duration. Miller's list is impressive and all those fallen empires point to the lack of durability and evanescence of man-made civilization, but they have also contributed enormously to our sense of civilization and world order that may not be perfect but has still worked for a long time. Each empire has brought something to our heritage, be they of governmental, military, literary or cultural value. Though empires fall, civilization endures; humanity has survived thus far and may survive in the future. The fact that empires are born and die may be inevitable, perhaps it is just in their nature to last a certain time. Then again, perhaps in Miller's view, the point is not to live life with a

full flame and die out because it is in our nature to do so, but instead to live, learn and rule wisely for the benefit of future generations.

Are we then doomed to that apocalyptic cycle? Are we able to change the course of events, to halt the swing of the pendulum that the abbot fears is not going to leave a hope of resurrection this time? This book has no absolute answers, but it suggests what we need to do in order to fight that destiny. Miller's idea is that there is a difference between human nature and divine nature and before we learn the difference and respect for it, we will not understand our place in this world and will be captives of our destructive cycles. This vicious cycle is connected to the third temptation of spirit; there are limits to what human nature can do and what divine nature can do and our desire to be as Gods instead of people is confusing that power structure and causing man to do things he cannot control. The abbot's fear that this time we might not get a second chance is understandable, he cannot believe that it is all about to happen again despite the knowledge they have of the past, that such stupidity does not deserve a second chance, or a third in this case, for what would be the point - to rise and fall again?

In the midst of this desperation, abbot Zerchi still has to preserve his hope, as can be seen from this speech he gives to the brothers.

> Brothers, let us *not* assume that there is going to be war. Let's remind ourselves that Lucifer has been with us—this time—for nearly two centuries. . .We all know what *could* happen, if there's war. The genetic festering is still with us from the last time Man tried to eradicate himself. Back then, in Saint Leibowitz' time, maybe they didn't know what would happen. Or perhaps they did know, but could not quite believe it until they tried it—like a child who knows what a loaded pistol is supposed to do, but who never pulled a trigger before. They had not yet seen a billion corpses. They had not seen the still-born, the monstrous, the dehumanized, the blind. Then they did it, and then they saw it. . . My sons, they cannot do it again. Only a race of madmen could do it again. (CFL 292.)

Saint Leibowitz' time naturally refers to the time when Miller wrote this book. In this passage, there is a heavy concern about nuclear war, it is a small pamphlet to warn about the dangers of unleashing such powers. There is the temptation to use such armament, although the result of it is known, like a child who has never pulled the trigger. The images of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were certainly burned into the minds of the people who saw them, Miller included, and that is certainly the reference in this passage. Luckily, the nuclear future Miller prophesized and feared

for did not turn out as badly as it may have seemed possible at the time of *The Canticle*. Undeniably, as has been stated repeatedly in this study, nuclear power became perhaps the most powerful tool in world politics but there has not yet been another nuclear conflict. Perhaps the images of such devastations had at least some effect and gave face to the consequences of such a war. Or perhaps, such fears were always exaggerated and those terrible years after the Cold War were an isolated event in world history, and will remain as such just like nuclear power will remain only a tool. Coming back to the passage, the abbot knows there is that temptation still with us, that genetic festering from the previous time the world went mad but he believes that only a race madmen would do it again. Needless to say, it is clear from this point onwards, that the race of madmen will do it again.

The vicious circle humanity is caught up in contributes well to the idea of the apocalyptic cycle coming towards the end. This is the last dark phase of the cycle, characterized by a sense of destiny, decadence and the flawed society that needs to be cleaned again. Abbot Zerchi wonders if the species is congenitally mad or is it the nature of empires to rise and fall; yet he is unwilling to accept the idea of a second destruction. Wolfe (1979: 138) sees a suggestion in the book that the interval between the discovery of nuclear weaponry and its use to destroy the Earth is longer the second time around and speculates that this might mean that human nature will eventually be cleaned through such trials. This is a relevant argument, and Wolfe may be right, but it seems a bit far-fetching attempt to find meaning for the development of humanity as regards of time. It does not seem that important to focus on the temporal structure of this book, Apocalypse serves only as a frame of reference in this story, much more emphasis is clearly placed on philosophical and ethical issues.

The spiritual challenge in the last part of the book is to differentiate between divine power and the nature of man and to resist the temptation to assume godlike power in a society where man is able to control his entire existence. The temptation is to conquer even the rest of the world with the help of powerful weapons. Mentally man has gone too far to stop and rethink his direction, Miller pictures a society that has lost desire for the truth and is only concerned with winning the war, despite the casualties or the effects on society. In a sense, man surrenders to the repetition of

destructive cycles by his inability to control his ambition to be like God and by his lack of self-criticism. What will man do once he has conquered everything? Is there an end to his conquests? Surely no, and this could be one of Miller's points, man may seek for technological advances and enjoy the result of his intellect, but his happiness should come from other sources.

9.2 Fear of suffering

Another theme that is largely dealt with in *Thy will be done* is that of pain and suffering and how to deal with that once the society is losing order and yet tries to control the outcome of its own making. As regards of the third temptation of spirit, society is reaching for godly powers in its attempt to control the issue of suffering and dying and by doing this, end up in opposite camps with those who still believe man should not meddle with such issues. As the war is picking up pace, there is radiation in the air and the serious radiation sickness cases are given governmental permission to perform euthanasia. The Church is obviously appalled by this administering of euthanasia and abbot Zerchi ends up in fierce arguments with Doctor Cors, a Green Star Relief doctor, who wants to set up one of these mercy camps on the abbey's premises. Zerchi discusses the situation with Doctor Cors.

> [Zerchi] Due process of mass, state-sponsored suicide. With all of society's blessings.' 'Well,' said the visitor, 'it's certainly better than letting them die horribly, by degrees.' 'Better for whom? The street cleaners? Better to have your living corpses walk to a central disposal station while they can still walk? . . . A few million corpses lying around might start a rebellion against those responsible. . . 'I wouldn't know about the government,' said the visitor, with only a trace of stiffness in his voice. I'm sorry, father, I feel that the laws of society are what makes something a crime or not a crime. . If I thought I had such a thing as a soul, and that there was an angry God in Heaven, I might agree with you.' Abbot Zerchi smiled thinly. 'You don't *have* a soul, Doctor. You *are* a soul. You *have* a body, temporarily. (CFL 310-312.)

There is a peculiar contrast between the abbot and Doctor Cors; whereas the abbot's solution to the situation is faith and prayer, the Doctor's solution is merciful death and keeping things easy and tidy. The abbot strongly condemns the government's involvement in the euthanasia camps, he feels that this is just one of the ways to hide the mistakes that have been made, instead of trying to solve the situation. What is more, the abbot thinks people might protest if they saw the full horror of the situation. Since the government has legislative power, they may enact laws as they

go to suit any given situation and as Doctor Cors says, those laws of society dictate what is considered a crime. Doctor Cors is not willing to question the government, though he declares himself a pacifist, he finds it easier to execute his duties as a doctor and believe in what he does. There is a similar case of denying responsibility in the doctor as there was in Thon Taddeo; if we all consider ourselves pawns in the game, nobody will ever turn things around.

Finally, just like the gulf of ideology and faith existed between abbot Dom Paolo and Thon Taddeo, it opens here between Zerchi and Doctor Cors as they discuss the existence of the human soul. For Doctor Cors there is no such thing and for the abbot the soul is the essence of what we are, we only have a body temporarily. From such a perspective it is easy to understand the colliding world views: in such a devastated world as in *Thy will be done*, if the earthly, mundane life is the only thing we have and we believe in, and that world is about to explode into oblivion, what else is there to do except to go quietly into the night? Is it not logic and even humane in some sense to take the easy way out, after all, who wants to suffer? On the other hand, what the abbot is demanding is spiritual strength to live through the thing we have created. How can we otherwise learn from the mistakes made if we are lucky enough to have a second chance? And why do we have such a small tolerance for pain?

For Herbert (1990:166), the antagonism between science and religion formalizes in the third part. For men of science pain is the only evil they know and for the Church, suffering is cleansing and a truly penitent person would acknowledge his sins and welcome punishment. Hiding the horror of radiation poisoning by making death less painful conceals the sin and with it man's need for God's mercy. (ibid.) Herbert's argument is easy to agree with, man is taking godly powers and refuses to experience the horror he has created; then there is nothing to be forgiven for. Even alarming problems with radiation will not stop society from 'getting all the kingdoms of the world', radiation sickness is just one thing to deal with on the path to greatness. In *Thy will be done*, society, and government with legislative power, will always find ways to get around things and to continue, they will manipulate and resolve problems with their 'God given gift' of intellect for as long as there is time.

The abbot encounters a young woman with a baby, both of them affected by radiation and on their way to one of Doctor Cors' camps. The abbot tries to convince the mother not to go to the camp.

> Are you in pain daughter? Offer it to Heaven, child. She looked at him coldly. 'You think it would please God?' 'If you offer it, yes.'. . 'It is the soul's endurance in faith and hope and love in spite of bodily afflictions that pleases Heaven. Pain is like the negative temptation. God is not pleased by temptations that afflict the flesh; **He is pleased when the soul rises above the temptation and says "Go, Satan."** It's the same with pain, which is often a temptation to despair, anger, loss of faith. . . even the ancient pagans noticed that Nature imposes nothing on you that Nature doesn't prepare you to bear. (CFL 333-335, emphasis added.)

In this passage there is a reference to the temptations of Christ, rising above the temptation and resisting to the tempter which pleases God. The abbot tries to make the girl understand that the body endures when the soul endures in the same time, and that we are not given more pain than what we are able to overcome. When we rise above the temptation without resorting to despair, we will accomplish something far greater and far more important in the essence of what we are spiritually. This theme of the fear of suffering has to do with the human character in terms of its physical and spiritual dimensions and how, in *The Canticle*, they seem to separate quite completely as the story moves from the first book to the last one. After all, we are entireties with three dimensions, physical, mental and spiritual, all in good harmony, but most of the decisions we take are usually at the expense of the spiritual, since the physical needs sound louder.

Herbert (1990:166) believes that, what Miller's theologian fails to see is that if nature prepares civilized man to bear horrors of the sort generated by the Flame Deluge, it is only by providing man with a capacity to forget. Lacking the wisdom that the memory of the past produces, the Church serves accidentally as an organ of memory through which the capacity for creating such horrors will be restored to man. (ibid.) This means that man's nature is not able to handle horrors such as atomic war and to protect himself, he forgets and thus creates the same situation again. However, Miller appears to disagree, he argues that the soul's endurance in faith despite bodily afflictions may be the solution for man to triumph over his weaknesses. As the abbot says, pain is often the temptation to loss of faith, so by resisting to the pain, we may resist the temptation.

The theme of suffering is brought to an end as the engines of war are upon the abbey. Abbot Zerchi is caught up under the rubble of the chapel which crashes down and holds him captive until he dies. Before that, he has to come to terms with a few issues that occupy him as the war is roaring above.

> To minimize suffering and to maximize security were natural and proper ends of society and Caesar. But then they became the only ends, somehow, and the only basis of law─a perversion. Inevitably, then, in seeking only them, we found only their opposites: maximum suffering and minimum security. The trouble with the world is me. . .No 'wordly evil' except that which is introduced into the world by man. Blame anything, blame God even, but oh don't blame me. The only evil in the world *now*, Doctor, is the fact that the world no longer is. (CFL 347-348.)

As Zerchi faces death and the end of the world is around him, he is suddenly afraid and surprised by this sudden reaction. His faith tests him momentarily, he wonders why he is afraid to die if he truly believes there is something waiting on the other side. Finally, he comes to the conclusion that he should not die before he has felt as much pain as the baby with radiation sickness and thus live up to what he has preached. Zerchi is still bothered by what he discussed with Doctor Cors and goes back in his mind to this issue of suffering. He connects the unreasonable fear of suffering to our craving for worldly security, which is seen as a positive thing but which in fact has turned on itself. Here Miller makes one of his best points; even if minimizing suffering and maximizing security were proper targets of society, when we started to seek only for them, we have ended up with their opposites: maximum suffering and minimum security.

Perhaps this means that by minimizing suffering man became weaker than what he was before and less able to handle physical and mental pain. And by maximizing security we created societies which focused on ensuring safety, rather than dealing with danger and threat from the start. After all, we have only to protect ourselves from ourselves, since the laws of society are based on the wickedness of man. As Miller writes, "the trouble with the world is me", there is no other evil, except that which is introduced by man. The society in *The Canticle*, where development far exceeds ours, is about to be buried in heaps of rubble without a trace of that security. Furthermore, here is once again the issue of refusing responsibility, which becomes even more important towards the end when it is too late to carry that responsibility. Miller suggests that roots of evil are in man's attempt to crave for Eden and for

worldly security when he should look for divine security and live in the world he has been given and to improve *that* world instead of trying to change it.

Since the tone of *Thy will be done* is recapitulative, it is only appropriate that in the end we arrive to where we started out, to complete the cycle properly. As Zerchi lies under the burden of the rocks, he notices a skull that has rolled out from the crypt inside the church, this skull belongs to Francis Gerard of Utah of *Let there be man*, the messenger from Rome killed on a desert road. As Zerchi addresses Francis' skull, the story is pulled together from the beginning to the end, eighteen centuries of human history between these two characters who are both on the same mission: to help create civilization anew.

> 'Brother', he whispered, for none but a monk of the Order would have been buried in those crypts. What did you do for them, Bone? Teach them to read and write? Help them rebuild, give them Christ, help restore a culture? Did you remember to warn them that it could never be Eden? Of course you did. Bless you, Bone, he thought, and traced a cross on its forehead with his thumb. . . Because there's more than five tons and eighteen centuries of rock back there. I suppose there's about two million years of it back there ─since the first of *Homo inspiratus*. . . Listen, my dear Cors, why don't you forgive God for allowing pain? If he didn't allow it, human courage, bravery, nobility, and self-sacrifice would all be meaningless. (CFL 349-350.)

This address is filled with bitter sadness, frustration and hopelessness as the cycle comes toward an end and the war is starting again, although abbot Zerchi is not aware of the full weight of his words. Zerchi is addressing a fellow monk, a labourer in the same lineage of those who wanted to help rebuild a culture, but ironically, he is addressing Francis, who started the world on this new quest that is now failing. Obviously Francis had good intentions, he certainly did help people to read and write, rebuild and give them Christ. What strikes us, is that the abbot in the last part faces the world differently than those in the beginning who had brighter hopes for the future, Zerchi's view is that of quiet desperation as he hopes that the monks remembered to warn people they could not rebuild Eden, that any attempt to do so would result in a catastrophe. Instead, we should focus on building a world that does not strive for paradisiacal perfection but for sustainable human development with our physical, mental and spiritual dimensions in harmonious interaction.

The fear of suffering is a failure at the spiritual temptation because society is only treating the symptoms of the mistakes that have been made instead of going to the root of what went wrong; they are giving into to the devil's temptation and allowing the wickedness of character to exist. Government is quietly cleaning the horrors of radiation from the streets, and society never fully exposes the horridness of the situation, people submit to the decisions and to the laws of society. Only the Church is trying to stop and think why this is happening again, why is man and his civilization captive of the apocalyptic cycle? Abbot Zerchi thinks that man has such a poor resistance to pain and suffering because he has no faith and is losing his soul, but it can also be argued that man's nature can only deal with painful memories by forgetting them and he then recreates the same thing.

9.3 Expulsion from paradise

As has become evident from the excerpts, *Thy will be done* carries a lot of paradise imagery; Miller makes recurrent references to the story of Adam and Eve in paradise, as well as to the idea of original sin and man's eternal struggle to free himself from it. Just as Adam and Eve, also the humanity of *The Canticle* is expulsed from this so-called paradise in the end, which means our precious world, be it flawed and imperfect. In the imminence of war, this expulsion or refuge comes in the form of space travel, as the monks prepare a spaceship which carries a selected group and the Memorabilia to another planet hoping to start life anew somewhere else. The leader of this mission is the aptly named Brother Joshua, but prior to him accepting this task, he has doubts concerning his calling to lead the group as for the mission itself:

> The starship was an act of hope. Hope for Man elsewhere, peace somewhere, if not here and now, then someplace. . . It is weary and dog-tired hope, maybe, . . .but it is hope, or it wouldn't say *go* at all. It isn't hope for Earth, but hope for the soul and the substance of Man somewhere. With Lucifer hanging over, not sending the ship would be an act of presumption, as you, dirtiest one, tempted Our Lord: **If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from the pinnacle. For angels will bear thee up.** Too much hope for Earth had led men to try to make it Eden, and of that they might well despair until the time toward the consumption of the world─ (CFL 301-302, emphasis added.)

Here is another reference to the temptations of Christ as Brother Joshua tries to reason with himself and the importance of the mission. It is safe to assume on the basis of these few but clear references to the temptations that Miller included them

intentionally and that they contribute well to the analysis of this work. Brother Joshua concludes that the starship is an act of hope for mankind and for the soul and to not send it into the space would be presumptuous since the warnings signs are clear. However, Brother Joshua realises that this hope is weary and tired, man made so many mistakes and ended up consuming his world in trying to make it Eden. However, abandoning hope is out of the question and Brother Joshua assumes the leadership of this strange mission beyond the stars, a shepherd to lead the flock.

In keeping still with the paradise imagery, Brother Joshua ponders on the reasons for why mankind is now faced with this horrible destiny.

> The closer men came to perfecting for themselves a paradise, the more impatient they seemed to become with it, and with themselves as well. They made a garden of pleasure, and became progressively more miserable with it as it grew in richness and power and beauty; for then, perhaps, it was easier for them to see that something was missing in the garden. When the world was in darkness and wretchedness, it could believe in perfection and yearn for it. . .Well, they were going to destroy it again, were they─this garden of Eden, civilized and knowing, to be torn apart again that Man might hope again in wretched darkness. (CFL 303.)

According to this passage, the closer man comes to perfection, the more displeased he is with it, since then he sees the things that are missing and in focusing on wanting for more, neglects to enjoy what he has gained. A poor soul in darkness can always dream the dream of better times but the one who comes close to paradise becomes unsatisfied with it. As Brother Joshua sadly understands, we destroy this garden of Eden, which is close to being perfect, civilized and knowing, tear it apart for the flaws that it has so that we may once again hope in darkness. According to Manganiello (1986: 163), trying to recover a lost Eden through technology becomes self-defeating and ultimately evil is not located in government structures but in human hearts. What is more, the human race has failed miserably the test of fidelity to God's word in contemporary times just like in Eden and the time of Noah. Through this latest failure Miller states that nuclear destruction is not justified as part of God's plan, but a man-made calamity in which each individual participates. (ibid.)

As Brother Joshua leads the new exodus, "under the auspices of a God who must surely be weary of the race of man (CFL 308)", abbot Zerchi, still captive of the collapsed church, encounters something extraordinary that changes the tone of the

novel and influences the interpretation of the ending. There is a peculiar character in *Thy will be done*, who is highly symbolic and much in the way that the Old Wanderer stretches the limits of imagination. This character is an old tomato-selling woman called Mrs. Grales who has a second head growing on her shoulder, a sleeping creature whom she calls Rachel and whom she has unsuccessfully been trying to get baptized at the abbey. When the world seems to have disappeared from around him, the half conscious and injured abbot Zerchi suddenly realises he is in the company of Rachel, who is now all awoken and clear-eyed, unaware of the surrounding horrors.

> His vision went foggy, he could no longer see her form. But cool fingertips touched his forehead, and he heard her say one word: 'Live.' Then she was gone. He could hear her voice trailing away in the ruins. The image of those cool green eyes lingered with him as long as life. He did not ask why God would choose to raise up a creature of primal innocence from the shoulder of Mrs. Grales, or why God gave it the preternatural gifts of Eden─those gifts which Man had been trying to seize by brute force again from Heaven since he first lost them. He had seen primal innocence in those eyes, and **a promise of resurrection**. (CFL 354, emphasis added)

The character of Rachel has divided opinions among those who have analysed Miller's book. For many, such as Ketterer (1974), Scholes and Rabkin (1977), Rachel symbolizes the Immaculate Conception, the one born free of sin, a new Eve, if you will. Rachel is the perfect ending to the extensive paradise symbolism, free of original sin and a promise of resurrection; a new mankind that may rise again without being predisposed to a destined fall. According to Herbert (1990: 167), there is no doubt that Rachel combines the spiritual innocence of religion with the physical perfection sought by science. However, innocence is no salvation since one cannot avoid harming others if one does not know what harm is. (ibid.) As McVann (2005) points out, in Hebrew, Rachel stands for a little ewe lamb which contributes to the character of primal innocence in the book. Some have even seen Christ references in the character of Rachel, which together with the associations to the Holy Grale (Mrs Grales), Eve and the Virgin Mary make her "a figure of absolute spiritual purity". It is possible even to draw a connection between old Benjamin and Rachel, since in the Old Testament Rachel is Benjamin's mother and this relationship can be seen as a spiritual one, meaning that the Wandering Jew has found his Messiah in Rachel and can stop wandering. However, it is more probable to understand Benjamin bar Joshua's disappearance in relation to the disappearance of humanity and all life on

Earth. (ibid.) Rachel is the last character in the book, apparently the only survivor, and does not encounter anyone else except Zerchi as he is dying.

In order to finish with the symbolic significance of names in *The Canticle*, it is only appropriate to conclude with Brother Joshua. There is a clear indication from Miller that Brother Joshua is in fact the new leader of humanity, and a leader of this exodus from Earth. According to McVann (2005), in the Old Testament Book of Joshua, Joshua is made the successor of Moses and this relationship of Joshua in *The Canticle* with abbot Zerchi reflects the relationship of their biblical counterparts; Joshua accepts the leadership of the people as the old leader passes away and thus completes the exodus. Brother Joshua is the representation of the entire human race that has lived since Adam; a father to all men and a carrier of their burdens. What is more, regarding the connection to the old Benjamin bar Joshua ('son of Joshua') in *Let there be light*: Joshua assumes the role of the Wandering Jew and must now go into space, "forever exiled by man's accumulated sins from the Eden of earth". Curiously, Brother Joshua was also a technician prior to his life as a monk, just like Leibowitz, and is therefore the new Leibowitz, the second founder of the Albertian Order. (ibid.)

In *Thy will be done*, technological humanity has come far from where they started in *Let there be man*, but spiritual humanity has not; society is keeping up an appearance of structure and order but it is an order of the desperate. As Ketterer (1974: 146) reminds, despite scientific advances no genuine progress in human understanding has occurred during the twelve centuries between Francis and Dom Zerchi in the last part of the book. The third temptation is largely at play, humanity is worshipping the devil in order to get "all the kingdoms of this world" and has ended up in interstate conflicts and on the verge of nuclear war. Government is playing God and administering euthanasia, hiding the truth and treating the consequences of their mistakes instead of trying to solve the problems. Humanity is stuck in a vicious apocalyptic circle from which it cannot wrest itself. This is an era of will, but of human will instead of divine will and since the temptation to have all those kingdoms is more overwhelming than the will to live, mankind ends up in the second Apocalypse. That is why emphasis is on loving a reality higher than human nature since in the human ego there are no ultimate answers. According to Senior (1993:

336), Armageddon recurs because "men will not state the truth, will not face the consequences of their policies and actions, will not accept responsibility; but they will evade, dodge, euphemize, and misrepresent to escape their moral shortcomings."

In the last lines of *The Canticle*, as the old world has been largely destroyed and Brother Joshua's ship has vanished into the red glow of the flashing horizon, the scavengers return to munch on whatever little is left of the world.

> The breakers beat monotonously at the shores, casting up driftwood. An abandoned seaplane floated beyond the breakers. After a while the breakers caught the seaplane and threw it on the shore with the driftwood. It tilted and fractured a wing. There were shrimp carousing in the breakers, and the whiting that fed on the shrimp, and the shark that munched the whiting and found them admirable, in the sportive brutality of the sea. A wind came across the ocean, sweeping with it a pall of fine white ash. The ash fell into the sea and into the breakers. The breakers washed dead shrimp ashore with the driftwood. Then they washed up the whiting. The shark swam out to his deepest waters and brooded in the cold clean currents. He was very hungry that season. (CFL 354-355.)

This time the scavengers are not buzzards like at the end of the first two parts, instead it is the shark, a predator as well, that swims in the cold clean currents of the sea, not in water contaminated by radiation. This seems to hint that not all life will die on Earth. There is a similar rhythm to the finishing lines here as in the end of the previous two parts of *The Canticle*; a repetition of the shrimp and the whiting and the shark in the same order thus creating an effect of nature's cycle: the shrimp is devoured by the whiting and the whiting by the shark. What is even more important is the interpretation of the shark itself. Although the shark is a fierce animal and often connected to danger, it can also be seen as a positive symbol: a hunter which has a great power of survival, endurance and long life. On the other hand, Brians (1999), does not see the shark as a survivor but concludes that it is most likely doomed to perish like rest of life on earth. According to Ketterer (1974: 147), although the shark is prepared to kill man to eat his flesh, the image in which he appears here is the shoreline, usually signifying new possibilities and new worlds. Scholes and Rabkin (1977: 225-226) continue, that the last lines are not the sign of the end of the world, since the shark is hungry and to be hungry you must survive; what is more, the fish has an iconic reference to Christ since ancient times and lives in the primeval sea from which life began and will begin again.

The more biblical interpretation is offered by Ower (1982: 447) and agreed upon by Manganiello (1986), for who Miller's positive eschatological imagery suggest that even the darkest times foreshadow the end as prophesied in *Revelation*, when God casts out Evil and creates a perfect world. According to Ower, the shark portrays the permanent ferocity in humanity that has just destroyed itself and the near starvation of the animal connects this second nuclear holocaust to God's ultimate defeat and punishment of Satan in *Revelation* 20. Perhaps the trick is in fact this ambiguity of the end; Miller allows latitude for interpretation depending on the views. According to Senior (1993: 337), just as there is no certainty in the history of the past, there is none for the future either, perhaps this is the novel's metafictional statement. What Brother Joshua, Brother Francis and Abbot Zerchi all have in common, however, is faith, and the answer to the physical, moral and spiritual distortions remains a belief in a providence that shapes our unforeseeable ends. (ibid.) All these interpretations of the end of the book are just as possible and it is the conclusion of this study that the end is open on purpose; perhaps it remained open to Miller as well. What seems certain though, as Senior states, that the book emphasizes the importance of faith in God and in the world, and in this sense, the end of the book is to be interpreted in positive apocalyptic light.

The previous chapters investigated how the three temptations of Christ: the physical, mental and the spiritual temptations, fit with the chronological and thematic organisation of *The Canticle*. This study dealt with the physical temptation through direct reference between Francis' fasting in the desert in his search for spiritual clarity and attempt to become a monk in the Leibowitz order and Christ's fasting in the desert to overcome the three temptations before he began to teach. The struggling society fails the physical temptation because they feed physical needs over spiritual ones and neglect to build a steady society due to their traumatic experiences. Secondly, the mental temptations were mostly reflected on the scientist Thon Taddeo, who failed his temptations by refusing scientific and personal responsibilities, and harnessed powers on the state that society was not mentally ready for. Miller also places responsibilities on the shoulders on everyman and this study concluded that in the view of the novel, humanity at large has failed the mental temptation by behaving irresponsibly over our heritage. Thirdly, in the last part of the book, humanity fails the spiritual temptation of wanting to be God and using godly

powers over society's problems when they should remain in their role of "God's" citizens with only citizen's rights and responsibilities toward society. Finally, in order to clarify and expand the reference to the Apocalyptic myth in Miller's novel, which is the second theme in this study in addition to the temptations, the next chapter will look at Apocalyptic significance from a mythological point of view.

10 APOCALYPTIC SIGNIFICANCE IN *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*

The apocalyptic imagery in *The Canticle* is prevalent throughout the story and Apocalypse moves in the story both in a mythological as well in a biblical sense; often these two intersect each other. For instance, the structure of the novel not only spells out biblical structure by moving from a new *Genesis* to *Revelation*, but also mythological structure by playing in the same time with both linear and cyclic views on time. *The Canticle* is linear in a sense that it moves from the new beginning of human civilization toward a decided end, which resembles biblical *Revelation* when the world is destroyed. On the other hand, the storyline is cyclical since just like many other apocalyptic stories, even *The Canticle* refuses ultimate endings and suggests a return back to life after destruction. What is more, already the beginning of the novel speaks for Miller's cyclic philosophy since the story starts from an apocalyptic near-annihilation and hence the Apocalypse in the end of the book is already the second one.

The Canticle includes several apocalyptic elements of catastrophe, judgment and renewal in its symbolism and in the events that build up the story. For instance, the story takes place in a nuclear wasteland surrounded by a barren desert and there is a constant presence of violence and warfare in every part of the book. Planetary destruction, cosmic relevance and exodus from Earth contribute to the overall sense of apocalyptic fatality. What is more, Miller's entire message is revelatory and prophetic in nature, he places a lot of judgment on mankind and seems pessimistic at times, however, always retaining a sense of optimism and deep expression of love for humanity. As for apocalyptic symbols, the buzzards, vultures, the shark and fire storms in addition to the dense biblical imagery and references to *Revelation* together create a profoundly apocalyptic setting.

Furthermore, philosophically, *The Canticle* is about man's relationship to his existence and destruction, as well as to the existence of a higher power. This connects the story to apocalyptic mythology in a way that just as archaic man was puzzled by his relationship to nature, the durability of his world and the will of the gods, *The Canticle* discusses these same issues in a modern context influenced by technological possibilities and dangers, and their role in the durability of our world. The novel also raises the question of God's role in the modern world and whether or not belief in a higher power is relevant in making our world last. Drawing from mythology, Miller's story expresses that same hope in the idea that the world will always be there even if it is periodically annihilated.

The fact that apocalyptic literature is often also post-apocalyptic has many functions; it expresses genuine humanity in the hope of recovering our world, it provides the dialogue of what could come after and what were the reasons that led to destruction, in order to point to the flaws in man and in society. Miller's post-apocalypse is uncovering the currents and demands of the era he lived; a century of wars and unprecedented weapons as well as man's ability to handle the situation that he has created. Furthermore, post-apocalyptic literature functions as a tool of spiritual cleansing apparently necessary to remind us of our potentially wicked nature, which can, however, be imagined in the safety of literature. In this sense, *The Canticle* does what Eliade stated earlier, apocalypse offers the possibility of recovering the absolute beginning, which implies symbolic destruction of the old world – the destruction of the world in the book remains symbolic since it is only literature but offers a chance to reflect on the many points it raises.

Furthermore, the book also intersects with the notion of the return to Paradise or to a Golden Age more in a biblical sense than mythologically. In the novel, Miller talks about man's attempt to try to recreate Eden when the world can never be Eden again because of the fallen state of humanity. Miller also writes that the more perfect the world becomes, the more displeased man becomes with it and sees more fault in it. While archaic man could bring back that state of bliss through rites and rituals if and when his world disappeared, Miller argues that modern man should not long for the paradise lost but instead do what Adam and Eve were forced to do also, to live as responsible human beings and come to terms with the world he has created. This

would mean learning to cope, reason and overcome all the wickedness and the potentials that drive a human heart.

Apocalyptic imagination requires that the destructive chaos makes way to a new design and replaces an old world of mind with a new one. Science fiction has been able to answer this apocalyptic demand and Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* perhaps better than most, since it involves more than imaginary futures. This book mixes themes from the Bible, mythology and the nuclear genre and manages to intertwine all of them into an evolutionary chain, one thing leading to another and all of them revolving around the same question of man's fate on Earth. Miller's book is a perfect matrix inside which the values of science and of religion can be brought together with human behaviour. In the end, as D.H. Lawrence reminded earlier, the value of interpreting texts with archetypal symbols valid for every age lies in the achievement as literature and in the stimulus these symbols offer to the imagination.

11 CONCLUSION

A Canticle for Leibowitz is very much a story of the Cold War, since it engages in the polemics of that time, but it also transcends those topics to address the survival of humanity not only in the nuclear age but in the world in its entirety. Undoubtedly Apocalypse would not have meant quite so much for us in recent decades, had it not been for the invention of nuclear weapons. The tremendous influence of Miller's novel leans on the collective experience of the two world wars and the consequent fears of the atomic bomb. In spite of the connection to the nuclear age, the book's concepts and conclusions are as relevant today as when it was written. This is because Miller's novel connects to the long tradition of apocalyptic writing and the sense of fatalism that characterizes our cultures and religions ever since the beginning of recorded history, and probably even beyond. For Fried (2001: 365), the book seems to be marked by epistemological breaks as if Miller, in moving from the beginning to the end, discovered the richness and power of his themes yet was unable to control the tone of the entire work.

The target of this thesis was to analyse Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* in terms of its reference to the myth of Apocalypse and the correlation of this myth to the three temptations of Christ, which include the physical, mental and spiritual temptations. The hypothesis was that *A Canticle for Leibowitz* proceeds in its three sections to explore the three temptations that humankind faces on their journey to recreate civilization, at which they fail, thus causing a second Apocalypse.

The first part of the book titled *Let there be man*, pictures the physical suffering of the world after nuclear devastation trying to overcome the neo-Medieval darkness and relocate itself in the world. The first temptation is physical, in Christ's temptation that means 'turning stones into bread' instead of realising that 'man shall not live by bread alone' but by the word of God and faith in Him. The physical temptation is mostly portrayed through the character of Francis doing his Lenten fast in the wilderness and there is metaphorical significance in the desert imagery and in the first temptation of Christ. The monks are still living in the word of God but their faith is also partly chained to the misery of the surrounding land and to the physically suffering of the world which cannot see past its hunger, both in a concrete and metaphorical sense. While humanity suffers from a nearly complete amnesia and traumatic denial of the past, newborn curiosity for worldly wisdom gives rise to a new era of intellect and humanity starts to separate itself from the word of God.

In *Let there be light*, the new Renaissance, light of mind exceeds the love for divine light and there is a separation between the Church and science. With the acceleration of science, the world gets caught up in a brewing war led by secular leaders. *Let there be light* is heavily marked with rejection of history and responsibility when an ambitious scientist neglects the past and creates his own past and future histories. What is more, man will not carry the burden of human nature with all its wickedness and try to understand the powers that drive our behaviour. The second temptation is mental, in Christ's temptation it means 'to cast yourself down for angels will bear you up' meaning that careless humanity will not take responsibility for itself and learn from its past mistakes allowing intellectual and material development replace spiritual values. Humanity fails because it refuses to trust in God as the higher power and instead wants to be wise by himself relying in the false sense of security amidst rapid scientific advances for military purposes.

Finally, in *Thy will be done*, the world is at the verge of another nuclear war, the society is haphazardly keeping the appearance of order and preparing for a war instead of trying to solve the situation. The third temptation is spiritual and in Christ's temptation it means 'to fall down and worship the devil for all the kingdoms of the world'; to which Christ replies 'you shall worship the Lord thy God and only Him shall you serve'. However, in the last part, the desire to have all the kingdoms of the world is far greater than the desire to live, because of pride and great material prosperity. At this last chance to wrest itself from its fate, humanity decides not to worship the Lord and ends up playing God himself, thus destroying the world. The end of the book, however ambiguously reviewed, has been mostly read in optimistic terms; humanity will continue on another planet or possibly even on this destroyed garden of Eden where the pure-hearted Rachel provides a new clean start. Although the immaculate purity of Rachel suggests a truly clean start without the burden of original sin, it can be argued that without the experience of harm, humanity will not know how to prevent it. We may also wonder if the humanity that left the Earth will be able to learn from previous mistakes or will there be a new Apocalypse in space.

The main finding of this study is that the apocalyptic cycle repeats in the book because man will not innocently defer to God as higher consciousness but falls to the temptations of the physical, mental and spiritual endurance and wants to play God himself. For this reason, the clarification points that are offered on this journey towards restoration are missed, and the whole weight of human habit, emotional structure and unconscious compulsion recreate the same circumstances again. In the novel, humankind progresses technologically, for the second time, but not spiritually, which means that there is no permanent and durable evolution of the body, the mind and the spirit. For Miller, this repetitive trauma is the real challenge for human survival, for if we do not face the things that cause us difficulties, how shall we ever transcend them? What is more, Miller does not seem to regard science and religion as antithetical; instead he speculates that their mutual consideration and co-operation might provide the answer to man's positive future prospects.

This study contributes to the relatively short list of literary studies of the English Department as well as to the most recent research on Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. This thesis uniquely draws from a vast and complex tradition of apocalyptic mythology and biblical sources as well as the nuclear genre of science fiction. Although the chosen topic grew much larger than expected, and while the organisation and frame of reference proved problematic in the beginning, the outcome is quite satisfactory. In fact, the combination of mythic, biblical and science fictional elements is probably the best merit of this study. The hypothesis works fairly well and although the reference to the temptations requires relatively much allegorical latitude, in the end, the Apocalypse can be seen as the result of failure in these temptations. Nearly all studies on *The Canticle* reviewed for this work require similar and even much more metaphorical expansion of the mind, so the requirements of this thesis are in no way exceptional. Furthermore, even if the peak of the novel's concerns dates back to the Cold War, they contribute fittingly also to the contemporary political, societal and scientific arena. Hopefully this work offers new and thought-provoking perspectives into this much studied great novel.

Despite the numerous studies over the decades, due to its affluence *The Canticle* is open for plenty of further study possibilities, even for different disciplines. A linguist could explore the language Miller uses in the three parts of the book and more importantly, how that language changes from one part to another in terms of choice of vocabulary, style, rhythm, imagery and literary references. His use of language and the embedded meanings and references work on many levels and curiously open up more with each reading. Furthermore, a theologian might study *The Canticle* exclusively on the basis of the Edenic myth of rise and fall, or through some other biblical approach. On the other hand, to see Miller's treatment of the Catholic Church as parody would give a completely different picture of the book compared to, for instance, this study with its favourable take on the book's religious aspects. A social scientist might look into the nuclear and societal concerns of the novel. What is more, a historian might get involved deeper into the cyclical repetition of history, the notion of time, and the newly experienced phases of history, such as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. There are certainly prospects for studying Miller's second, posthumously published and largely neglected novel *Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* (1997), either separately or in connection with *The Canticle*.

According to Wolfe (1979: 146), nuclear holocaust is a problem of culture, not of science. *The Canticle* is an aggravated projection into an imaginary future but with some logical potential. It provides good insights into the fragility of our systems of language, meaning and knowledge, to the evanescence of our cultures and empires, as well as to human incapacity for understanding the compulsions that drive our societies. Despite the sinister apocalyptic nature, the seriousness and nearly unfathomable thematic density, the book is, in the end, about love of humanity. In *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, Miller is employing the 'Christian way'; he seems to find his answers to the human condition in the most compelling myth of the western civilization and in the mytho-poetic structure of the Bible.

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APPENDIX: THREE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST, MATTHEW 4:1-11

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.
2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.
3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command these stones be made bread.
4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,
6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.
8 Again, the devil taketh him up into exceeding high mountain, and skeweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Quoted from: *Holy Bible, Authorized King James Version.* London and New York: Collins' Clear-Type Press.