

SAMPLE ARTICLE 3

NOTES ON NAMES, BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS, AND RELIGIOUS THEMES IN *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*

Mark McVann, F.S.C.

The symbolic significance of names of characters in works of literature has been an area of scholarly concern since literature and its criticism began. The names of characters in epic poetry, novels, short stories, dramas, and other literary forms have long been known to be comments on, or to reveal important aspects of, the inner life of characters or roles played by them in literary works. The Bible, for example, that ancient and most venerable of books, makes puns playing on names, comments on the significance of names, uses names as hints of characters' missions and destinies. Walter M. Miller, Jr.'s classic *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is peopled by characters with names that reveal a great deal about them and the theme of the book:

Miller employs a wide range of sophisticated literary techniques—including his method of naming characters—to express his theme, which, simply stated, is that although man has advanced technologically over the years, he has failed to progress spiritually; without Christian values to check and direct his materialistic impulses, man becomes enslaved by his technology which eventually destroys him. In order to emphasize this spiritual theme and at the same time delineate the functions of his characters, Miller has carefully drawn the names of his most important figures from Christian lore.^[1]

Just how carefully can be seen from how the names of his principal characters reveal so much about them and their role in the story. No claim to exhaustive treatment is made here. The names of the characters in Miller's great work of art have been the subject of interpretive essays for many years and probably will continue to intrigue sensitive readers and literary critics alike for many more years.

NAMES IN "*FIAT HOMO*"

ISAAC EDWARD LEIBOWITZ: "The name has a threefold association with mirth. Isaac is from the Hebrew, 'he who laughs' or 'he may laugh' and has the connotation that the bearer be regarded in a friendly light. Isaac is the son of Abraham and Sarah in their old age, the son of the promise (Gen. 21). Edward derives from 'ead' meaning fortunate or happy, and 'weard' meaning guardian. Leibowitz means 'lover of jest'" (Robertson and Battenfeld, 121). There is good reason for the stress on mirth in connection with the saint's name, especially as attention is constantly called to the smile worn by the statue of Saint Leibowitz in the abbot's study. And in "*Fiat Lux*" (153-156), there is an extended meditation on the possible meaning of the saint's smile.

Nevertheless, there is also strong allusion to death and martyrdom. Isaac, as noted, is the son of Abraham and Sarah born to them when they are old--hence the reason for laughter (cf. Gen. 17: 17; 18:9-14)--but Isaac is also very nearly the victim of a holocaust. In the famous story of the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22), the boy is to be burned as an offering but at the last minute a ram is sacrificed in his place. Scholars have long recognized the story as a biblical condemnation of human sacrifice, a theme also taken up in *Canticle* in an apparent allusion to the sacrifice of Isaac: "What burnt offering is this you have prepared for me?...Have you made me a holocaust of sheep or goats, or offered a calf unto God?' But the Prince answered him not and God said: 'You have made me a holocaust of my sons!'"(187). Additionally, the promise made by God to Abraham--that he would be the father of a great nation (Gen.12:2; *passim*)--would have been void had Isaac been sacrificed; but Isaac is not, and so the promise is passed on to him, and through him, to descendants who eventually become the people of Israel. This aspect of the

name Isaac, then, also seems to form part of the biblical allusion contained in the saint's name: just as Isaac preserves the legacy of the promise by being spared from the holocaust, so too does Isaac Edward Leibowitz live through the nuclear war to pass on the legacy of learning to holocaust survivors.

Leibowitz's middle name, Edward, in addition to alluding to his being a guardian (i.e., of learning to be passed on), seems also to be an allusion to martyrdom. There was during the English Reformation a priest named Edward Powell who had been chosen by Oxford as one of four theologians to write the university's rejection of Lutheran theology. Oxford was so delighted with Edward Powell's work that he was given the title of "the glory of the university." Henry VIII had heard and approved of his preaching. Edward Powell, however, like Thomas More, John Fisher, and others, opposed Henry's claim to supremacy of the church and died for it. He was executed with a group of religious dissidents comprised of both Catholics and Protestants. The Catholics were hanged as traitors; the Protestants burned as heretics. Thus the allusion in *Canticle* to Blessed Edward Powell: he was an intellectual who opposed the murderous authorities the same way Isaac Edward Leibowitz opposed the murderous and anti-intellectual Simpleton leaders. Edward Powell and his companions were hanged and burned; Leibowitz was martyred by being hanged and burned (65).^{ii[iii]}

The name Leibowitz, "lover of jest," is a strongly Jewish surname and therein lies its principal value: his Jewishness is never glossed over, denied, or forgotten. On the contrary, because the saint is remembered and addressed by his last name, his Jewishness is constantly underscored and thus also constantly underscored is his commonality with the Old Jew, that is, their shared Jewishness is precisely what constitutes their shared humanity.^{iii[iii]} This connection is further emphasized by the two Hebrew characters with which the Old Jew marked the hourglass-shaped stone found by Br. Francis. Abbot Arkos and Prior Cheroki discuss the implications:

Cheroki stared at the symbols __ and shook his head....

[Arkos said]"That is a *lamedh*, and that is a *sadhe*. Hebrew letters."

"*Sadhe lamed?*" [Cheroki asked].

"No, right to left. Lamedh sadhe. An ell, and a tee-ess sound. If it had vowel marks it might be 'loots,' 'lots,' 'lets,' 'lates,' 'latz,' 'litz'—anything like that. If it had some letters between those two it might sound like LIII—guess-who."

"Leibo—Ho, *no!*"

"Ho, yes! Brother Francis didn't think of it. Somebody else thought of it..." (45).

The ell and tee-ess sounds carry over into the name of the Old Jew in "*Fiat Lux*," Benjamin E*leazar*, and the beggar in "*Fiat Voluntas Tua*," *Latzar* (=Lazarus, 278), continuing, by sound-value, the emphasis on the relationship between the names of this character in his various manifestations and Saint *Leibowitz*.

ARKOS: "Griffin suggests Father Arkos' name is derived from the Greek arktos, meaning bear. The description of a fur robed Arkos as a 'were-bear only incompletely changed into a man' with 'black fur on his chest...padding about his study in bare feet' lends credence to this point. It has also been suggested that the name derives from the Greek for 'beginning.' The names of the abbots go from A (Arkos) to Z (Zerchi), from beginning to end" (Robertson and Battenfeld, 118). Of the two possibilities, the second seems by far the likelier. The bear-like appearance of the abbot finds its principal value, a mildly comic one, in the strong contrast between himself, "his wide peasant face wearing a thick-furrowed muscular glower" (42), his "gruff voice" (44), generally rough demeanor, and his aristocratic prior, Fr. Cheroki, "who came of baronial stock" (42) and who was therefore a courtly, mild-mannered, and reserved formalist made very uncomfortable by this informal encounter with the roaringly furious abbot over the sensation in the monastery caused by Br. Francis' finds in the fallout shelter. The prior's

demeanor may also remind the reader of the deep emotional reserve (or “stoicism”) of Native American people--like the Cherokee--who amazed white people by their strong resistance to open expression of emotion even in extremely difficult and painful situations.

BROTHER FRANCIS GERARD OF UTAH: “Brother Francis’ name links him with Francis of Assisi with whom he shares the characteristics of humility, innocence, singlemindedness, and meekness. Gerard, from the Germanic Gerhard, meaning ‘strong with the spear,’ links him with his native savage Utah race” (Robertson and Battenfeld, 120-121). To this can be added another Franciscan allusion, i.e., St. Francis’ famous composition entitled “Canticle of Brother Sun.” Br. Francis also functions as a sort of inclusio in *Canticle*: we meet him in the novel’s opening line, and reference is twice made to him at the novel’s end: as the never-canonized Venerable Francis (253) and when his skull rolls out of the tomb after the blast which topples the church and buries Abbot Zerchi (331). This serves to round off not only the history of the abbey, but the history of the earth as recounted in *Canticle* and prepares for the new history about to begin with the coming to life of Rachel in the novel’s final pages.

NAMES IN “FIAT LUX”

MARCUS APOLLO: “The name indicates a fusion of images in one man. Apollo is the god of prophecy. Marcus Apollo warns about the lack of spiritual values in a world which overvalues the material. The name is also associated with Appollos...a contemporary of St. Paul (As Marcus Apollo is a contemporary of Dom Paulo). He was noted for his eloquence...Mars is the god of war and is associated with the idea of action and that there is no creation without sacrifice. Marcus Apollo is executed by Hannegan” (Roberston and Battenfeld, 122).

The aspects of prophecy (Apollo) and war (Marcus) are united in that Marcos Apollo predicts that there will be war when a certain messenger, sent to deliver an unacceptable message to a man who kills deliverers of unacceptable messages (Hongon Os), returned safely home: the message actually sent, therefore, was other than what was reportedly sent; therefore, there would be war (121). Marcus Apollo also considers his own death as the possible price for warning New Rome of the gathering storm: “Martyrdom is all very well, but we have a job to do first” (125).

The name Apollo is also, of course, the name of the Greek sun god and therefore always an allusion to brilliance and light. In this case, the allusion applies to Marcus Apollo personally as a brilliant diplomat whose skills are amply evident in his negotiations with Thon Taddeo concerning the Memorabilia. “Moreover, just as the biblical Apollos preached a religious doctrine in opposition to his age’s growing materialism, so, too, does Apollo offer to Taddeo, the scientific materialist, a spiritual alternative to the materialist viewpoint. That alternative, however, is rejected because Taddeo...has failed to learn the spiritual lessons that history teaches” (Stoler, 78-79). Nowhere is Taddeo’s rejection of this lesson more beautifully displayed than in the following scene from the meeting of Taddeo and Marcus Apollo in the latter’s home:

“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.” He went to light a tallow lamp, for the twilight was rapidly fading into night. He struck steel and flint until the spark caught and he blew gently at it in the tinder.

“Perhaps,” said Thon Taddeo, “but I doubt it.”

“You reject all history, then, as myth?” A flame edged out from the spark.

“Not ‘reject,’ But it must be questioned. Who wrote your histories?”

"The monastic Orders, of course. During the darkest centuries, there was no one else to record them." He transferred flame to wick (129).

We have in this scene a perfect example of setting as a comment on the action: even as the discussion centers on the possibility of history being a source of knowledge--light banishing darkness--the priest, who represents spiritual values and who recognizes the lessons history teaches, brings light (Apollo) by lighting the lamp.

THON TADDEO PFARDENTROTT, despite his denial, really does reject history as a source of knowledge: he is committed to an absolute materialism as the following indicates. One of the thon's assistants tells Br. Kornhoer that the measures he is taking will determine the date of construction of the abbey:

"The abbey's architectural records are complete, he [Kornhoer] said. "They can tell you exactly when each building was and wing was added. Why not save your time?"

The man glanced up innocently. "My master has a saying: 'Nayol is without speech and never lies.'"

"Nayol?"

One of the nature gods of the Red River people. He means it figuratively, of course. Objective evidence is the ultimate authority. Records may lie, but nature is incapable of it. He noticed the monk's expression and added hastily: "No canard is implied. It is simply a doctrine of the thon's that everything be cross-referenced to the objective."

"A fascinating notion, murmured Kornhoer.... (194-195)

Neither monastic historians nor the abbey's architectural records are to be trusted, and nothing can be learned from the past: only the empirical is real. What motivates this contempt for history? Abbot Paulos exposes it in the confrontation in the abbey library just before the thon returns to Texarkana: "Why do you wish to discredit the past, even to dehumanizing the last civilization? So that you need not learn from their mistakes? Or can it be that you cannot bear being only a 'rediscoverer,' and feel that you must be a 'creator' as well?"(235). Indeed, this is the crux of the problem, Taddeo's trying to become God. The story of the fall of man (Gen. 3), which sets out clearly the terrible consequences of such folly, is lost on the thon who denies his arrogance even as he openly displays it (see the magnificent dialogue between Taddeo and the abbot, 233-235).

All this, of course, is hinted at in the thon's name. Taddeo: "God's gift." Being God's gift is a two-edged sword: Taddeo is a brilliant scientist--the new Galileo--whose work will lay the foundation for the reemergence of technological civilization. But abuse of the gift also can lead to the same pride that caused the fall of Adam and Eve. In their attempt to become God by eating the forbidden fruit, they actually achieve the opposite of what they intend: they become subject to, rather than escape from death; they become powerless and alienated from God, each other, and nature rather than come into supremacy; they unleash chaos into creation rather than subject it to themselves. Thon Taddeo follows this same path. The abbot's meditation after Taddeo's departure is inspired by Genesis: "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" (238).

In addition to the thon's brilliance and arrogance, however, there is also an intransigence, a willful blindness, a sort of muleish stubbornness about him hinted at in his name. The German for horse, "pferd," is echoed in the "Pferd" of his surname (Pferdentrott) and trot, then, the horse's method of locomotion. It is tempting to think that the name suggests that its monomaniacal bearer is a horse's ass. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

BROTHER KORNHOER: "Samuelson sees a relationship between Brother Kornhoer, whose name suggests a farmer, and Brother Armbruster, whose name means 'cross-bow' and suggests a hunter, and the story of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-6). An ear of corn is also symbolic of the idea of germination and growth, the development of a feasible potential, such as Brother Kornhoer's realization of the arc lamp"(Roberston and Battenfeld, 118). The allusion to Cain and Abel is grounded in the conflict between Kornhoer and Armbruster over the difference between liberal and conservative views of what monastic tradition may legitimately accommodate from the "world" and what is inimical or deadly to it.

The reference to "farmer" also contrasts nicely with the (bastard) Texarkanan royalty. Thon Taddeo, a theoretical genius, does not think in terms of practical applications of his theories to the physical world. He is stunned by the arc lamp as it never occurs to him that anyone at the abbey might apply his theories and accuses the monks of keeping secret a lamp of the ancients. But in the arc lamp's inventor, Brother Kornhoer, a practical genius, the thon has met his match and in more than one way: as arrogant as the thon is, Kornhoer is humble. He is not interested in a post at Thon Taddeo's collegium: "Brother Kornhoer hesitated. 'My vocation is to religion,' he said at last, 'that is--to a life of prayer. We think of our work as a kind of prayer, too. But that--' he gestured toward his dynamo '---for me seems more like play.'" And, of course, it is the humble Kornhoer who retrieves the rod from storage for the abbot to replace when he announces that all who read in the alcove should do so "*ad lumina Christi*" (by the light of Christ, 236), a lesson newly learned by Brother Kornhoer, and newly rejected by Thon Taddeo. Kornhoer does not deceive himself into believing he is God's gift. Thus, the lowly farmer's knowledge and understanding far surpass the not-quite-royal scientist's.

THE POET-SIRRAH: The Poet is an enigmatic and comic character, sort of a jester or fool, as Taddeo suggests, who walks a line courting danger. This character recalls poets and writers like Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, men who saw clearly that the medieval world they loved, or satirized, and certainly immortalized, was giving way to a troubling new one of which they were deeply suspicious, a world in which the clearly structured cosmos and perfectly balanced social order they believed divinely ordained was passing rapidly into a chaos ruled by unscrupulous princes, corrupt ecclesiastics, and ambitious city burghers. The age of Dante's *Divine Comedy* was passing to the age of Machiavelli's prince.

The poet-sirrah is plagued by his glass eye, which symbolizes conscience, and not only his own: he is also plagued because conscience is so easily ignored by some people, principally, of course, by Thon Taddeo. But even the Poet's sensitive conscience is a fickle one: hardly scrupulous himself--he cheats old Benjamin out of a blue-headed goat, filches wine from the abbey's cellars, and steals the thon's boots--he nevertheless agonizes in titanic fashion over his desire for wine, but when, exhausted from the struggle he finally gives in, he takes out his glass eye and pours the bottle over his head rather than down his throat: "The advantage of a removable conscience, you see" (223). The Poet, who abandons the abbey for parts unknown, leaves his glass eye on the upturned wineglass at the monks' banquet given for Thon Taddeo, telling the eye to watch the thon carefully (206).

"So he thinks I need it more than he does."

Dom Paulo shrugged. "He's only the Poet-sirrah!"

The scholar puffed a breath of amusement....Suddenly he laughed. "I rather like that. I think I know who does need it more than the Poet" (223).

And, irony of ironies, we meet with the glass eye--the removable conscience of the Poet-sirrah-- in "*Fiat Voluntas Tua*," as a talisman enshrined in one of the Hanngean dynasty crowns (303).

But it turns out the Poet's conscience is, unlike the thon's, not so easily removed. He cannot permit the soldiers in the thon's party to get away with sketching the abbey's fortifications. "Apparently unafraid of dying," he publicly exposes their spying on their gentle hosts (206). And his conscience gets

the better of him again in the last chapter of *"Fiat Lux."* There, safely hiding in a bush, he jumps out in a futile attack on a soldier hacking at a woman who was running from his cavalry company. The woman, one of a number of refugees, refused to recognize Hannegan's claim to be head of the church; she and they were fleeing from religious persecution in his kingdom (recalling again the martyrs during Henry VIII's reign). The Poet's conscience would not allow him to stand idly by while the innocent suffer. In this way he is very much opposed to Thon Taddeo to whom the suffering of other people means nothing, as he himself made clear in his lecture to the monks and as the abbot recognized with horror: *"Let there be blood, iron and weeping...How could such a man [as the thon] thus evade his own conscience and disavow his responsibility--and so easily!"* (215). The thon's substitute for conscience is honor: he reddens with anger when the abbot suggests he may be abusing his intellect for reasons of pride or escape from responsibility: "You question the honor of my motives?" he asks threateningly (235). The thon returns the soldiers' sketches of the abbey's fortifications "as a matter of honor, not to let them take advantage of your hospitality" (237). But he will not promise any effort on behalf of the abbey. Why? Perhaps the coming war may finally allow him an "honorable" way to take the abbey's ancient documents, the Memorabilia, into his own possession, which is what he has wanted all along (e.g., 163). The Poet-Sirrah, on the other hand, has no honor whatever, cares nothing for it, nor has any need of it: his fidelity to conscience shows how small and tawdry the thon's "honor" really is.^{iv[v]}

BENJAMIN ELEAZAR BAR JOSHUA: In correspondence, Miller states that "psychologically, Benjamin was just an unconscious (at the time I wrote) compensation for the fact that Leibowitz was an ex-Jewish convert. You might say that Benjamin is Leibowitz's unconverted part. Conversion doesn't cancel out what was previously in the psyche. The old man is uncanonized Leibowitz's shadow, although I did not think it so while writing" (Robertson and Battenfeld, 118). Miller's Jungian reflection is interesting; leaving aside a direct response to it, however, there can be no question that nature of the relationship between Leibowitz, the man *and* the statue, and the Old Jew is extremely complex psychologically as well as literarily.

Stoler suggests that the name may be an oblique reference to the tribe of Benjamin that was nearly destroyed by inter-tribal warfare the survivors of which fled for refuge to Rock Rimmon in the wilderness (Judges 19-21), an allusion to the desert mesa of "Last Resort" where Benjamin lives as a hermit (82). This suggestion is excellent, but there is another, perhaps even more telling allusion because Benjamin is the last son of Jacob, who is called Israel in the story of his sons going back and forth to buy grain in Egypt during the famine in their own land (Gen. 42-45), while Benjamin in *"Fiat Lux"* is "the last old Hebrew" (173).

The name Eleazar, which means "God's help," is also rich in biblical allusion. There are several possible candidates, but the most probable is the old man Eleazar in II Maccabees 6:18-31. It is by God's help that--during the Greek persecution of the Jews in the time of the Maccabees--this old man spurns the pork he may eat in exchange for his life. He refuses the unclean meat, as well as the semblance of eating it, because he will not scandalize the young at the end of his long life by eating forbidden food. It is with God's help that *Canticle's* Benjamin Eleazar lives so long a life. More to the point, however, is that, like the old Eleazar in Maccabees, old, old Benjamin Eleazar refuses to give up his Judaism for a new kind of life. (See my article in this issue on the relationship between the Old Jew and Leibowitz). It should also be noted here that the name Eleazar in Greek is Lazarus, thus identifying Benjamin Eleazar of *"Fiat Lux"* with Lazarus of *"Fiat Voluntas Tua."* Bar Joshua, of course, means son of Joshua, i.e., Israel as a people. This name also links the Old Jew with Brother Joshua, a pivotal character in *"Fiat Voluntas Tua."*

ABBOT PAULOS OF PECOS: Stoler suggests that the name is to be associated with St. Paul. St. Paul and Appollos were contemporaries and friends in the New Testament, so Abbot Paulos and Marcus Apollo are friends in *Canticle*. "In addition, St Paul was a Jewish tentmaker of the tribe of Benjamin, and Paulo's confidante in *Canticle* is the Jewish tentmaker, Benjamin. Another parallel between the two is that St. Paul suffered from his 'thorn in the flesh'...while Dom Paulos suffers from frequent internal hemorrhaging. Finally, both have periods of religious confusion and doubt" (Stoler, 79). Stoler goes on to say that these are merely superficial resemblances because "St. Paul is often regarded as the 'second founder of Christianity' and Dom Paulos' mission, as he sees it, is to help reestablish the basic tenets of

Christianity when they had eroded after the nuclear holocaust and which are still imperiled by religious schisms and rapid scientific advancement” (79). In line with this last insight, perhaps the parallel between Paulos and St. Paul can be drawn even more sharply by noting that neither looks to the world to make sense of it: “For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit are concerned with the things of the spirit. The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace,” (St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans, 8:5-6). Finally, both are absolutely uncompromising in their defense of the truth and in seeing the world entirely “*ad lumina Christi.*”

NAMES IN “FIAT VOLUNTAS TUA”

DR. CORS: “From the French corps, meaning ‘body’ or ‘matter.’ Dr. Cors is in charge of the Exposure Survey team which recommends radiation victims to euthanasia centers” (Robertson and Battenfeld, 119). Understanding the name in this way relates it directly to the character’s profession as a medical doctor. There is another way to view the name, however, as coming from the Latin, *cor*, meaning heart. This physician’s idea of mercy, however, leaves a great deal to be desired. The name, then, is ironic because heart suggests compassion and mercy, but the doctor recommends death when the only evil he recognizes, physical suffering, cannot be conquered. After writing a red ticket that gives the bearer admission to the Eucrem team’s camp where euthanasia is carried out on a large scale, something Cors had promised not to do on abbey grounds, he and the abbot speak:

“Then you know why I broke the promise. I have to live with myself afterwards, man! I don’t want to live as the torturer of that woman and that child.”

“Pleasanter to live as their executioner instead?” (308)

Cors represents the embodiment of what the abbey sees as the two principal evils of the age:

[Zerchi said:] “You heard him say it? ‘Pain’s the only evil I know about.’ You heard that?”

The monk [Br. Pat] nodded solemnly.

“And that society is the only thing which determines whether an act is right or wrong? That too?”

“Yes.”

“Dearest God, how did those heresies get back into the world after all this time? Hell has limited imaginations down there. ‘The serpent deceived me and I did eat....’” (299-300).

The doctor, unlike the abbot, does not seem to understand that there are things worse than pain, worse than death, and that society’s judgment about what is right and wrong is all too often arbitrary, misguided, and political rather than moral, as the very existence of nuclear weapons demonstrates (295).

BROTHER JOSHUA: “The name is Hebrew for ‘Yahweh is salvation.’ In the Old Testament Book of Joshua, he is appointed successor to Moses and leads the tribes of Israel in their successful campaign to settle Canaan. Brother Joshua’s relationship with the older Dom Zerchi parallels Joshua’s relationship with Moses....Brother Joshua says that the Old Testament Joshua is ‘the namesake of my namesake.’ The Hellenized form of the Hebrew is Jesus, and there are strong parallels between Joshua and Jesus, both of whom accept terrible responsibilities” (Robertson and Battenfeld, 121-122).

Brother Joshua, then, like the first biblical figure for whom he is named, assumes leadership of the people when the old leader passes from the scene and completes the Exodus. Certain episodes

involving Br. Joshua also recall Jesus' temptations both in the desert and in the Garden of Gethsemane when Br. Joshua struggles with the abbot's invitation to assume leadership of the group going into exile in space. There, in Chapter 26, he is tempted to despair (286). The allusion to a serpent in this scene also recalls Adam's temptation in the Garden of Eden: "[Joshua] started nervously. Something—*slithering?*" (288). All this indicates that Br. Joshua's role is extremely complex, recalling the exodus from the Garden of Eden, completing the exodus from Egypt, and Christ's temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane, which is the beginning of his exodus from life to new life: "And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah...and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30-31). Br. Joshua, then, represents a kind of summation of the whole of the human race that has lived on the earth since the time of Adam: "...Joshua has become a symbolic father to all men and the bearer of their burdens; and the significance of Benjamin's last name, *bar Joshua* ('son of Joshua') now becomes clear. Joshua simply takes up as the Wandering Jew where Benjamin left off. Joshua, the new Adam, must now venture into the desert of space, exiled forever by man's accumulated sins from the Eden of earth" (Griffin, 121).

There is also a direct allusion to Leibowitz which reinforces the Moses-Joshua parallel. Leibowitz, the technician, had been married before the war and afterwards returned to the Southwest to look for his wife. It was only after finally accepting that she had been killed in the war that the momentous decisions to seek baptism, enter the Cistercians, become ordained, and found an order are made. We learn of a similar content in Br. Joshua's life: he was also a technician who had been married and had previously entered the Cistercians. When the abbot asks him to lead the group going to the space colonies, Joshua is deeply shaken:

[Zerchi said,] "We have a ship."

"A *starship?*"

"No less. And we have a crew capable of managing it."

"Where?"

"We have the crew right here."

"Here at the abbey? But who—?" Joshua stopped. His face grew even greyer than before. "But Domne, my experience in space has been entirely in orbital vehicles, not in starships! Before Nancy died and I went to the Cisterc--" (269).

Brother Joshua then, in addition to the other roles noted above, is also the new Leibowitz, the new or second founder of the Albertian Order of Leibowitz as it begins its exodus from the world about to be destroyed, like the Israelites leaving plague-stricken Egypt in an act of hope, searching for a better, more human life.

MRS. GRALES: "The name is closely associated with the Holy Grail, the chalice used by Jesus at the Last Supper and in which Joseph of Arimathea purportedly collected the last drops of blood from Jesus on the Cross. According to legend, the chalice was made by angels from an emerald that fell from Lucifer's forehead when he was thrown into the abyss. The blood of Christ redeems the sin of Lucifer through the Grail. It is the chalice of salvation as Mrs. Gales is the vessel for the salvation offered by Rachel in her innocence" (Robertson and Battenfeld, 123).

It is ironic that Mrs. Gales, a humble and thoroughly common woman, should be the source for the new beginning of the human race by "bearing" Rachel, the new Eve. Indeed, it is doubly ironic that Mrs. Gales, who had had an abortion at some point in her life (326), should be the "mother" of the first child of the newly born human race.

RACHEL: "Rachel's innocence and purity, her lack of Original Sin, bind her to the Virgin Mary and Eve before she eats the forbidden fruit. She may represent the new mother of mankind. Rachel of the Old Testament is often considered the mother of Israel because she bore two of the twelve patriarchs of Israel's tribes. Rachel is born of the...vessel Mrs. Grales...her Immaculate Conception is pointed to in Brother Joshua's dream (Chapter 25) when she whispers to him, "Accurate am I the exception...I commensurate the deception...I am the Immaculate Conception..."(Robertson and Battenfeld, 124)

The name Rachel, in Hebrew, means little ewe lamb, yet more support for innocence and purity as stressed above. Some have argued that Rachel is to be understood as a Christ figure since there are "at least a dozen cuts" (334; alluding to the twelve tribes of Israel?: the twelve apostles?) and five slivers of glass extracted from her wounded arm, alluding to the five wounds of Christ: "Her five wounds, her rejection of conditional baptism (which, as a perfectly pure being she does not need), and her intuitive knowledge of the sacraments which she administers to the dying priest combine to create a Christ-figure. Associations with the Holy Grail, the 'primal' Eve, the Virgin and Christ make Rachel a figure of absolute spiritual purity" (Stoler, 87).

It is also interesting to note that the only women of any significance in this novel appear at its end and that they play completely unexpected or ironic roles: an old woman gives a highly unconventional "birth" to a young woman. The dying abbot, looking at this young woman "had seen primal innocence in those eyes, and a promise of resurrection. One glimpse had been a bounty, and he wept in gratitude" (336). Thus, it seems, that she is both Mary and Eve, the new mother of the new human race, called forth from the tomb by God yet again.

To Benjamin...Rachel's appearance seems to signify the end of his centuries-long search for his Messiah, for upon her introduction to the book, Benjamin mysteriously disappears from the narrative. That there is a spiritual bond between Benjamin and Rachel is strongly suggested by the fact that in the Old Testament, Benjamin is Rachel's son. Miller transmutes the blood bond between the two into a spiritual bond, and implies that the Wandering Jew has found his Messiah at last and need wander no longer (Stoler, 84-85).

This is a possibility. However, it seems to me that Benjamin bar Joshua's disappearance is linked to the disappearance of humanity and all other life—except Rachel--on the surface earth. This is strongly implied in the Abbot's farewell to the space journeyers: "Remember this Earth. Never forget her, but—*never come back*....If you ever come back you might meet the Archangel at the east end of earth, guarding her passes with a sword of flame" (292). Additionally, the first two books had closed with references to buzzards, aerial scavengers; the last book to marine scavengers, sharks driven down deep into the ocean. But historical humanity, although disappeared from the earth, is still in the cosmos. Led by Joshua (bar Leibowitz), the same humanity called forth from the tomb and represented by Lebowitz, i.e., a faith-filled humanity, speeds away towards Alpha Centauri and the hope of a better life as the world ignites.

LUCIFER: The ironic name of the Prince of Darkness because the word means "bearer of light." This word is also, of course, the name used in "*Fiat VoluntasTua*" to indicate a nuclear detonation: "Lucifer is fallen." Lucifer, the most brilliant of God's angels, rebels against him and is cast into hell. His is a perfect name for the Bomb: brilliant in its first appearance, but unleashing fiery hell.

NOTES

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[i]. John A. Stoler, "Christian Lore and Characters' Names in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*," *Literary Onomastics Studies*, Vol. 11, 1984 (77-91), 1. I also wish here to acknowledge my debt not only to

John A. Stoler, but to William H. Robertson and Robert L. Battenfeld for their book, *Walter M. Miller, Jr.: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT) Greenwood Press, 1992, and especially the "Glossary of Allusions, References, and Associations in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*," pp. 117-127. I do not seek in any way to find fault with the excellent work of these scholars but rather to continue the conversation on the fascinating topic of characters' names in *Canticle*. Unless otherwise indicated, all numbers in parentheses are page numbers in *Canticle*, Bantam trade paperback edition, October, 1997.

ii[iii]. I do not know that Miller had the martyr Edward Powell in mind when he gave Edward to Leibowitz as a middle name. However, Miller's interest in English Renaissance history seems obvious in the way he has structured much of "*Fiat Lux*": The references to Henry VIII in Hanngen's rule cannot be accidental. Miller may have read about Edward Powell and his martyrdom and alluded to it in the name of the title character of his novel.

iii[iiii]. On the life of Edward Powell, see the summary in the Catholic Encyclopedia at www.newadvent.org, under "P." See also my article in this issue on the question of the relationship between the Old Jew and Leibowitz.

iv[iv]. For a very different interpretation of the role of the Poet, see Russell M. Griffin, "Medievalism in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*," *Extrapolation*, Vol. 14, May 1973 (112-125), 118-119.