

# **A Canticle for Leibowitz Study Guide**

**A Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter M. Miller, Jr.**

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# Plot Summary

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* follows a Catholic monastic order in its 18-century effort to preserve the legacy of human knowledge as mankind repeatedly destroys itself in nuclear flames.

Six centuries ago, the world suffers a Flame Deluge and violently rejects all learning, in the Simplification. A widowed former weapons scientist, Leibowitz, gathers followers and establishes a monastic order dedicated to preserving remnants human knowledge. Leibowitz is martyred and by the 26th century is up for canonization. The world has returned to a hunter-gatherer economy, and the Catholic Church struggling against marauding barbarians and shamans. Young Francis Gerard of Utah and fellow novices spend Lent scattered in the desert, enduring a strict vocational retreat before professing in the Albertine Order of Leibowitz (AOL.) An ancient stranger invades Francis' peace and discloses a long-buried fallout shelter. Novices embellish the story, which the brutal Abbot Arkos wants suppressed. After many tries, Francis is professed and made an apprentice copyist. He spends 15 years illuminating the Leibowitz blueprint he found in the shelter, and is invited to New Rome for the canonization. During the trek, Francis loses his prized illumination to robbers but preserves the original, which he presents to the Pope. En route home, an arrow to the forehead kills Francis, who is buried by the stranger he first met wandering the deep desert.

By A.D. 3174, Hannegan II of Texarkana is bent on reuniting North America and secular scholars are shaking off the Church's monopoly on learning. Among the foremost is Hannegan's brilliant cousin, Thon Taddeo Pfordentrott. Troubled by premonitions of trouble, Dom Paulo rules the abbey. Brother Kornhoer reinvents artificial light and feuds with the old-fashioned librarian, Ambruster. Paulo visits a hermetic old friend, Benjamin, who considers himself the last remnant of Israel, old enough to have buried the murdered Francis. Benjamin waits for a Messiah but does not expect him. Refreshed, Paulo returns to the abbey to await Taddeo's extended visit, which lays the foundation for decades of work fitting the puzzle together. Taddeo foresees a blood crisis to break the bonds of cultural inertia, Paulo fears another Flame Deluge, and Benjamin sadly concludes Taddeo is not the Messiah. War breaks out, Hannegan incurs New Rome's wrath by murdering its envoy, and as Taddeo prepares to leave the abbey, Paulo argues scientists have a brief window for exercising moral authority over rulers, but the scholar's mind is closed. He believes the secular world should take over the Order's mission. Buzzards again circle battlefields, doing what Nature intends.

By A.D. 3781, darkness has given way to light but radiation levels are rising after a recent detonation in Asia. Under Dom Jethrah Zerchi, the Order has been recruiting space veterans, including Brother Joshua. A figure looking like Benjamin appears in the refectory, proclaiming an omen, and a two-headed mutant, Mrs. Grale, discomforts the monks. As diplomatic talks stall and a full-fledged exchange appears imminent, Zerchi forces Joshua to decide whether he will accept ordination and lead 27 monks to Centauri Colony. After an agony in the abbey rose garden, Joshua agrees, and the party departs for New Rome. The abbot faces a moral dilemma when the Green Star



organization asks to perform triage on radiation victims in the abbey courtyard. Dr. Cors does not practice euthanasia, but does advocate a quick, merciful death for those terminally exposed. To Zerchi, this is a mortal sin. The battle focuses on a young Catholic widow and her wailing, horribly burned, infant. Zerchi sends picketers to the nearby euthanasia site, and is so outraged, when he loses his two innocent souls he punches Cors and is spared jail only by agreeing to end the protests. Zerchi is hearing Mrs. Grale's confession when Leibowitz Abbey is blown apart by a nearby detonation and, trapped in rubble, he learns to practice what he has stoically preached. Rachel assumes control of the shared body, refuses conditional baptism, and administers a last communion to the dying but mystified priest. The monks escape as the earth is engulfed in flames, leaving only deep-water sharks alive.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* follows a Catholic monastic order in its 18-century effort to preserve the legacy of human knowledge as mankind repeatedly destroys itself in nuclear flames.

During his Lenten fast in the desert, novice Brother Francis Gerard of Utah sees on the horizon a wiggling iota of black, which terrifies him. Only monsters, which abound in the wilderness, or the addle-witted would hike the desert at noon. As the iota approaches, it resolves into a spindly old man with a spiked staff, hat, beard, sandals, and water skin. His loins are girded in burlap, and he seems too frail to be harmful, but Francis cautiously hides behind a pile of rubble to watch. Rarely do three strangers a year take the road from the Great Salt Lake to Old El Paso, past the abbey and its oasis. At noon, the ruins offer no shade, but wise travelers know to tilt up large stones, kill whatever lies under them, and enjoy brief refreshment. As the pilgrim cools himself, he unwraps a biscuit and a bit of cheese, and offers a blessing Francis does not recognize, but it convinces him the man must be a pilgrim to the abbey's unofficial shrine to an unofficial saint.

Lenten rules forbid monks to speak voluntarily or leave their hermitage, but still Francis clears his throat loudly. The pilgrim jumps up defensively. Charity and courtesy take precedence over the rule of silence, so Francis speaks to calm him. As the pilgrim retrieves his sandy food, Francis looks away, having eaten only cactus fruit and a handful of parched corn since Ash Wednesday. Vocational vigils are strict. The pilgrim offers to share, and Francis' muscles involuntarily draw him near before visions of his angry Abbot and Blessed Leibowitz admonish him and he sprinkles the tempter with holy water. The pilgrim counterattacks with his staff and Francis survives only by retreating until the man is exhausted and resumes eating.

The pilgrim now watches Francis haul select stones to his burrow. Francis is fortifying his dwelling against wolves and is progressing towards completing a dome. The pilgrim notes a specially shaped stone is needed to fit a crucial gap and, sensing Francis wants to be alone, offers to find it before setting out again. Francis' no-thank-you goes unheard, and he hears the pilgrim announced he has marked the perfect stone for him. His privacy restored, Francis resumes work, starved, exhausted, and praying for a sign of his vocation. He labors whenever a cumulus cloud passes overhead, carrying water to the mountains, offering him shade, and rests in between. Francis trips over the pilgrim's marker and studies a fresh, mysterious inscription, reading ?. Removing the stone, Francis worries he has penetrated a beast's lair and drops in pebbles. Hearing echoes below, he calculates the hole must open into an area the size of a room. When the stone will no longer fit its former space, Francis carries it to his shelter, where it slips perfectly into the gap. Francis copies the ?? to show Prior Cherokee during his Sabbath round of the hermitages. Francis is drawn back to the hole, fearing its inhabitant, which



is surely best encountered in daylight. As Francis enlarges the opening, the ground gives way, revealing a staircase. Descending, he finds a half-buried sign reading, "Fallout Survival Shelter / Maximum Occupancy:15." Francis has heard legends about Leibowitz exorcizing a fiendish Fallout monster, born in the Flame Deluge. Some say it once tormented Job. This lair appears to house 15 Fallouts.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 establishes young Brother Francis and other novices are making a vocational retreat in the deserts around their monastery, Leibowitz Abbey. Some great cataclysm has obviously occurred, The Flame Deluge, and spawned both biological mutations and mythic monsters. Francis wants to be a monk and is scrupulous about observing the strict discipline of his order. A stranger, whom he presumes to be a pilgrim, breaks Francis' silence and peace, but also shows him the key rock holding fast the ground above an ancient fallout shelter, something Francis has heard of only in hazy myth. The identity of the stranger and contents of the shelter soon put the novice in great trouble with his superiors.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Francis recites the Litany of the Saints as he descends again into the cave with holy water and a torch. Debris fills a third of the cavern. At the far end it blocks a great hinged door bearing the sign, "Inner Hatch / Sealed Environment," and a printed warning about the conditions under which the seal is automatically broken. Francis observes differences in color that show today's cave-in has not caused this massive damage. Seeing a gold tooth gleaming in a skull, Francis realizes this place has not ravaged, and he pulls on rusty desk drawers, hoping for a priceless find of documents or books from before the Age of Simplification. Providence has bestowed a blessing here. Francis recalls how Venerable Boedullus had erred excavating an "international launching pad," and turned the landscape into a vast crater lake filled with giant catfish. The Abbot has decreed excavations are valid only to augment the Memorabilia with paper artifacts. The golden grin draws Francis to a rusted box pillowing the skull. Francis opens the lid, and finding papers under a series of trays, he carries the box to the surface to examine in sunlight.

Francis puzzles briefly over small tubular items with wire whiskers he has seen on pagan shamans and in the museum. Since the bonfires of the Simplification, paper has been holy and Francis treats these with reverence. A faded note in a hasty scrawl asks Carl to keep Em there until I.E.L. can arrive, appears to be gibberish. Notes in the same hand remind Emma to pick up pastrami and other items. Below is a column of figures, which Francis confirms are added correctly. A Memo book disappointingly holds only names, places, numbers, and dates ranging from the late 1950s and early 1960s, the twilight of the Age of Enlightenment. An important discover, indeed!

A rolled-up Racing Form is too fragile to open, but the thrill of discovery is great when Francis unfolds a blueprint, only one of which survives in the museum. Francis is angered to see some idiot has desecrated its back with doodling, but then remembers blueprints had once been common as weeds. In a corner is a printed checklist indicating the circuit design is by Leibowitz, I. E. Authorities argue whether their founder, if canonized, should be called St. Isaac, St. Edward, or St. Leibowitz. Francis trembles, realizing he has found relics of the saint and heaven has confirmed his vocation, something the Abbot has warned novices not to expect. The bells announcing the Angelus carry from the Abbey and Francis realizes it is dusk and his shelter is not complete. He hears wolves by twilight and dares not leave his fire to collect cactus fruit, so he will starve tonight, and is tempted to take his findings to the Abbey, but dares not risk his vocation. Francis unrealistically pictures a basilica rising about the Fallout Shelter and himself serving as priest and guide to the saint's relics. New Rome is occupied with weightier matters, like the argument with the Dominicans over dogmatizing the Preternatural Gifts of the Holy Virgin. Francis awakens to see a wolf blinking at him and worries if his yelp of fear breaks the rule of silence. Hugging the box, Francis prays Lent may pass swiftly.





## Chapter 2 Analysis

The Litany of the Saints, which opens Chapter 2, is updated to ask deliverance from ground zero, cobalt, strontium, cesium, and "misborn monsters," confirming the Flame Deluge has changed the world to the point the church must update its ancient liturgy. There are indications this band of monks are preservers of the few artifacts surviving the mid-20th century, not only from some great conflagration, but also from a period of anarchy that systematically destroys the past. Full details about all these matters will be brought out. Francis' priceless find, linked to Chapter 1's elusive stranger, will occupy the next few chapters and place a heavy burden on the novice.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Wondering how a young boy can find occasions for sin amidst such desolation, Fr. Cheroki hears Francis' lengthy confession of offenses towards the pilgrim. The presence of the Holy Sacrament obliges Cheroki to stand or kneel, inflaming his arthritis. Francis can never find the right words for his motives and the priest's sarcasm does not help. When the subject turns to Francis' belief his finds have proven his vocation, Cheroki declares Francis has not prepared for this confession, withholds absolution, and orders him to gather his things and return to the monastery. Cheroki takes up the Sacrament and rides to the next novice's outpost, leaving Francis agreeing he has been acting addled. As he packs, a supply caravan arrives, led by Brother Fingo, the cook's helper, who is the ugliest man alive but a good sport.

Like fellow Minnesotans, Fingo suffers baldness and uneven distribution of melanin. However, his perpetual good humor distracts attention. Fingo is a woodcarver by trade, but self-assertion shown while carving a figure of Leibowitz has earned him a stint in the kitchen. Fingo tells Francis he looks sick, to which Francis replies Cheroki has ordered him back to the abbey. Francis shows Fingo his box with its note from the Beatus. Fingo is sure it is the fever and is ready to resume his rounds, but agrees to look at the hole to confirm its existence. Francis too treks away. Two weeks of near-starvation have exacted a toll, and Francis faints short of the abbey. Cheroki finds and revives him as Fingo arrives. Receiving Fingo's confirmation of the hold, Cheroki repents of his earlier impatience and refusal to examine the box or visit the crypt. He agrees to finish the confession and absolve Francis.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 establishes two key characters but chiefly serves to reiterate the "evidence" introduced in Chapter 2, by picturing Francis grappling with his fastidious conscience. His confessor wants everything delivered staccato and properly packaged for frequency and volition, and is sarcastic when Francis fails. Talkative Fingo is the first person to hear Francis' full story, and it will soon dominate the novices' rumor mill. The woodcarver will return to the story several times later.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

too eager. Arkos shows Cheroki the ??, which the Abbot says someone has figured out can be expanded (reading right-to-left) to Leibowitz. Leaving Francis in the desert to dig up more, which had not been Cheroki's reason for sending him in. The abbot orders him to see Francis and then send him to him.

Around 9 AM, Francis knocks timidly on the abbot's door. Sleep and a little food have restored him enough to be afraid of the abbot. Arkos invites him in affably but swiftly turns accusatory, condemning his desire for overnight fame and hubris in believing he is called to religion. Arkos demands Francis deny meeting anyone in the desert, since no pilgrim stopped at the abbey as his story goes. When Francis refuses, Arkos administers ten mighty whacks of a hickory ruler to his buttocks, to which the novice responds, "*Deo gratias!*" each time, and in the end maintains the old man is not an illusion. Unable to sit, Francis stands to hear he is to resume his vigil, but trade hermitages with Brother Alfred, and never visit the ruins again. He may discuss this with no one but his confessor or the abbot, and contemplate the damage he has done. Arkos smiles involuntarily when Francis declares it could not be Leibowitz he encountered, for the old man chased him with a stick, which a saint would hardly do. Francis admits it is easy to brow-dazed staring at the desert sky. Francis' mind cannot perceive a sharp line between the natural and supernatural orders, so he cannot go beyond saying his visitor *may have been* just an ordinary old man. The abbot demands certainty, but Francis cannot shake some extraordinary things about the man. Knowing the futility of commanding someone to think otherwise, Arkos dismisses Francis.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Chapter 4 introduces information about the process of canonization in the Catholic Church, which will be amplified later, and continues going over the particulars of Francis' story, which fellow novices are embellishing. All of this can harm Leibowitz's chances in New Rome, where exaggeration is unappreciated. Francis endures a savage beating rather than compromise his story - the first of many meted out by Arkos - and the suppression of the story begins. These efforts should be born in mind when details later come out on *The Simplification*, during which, Chapter 4 reveals, Leibowitz, it is hanged.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Mystified by the commotion in the abbey, Francis returns to his desert vigil. He finds it hard to see why everyone concentrates on the old man rather than Leibowitz's relics, and admonishes himself for paying too little attention as to the pilgrim to answer questions. He confesses being distracted from prayers and spiritual exercises during Cheroki's next circuit, and is told not to brood about what might be true. Perhaps Francis observes too little, because he is too wrapped up in his own vocation to see the vast significance of events. His desire for final and perpetual vows may be akin to the cat's motive for becoming an ornithologist - simply to glorify his natural ornithophagy (bird-eating.) Other than the Order, what has Francis to do? He cannot return to Utah, from which he fled the life of an acolyte to the shaman who kidnaps him as a child. After the abbey, that primitive life would be stifling. Small communities of hunter-gatherers, with very few center of civil order, lightly populate the continent. "Industry" consists of fighting and the more profitable and prestigious witchcraft. Francis' training has not practical worth apart from the Church, which in North America is too far from the Holy See to be more than loosely subject. The Church is de facto the only means of communication left, and word of plague in the northeast swiftly spreads everywhere. Barbarians are threatening to infiltrate the far Northwest, and the Pope has sent his Apostolic Benediction to any men skilled in arms to join a crusade there in defense of Christendom. Francis has considered joining, but is too puny to stand up to the rumored nine-foot heathen. That leaves joining the Order, and his vocation has been bent if not broken.

Francis wants to survive six more days of starvation, but first must confess eating a lizard. Cheroki has heard so many novices' confessions he is nonplussed. Holy Week arrives. On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, Arkos performs appropriate rituals at each hermitage. On Holy Saturday, the monks carry the famished, raving novices back to the abbey. Francis, who has lost 30 pounds, collapses before he can reach his bunk. As brothers tend to him, he babbles about an angel or saint in a burlap loincloth, and tries to apologize. The brothers exchange significant glances, but say nothing. Word reaches the abbot, who summons Francis, who cannot give him the absolute answer he wants, and informs him he will not be professed with the others.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter 5 fills in information about the state of a world once again based on a hunter-gatherer economy, marauding barbarians, and shamans. The Church is the only beacon of light, and Rome's ability to maintain unity is strained. The Pope's call to arms for a crusade against the barbarians in North America confirms a new Middle Ages is in effect. More details will come out. Francis, who realizes he is fit for nothing but the

Church, fails in his first attempt to profess his vows, because he cannot see black-and-white the way his superiors demand.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Francis is upset when the abbot seals the shelter without thorough investigation. A rumor - true - spreads, "Emily had a gold tooth." When Emily Leibowitz vanishes at the beginning of the Flame Deluge, it takes years for the widower to admit she is dead. As in the days of Noah, God tests prideful mankind by commanding wise men like Leibowitz to devise unprecedented engines of war containing the very fires of Hell. Magi give these to all the princes, warning no one dares use them. The princes, however, see the advantage of a secret first-strike and bring on the Flame Deluge. The Memorabilia records how, within days, cities are destroyed, nations vanish, crops die, and deserts spread. Many die of the poisoned air, while survivors wander, resulting in a confusion of tongues. Hate is born and determines to wipe out the magi, their hirelings, and all record about everything from before the devastation. The Simplification is a great bloodletting of the world's rulers, scientists, technicians, teachers, and anyone else the mob turns on. The leaders embrace the epithet "Simpleton." The Church gives sanctuary to many learned people, but some monasteries too are invaded. The madness is handed on to the Simpletons' children and mob fury breaks out sporadically for four generations, with the merely literate the final victims.

After fruitless searches for his wife, Leibowitz joins the Cistercians, is ordained priest, and gathers followers, who petition Rome (no longer a city) to establish a new order with the task, unannounced, of preserving human history. The monks, whose burlap rag habit matches the simpleton mob, work either as Bookleggers, burying materials in kegs to keep them from being destroyed, or Memorizers, committing passages to memory. The brothers establish a monastery at a water hole three days' walk from the book cache. While bootlegging, Leibowitz is denounced as a weapons specialist, hooded in burlap, and both strangled and roasted alive.

The monastery is attacked three times before the madness ends. Only a few kegs of original books survive, and for six centuries, the Order has been preserving, copying, recopying, and waiting - far beyond Leibowitz's prediction of 4-5 generations. Moses and Hitler both show how a leader can remake a society in short order. In this new society, simpleton, citizen, and slave are synonyms. Knowledge takes on a symbolic meaning for the monks, and it matters little if they are preserving the useless, obsolete, and inscrutable. Someone in some century may fit it all back together. After the shelter is closed, the abbot quietly rounds up all the documents and relics and locks them away in his study. Rumors die out until a messenger from New Rome is overheard talking with the abbot in the refectory. Within weeks, this too is forgotten. Francis fasts another Lent, returns emaciated, fails to tell the abbot what he wants to hear, endures the hickory ruler, and is passed over again for profession of vows.



## Chapter 6 Analysis

Chapter 6 finally reveals what happens in the Flame Deluge and Simplification, in the style of biblical narrative, with clear allusions to the Flood and Tower of Babel. Into it is woven the doctrine of "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD), shown failing monumentally. Description of the Simplification recalls scenes from the French and Bolshevik revolutions. Mention of Hitler is odd, considering all of the 20th-century things the Simplification has blotted out of memory.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Francis has endured seven years in the novitiate, scrubbing floors in the kitchen and studying antiquity, when a messenger arrives from New Rome. The Black Friar inquisitor, a kindly man, praises Arkos for prudently turning over investigation of the fallout shelter to his Dominican Order, to project objectivity. The Devil's Advocate, meanwhile, seeks to prove Emily Leibowitz is alive at the time of her husband's ordination, to cast doubt on his character. Francis finds pinpoint the date of her death. When the visitor leaves, Arkos' attitude changes and Francis is professed an AOL monk. He is apprenticed to gentle, aged Brother Horner as a copyist. Horner allows his staff to fill time after their assignments are completed on pet projects rather than copying "perennials," those titles the clergy regularly demand. Brother Sarl's project is restoring missing words and phrases from damaged documents, using a mathematical method, and he has completed four pages in 40 years. Francis asks to copy the Leibowitz blueprint, surreptitiously, because it is still a "sensitive" subject with the abbot. Horner agrees not to notice.

Francis labors for months, wondering why the ancients take the trouble - and waste so much ink - filling in around white lines and letters, rather than drawing black-on-white. Francis reproduces the intricate Leibowitz blueprint down to a stain he hopes is Leibowitz's blood, but sarcastic fellow apprentice copyist, Brother Jeris, suggests comes from an apple core. They discuss the philosophical meaning of "Transistorized Control System for Unit six-B," with Francis believing the high abstraction expresses Leibowitz's transcendental thought. Electronics, once an art/science, deals with electrons, something one source calls a "Negative Twist of Nothingness." Francis completes his project accurately enough for display purposes, but not grandly enough to glorify a saint. The combination of copying text of an illuminated Psalm and stumbling upon an ancient encyclopedia that explains how blueprints really used to be produced, Francis decides to create a colorful new version, adorned with vine motifs, and turned from a stark rectangle into a shield. Francis makes dozens of preliminary sketches before the abbot discovers what he is doing. Surprisingly, Arkos just shrugs and walks away. Horner finds Francis has fainted.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 graduates Francis from novice to monk and places him in the copyists' room under conditions of freedom that allow him to undertake a novel illuminated blueprint. Details of how the AOL performs its mission of supplying texts to the clergy and generally preserving the past are revealed. The copyists' naivety is clearly shown amusingly in Francis misunderstanding of how blueprints are created. Francis' illuminated blueprint plays a key role in Chapter 10, where a robber makes different, but equally naive, assumption about the two artifacts.





# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

Arkos relaxes once the Dominicans take over the cause, eleven years after Francis' incident. Francis devotes years of free time labor to his project, which blends with the tedium of days and seasons that for everyone ends with Extreme Unction and the Just King's judgment of "come" or "go." Sarl completes a fifth page before dying, leaving notes someone may use to finish the task. Fingo is restored to the carpentry shop and allowed an hour a day to work on his Leibowitz. Francis enjoys watching the martyr's visage emerge, with merry-but-sad crinkly eyes and the hint of a wry smile Francis recognizes but cannot place. The smile irritates the abbot, who hides the completed carving in his study. Word of Francis' progress on the illumination spreads and someone insists the Beatus he met must inspire him. When Jeris succeeds Horner as master of the copy room, he insists Francis put away the things of a child and start doing a man's work. Francis hopes to outlive Jeris and resume work. Providence arranges another way by sending a prothonotary apostolic, Msgr. Malfreddo Aguerra as postulator for Leibowitz's canonization. His Dominican clerks will reopen the shelter, explore the "Sealed Environment," and interview Francis about his alleged apparition. The abbot provides deluxe accommodations and entertainments beyond Aguerra's needs or wants, suggesting this abbey lives extraordinarily well. Arkos suggests an unhappy end to Francis' life if he is not very careful in what he says to Aguerra, lest Leibowitz's cause be shelved again. Thus, Francis goes frightened to the suave, diplomatic elder, who wants him to verify a compilation of travelers' stories about the incident.

Reading the fat scroll of hearsay horrifies Francis, who insists the event is nothing like this and wishes he had never mentioned a pilgrim to fellow novices. Francis briefly summarizes their one meeting, not marked by halos, heavenly choirs, or carpets of roses. The stranger did, however, write two unintelligible marks on a rock. Agreeing travelers' stories are always exaggerated, the postulator throws Miracle No. 7 into the waste bin. There is more than enough evidence for sainthood without this, and the Devils Advocate would have crucified Francis, Aguerra says, before revealing 15 skeletons have been found in the inner chamber. Aguerra hopes and believes the gold-toothed skull is Emily. Before returning to New Rome, Augerra insists on seeing Francis' unfinished illumination, declares it beautiful, and insists he finish it. Jeris must allow it.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

Chapter 8 shows the cause of Leibowitz's canonization reaching the point that the shelter is unsealed and systematically explored. Aguerra, who will reappear at the end of Part 1, officially closes investigations into exaggerated travelers' stories deriving from Francis' simple telling of his meeting with a stranger in the desert and resurrects his illuminated blueprint, which has been put on a back burner. The fate of ugly Fingo's enigmatic carving will be examined in Part 2, but it is clear the preservers of human

knowledge have an iconoclastic bent. More details of the process of canonization are revealed.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

After Aguerre's departure, his malign opponent, Msgr. Fraught, arrives to a cooler reception. Arkos does not warn Francis against using his imagination with the Devil's Advocate. Fraught inquires about mental illness in Francis' family, before moving on to artificially aging paper, the commonness of the name Emily and its diminutives, and the "fantastic twaddle about an apparition." Francis is interrupted frequently as he tells his version, and is subjected to a ruthless cross-examination. Deciding Francis' story is trivial Fraught dismisses him. Viewing the Leibowitz blueprint, Fraught finds it a vivid, "dreadful incomprehensibility," and a waste of six years' work. Francis is relieved not to be told to quit. The abbey's work goes on routinely after Fraught's departure, until word comes from New Rome the Pope has decided to canonize Leibowitz in conjunction with a General Council. Withered by age, Arkos summons Francis to appoint him the abbey's delegate to the event, eventually admitting the Pope has asked for him by name. He will carry the original blueprint, and Arkos recommends he take his illumination as a personal gift to the Holy Father. Francis faints.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 shows the final stages of the consideration of Leibowitz's canonization, with the Pope asking Francis to represent his order at the celebration, which will take place in conjunction with an ecumenical council that will, in a new era, take up the eternal question of the relationship between knowledge and belief, and who has the right to regulate it.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Reaching New Rome takes at least three months and entails great danger from robber bands. Francis prays they will be too ignorant to understand the value of the relic and his illumination. Some thieves allow victims to leave, relieved of booty. As a precaution, Francis wears a black eye patch, suggesting to the superstitious he has the evil eye. Two months out, Francis is waylaid in a wooded area near the Valley of the Misborn, a colony not affiliated with Catholic charities for leper like mutants. Occasionally babies are born with recessive genes, appear normal, but are so devoid of human spirit some even within the Church advocate destroying them. New Rome under Pope Leo XX refuses, however, and the misborn are often called the "Pope's Children." The short, brawny robber who confronts Francis appears normal, but has a companion who may be two-headed. The robber laughs at the eye-patch ploy and demands Francis disrobe and open his bindlestiff.

The robber admires the gold on the illumination but dismisses the dull original. He allows Francis to leave with his clothing and donkey, but not the illumination. The robber is offended by the idea Francis venerates his ancestors and has wasted 15 years on the woman's work of copying a drawing. Francis offers to wrestle the robber for the documents, but loses swiftly. The victor will allow Francis to ransom the illumination if he can get two heklos of gold from the Pope. Fondling the relic and blessing the robbers' ignorance, Francis rides away as one of the band repeats "Eat! Eat!" Francis rides sadly, contemplating 15 years of love and torment.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Francis loses his prized illumination when robbers take it for the original and the blueprint-relic the copy he has spent 15 years creating. Much of the chapter is devoted to the substance of debates on whether genetic mutants retain the human soul that precludes doing away with them summarily. The Pope ends discussion by adopting an unwavering pro-life position even under such radical conditions, and one of the outwardly normal "Pope's Children" takes from Francis the personal gift intended for his successor.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

Francis is awed, watching the majestic basilica prepared for the canonization ceremony. Every action contributes to the dignity and overpowering beauty, even the *sampetrius'* placement of a footstool before the papal throne and particularly a review of the armored and immobile papal guard. Pilgrim throngs are admitted, breaking the silence, and the guard goes on the ready. To a peal of trumpets that makes Francis' scalp crawl, the crowd rises, and a frail old man in white is carried in on a chair. The ceremony is brief but intense. Aguerra chants three requests to Pope Leo XXI to number Leibowitz among the saints. A heroic portrait, *sans* smile, is unveiled. After a *Te Deum* and Mass in Leibowitz's honor, it is finished. The small group of pilgrims, including Francis, makes its way through a series of checkpoints to attend the Pope's reception. The *sedarius* demands a clan chief remove his panther headdress. Francis swoons when the Pope strides in and makes his way slowly down the line. He insists the chief put on his headgear, which he admires. When Francis' turn comes, he sees a meek, fragile man, who speaks in the formal curial style, only because it is expected. The Pope is grieved to hear of Francis' misfortunes and the loss of his gift, but rejoices to meet him and through him greet the Order that prevents the world's total amnesia. Francis produces the blueprint and tells the story. The Pope admonishes Francis for saying he "wasted" 15 years on the illumination, which allowed the relic to arrive in New Rome unscathed.

When the Pope blinks (or winks,) Francis' eyes are opened to the shoddiness of his white cassock, the walls, and carpet. Dignity, he realizes, overshadows poverty. The Pope promises Francis a threat of excommunication against anyone who molests him en route home (Francis realizing highwaymen will not be able to read the decree), and says goodbye to his "beloved son." Aguerra pulls Francis aside and embraces him. Aguerra has aged badly, which makes Francis realize he too is graying and wrinkling around the eyes from long squinting over the copy-table. Aguerra hands him a package, which he asks be opened elsewhere. Francis asks to confess to his Patron's advocate. His heart is troubled only by his discovery of the shelter hindering the saint's case. After absolving him, Aguerra gives Francis a tour of the basilica, pointing out crumbling masonry and frescoes, showing the Church is not wealthy in this age. Francis opens the package and finds a purse holding two helklos of gold.

The robber is not waiting, when Francis arrives at his outpost. So, he rests, awaiting him as long as necessary. He is happy for the chance to rest. Francis surveys the southwestern horizon and shivers, discerning a black iota walking through the shimmering heat. As it nears, Francis crosses himself, wondering if this could be the same stranger. A Pope's Child arrow hits him between the eyes. The wanderer rests, watching buzzards flock over a clump of trees, and then approaches to drive them away from the partial remains of a man. Anxious about being attacked, the stranger digs a grave deep enough to frustrate the buzzards, who divert to the body of a dead hog and the remains of a cougar's meal. Buzzards lay eggs, feed their young, and eat whatever



the fruitful earth offers. Sometimes a toad, once a messenger from New Rome. Pickings are good, until a new city-state arises and ends the carnage of war. In A.D. 3174, there are rumors of war.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

Part 1, "*Fiat Homo*," ends with Francis death at the hands of highwaymen who earlier spared him. Circling buzzards, which have been a frequent background motif, now land to partially devour him. The pilgrim again walking out of deep desert is the last thing Francis sees, and the old man digs for him a shallow, unmarked grave. Buzzards flourish in times of warfare, and a new cycle is about to erupt in Part 2, "*Fiat Lux*."



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Msgr. Marcus Apollo, Papal nuncio to the Court of Hannegan, is certain war is near, overhearing Hannegan's third wife gossiping about a favorite courier returning intact from a mission to Mad Bear's clan. Had the Plains tribes and the civilized states accepted the "Agreement of the Holy Scourge," Mad Bear would not have slain him in fury. Hannegan's emissary must, therefore, have gone on another, undisclosed, mission. The tall black-clad cleric makes his way to his assistant, Brother Claret, but says only, "Sarkal came back alive." They will talk more after the wedding reception. The bride's half-brother, an elegantly attired academic Thon Taddeo Pfordentrott, approaches, irritated being outside his secular cloister in the collegium. Taddeo hopes to learn more from Apollo about the Leibowitzian documents at the abbey. Apollo assures him they are authentic and encourages him to accept the abbey's invitation to examine them. Taddeo cannot afford the time or endure the danger of a six-month visit and wants help borrowing the documents for study by himself and his colleagues.

Knowing this is impossible and wanting to kick Taddeo for his audacity, Apollo invites him to his quarters later. Apollo tells Claret he will meet Taddeo for two reasons. First, Hannegan's important kinsman must be indulged. Second, Taddeo may divulge information vital to New Rome's interests about intentions to unite the continent under one dynasty by using a Denver/Laredo alliance to tie up Mad Bear and encourage Chihuahua to attack Laredo from the south. This will then free Hannegan to take on the Mississippi Republic. Apollo is unsure if this will work, but New Rome must be forewarned in order (doubtfully) to stay out of the squabble.

Taddeo is cordial and nervous, when he reaches Apollo's quarters. This tips the cleric to his eagerness to get something, making him too easy a victim for the cleric's planned verbal fencing match. Taddeo reports the faculty has met and worries the abbey may be running a hoax. If the documents are authentic, they must be investigated immediately. They appear to fit into Taddeo's field of study, where at 30 he has established himself as a revolutionary thinker in electrical essence, planetary motion, and attracting bodies. Brother Kornhoer's list includes names like Laplace, Maxwell, and Einstein. They're all men forgotten, except anecdotally by history. The abbey may contain scientific papers. To illustrate the urgency, Taddeo leads Apollo to the window and points out a weary peasant leading his donkey. The fool does not realize he can ride the animal back from market, because it is no longer weighed down with grain sacks. Taddeo marvels this illiterate, superstitious, murtherous moron is descended from men who once invented machines that fly, talk and think.

The monsignor naturally sees in him the image of Christ. Taddeo asks impatiently how a great, wise civilization can destroy itself. Lighting a tallow lamp, Apollo suggests material greatness and material wisdom are different, and asks if Taddeo rejects all history as myth. Taddeo insists history must be questioned. In the time of the antipopes,



many schismatic orders fabricated and passed off versions of their own. The only thing undeniable is an advanced civilization once existed, shown by its physical remains. Doubt is a powerful tool for historians. Apollo smiles and asks Taddeo what he wants. He wants a letter to the abbot assuring him the materials will be cared for and returned safely, guaranteed by Hannegan. Conclusions drawn away from the abbey's influence will be more convincing to other scholars. Apollo surprises Taddeo by agreeing to write Dom Paulo, but doubts it will help. When Taddeo leaves, Apollo tells Claret he must go swiftly to New Rome and return via the abbey. There, Claret is to tell Paulo "Sheba expects Solomon to come to *her*. Bearing gifts," and then bring the abbot's "no" to him for delivery to Taddeo.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Chapter 12 jumps forward to A.D. 3174, and introduces a new cast of characters, who will be developed in the following chapters. The scattered hunter-gatherer society has been united into a number of hostile geographic principalities, and Hannegan is bent on uniting the continent again. Secular scholars are certain a great civilization once thrived in North America, as seen from unearthed artifacts, and are shaking off the Church's monopoly on learning. Among the foremost is a young physicist, Hannegan's brother-in-law, Thon Taddeo Pfordentrott ("thon" being an honorific in the 32nd century.) Science and religion and church and state issues loom, and the papal envoy to Hannegan's court is determined to keep New Rome informed.





# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Watching buzzards circle the desert, the abbot has forebodings of death. An assistant rereads a letter from Msgr. Apollo Dom Paulo already knows by heart. Sheba will come to Solomon after all, perhaps to denounce him as a charlatan, which means Taddeo, the brilliant, well-meaning, anticlerical, anti-monastic potential loose cannon, has given up on receiving the Memorabilia and will arrive on the Assumption, protected against bandits by a small party of cavalry. Paulo is certain his old friend is saying something ominous between the lines, but cannot figure out what. The courier bearing Apollo's letter has explained Taddeo's embarrassing past. He was educated by Benedictines after illegitimate birth to a serving maid. He intellectually outstrips his cousin, who, despite his illiteracy, is being groomed for the throne. He is then recalled to the duke's court as a bitter 15-year-old, when the duchess, who bears only daughters, dies. The abbot worries about bitter memories, half-memories, and imagined memories. In the weeks since the letter arrives, Paulo has slept badly and suffered a recurrence of an old bowel problem. There is no reason to worry politically or economically, but Paulo feels foreboding about a small, malicious, compulsive devil lurking, and wonders if he has grown life-weary.

When his prior and likely successor, Father Gault, approaches, Paulo wonders if buzzards have eaten another old friend, Eleazar Benjamin, whom he has not seen in five years. Paulo has been thinking lately about the Old Jew, whom he resolves to visit soon. Eleazar claims to be at least 3,209 years old, but Paulo gives him just over 100. Gault needs direction on 1) expelling the Poet from the guest room, 2) serving vespers, and 3) resolving the perdition vs. progress feud between brothers Ambruster and Kornhoer. Paulo hopes the latter's experiment in electricity will fail, and intends to deal personally with all but vespers. Paulo heads to the guesthouse, smelling rotted food, hearing the bleating of a goat, and seeing an eyeball in a vase of water on a shelf. The Poet sprawls on his bed, a wine bottle nearby, irritable about being awakened. Paulo orders him to vacate immediately and scrub the place in the morning. The Poet replies he is anxious to leave, because the place is infested with bedbugs. Paulo confiscates the stolen sacramental wine and learns the bald, blue-headed, mutant goat has been won from Benjamin in a game of mumbly-peg. Paulo orders the Poet to return it, and heads for the basement.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Chapter 13 deepens the portraits of Dom Paulo and Taddeo, and introduces the Poet and Eleazar Benjamin, two enigmatic characters who remain prominent throughout Part 2. Leibowitz Abbey is enjoying political peace, economic prosperity, and educational success, but the abbot has premonitions of trouble, which, indeed, come true. Buzzards again circle overhead, as they have throughout the novel.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

The vaulted basement, dug while the Bayring Horde lies in the region, has protected the Memorabilia from nomads, sectarians, and schismatic knights-friars for 12 centuries. A small flame of knowledge is now smoldering and some claim valid knowledge is indestructible, ideas are deathless, and truth is immortal. The abbot contemplates this applies only to the Creator's ineffable *Logos*, while human thought and speech is valid only within given cultures. Cultures are not immortal, and truth can be crucified and, perhaps, resurrected. Coming from a different society, the Memorabilia's ancient words and formulae can be little understood. The early AOL brothers' pressing of a Veronica's Veil to the face of their crucified civilization is incomplete, faint, and confusing. It cannot generate a revival of ancient science or civilization, but can offer hints to a new evolution. Venerable Boedullus asserts this has happened before, and Paulo plans on reminding scientists who has kept the spark burning while the world sleeps.

The basement bustles with construction, watched by the grim Librarian and Rector of the Memorabilia, Brother Ambruster, but supervised by Brother Kornhoer, who rushes to the abbot, enthusiastic about the light no man alive has seen, which will soon burst out here. Paulo is concerned they have hurried installing a makeshift machine just to impress Taddeo. Wagon wheels, copper wire, and iron blocks form a "dynamo," which stands poised to cause a lamp burn brighter than 100 candles. Paulo declines a scientific explanation, but wonders why predecessors have failed to do this. Kornhoer says the dynamo is only partially implicit in fragmentary writings, from which he has theorized and deduced his system. Kornhoer is a seminal thinker in this area. Ambruster insists Taddeo work in an alcove like everyone else, while Kornhoer suggests he be given a partitioned, well-equipped work area and free access to rare volumes chained down for security. Paulo sides with the librarian, because the villagers are anxious to fill the shelves of their new library. Kornhoer next insists if Taddeo is to work in an alcove, the crucifix must come down temporarily to accommodate his light, and the librarian rages about desecration and threatens physical violence. Paulo winces at the inventor's suggestion, but dislikes Ambruster's worsening disposition and supports the logic of removing the crucifix.

Paulo remains in his study during the test next day, having privately warned and publicly rebuked Ambruster, with whom he nevertheless sympathizes. The abbot's cramping does not go away as it usually does, and he takes this as a warning from an angel, a demon, or his conscience. He studies Fingo's 6,000-year old carving of St. Leibowitz, odd for a sacramental image, with crossed, crinkly eyes, wry smile, and frowning brows. Paulo ascribes these features to irregularities in the wood. His stodgier predecessors have often disliked it, and Paulo is certain it will one day give way to a more orthodox plaster version, because religious art must please simpletons and sages alike and tastes change over centuries, usually downward. The day's heat makes both Paulo's cramping and depression worse. He asks St. Leibowitz's intercessions and considers



dispensing himself with a more digestible diet. He contemplates how the scales, weighing life and labor against silver and gold, are crooked and ruthless, spilling many lives, and a king is carrying them across the desert. Paulo suppresses the vision, wondering, as St. Leibowitz smiles at him, if they are laughing at him in heaven.

Paulo wonders if the coming king (Taddeo) will agree with Venerable Boedullus that half the Memorabilia should be called the "Inscrutabilia" and find his trip across the dangerous desert worthless. The fist in Paulo's stomach clenches and he collapses on his desk, wishing the chalice could pass for a while, but realizing crucifixion is always now. If you fall off your cross, they beat you to death with shovels, robbing you of dignity. St. Leibowitz smiles on, perhaps at his hangman, or at Satan himself. Gault finds Paulo with blood showing between his teeth, but quickly revives him. Paulo insists it is ridiculous, idiotic, and absurd, and declines to see the doctor. Gault reports the test is successful and Paulo pretends to listen, while thinking about a safe time for him to die.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

By examining the perdition vs. progress feud between brothers Ambruster and Kornhoer, Chapter 14 has an opportunity to discuss theories of history in Neo-Platonic terms and for the first time suggests the monks of St. Leibowitz know they are preserving as much chaff as grain. The ailing abbot also meditates on the nature of religious art.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

Hongan Os ("Mad Bear"), ruler of the Plains clans, is a just and kindly man, more merciful to his animals than his warriors, and careful about the sensibilities of the superstitious, grass-eating allies he needs. Knowing if the Laredans learn Hannegan is arming his tribes, his plan will fail, and never doubting his clans are superior, Mad Bear breaks taboos and risks tribal restlessness to deal with a messenger from Texarkana. He is willing to stop raiding his Eastern rival, Hannegan, as long as he provides arms and supplies. A joint war on Laredo is left implicit, but fits Mad Bear's plans of expelling the farmers who have encroached on his ancestral grazing lands. The twelve Eastern guests are divided into two mutually repugnant groups, one of which is led by an untrustworthy manic, who writes mysteriously in a small book and digs in the dry riverbed. Mad Bear puts on his ceremonial wolf robes, is anointed by a shaman, and is hailed with the legend of his nickname during a solemn entrance to the fire ring.

Mad Bear ignores the eulogies, as he drains a cup of fresh steer blood, which offends the grass-eaters' religious taboos. Taddeo, present among the Texarkanans, mollifies Mad Bear and amuses him by requesting guards for their westward journey into the Dry Lands to visit Leibowitz Abbey. There, he hopes to obtain the skills of ancient sorcery. A shaman derides the dark-robed ones, who are easily captured, but admires how well they endure torture. Taddeo says the monks do not know how to use the incantations they hoard, and hopes to master them himself. Tired of Mad Bear's insults, he retires, while the warriors talk on. Taddeo disdains his ignorant cousin's political aspirations but happily accepts his useful patronage.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

Chapter 15 clarifies the tribal alliance that has several times been mentioned, and richly depicts the diverse life-styles and belief systems of brutal 13th-century North Americans. The monks are despised by the bellicose natives for their pacifism and, by the great scholar heads to their abbey for their ignorance about the invaluable information they preserve.



# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary

The sunburned old hermit, Benjamin, with hat, beard, sandals, burlap loincloth, and water skin, stands on a mesa, watching a speck cross the desert, and meditating on peace. He descends to the arroyo and surprises his visitor, Dom Paulo. Benjamin demands Paulo return the goat to the Poet, who won it, or curse it and cast it into the desert. The grumpy old friends eventually embrace, and Benjamin confesses to throwing pebbles at fasting novices who camp too near, because one of them once mistook him for a distant relative, a scalawag Leibowitz, and Benjamin does not want it to happen again. Paulo cannot believe the Old Jew is pretends to be 12 centuries old, but Benjamin insists he buried Francis and informed New Rome where to find the grave. Accepting Benjamin's offer of hospitality, Paulo is exhausted climbing to the primitive hovel, in front of which a pillar stands displaying a large Hebrew sign Benjamin claims means, "Tents Mended Here." Only by squeezing between a flat rock and the outer wall can another Hebrew inscription be read. Benjamin dares not display it in times like this, and refuses to translate.

Benjamin offers milk and an opportunity to explain why a Taddeo visit worries Paulo, who counter-offers wine and refuses to discuss it. Benjamin notes he too has been labeled a secular scholar, staked, stoned, and burned for it. Paulo objects Torquemada is dead, and out of loved begs Benjamin not to think of himself as the embodiment of the scattered Jews and sole bearer of their burden. Benjamin insists he cannot refuse. Paulo says he too is a member of a congregation that the world despises, and as a priest is accountable for the acts and deeds of every cleric since the time of Christ, who alone has the strength to bear that. All men bear the burden of the guilt of original sin, and must admit this as readily as they accept the inheritance of ancestral glory, virtue, triumph, and dignity. Christ crucified has lifted the burden and left only the imprint, which is an easier yoke. Paulo knows Benjamin is watching for another Messiah. Blessing this brave, wise fool, Benjamin observes Paulo is a devotee of paradox, mystery, and contradiction, able to find sense in the Trinity. Paulo equates the Jewish burden of being Chosen with the Catholic burden of Original Guilt. Both imply responsibility. Benjamin exalts in making Paulo want to argue about the Trinity, to which Paulo counters, waiting years for One-Who-Isn't-Coming has taught Benjamin no wisdom but made him shrewd. Benjamin smiles, declaring, insult, railing, baiting, and persecution cannot keep him from knowing He is already here, because he has seen him.

Talk turns to Taddeo, Kornhoer's lamp, and how radically things have changed in two centuries. Paulo has electrical essences in his basement. Paulo then opens up about various fears, including the Order's responsibility for the Memorabilia. He feels like a shoemaker trying to sell his wares in a village of shoemakers. Leave the business or learn to make better shoes, Benjamin advises, and warns him monks should pray, not build strange contraptions or resort to metaphysics. He has no sympathy for their meddling in affairs of the world. The children of the world will take all the monks have to



give and then toss them aside. The flippant words conform to Paulo's fears about Taddeo. Benjamin wants to examine the entrails of this New Era before prophesying if things like the lamp will work, and does not truly expect the coming of Him who once shouted to him, "Come forth!" but still, he waits. Paulo is shocked by Benjamin's request he bring Taddeo past the foot of his mesa. He hopes the scholar will be on their side and not make authorities more dangerous by offering them advice. It is late, and Paulo must leave, realizing his belly hurts less than recently. *El Shaddai* is merciful, Benjamin observes, but also just. They embrace affectionately and part.

## Chapter 16 Analysis

Chapter 16 is a richly theological opportunity for the author to depict the widely scattered Jewish remnant in the 32nd century and debate the age-long theological questions of the Unity of God, Original Sin, and Election. Benjamin claims to be considerably older than Methuselah (the oldest man in the Bible), related to St. Leibowitz, whom he for some reason abhors, and the familiar stranger who at the end of Part 1 buries the murdered Brother Francis. At the opening of the chapter, Benjamin is reciting a Messianic passage (Isaiah 9.7), and the second inscription he refuses to display or translated is the *Shema Yisrael*, the Jews' sacred and concise confession of faith in the Oneness of God. Benjamin waits for a Messiah but does not expect him.



# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary

An envoy from New Rome assures Paulo war is coming. Vatican attempts to warn King Goraldi about Hannegan's threat has led to Msgr. Apollo's arrest, which the Vatican countered by putting Texarkana under interdict. Since 80% of the population is cultist, this has little effect. The envoy doubts Taddeo can make it to the abbey unscathed, but he will arrive. Paulo judges the world can ill afford to lose such a scholar and doubts the Empire of Denver will be affected by war. The envoy enlightens Paulo on Hannegan's strategy and treachery in gathering allies, shattering them, and picking up the pieces. This will free him to strike east or northeast into lucrative areas. The abbey is in no immediate danger of being overrun, but should begin taking steps to keep the Memorabilia safe. Paulo angers, picturing 12 centuries of effort being compromised by an rough-riding illiterate prince, and reminds the envoy of past success in fighting off raiders. Now, the envoy warns, they have bountiful supplies of gunpowder and grapeshot.

Assumption passes without word from Taddeo, and pilgrim requests for votive masses keep the priests busy. Rumors have it the abbot is fasting as penance for putting the scholar in harm's way, but the truth lies in his stomach troubles. The watchtowers are continually manned, and on afternoon spots riders on the horizon. Next morning, 20-30 horsemen approach and break into two groups. The wolf-skinned nomads, apparently guides, gallop eastward, while 6-7, some in uniform, trot to the gates. Paulo welcomes the scholar fulsomely and receives a monosyllabic reply. Paulo feels like a bridge across 12 centuries between the last martyred scientist and the first of a new age, but then begins feeling more like he is stranded on a sandbar in Time's river. As the visitors settle in, Paulo notices how the wooden saint's smile resembles Benjamin's smirk and his warning, "The children of this world are consistent too."

## Chapter 17 Analysis

Taddeo's arrival at Leibowitz Abbey is expected on the Feast of the Assumption (Aug. 15) and occurs on St. Bernard of Clairvaux's day (Aug. 20.) Warned of the inevitability of war, Paulo has fortified the gate and worries about his imprisoned old friend Apollo and the scholar he has forced to brave growing danger. The Vatican, which tries to keep rival rulers believing it is diplomatically neutral, is forced to act against Apollo's jailer, but interdiction (cut-off from the sacraments) means nothing to the 80% of the population that is no longer Catholic. Vicious Hannegan cannot be expected not to retaliate for the papal affront. Paulo - and will not. His eyes and stomach worsening, Paulo feels out of place in the coming new world, a second recognition of the possible futility of the Order's historical mission. Will the new scientist be worthy of the old? The intricacies of that simple question are brought out in the rest of the novel.





# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary

The refectory reading conflates the familiar story of God granting Satan permission to try Job's loyalty with the mythology of the Flame Deluge about princes receiving the very fires of Hell. A crafty Judas Iscariot-like magi named Blakeneth counsels the prince to believe weapons may be used, provided they not exceed a set limit, and enemy cities are smitten for three days and nights. God takes offense at this holocaust of his sons and slays the prince and the betrayer, and there follows pestilence on the earth and madness in mankind. A man named Leibowitz, who as a youth loved the wisdom of the world more than the wisdom of God like St. Augustine of old, repents ... The abbot raps sharply on the table and the reader falls silent. Taddeo asks if this is their only account of the fall of civilization. Paulo says there are several versions, differing in minor details. This version dates from a few decades after St. Leibowitz's death, written by a young monk who is not an eyewitness but has a liking for biblical mimicry. The monks have determined many minor nations have such weapons before the Deluge, so "Name" and "Blackeneth" are probably Legion. Taddeo abruptly asks about examining the Memorabilia, and Paulo invites him to come and go as he pleases.

The library is unusually crowded in the morning, awaiting the arrival of the abbot and the scholar. Paulo lets them cool their heels. "*In principio Deus*" is the password from the stairway, and other monks assigned specific tasks, chant verses from the story of Creation as checkpoints, leading up to Kornhoer's "*Dixitque Deus: FIAT LUX,*" Three set their shoulders to the turnstile to activate the dynamo and the verses continue, broken by a yelp of "Lucifer!" when the monk gets a shock and Kornhoer's loud "CONTACT!" as the guests arrive. The arc light floods the vaults with brilliant light, which stops everyone in their tracks. The abbot crosses himself and whispers, "I had not known!" Recovering from the shock, Taddeo surveys the room and breathes, "Incredible!" and "Unthinkable!" - opinions confirmed as he inspects the machinery. Paulo rebukes Kornhoer for frightening their guest with this hellish brightness. Fighting for self-control, Taddeo asks how - and why - they have kept this secret for centuries.

## Chapter 18 Analysis

Chapter 18 uses the Latin text of Genesis 1.1-5 as a matrix for the inauguration of Kornhoer's electric light. The reactions of both abbot and scholar seem unexpected, but it is hard to put oneself in the shoes of people who witness something unseen for more than a millennium. Paulo is chagrined his guest has been frightened, and the anticlerical Taddeo suspects a cover-up.





# Chapter 19

## Chapter 19 Summary

The abbot does all he can to make amends, and the scholar apologizes for his outburst, having been informed about how Kornhoer designs and manufactures the device just recently. Paolo worries Taddeo's ego is bruised by not having made the invention, the scholar is more concerned four monks must spend all their time running and maintaining the dynamo for him to enjoy light. He spends several days studying the abbey at large, verifying the "oyster" before turning to the "pearl," the Memorabilia. When Kornhoer finds an assistant on his knees at the refectory entrance, he suspects some special devotion to Mary, but learns he is measuring the depression made by centuries of sandals at the optimal point for calculating traffic - three times per day per monk. They use this to validate architectural and historical records, since objective evidence is the ultimate authority. Nature cannot lie like human recorders. Kornhoer observes the drawing shows a normal distribution curve, which the assistant says is expected.

The abbot's interest in the officers' systematic inspections is less esoteric. He demands of Gault why they are making detailed drawings of the fortifications. The Poet has pickpocketed a drawing. Paolo considers it for now professional admiration of an abbey never conquered. Gault suggests an army bound for Denver would find it an attractive, ready-made garrison. Paolo admits he has thought of that, but doubts they are spies, because Hannegan has never heard of the monks, but now he will. The officers are the scholar's escorts, not his servants, so the monks must think about how to approach him. Taddeo satisfies himself the abbey is not a clam, and turns to the pearl, using rare originals, stored in light- and airtight casks, whenever possible, being wary about copyists' facsimiles. After five days, Taddeo catches a scent and accelerates the pace, finding fragments from a 20th-century physicist. Kornhoer cannot make heads or tails of the "beautiful" mathematics, and Taddeo tries to explain to him a whole system of equations sharply contracted. Armbruster, who sees books as objects to be preserved rather than used, grimaces, as casks are unsealed.

To give the scholar a perch for crowing, Paolo suggests he explain his work to the community in non-technical terms. The scholar studies the abbot and smiles doubtfully. Scientific language *is* the simplest language for this subject matter, simplifying thousands of pages of "simple" narrative into a half-page of equations. Still, Taddeo believes he has enough pieces of the puzzle to talk about how he expects them to fit together. He worries only that religious people will take offense at his non-traditional ideas. Paolo sees no problem, since the monks have been waiting centuries for the world to take interest again. Taddeo is amazed Kornhoer has turned fragmentary data into a working model, skipping 20 years of preliminary experimentation. This is a case of miraculous intervention. Imagine what he could achieve in a proper machine shop. What is he doing cooped up in a monastery? A time is set for the lecture, and Paolo is



relieved the esoteric gulf will be narrowed by a free exchange of ideas. Gault restrains the abbot's optimism by reminding him about the officers and their sketchbooks.

## Chapter 19 Analysis

Chapter 19 looks at Taddeo enthusiastically examining the Memorabilia and finding unexpected treasures. His voluminous notes will have to be further analyzed, but he thinks he sees how the puzzle will fit together, and does not object to talking about this with the monks. Having been educated by Benedictines, he knows religious may take umbrage at his non-traditional ideas, but the abbot plays this possibility down. He wants to bridge science and religion. Kornhoers' remarkable aptitude for science is noted and its relation to his vocation will be further examined, as will the officers' ominous drawings of the abbey's defenses.



# Chapter 20

## Chapter 20 Summary

The abbot dispenses with abstinence and silence in honor of their guests, who are joining them for dinner. During the prayer, the Poet slips into an empty place beside the abbot, who apologizes to the scholar for his presence and outburst about the entry. Hannegan maintains court jesters, so he is used to the species. Gault demands the Poet apologize, which he does, after a fashion, proclaiming people should apologize for one another rather than themselves, to remove humiliation and increase charity. Only the officers are amused. The Poet jokes on, eventually coming to his blue-headed goat, which he proposes should not be driven into the desert to bear responsibility for Taddeo's equations, but instead be kept to bleat a warning when Hannegan's troops lay siege. Officer Jorard is restrained from slashing the Poet as he reveals details of subversive drawings. Paolo grinds the Poet's toe under his heel until he asks to be excused from the table, but the Poet pops out his artificial eye and leaves it on an upturned wine glass, to watch Taddeo in his absence. Paulo begs Taddeo not to harm the irate guard and promises to expel the Poet for provoking him.

The pall that falls over the banquet vanishes by the time the lecture begins. Taddeo is no orator, but his message pleases the monks. He is amazed at what he has found, had not believed so much survived from the last civilization, and laments the current century has not yet made use of it. Paolo catches an undercurrent of resentment or suspicion in the tone and perceives jealousy in being curses only to re-discover. It will take 20 specialists decades to deduct everything possible from the Memorabilia. The scholar reads an excerpt from an advanced physics text that no one but he understands. A page and a half of elegant math follows it and supplies the missing ending. Taddeo wonders what precedes this fragment, and how it can be tested. It will take generations to evaluate and understand these findings, hindered, unfortunately, by the abbey's isolation and inadequate facilities. The abbot braces for the worst, but Taddeo turns to the properties of light. The abbot interrupts, asking for a reaction to Msgr. Apollo's contention that prior to the Flood and the first rainbow, light had been irrefragable. The monks roar with laughter, the scholar blushes, Paolo silences them, and apologizes. Facing no more questions, Taddeo describes his collegium, well attended and liberally endowed. He tells about several on-going practical investigations out of a long list in diverse scientific fields. The collegium seems to the monks poised to open Nature's private files and end the long cultural amnesia.

Taddeo is loath to discuss Thon Maho Makh investigations into the origins of the human species, but a young monk helpfully suggests reading St. Augustine on evolution from the germinal causes God creates. Taddeo promises to look it up, but his condescending smile shows he will not. The most radical project is Thon Esser Shon's trying to create living protoplasm from just six basic ingredients. When Ambruster interrupts dryly, what he will use beyond his hands, standing, sitting, or prone, the abbot banishes him to await punishment. Taddeo concludes with optimism about the coming intellectual



revolution in which Truth will depose Ignorance and reign, and Man will again master the earth. A century hence, men will fly, drive, build 30-story structures, cruise under the sea, and have machines to perform all work. Sadly, this will require violence and upheaval, for no change comes calmly in a world where Ignorance has a vested interest in the status quo. A new pall falls over the room and Paolo loses hope this scientist might take a moral stand before his ruler. As in the Flame Deluge, God requires wise men to exercise free choice, and Taddeo has chosen to wash his hands before the multitude. Mankind will be crucified, without dignity. The scholar falls silent when a figure draped in a prayer shawl enters and hobbles toward the lectern. The speaker recoils from Benjamin's touch, but he jumps on stage, seizes his arm, and stares hopefully into his eyes. The Old Jew's face clouds and he turns away, shrugging to the silent monks, "It's still not Him."

## Chapter 20 Analysis

Chapter 20 shows a proud young man impressing an audience to which he feels superior. His speech gives a good feel for what he is discovering in the Memorabilia, and skirts both religion and the need for these invaluable records to be relocated to a better institution. He describes the optimistic state of emerging science, but concludes another blood crisis must occur to break the bonds of cultural inertia. The abbot sees the inevitability of another Flame Deluge. His thoughts are interrupted by Benjamin's appearance and his sad conclusion this is not the Messiah. Note the scholar's ignorance of St. Augustine and dismissal of his possible relevance to his colleague's research. The North African bishop's theory lay dormant for 15 centuries before Charles Darwin came to and developed similar conclusions about the origins of life.



# Chapter 21

## Chapter 21 Summary

The King of Laredo demands Texarkana withdraw its troops, is poisoned overnight, and a one-day war puts Hannegan in control of his region. Hannegan then brutally executes Msgr. Apollo for treason and espionage and throws his remains to the dogs. Taddeo offers to depart, for although he privately condemns his uncle's policies, publicly he dares not endanger the collegium. The abbot insists common humanity makes him welcome at the abbey, but relations cool. A citizens' committee from Sanly Bowitts asks sanctuary in the event of invasion, which the abbot declines only for military-age males. Refugees flee famine. Some Laredans go home as ordered, but others vow to fight Hannegan to the death and, weakened, fall to Mad Bear's hit-and-run assaults. Taddeo first notices the Poet is gone, leaving his eye behind. Paulo says the Poet jokes with it, treats it like a fetish, and claims it is a removable conscience, which does appear to ease his manic depression.

Taddeo toys with the eye and pockets it, before declaring his work at the abbey finished. Their escort will meet them a week's ride to the east. Paulo hopes they have not changed sides. Insulted, Taddeo asks the abbot's understanding of his political situation vis-a-vis Hannegan, who endows the collegium, which benefits mankind. Paulo notes no one profited 1,200 years ago and asks why mankind must follow that path again. There is a brief time to control natural forces. He has no illusions he is convincing Taddeo, who says Man will never be good, pure, holy, and wise enough for the monks to loose science from the cloister. Paulo is angered by the accusation they have done nothing with their treasures, and tells the legend of their founder how, having been drenched with fuel oil, asks for a cup of it to drink, changes it to water and the water into wine for his last communion. Paulo has a list of AOL martyrs and copyists who have gone blind, preserving the legacy. Taddeo sniffs they have different masters to serve.

## Chapter 21 Analysis

Chapter 21 describes the outbreak of war, including the brutal murder of New Rome's envoy. Hannegan's relative ends his work and has it out with the abbot about how effectively the Order has performed its mission over 1,200 and the ethics of Taddeo's politics of expediency. The scientists still have a brief window for exercising moral authority, but the scholar's mind is long ago closed. St. Leibowitz's last communion is mirrored at the novel's conclusion.



# Chapters 22 and 23

## Chapters 22 and 23 Summary

As departure nears, Taddeo talks candidly with a small monastic audience. Hypotheses must be confirmed by observation, and Kornhoer has helped him overcome difficulty in testing optical phenomena. Praising the inventor's gift for practicality and suggest they would make a good team, if the abbot would release him. A young priest explains how the historic economic rationale for allowing "brothers on leave" does not apply today. Taddeo suggests a scholarship at the collegium, with a stipend to the abbot. He is sure this will help relations. This flatters and troubles Kornhoer, because his calling is to Religion. Monks view work as prayer, but his machine seems more like play. He will obey the abbot, who happens by, too hurried to stop and talk. Gault tells him Claret is in the guesthouse, fugitive, tortured, and guilt-ridden about betraying Apollo. The medic is unsure if he will survive.

Paolo scans Hannegan's decree to all clergy in his realm. It condemns Pope Benedict XXII as a heretic, simoniac, murderer, sodomite, and atheist. It also denies the validity of Benedict's interdict. Texarkana clergy must now be licensed and recognized. Several bishops unfamiliar to Paolo countersign the document. Meanwhile, in the basement, Taddeo talks of finding indications Man was created as a servant species shortly before the Flame Deluge by another civilization, the descendants of Adam, that perishes. Gault rejects this as opposing common sense as well as Revelation. Taddeo believe this recasts the Simplification as a rebellion, which is more sensible than traditional explanations, and explains why moderns are so inferior to the ancients. Paulo strides in, pleading God to have mercy on the abbey, for "we know not what we did." He tells his nemesis this conjecture absolves Man's rebellion against the wicked sons of Adam as justifiable tyrannicide, and demands to see the references. Having read it, Paolo proclaims it a play or dialog discussed in Venerable Boedullus' *De Inanibus*. His polite explication of Genesis' account of the Fall runs simultaneously with Taddeo's condemnation of unreasoned dogmatism and insistence on the freedom to speculate.

The abbot asks what is appealing about dehumanizing the last civilization. As Taddeo demands the records be in competent hands, the arc light sputters out as the novices stop cranking the drive mill. As he waits for Kornhoer to be summoned, Paolo demands Taddeo read the mayoral edict. Kornhoer arrives and replaces the crucifix in its rightful place as Taddeo finishes packing for immediate departure. Paolo asks him to remind Hannegan of the abbey's successful history of defending the Memorabilia and extend an invitation to his colleagues, Thon Esser Shon in particular, to come for study any time. Philosophers will soon need sanctuary, and the abbey's walls are thick. Dismissing the novices, Paolo goes to his study, the Fury twisting his insides. Knowing the end is near, he puts off making his last confession until the guests leave. As a matter of honor, Taddeo returns the officers' sketches and suggests Paulo burn them. They shake hands gingerly, not as a sign of truce but out of mutual respect. Paulo sees the temptation of Eve being acted out again, as the "father of lies" cleverly tells half-truths void of love.



Paolo dies that year in an odd year marked by heavy rains that make the Plains bloom. Denver and Texarkana reach and break an agreement, and the Old Jew resumes healing and wandering. A king rides out of the east to subdue and own the land. It is a year of Man.

The Poet's thirst is unquenchable after the skirmish, as he and a cavalry officer crushed beneath his slain horse alone remain alive. The officer's screaming for his mother or a priest annoys the poet, who blames only himself for getting shot by wanting disinterestedly to watch the troop chase down a party of refugees. He cannot figure out why he leaps out of hiding and stabs an officer, only to be felled by rifle fire. The Poet cannot remember every fearing death but has often suspected Providence of harboring him a horrible ending, nothing as clean or anonymous as this. The Poet crawls over to the bleating, greenish officer, who draws his pistol, fires, and misses. The Poet grants him absolution before stabbing him in the throat. He drinks the officer's water and waits to die in agony. The buzzards strut, preen, and quarrel over their abundant but uncured dinner, including the Poet. As always, they fulfill their part in the plan of Nature for centuries, until the generations of darkness give way to generations of the light in A.D. 3781.

## Chapters 22 and 23 Analysis

Chapter 22 shows the final meetings of Paulo and Taddeo in an argument that cleverly recasts the ancient Gnostic doctrine that a lesser divinity creates the world and battles the supreme god. The Order's fundamental mission and how well it has met it are again discussed, and one monk's ability to remain loyal to his vocation of prayer while working in science foretells the conflict that dominates the end of the novel. Three-paged Chapter 23 concludes *Fiat Lux*, as buzzards circle a battlefield, doing what they are destined by nature to do. They eat. Time jumps forward 607 years to A.D. 3781, when darkness has given way to light.





# Chapter 24

## Chapter 24 Summary

There are spaceships again in the 38th century, manned by garrulous, conceited beings, who feel a manifest destiny to conquer the stores and record their feats in forms like the "Versicles by Adam, Rejoinders by the Crucified," chanted to a marching cadence, describing the senseless life cycle of the children of Eve, trying to build Edens on earth. The liturgy includes the latest rendition of the Cantic of the Brethren of the Order of Leibowitz, declaring, "Lucifer is fallen." These happen to be the secret code words that leak to reporters, who badger the Defense Minister with questions about Sir Tische Thon Berker's statement about radiation levels on the Northwest Coast ten times normal. The minister is unresponsive about reported testing across the Pacific, reminds the press testing is illegal, and they are not at war. The manufacture of nuclear weapons has been banned by treaty since their reinvention, but deep space propulsion needs nuclear fuel. The moon and asteroids can provide raw materials for manufacturing weapons, but only orbiting the weapons is illegal. Getting nothing, reporters ask wryly about the minister's views on the weather (it is warm) and Motherhood (it is bad for recruiting soldiers.)

Like previous AOL abbots, Dom Jethrah Zerchi is more active than contemplative, which makes him an effective ruler. He knows he is impulsive, particularly at present, when the "Abominable Autoscribe," his massive transcription/translation machine is malfunctioning. Having waited three days for a repairman, Zerchi has it disassembled and has suffered a shock by invading the Factory Adjustments Only panel. He summons Brother Patrick, his waddling secretary. Needing to send an urgent radiogram to New Rome, Zerchi wants a Christian stenographer, as opposed to using the perverse pagan APLAC "thinking machine." The radiogram must be in Alleghenian dialect, because Sir Eric Cardinal Hoffstraff does not speak Southwestern and neither trusts the other's Latin. Patrick has called Brother Joshua, an ex-engineer with space experience, but he refuses to touch the APLAC.

When Patrick withdraws, Zerchi plugs in the machine, adjusts its settings, and begins dictating a "priority urgent" message to the Vicar Apostolic Designate, Provisional vicariate Extraterrestris, of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in New Rome, asking advice on activating the plans in Pope CelestineVIII's *Motu proprio* of A.D. 3735, confirmed in his *Quo peregrinator grex* of A.D. 3749, and Pope Paul's correspondence with Abbot Boumous, Zerchi's predecessor, in 3756. The Order stands ready to execute the plan on six weeks' notice. The APLAC reverses the translated text making Zerchi yearn for quill pens. Red-bearded Joshua dares laugh as he accompanies Pat into the office, and Pat informs the abbot the Zone Defense Interior (ZDI) has ordered all private radio transmitters off the air. Zerchi orders them to call Spokane to get to the bottom of rumors of rising radiation counters.





Dusty winds batter the abbey and now-developed city of Sanly Bowitts. A highway separates the ancient abbey from modern glass and aluminum additions. On a side road, an old beggar clad in burlap leans on his staff and murmurs, "Omens" at the sound of test missiles being fired. An old woman warns children not to torment the grumpy tramp, whom they declare is "old Lazar, same one 'ut the Lor' Hesus raise up." Auntie corrects them. The old man is just hunting for Lazarus. Joshua, meanwhile, is taking air samples, which he processes in the laboratory and decides to wash off the dust. Doubting visitors will appear, he strips naked, settles into an icy bath, and jumps out, frightened when Sister Helene enters, carrying glassware. She shrieks and flees, leaving Joshua to dress hurriedly and resumes work, mortified. In his office, he adds the new data to a wall chart that reveals an upswing, and then dials the abbot on his view-phone. After being berated about the bath and an earlier incident in a reservoir, Joshua reports phoning Father Leone in Spokane, where radiation is higher, and they have detected a seismic disturbance consistent with a megaton-range detonation.

Why the Asians would not test on the far side of the moon or Mars and avoid detection is puzzling. The government *must* know, from satellite observations, but is "protecting" the citizenry. Experts disagree on why the world has been in perpetual crisis for 50 years, but Zerchi attributes it to the congenital insanity of the species. He summons Joshua to await a response to his telegram, sent my regular wire, for Joshua has a part if *Quo peregrinator grex* goes into effect. Through the window, Joshua makes out through passing traffic the unmistakable figure of Mrs. Gales, a two-headed monstrosity who troubles him. Joshua spins his globe, backwards, stopping it at intervals. Recalling the biblical story of his namesake, he wonders if Mother Gaia did this, would time reverse? Just 0.3 million turns would bring them back before the Flame Deluge - but why stop short of Adam? Joshua dreads crossing the highway to the ancient abbey, where the spirit is so different, asking "Why, Lord"" rather than "How?" but summoned by the abbot, Joshua must obey. He takes the pedestrian underpath to avoid Mrs. Gales, the tomato woman.

## Chapter 24 Analysis

Part 3, *Fiat Voluntas Tua*, begins with a new cast of characters facing imminent nuclear war. It is broadly indicated the Order is involved in a survival plan devised in consultation with New Rome. The now-quaint description of computers, satellites, and Star Wars-like (Reagan's version, not Lucas') technology is remarkable, given the novel's 1959 writing. Part 2's major theme of wrestling with why humanity insists on destroying itself repeatedly is taken up with greater poignancy as radiation levels in the Western desert are rising from a recent explosion in Asia. Note that with the Hannegan's failure to reunify North America, various regions have evolved dialects of English that are not fully intelligible to non-specialists.



# Chapter 25

## Chapter 25 Summary

Texarkanan officials flee to their estates as a nuclear event at Itu Wan becomes certain, headlines proclaim, "Lucifer is Fallen," and the prickly Minister of Defense again faces the press. He hints acknowledging Asian claims is seditious, but a reporter insists a neutral source is claiming an underground test has broken loose, been detected by a Christian Coalition satellite, and been answered by a nuclear strike from space. She rejects the military's attempt to put responsibility on the shoulders of the 11-year-old monarch. The minister will say only that since diplomatic relations are broken since the last crisis, they must rely on neutralist accounts, which vary. A megaton-range subsurface detonation has occurred, which is illegal even if it is merely an attempt to divert a subsurface river as the Asians claim. The minister doubts there will be war, but some Texarkanan armed forces are subject to conscription by the World Court. He also denies an Asian ultimatum that the World Court takes action against Texarkana.

Zerchi switches off his radio and paces, trying not to think about humanity dooming itself. He activates the room silencer and gives Joshua two telegrams from New Rome. The first puts *Quo peregrinaqtur grex* on hold, but the second activates it immediately, to depart within three days. Zerchi explains the initial plan to provide priests for a colony at Alpha Centauri is scrapped, because it means dispatching new priests from Earth in each generation. It is more efficient to send at least three bishops, to assure an extraterrestrial apostolic succession. Until the last crisis, this is seen as a silly extravagance, but now *Quo peregrinaqtur grex* is the Church's emergency survival plan. The Order has a starship and a crew and has microfilmed the Memorabilia to take to Centaurus Colony. Zerchi gives Joshua three days to answer several questions. Is he willing to go? Does he feel a priestly vocation? Is he enthusiastic about leading the group?

The monks normally take the underpass between the ancient abbey and the modern refectory, but with traffic light, Zerchi and Joshua risk a surface crossing of the six-lane robotic highway. On the median, they spot Mrs. Grales and her vicious, six-legged dog on the prowl for the abbot. Grales' active face is wrinkled, while the other is cherubic and apparently only vegetatively alive. Grales wants the abbot to baptize Rachel, but Zerchi defers to her parish priest, Father Selo, whom Grales insists like other local clergy refuses to touch Rachel. When the monks tear away, Zerchi explains Rachel is Grales' second head and he is grateful the decision is not his. When Joshua reveals Rachel has smiled at him, Zerchi demands he admit it is his imagination. The new refectory looks like an industrial lunchroom with religious images and captures the change in atmosphere throughout the abbey. The Order's original mission is complete and it is conforming superficially to the times. Prior Lehy reminds the 70th generation of AOL monks their vocation to pray for the world is critical these days, because, "Lucifer is fallen." Zerchi reports authorities offer no comment, the World Court is in emergency session, and a defense alert is in effect that will affect the abbey in three ways. First, for



three days, they will supplicate the Virgin Mary's intercessions for peace. Second, civil defense instructions are available and should be reviewed. Third, a team of 27 professed brothers have been chosen for a special mission. Joshua, several eminent scholars, a janitor, and a cook are included.

The monks are admonished not to assume war, because Lucifer has fallen only twice in two centuries. In St. Leibowitz's time, mankind had not known the outcome until it used its weapons, but today's leaders know with bitter certainty and are keeping the peace. Silence falls as Zerchi sees at the beggar's table an old man smiling in the sea of grave faces. Bearded, clothed in burlap, and looking vaguely familiar, he makes Zerchi nervous. He says his name is *Lazar shem* or Lazarus. As the delayed meal is blessed and served, Zerchi tries to dismiss the myth of the man raised from death by Christ. After Compline, Joshua sleeps badly, troubled by a dream in which a surgeon removes Rachel, who pleads to be saved and declares, "I am the Immaculate Conception." That night, the Atlantic Confederation attacks the Asians and they swiftly retaliate, obliterating the ancient city.

## Chapter 25 Analysis

Chapter 25 lays out New Rome's plan to preserve the Memorabilia and apostolic succession in space. The Order has been recruiting space veterans, including Joshua, the leader-designate of the desperate mission. The theme of the unthinkability of nuclear war intensifies as it comes to pass. Looking like Benjamin, the Lazarus of legend appears in the refectory, and the next theme - the challenge to traditional Catholic morality posed by genetic mutation - is introduced in the form of Mrs. Grale's second head, Rachel. "Lucifer is fallen" is drawn from the last book of Christian scripture, Revelation, where foolish human rulers in the end times are referred to collectively as "Babylon." Lucifer acts as a synonym for Satan and comes from the apocalyptic Hebrew prophet Isaiah. The mysterious Benjamin, who reappears, calling himself Lazarus, has earlier been likened to the prophet Ezekiel. Lazarus is Jesus Christ's friend, whom he raises from the dead before his own crucifixion, and local legend holds is still wandering the earth. Mariology, shown as a 26th-century topic of controversy, reappears as Grales' second head animates in a dream and claims to be the Immaculate Conception, a Catholic doctrine that explains how the Son of God could take on human form without incurring original sin, a topic earlier discussed in the abstract by Benjamin and Dom Paulo.



# Chapter 26

## Chapter 26 Summary

Next morning, the Emergency Warning Network reports on fallout patterns in Texarkana. The Royal Family and Regency survive and no civil disorder has taken place or is expected. The World Court has ordered a cease-fire, which the Atlantic Confederation agrees to observe for ten days during negotiations on Guam. Asian radio maintains an errant Atlantic missile has destroyed Texarkana. The abbot snaps off the radio, indignant the two sides are arguing over whose axe is bloodier. Imagine Christ breathing the same air as the humans responsible for this mass murder and God's infinite sense of humor dying like a Yiddish *Schlemiel* for their likes! Apologizing for his rant, Zerchi glances at the rotting carving he has rescued from oblivion and restored to his office. St. Leibowitz's satiric smile reminds him of last night's beggar. Armed with nuclear weapons, rulers believe they are not God's regents, but gods in their own right and are acting, as they did when they killed Christ and St. Leibowitz.

The abbot gives Joshua the prycis to *Quo peregrinator* to read, and as he does, hears from Cardinal Hoffstraff confirmation the plan is activated and urgent. Zerchi demands immediate answers to his three questions, but Joshua remains unsure about priesthood. Having the least technical experience of the recruits, Joshua is most easily released for pastoral and administrative duties. The group will be an AOL daughter house operating under a modified rule, and if Joshua accepts ordination, he will certainly be elected Superior. They will be accompanied by nuns, children from St. Joseph School, scientists, and three bishops, delegated by the Pope to ordain priests and consecrate bishops. Zerchi suggests past abbots of various dispositions have felt unworthy of office and gives Joshua a half hour to think, drink, vomit, pray, or do whatever it takes to decide.

In the dark courtyard, Joshua sits by a rose garden, listening to the chants coming from the church. He wonders whether New Rome dispatching a starship is an admission of despair or hope Man can shake the dust off its sandals and find peace on another world. Light spills out of the door as monks depart for their cells, and the twinkling red sanctuary light reminds Joshua God has used fire as a symbol of both Heaven and Hell. No Edens will be found among the stars, but perhaps this will offer the survivors less temptation and allow them to see why Earth has failed. He wonders if the Memorabilia will be a blessing or curse on another world. Joshua begs God not to make him leave, but accepts the summons in the spirit of his vows. He wishes God would not demand so quick a decision.

Sensing an intermittent slithering and rustling in the dry leaves beneath the roses, Joshua is frightened. He recalls Brother Hegan, bitten by a sidewinder and dying. Prayers about the ends of the Earth remembering and turning to the Lord seem appropriate tonight. Something nudges Joshua's wrist and he throws a rock into the bushes. Nothing emerges, and Joshua feels foolish, stoning the omen he seeks. He



hears the Words of Institution, and joins the 27 space goers, accepting to minister to people yet to be born. The abbot smiles and reminds him leadership is a burden, not an honor.

Chartering a plane to New Rome is easier than gaining clearance from the ZDI to fly, but by mid-afternoon Zerchi boards to say farewells. He exhorts the 27 Bootleggers they represent the continuity of the AOL and the Chair of Peter. The Pope will not accompany them, but his representative will. The College of Cardinals is prepared to designate Centaurus Colony a separate patriarchate to accept the Patrimony of Peter should Earth perish. The ship will be their monastery until they reach Centaurus and establish a mother house of the Visitationist Friars of the Order of St. Leibowitz of Tycho, charged with missionizing whatever worlds human inhabit. They will pass on 4,000 years of continuity and keep alive the memory of Earth to which they may never return. If they try, they will find an angel guarding it with a sword of flame. Lonely space is their home. Zerchi says individual good-byes and watches the plane fly away. Those who remain, he knows, have the easier part of waiting and praying the end will not come.

## Chapter 26 Analysis

Chapter 26 describes Joshua's agony in the abbey rose garden, recalling the gospels' prelude to Jesus' crucifixion, complete with the serpent of Genesis' account of the Fall of Man. The 27 space farers are a new Exodus from an earth that is likely to go up in flames and thereafter be guarded by the angel Genesis says God posts at the entry to Eden to keep Adam and Eve from returning. The chapter also reflects on the canonical requirements for perpetuating the papacy on other worlds.



# Chapter 27

## Chapter 27 Summary

The radio assures the public fallout is unlikely to be spread further by the winds, but 2.8 million have perished in the nine days since Texarkana is struck. The figure will rise as survivors on the fringes succumb to lethal doses. The station is required by Public Law 10-WA-3E to warn euthanasia is a crime unless terminal condition is certified at a Green Star Relief Station. Zerchi is incensed. With his abbey overburdened housing and feeding refugees, and he is dealing with Dr. Cors, the local representative of this program of state-sponsored suicide. Zerchi says cynically it is the government's way of preventing a rebellion by hiding the corpses, while Cors maintains it is a more merciful alternative to the Catholic insistence on souls enduring torment to avoid an eternity in Hell. Zerchi condemns the Radiation Disaster Act as proof the government has acted with full awareness of the consequences. Cors confesses to be a pacifist concerned only with dealing with present reality, realizing he and the abbot cannot agree. He heads the Exposure Survey Team, not the Mercy Cadre and, therefore, kills no one. Zerchi admits the Green Star's relief work is admirable and even heroic, but tainted by euthanasia. Cors wants to use the abbey courtyard for two days to evaluate burn victims.

The sick will be sent to an emergency camp for treatment, Zerchi interrupts, and the sickest will go to a "mercy camp." Cors insists euthanasia is entirely voluntary and shows the abbot the red and green labels they attach to victims. The red ones carefully spell out provisions of 10-WA-3E and those who receive one have it explained carefully to them. Cors wants only parking space for his mobile units, which otherwise will have to be situated down the highway, requiring the refugees to walk two miles. Zerchi insists a higher law forbids him to allow anyone to counsel evil on his premises. Cors may use the courtyard if he swears in writing to refrain from telling anyone to kill themselves, because silence on the subject will absolve the abbey of the guilt of complicity. Cors is incensed at the inhumanity of the demand, but signs, with Pat as a witness. The abbot knows it is probably worthless, but admires the doctor's dedication and sincerity, which probably exceeds his own. Zerchi opens a letter from New Rome informing him Joshua's party has left for an undisclosed destination and ZDI is investigating rumors the Vatican intends to launch an unauthorized starship. The century and a half-old Church-State concordat allowing the church to own spacecraft and send missions to open outposts will doubtless be interpreted prevent this launch, as it has been to prevent non-whites from flying to other worlds. The Church has not used its right to send missions wherever it wishes, so the legalities have not been tested. If there were time to make Joshua's band a test case, there would be a backlash of not allowing the space to go to poor colonists rather than monks. Zerchi realizes in nine days he has not totally abandoned the virtue of hope.

A monk returning from an errand in the city reports Green Star is setting up a refugee camp two miles down the highway, which Zerchi hopes will relieve his strain. He climbs



to the watchtower, taking binoculars, rosary, and an old book ascribed to a mythical "St. Poet of the Miraculous Eyeball," whose canonization and very existence are uncertain. The book is a satirical dialog between two agnostics attempting to establish the existence of God cannot be established by natural reason alone. Zerchi quickly tires of reading and surveys the mesa and radar installation, seeing nothing unusual. He next focuses on the Green Star encampment under construction, where a welcoming, red-tagged statue beckons people to Mercy Camp Number 18, and understands why fire brick and pottery are being unloaded. A crematorium is being set up. In a fury, Zerchi finds Cors in the courtyard, ministering to a yellow-tag patient. Seeing the binoculars, Cors understands. Zerchi orders five large, striking, lightweight picket signs prepared and five novices with martyr complexes recruited to carry them.

## Chapter 27 Analysis

Chapter 27 begins examining the moral debate over euthanasia. Is a quick, merciful death a mortal sin as Catholic theology insists? Does state regulation of the normally illegal act of suicide in any way modify the legitimacy? Does concern for the horribly suffering victims outweigh scruples? The theme continues in the following chapters.





# Chapter 28

## Chapter 28 Summary

After Compline, Zerchi finishes praying for the incorruptibility of Joshua's band and is met by Cors, who confesses he has already broken his promise and offers to remove his vans. The abbot demands details. From the little Cors says, Zerchi knows that he is talking about a crippled, flash-burned widow and her baby that nearly glows with radiation. Cors cannot live with himself if he fails to tell them relief exists. He would rather be a murderer than a torturer, if those are the only roles Zerchi allows. He has told the woman, "If you love your child, spare her the agony. Go to sleep mercifully as quick as you can." Zerchi tells him to finish triaging and then leave. Cors spits at the thought of remaining longer in the abbey. Zerchi finds the woman and her baby, both crying, in the overcrowded guesthouse, which smells of antiseptic and death. She shows him her red tag and he offers her a rosary instead.

On the last scheduled day of the truce, the ministerial conference at Guam recesses so the principals can confer with their governments. Both sides know mutual annihilation is the only alternative to continuing the cease-fire, but both feel obliged to posture. Zerchi knows Vatican diplomats are keeping the Pope abreast of events in Guam so Gregory change in praying for peace and to praying for justice in hopes of horrifying the world at its prospects. Lehy, like many others, has been watching the sky, which Zerchi declares is unhealthy. When the flash occurs, it will be too late to react. Lehy claims he is watching the buzzards circle the Green Star camp. Heading out for air, Zerchi runs into Mrs. Grales, donating tomatoes for the refugees. He assumes she wants to ask again about baptizing Rachel, but she asks him instead to hear her confession. Fr. Selo, she says, is an occasion of sin for her, so she cannot go to him. Zerchi promises to meet her in half an hour in the Lady Chapel. He believes Rachel is mirroring the old woman's nods, but dismisses the idea. Picking up a car in the garage, the abbot heads for the gate. Seeing the girl and her baby on the roadside, he pulls over and insists she return to the guesthouse, but she insists she must get to town. Failing to talk her out of the trip, Zerchi helps them into the car and sets off. Near the Green Star encampment, he slows to encourage his funereal-looking monks, carrying signs that read "Abandon Every Hope Ye Who Enter Here." Police cars keep them and hecklers separated since an altercation Green Star hopes will result in a court injunction. If it is issued, Zerchi intends to disobey and keep his novices in place. Glancing at the statue, he winces, recognizing a composite of faces psychologists determine are the most welcoming, resulting in a slightly effeminate, simpering version of Jesus. It's hardly the Lord of Golgotha. It seems to say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," rather than "Depart from me into everlasting fire" or flogging the moneychangers in the Temple.

Clearly intended to be a Christ figure, the statue stands on a pedestal declaring "COMFORT." Its red tag makes clear for whom the station is intended. Seeing the girl eye the door handle, Zerchi accelerates and asks about her pain. She cannot understand a God who would be pleased by her baby's agony, and he is hard-pressed





to explain the doctrine of redemptive suffering. She does not care about herself, but for her baby, who cannot understand sermons. Knowing no explanation will matter, Zerchi simply commands her not to do it, and shares a childhood story about killing a mortally wounded beloved cat, Zeke, on the insistence of his friends. To this day, Zerchi regrets not letting Zeke die naturally. The girl demands he shut up, but he insists it is his job as a priest of God to command her to offer her baby as a sacrifice to the true God rather than the false gods of the euthanizers. The abbot has never spoken with such authority or brutality before and surprises himself, but she appears to wilt as he wishes. She does not escape, when he stops at St. Michael's and agrees to think about accepting help at the abbey.

At the Green Star compound on the ride home, an officer orders Zerchi to pull over. The picket line has been shut down. A court official approaches to serve a summons on Zerchi, who agrees to return and accept it after dropping off his passengers. An officer notices the girl's red tag and defends her right to get out. When Zerchi forbids her, the officer demands he release her. When the abbot persists, he is restrained until Cors approaches and asks he be released. Accepting the injunction, Zerchi orders the novices to discard their signs and get in the car. The girl and her baby are escorted into the camp, and Cors tries to commiserate with the abbot, but is punched in the face. Forced into a police cruiser, an ashamed abbot watches Cors, the process server, and an officer confer for five minutes. Showing scorn for a priest that resorts to violence, the officers sets Zerchi free on his own recognizance, but orders him and his monks to stay clear of the camp.

## Chapter 28 Analysis

Chapter 28 shows the moral battle focuses on a single instance, a critically injured young Catholic and her wailing, horribly burned infant. Zerchi insists it be allowed to die naturally rather than being offered as a sacrifice to false gods. Maternal concern outweighs sterile arguments, but she responds to a brutal and authoritative command from the normally placid cleric. His novices' picket sign reproduces the sign welcoming the departed to Hades in Dante's *Inferno*, intended to be as unsubtle as the Green Star's insipid Christ-like statue with a red tag is intended to be inviting and comforting. The power of religious art has several times been raised in the novel, and here is broadened to discuss the authenticity of portraying Jesus the meek and welcoming vs. Christ the stern judge. Outraged at losing two innocent souls, Zerchi amazes himself by punching Dr. Cors, and is spared jail only, because it is already overloaded with displaced people. He must agree to end protests at the euthanasia site.



# Chapters 29 and 30

## Chapters 29 and 30 Summary

Hearing his superior's confession, Fr. Lehy reminds Zerchi they have discussed his temper before, assigns him penance, and gives him absolution. As a result, Zerchi is late arriving for Mrs. Grales' confession. She is agitated and tells the priest the Dread One is nearby. She says before she can ask God's forgiveness for her sins, she must forgive him for the Justice he has meted out. A glimpse of Rachel convinces Zerchi this makes primitive sense. When she crosses herself, Grales includes Rachel in the gesture. As she whimpers her rhythmic list of sins, Zerchi contemplates how everything is an echo of the Original Sin and has difficulty after this afternoon's events to concentrate. She alludes to an old abortion, which only a bishop can absolve. Suddenly, there come the sounds of missiles launched. Grales proclaims, "The Dread One," and the priest races through a quick Act of Contrition. A light brighter than the noonday sun shines through the curtain on the confessional and it begins to smolder. As the light diminishes and the church fills with smoke, Zerchi orders her to run to the altar of reservation, wondering how many seconds remain. The building crumbles on him as he removes and cradles the ciborium.

When Zerchi regains conscience, he realizes he is pinned at the waste by tons of rubble, near the rose garden. He collects scattered Hosts, wiping his blood from his fingers, so as not to contaminate the Viaticum many may need. Awakening from a second blackout, Zerchi realizes he must now practice what he has so stoically preached. He feels little pain but intense itching - and indignity. Awakening a third time, Zerchi realizes he is afraid and screaming. His prayers are more apologies than petitions. He has witnessed many easy deaths, and recalls a verse from the *Dies Irae* dealing with the *just* man being "scarcely safe." He thinks about his debates with Cors and the maximizing of suffering and minimizing of security. A weak laugh makes him black out again. As he comes to, Zerchi babbles about Satan wanting Man full of Hell - or Hell full of Man. Imagining he is talking to Pat, he says Jesus never asked anyone to do a damn thing he did not do - and neither has he. He dedicates his present suffering to the mother and baby he earlier commanded to obey. The explosion has torn open ancient crypts, and Zerchi faces an intact cranium with an arrow protruding. Wondering why this unknown monk had been martyred, he blessed him. Zerchi is surprised to hear a childish sing-song and recalls Grales' comments about needing to forgive God.

Zerchi sleeps fitfully for a while and awakens to see three buzzards eyeing him. Telling them irritably dinner will have to wait, he shoos them off and hears the voice again. His weak shout for help is answered by Grales, who is mimicking everything he says. The old woman's head is now sleeping and young Rachel smiles. She is unable to communicate what she wishes to, but the arthritis of old age has vanished as Rachel kneels beside him. Plucking glass shards from her injured arm, Zerchi is amazed to see blue marks rather than bleeding and is filled with awe. Rachel shows no discomfort. Moistening a finger, the abbot performs a conditional baptism on Rachel, but is sternly



refused as Rachel settles into an attitude of peaceful prayer. She smiles again and appears to search for something. Before he can stop her, Rachel picks up the ciborium and reverently offers him a single Host. He realizes she understands the sacredness of this Sacrament of Life. He sobs, looking at this latter-day maiden and uses his last breaths to recite the Magnificat. Rachel's cool fingertips touch his forehead and she says one word, "Live." Her green eyes remain in Zerchi's mind after she wanders away, promising resurrection. As he dies, the abbot does not bother to ask any *whys* of God.

The monks sing as they help frightened children into the ship. The last is aboard when they see flashes on the horizon. The last monk slaps the sand off his sandals before sealing the hatch. The starship ascends ahead of the hideous mushroom clouds that engulf a third of the heavens. White ash falls as breakers carry to shore driftwood, shrimp and whiting, leaving to the ocean deeps the sharks, deprived of their food chain. It will be a very hungry season for the sharks.

## Chapters 29 and 30 Analysis

Chapter 29 shows Leibowitz Abbey blown apart by a nearby nuclear detonation, trapping the abbot and teaching him to practice what he has long preached. In Rachel, whose declaration, "I am the Immaculate Conception" had recently sounded so blasphemous, Zerchi sees the Virgin Mary and echoes her words praising and surrendering God at the Annunciation. Chapter 30 shows the monks leaving as the earth is engulfed in flames. The last to board obeys Christ's command to his disciples, should any village reject their preaching. Knocking the dust from their sandals seals their fate and frees the preachers of responsibility. Deep-water sharks appear to be the only creatures that survive, replacing the buzzards as symbols of voracious nature.



# Characters

## Saint Isaac Edward Leibowitz

the ?? inscription, which stranger inscribes on Francis' keystone, can be expanded (reading right-to-left) to "Leibowitz." Authorities argue whether their founder, if ever canonized, should be called St. Isaac, St. Edward, or St. Leibowitz. Once the Devil's Advocate relents, Leibowitz's canonization is scheduled in New Rome and Francis is sent to represent the Order. Legend says after being drenched with fuel oil, he asks for a cup of it to drink, changes it to water and the water into wine for consecration as his last communion.

## Benjamin Eleazar bar Joshua

Given a name only in Part 2, Benjamin is described identically in all three parts of the novel, as a spindly old man dressed in burlap, with a hat, staff, sandals, and water bag, and uttering a characteristic, non-verbal utterance. The solitary Old Jew whom Dom Paulo knew as a young novice 50 years ago, Benjamin is living as a hermit on a desolate arroyo, and they have not seen one another in five years. Benjamin in the 32nd century claims to be 3,209 years old, but Paulo gives him just over 100. He further claims to be related to St. Leibowitz, whom he detests, and to be the stranger who buries Brother Francis and tells New Rome where to find his grave. Benjamin lives atop a mesa in a primitive one-room hovel that displays a Hebrew sign advertising, "Tents Mended Here," but hiding from the world the dangerous *Shema Yisrael*. Benjamin tells his old friend, Abbot Paulo he is waiting for the Messiah but does not expect to see him. He wants Paulo to lead Taddeo by the mesa en route to Leibowitz Abbey. Paolo, of course, declines, and is surprised to see Benjamin appear towards the end of Taddeo's public lecture, draped in his prayer shawl. Benjamin jumps to the stage, looks deep into the scholar's eyes, and turns away with disappointment, announcing to the silent monks "It's still not Him." Benjamin reappears as a wanderer in Part 3, standing on a side road near Sanly Bowitts, clad in burlap leans on his staff and murmurs, "Omens" at the sound of test missiles being fired. A gnarled old woman tells children not to torment the grumpy tramp, whom they declare is "old Lazar, same one 'ut the Lor' Hesus raise up." Auntie corrects them. The old man is just hunting for Lazarus. He appears in the refectory, smiling at the beggars' table, as Abbot Zerchi and Prior Lehy brief the monks on the looming danger of nuclear war.

## Venerable Francis Gerard of Utah, AOL

Francis is the protagonist of Part 1 of the novel, set in the 26th century. A naive, 17-year-old novice at the outset of the novel, Francis is intent on professing in the Albertine



Order of Leibowitz (AOL), realizing he cannot return to the life of a proselyte to a shaman, who abducts him as a child from his Utah home. However, his discovery of a fallout shelter dating from the mid-20th century, and possible relics of Blessed Leibowitz, to whom he is enthusiastically attached, cause his abbot to question his vocation. Particularly annoying to Abbot Arkos is Francis' inability to declare the stranger Francis encounters in the desert is either a heat- and hunger-inspired illusion or a mere mortal - and certainly not Blessed Leibowitz himself. Francis never claims to have seen the Beatus, but fellow novices have elaborated on his narrative, angering Arkos. Francis endures several penitential beatings as he sticks by his story. Francis endures a record seven years in the novitiate, including seven stringent Lenten vigils, before an emissary from New Rome pronounces Francis' evidence for Leibowitz's sainthood appears valid, and Arkos allows him to profess his vows. Francis is transferred from menial kitchen work to an apprenticeship in the copy room, where he creates over years an illuminated version of Leibowitz's blueprint, and eventually is sent to New Rome to represent the AOL at St. Leibowitz's canonization. The original blueprint, now an official relic, and the illuminated copy as a gift to the Pope, go with him on the dangerous trek. Bandits steal the illumination, which they mistake for the valuable document, sparing the relic. The Pope praises Francis for his years of labor producing a work he hears is magnificent. The labor has redeemed the true relic. En route home with sufficient gold to buy back the illumination from the bandits, Francis is killed by an arrow to the forehead. Buzzards pick at his corpse until a stranger, dressed and acting like the one who originally appeared to Francis during his vocational vigil, drives them away and buries his remains in a simple, unmarked grave. In the final cataclysm that destroys Leibowitz Abbey, Francis' cranium, with the arrow still in place, is deposited beside the dying abbot, who blesses the unknown martyr for his ancient sufferings on behalf of the Gospel.

## Father Paulo of Pecos, AOL

The 32nd-century Abbot of Leibowitz Abbey, fiery, philosophic, and ailing Dom Paulo is one of the chief characters in Part 2 of the novel. He receives a coded message from his old friend Msgr. Marcus Apollo, papal envoy, "Sheba expects Solomon to come to *her*. Bearing gifts." Paulo rejects the idea of temporarily lending the Memorabilia to Taddeo's collegium, forcing the renowned scholar to visit the abbey. Waiting for Taddeo's arrival, Paulo is forced to intervene personally in a struggle between brothers Armbruster and Kornhoer over the electric light the latter is building in the library. The abbot sides with Armbruster about keeping rare volumes chained for security reasons, but with Kornhoer on temporarily removing a crucifix to make room for a study lamp. When Armbruster refuses to control his temper, Paulo is forced to rebuke him publicly. All of this worsens Paulo's painful stomach cramps, an old ailment that has recurred, and he broods about death. Paulo makes a day trip to the mesa on which his old friend Benjamin Eleazar bar Joshua lives as a hermit, and they debate Trinity, Original Sin, and Election in a serious but bantering style. The long reunion eases Paulo's stomach cramps. Paulo is relieved when Taddeo's party finally arrives safely, but suddenly feels out of place in the new world of possible renaissance. The First seeing Kornhoer's socking light, Paulo is chagrined it frightens Taddeo. To give the scholar a perch to crow from, Paulo arranges for him to lecture the brotherhood on his preliminary findings. After



a long and optimistic presentation, Taddeo says it will take violence for the coming renaissance to occur, since the vested interests of Ignorance will not give up easily. Paolo laments to himself this means the scholar will not take a moral stand with Hannegan, and the roll-up to the Flame Deluge is destined to be repeated. Mankind will again be crucified. When Taddeo offers to leave the abbey after Msgr. Apollo's brutal murder, the abbot insists common humanity makes him welcome at the abbey. Relations remain tense between the two to the end over control of the Memorabilia and Taddeo's latest theory, that contemporary Man is the invention rather than descendents of Adam. Paolo feels death approaching as the guests leave, and dies later in the Year of Man.

## **Thon Taddeo Pfardentrott, D.N.Sc.**

A leading 32nd-century scholar at the collegium at age 30, Taddeo is a major character in Part 2. He wants to examine the Leibowitzian documents not at Leibowitz Abbey as offered, but at the collegium. As chief Hannegan II's important and somewhat loose-lipped cousin, Taddeo is worth cultivating by New Rome's envoy, Msgr. Marcus Apollo. Taddeo has overcome an embarrassing past. He was educated by Benedictines after an illegitimate birth to a serving maid. He intellectually outstrips his cousin, who is being groomed for the throne. He is recalled to the duke's court as a bitter 15-year-old when the duchess, who bore only daughters, dies. He forgives everyone, except the dead duchess and the monks. The abbot worries about Taddeo's bitter memories, half-memories, and imagined memories. Taddeo's field of study, in which he has established himself as a revolutionary thinker, includes electrical essence, planetary motion, and attracting bodies. A list of documents from the abbey includes names like Laplace, Maxwell, and Einstein, which raise hopes for a renaissance from the current darkness. Taddeo marvels an illiterate, superstitious, murderous moron he sees from a window is descended from men who once invented machines that fly, talk, and think, or that a great, wise civilization could thoroughly destroy itself. En route to Leibowitz Abbey, Taddeo accompanies a delegation that meets with Mad Bear to discuss a strategic alliance, and gains from the tribal leader an armed guard to get him through the Dry Lands safely. Taddeo is frightened by the brilliance of Kornhoer's light and at first wonders how and why the monks have kept this secret for 1,200 years. The scholar and his assistants set to studying the abbey at large and then turn to the Memorabilia's rich treasures. Taddeo is amazed to find fragments from a 20th-century physicist with equations intact, and agrees to present his general findings to the monastic community, having been assured by Dom Paolo they will not take offense at his unorthodox ideas. Taddeo's speech is well received, until he advances the conclusion the coming renaissance will require violence for the vested interests of Ignorance to be overcome. Taddeo stops speaking when Benjamin enters, jumps on stage, studies his eyes, and declares, "It's still not Him." As a Texarkanan, Taddeo offers to leave the abbey after Msgr. Apollo's brutal murder, for although he personally condemns his uncle's policies, publicly he can say nothing that will endanger the collegium. The abbot insists common humanity makes him welcome at the abbey. Taddeo remains, coolly, to complete his work, and leaves, bearing the Poet's glass eye after the Poet's disappearance and a final debate with the abbot about the different masters they must serve. Before leaving





the abbey, Taddeo tries to recruit Kornhoer for the collegium and conflicts with the abbot over who should administer the Memorabilia and the scholar's latest theory that contemporary Man is the invention rather than the descendant of Adam. As a point of honor, Taddeo surrenders the officers' drawings to the abbot and shakes his hand gingerly, as a sign of mutual respect rather than impossible agreement.

## Dom Jethrah Zerchi, AOL

The 38th-century abbot of St. Leibowitz Abbey, Zerchi is a major character in Part 3. Like many previous AOL abbots, he is more active than contemplative, which makes him an effective ruler. He knows he is impulsive, particularly when first introduced in the novel, frustrated that his APLAC machine, which he calls an "Abominable Autoscribe" is acting like the dragon that bites St. George, preventing him from getting off to New Rome an urgent radiogram about resurrecting *Quo peregrinator grex*. Communications go through, and New Rome first appears to cancel the plan to send a 27-monk team to Centauri Colony along with the microfilmed Memorabilia, and then orders it activated on three-days' notice. On the eve of the initial nuclear interchange, Zerchi is twice discomfited, first by Mrs. Grales' request he baptize her second head, Rachel, and second by a smiling stranger, Lazarus, at the beggars' table in the refectory. Zerchi gives Brother Joshua three days to decide whether he is willing to return to space, as an ordained priest, to lead the mission. To protest a Green Star euthanasia camp two miles from the abbey, Zerchi dispatches picketers, proclaiming (from Dante's *Inferno*,) "Abandon Every Hope Ye Who Enter Here." Failing to convince a lethally infected young Catholic mother from euthanizing herself and her baby, Zerchi commands her to obey Catholic doctrine and later assaults Dr. Cors, two actions that surprise him greatly. He agrees to obey a court injunction as a condition of avoiding arrest. After confessing his anger has brought dishonor on his office, Zerchi is distracted hearing Mrs. Grales' confession. A nuclear detonation occurs as he is on the point of granting absolution, and he races to rescue the reserved sacrament to offer last rites to anyone who survives. The abbey is blown apart and Zerchi finds himself buried from the waist down by tons of rubble. As he accepts he must die as he has advised others, Zerchi offers his sufferings to God on behalf of the woman and her child. Mrs. Grales approaches him, mysteriously renewed, with Rachel now in control. Rachel refuses conditional baptism and instead instinctively gives the priest his last communion from the ciborium he has rescued. He dies recalling her kind green word and single word, "Live."

## Brother Joshua, AOL

A red-haired, free-spirited 38th-century monk nearing middle age, Joshua is a major character in Part 3. A widowed ex-engineer and veteran of orbital missions in space, Joshua is assigned to monitoring the radioactivity of air samples and coordinating with an AOL outpost in Spokane. Joshua is more at ease in the abbey's new glass and aluminum annex than in the old cloister, where "Why, God?" is asked instead of "How?" Frightening Sister Helene by bathing naked in his laboratory is Joshua's second offense against modesty, but Abbot Zerchi still summons him to his office to await a response



from New Rome, telling him he will play an important part should *Quo peregrinator grex* be activated. That role, it is revealed, is to lead a 27-man mission to Centauri Colony, to preserve the microfilmed Memorabilia and preserve the apostolic succession off the Earth, should mankind destroy it in a nuclear holocaust. Zerchi gives him three days to decide if he is willing to leave Earth forever and accept ordination to the priesthood. After a Christ-like agony in the abbey rose garden, complete with a slithering serpent, Joshua accepts the burden of leadership.

## **Msgr. Malfreddo Aguerra, OP**

Aguerra is the suave, diplomatic prothonotary apostolic sent to the abbey from New Rome in the 26th century as postulator for the 20th-century martyr Leibowitz's canonization. Aguerra's Dominican clerks reopen the shelter and explore the "Sealed Environment," while he interviews Francis about his alleged apparition. Aguerra wants Francis to verify a compilation of travelers' stories about the incident, which Francis declares is fantastic exaggeration of a single brief meeting. Aguerra discards the scroll, confident enough authentic data on miracles exists without it. On Augerra's insistence, Francis is allowed to resume work on his illuminated blueprint. At the canonization ceremony in New Rome, Aguerra intones the three petitions to Pope Leo XXI to add Leibowitz to the canon of the saints, hears what turns out to be Francis' last confession, and gives him the money to redeem his illumination from the highwaymen.

## **Msgr. Marcus Apollo**

The 32nd-century papal nuncio to the Court of Hannegan, Apollo is a tall, thin, sophisticated man first seen at a politically important wedding reception. He is determined to keep New Rome apprised of the rising dangers of war, assigning his clerk, Brother Claret, to deliver a sensitive oral report. When Apollo warns a foolish warlord of Hannegan's treacherous intentions, he is arrested and his files confiscated. New Rome puts Texarkana under canonical ban, which makes little sense in a region where Catholicism is only a thin veneer on a pagan population. After winning a one-day war with Laredo, Hannegan executes Msgr. Apollo for treason and espionage, hanging him, cutting him down still alive to draw, quarter, and flay, and finally throws his remains in chunks to the dogs.

## **Father Arkos, AOL**

The 26th century Abbot of Leibowitz Abbey, Arkos is an impatient and sadistic man, primarily concerned about spin control on Francis' story about an old man leading him to the Fallout Shelter, which novices are embellishing into a meeting with the Beatus' himself. Arkos seals the shelter and withholds Francis' profession for a record seven years, relenting only when New Rome appears to accept Francis' evidence. He transfers Francis from menial duty to the scribes room, and surprisingly allows him to copy the Leibowitz blueprint. Arkos provides deluxe accommodations and





entertainments for Msgr. Aguerre, the prothonotary apostolic sent to the abbey from New Rome as postulator for Leibowitz's canonization, and threatens an unhappy end to Francis' life if he is not very careful in what he says to Aguerre. Arkos is too old for the journey to New Rome for Leibowitz's canonization, and sends Francis, warning him not to faint in the Pope's presence.

## Brother Armbruster, AOL

The grim 32nd-century Librarian and Rector of the Memorabilia, Brother Armbruster battles so frequently and intensely with Brother Korhoer over the electric light the latter is building in the library that Abbot Paulo has to intervene personally. Paulo sides with Armbruster about keeping rare volumes chained for security reasons, but with Kornhoer on temporarily removing a crucifix to make room for a study lamp. When Armbruster refuses to control his temper, Paulo is forced to rebuke him publicly. Believing books are meant to be preserved, not used, Armbruster is incensed watching led-lined, airtight casks being unsealed for a secular scholar's perusal of rare originals. During Taddeo's public lecture, Armbruster asks a rude question that proves the last straw for the abbot.

## Pope Benedict XXII

The 32nd-century Pontiff who puts Texarkana under interdict for the jailing and brutal murder of his envoy, Msgr. Marcus Apollo, Benedict XXII is, in turn, condemned by Hannegan II as a heretic, simoniac, murderer, sodomite, and atheist. Texarkana clergy thereafter must be licensed and recognized. Several bishops unfamiliar to Abbot Paolo countersign the document.

## Venerable Boedullus, AOL

A 26th-century monastic archeologist who errs excavating an "international launching pad," and turns the landscape into a vast crater lake filled with giant catfish, Boedellus asserts in his *De Vestigiis Antecessarum Civitatu* that books about past civilizations and science can hint how contemporary science can evolve, but also insists over half of the Memorabilia should be called the "Inscrutabilia." Paolo cites Boedullus' *De Inanibus* as his reason for rejecting the document on which Taddeo hypothesizes contemporary humans are the invention rather than the heirs of Adam.

## Pope Celestine VIII

Celestine is the 38th-century Pontiff whose *Motu proprio* of A.D. 3735, confirmed in his *Quo peregrinator grex* of A.D. 3749, serves as the basis for plans to send AOL missionaries to minister to colonist on a moon of Alpha Centauri and preserve the Throne of Peter in the event of Earth's destruction.



## Father Cheroki, AOL

The 26th-century Prior of Leibowitz Abbey, under Abbot Arkos, Cheroki provides Francis a copy of the *Little Book* of meditations during his vocational vigil in the desert, and grows impatient with him during confession, hearing his tales about finding relics of Blessed Leibowitz - and his vocation as a monk. Cheroki comes from baronial stock in Denver and, while venerating Abbot Arkos' sacred office, steers clear of him as a person. Cheroki has heard so many novices' confessions he does not blink at Francis' admission he has eaten a lizard.

## Brother Claret, AOL

Msgr. Marcus Apollo's clerk, to whom he entrusts a crucial mission to New Rome and Leibowitz Abbey about the growing prospects for war, Claret is tortured for information when Apollo is brutally martyred, and finds refuge as a broken man at Leibowitz Abbey.

## Dr. Cors

The dedicated, hardworking, sincere pacifist physician heading an Exposure Survey Team, Cors seeks permission from Abbot Zerchi to set up his mobile vans in the abbey courtyard to spare refugees a painful walk down the highway to the alternate site available. Cors does not want to debate moral theology, but merely to deal with present reality. The Mercy Cadre operates elsewhere, and he merely carries out the provisions of law 10-WA-3E, informing anyone red-tagged of his or her option to die a quick, painless death. Zerchi insists a higher law forbids him to allow anyone to counsel evil on his premises and demands a written oath to refrain from telling anyone to kill him- or herself. Cors is incensed at the inhumanity of the demand, but signs, with Pat as a witness. Cors offers to leave after being conscience-driven to recommend an easy death to a horribly burned young Catholic and her baby, and is later that day punched by Zerchi when she enters the camp. Cors refuses to press charges, and the embarrassed abbot is released on his own recognizance.

## Brother Fingo, AOL

A 26th-century woodcarver, Fingo is doing a stint in the kitchen as cook's helper to learn humility after asserting himself while carving a figure of Blessed Leibowitz. One of Fingo's tasks is to lead a supply caravan to the various Lenten hermitages, Fingo is the ugliest man alive but a good sport. Like fellow Minnesotans, Fingo suffers baldness and uneven distribution of melanin, but his perpetual good humor distracts attention. Allowed to resume his carving work, Fingo produces an image of Leibowitz that features crinkly eyes and a wry smile that Francis finds familiar but cannot place. Abbot Arkos is troubled by the smile and relegates the finished statue to his private office. It remains there in 32nd-century Abbot Paulo's day, better admired, but is exiled to a damp



basement by his successors. The last abbot, Dom Zerchi, restores it because of the enigmatic smile.

## **Mrs. Gales / Rachel**

A woman in 38th-century Sanly Bowitts, Gales is an unmistakable mutation with two heads. She generously donates homegrown tomatoes to the Abbey, but is avoided uncharitably by Abbot Zerchi and Brother Joshua. On the eve of the nuclear exchange that initiates the end of the world, Gales begs Zerchi to baptize Rachel, her name for the inanimate, cherubic-looking second head, which is something the parish clergy refuse to do. Joshua is troubled by a nightmare in which a surgeon removes Rachel, who pleads with the monk to save her, for she is the Immaculate Conception. As the days of peace negotiation run out, Mrs. Gales asks Zerchi to hear her confession, which he does, distracted by the day's events. When she suggests she has had an abortion, he says only a bishop can grant absolution, but advises a quick Act of Atonement. A nuclear blast interrupts the rite and Zerchi flees to collect the reserved Host. The church explodes, pinning him under tons of rubble, but Gales finds him. Green-eyed, smiling Rachel is now in control and the arthritic old body is youthful again. She feels no pain and bleeds little as Zerchi removes large shards of glass from her arm. Rachel refuses conditional baptism, and instinctively administers a final communion to the dying priest. He sees in her the image of the Virgin Mary and with his last breath recites the Magnificat, giving up on asking God, "Why?"

## **Father Gault, AOL**

The 32nd-century Prior of Leibowitz Abbey under the ailing Abbot Paulo, Gault is also his likely successor. Alerted by the Poet, Gault warns Paulo about the military officers accompanying Taddeo to the abbey are making detailed drawings of the defenses, and tries to silence the Poet, when he insults the abbot and Taddeo at a rare banquet. Gault argues with Taddeo's theory that contemporary Man is the invention rather than the biological offspring of Adam until the abbot arrives to take over. After Taddeo's party departs, Gault hears the terminally ill abbot's last confession.

## **Hannegan II**

"By the Grace of God Mayor, Ruler of Texarkana, Defender of the Faith, and Vaquero Supreme of the Plains," Hannegan II is a corpulent, illiterate, ruthless, and polygamous 32nd-century chieftain intent on unifying the North American continent. His strategy is to force a Denver/Laredo alliance to tie up the tribal leader Mad Bear and encourage Chihuahua to attack Laredo from the south. This will then free Hannegan to take on the Mississippi Republic without fear for his rear lines. Hannegan is uncle, patron, and protector of the renowned young scholar, Thon Taddeo Taddeo, and murderer of Msgr. Marcus Apollo, the apostolic nuncio to his court, who alerts New Rome to his plans. This



brings him under a bull of excommunication, which he summarily rejects and demands an oath of loyalty from all bishops and clergy in Texarkana.

## Sir Eric Cardinal Hoffstraff

The 38th-century Vicar Apostolic Designate, Provisional Vicariate Extraterrestris, of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in New Rome, responsible for activating the plans in Pope Celestine VIII's *Quo peregrinator grex* of A.D. 3749.

## Brother Horner, AOL

A gentle old monk with a heart condition, Horner oversees the monastery's staff of copyists, to whom Francis is added as an apprentice after he is finally professed. Horner allows his staff to work on private projects after finishing assigned tasks as an antidote to tedium. He understands Francis' plan to copy multiple blueprints as camouflage for his true pet project, copying the Leibowitz blueprint. Francis keeps from Horner his work on an illuminated version. When Horner dies, he is succeeded by the less tolerant Brother Jeris, who forbids Francis from continuing what he considers a frivolous project.

## Brother Jeris, AOL

A sarcastic monk assigned apprentice copyist at the same time as Francis, Jeris discusses with him the philosophy behind the Leibowitz blueprint. When Jeris succeeds Brother Jeris as master of the copyists, he forbids Francis from continuing what he considers a frivolous project. Only the insistence of the visiting prothonotary apostolic, Msgr. Aguerra, forces Jeris to relent. Jeris' request to install a printing press is rejected by the abbot on the grounds ink, paper, and demand for inexpensive books are all wanting.

## Brother Kornhoer, AOL

Kornhoer is the 32nd-century monk who theorizes and fashions, from data dimly implicit in the Memorabilia's fragmentary documents, a primitive dynamo and arc lamp to install in the library, to aid (and impress) the noted visiting scholar, Taddeo. This invasion of the library space and impious modernism enrage grim Librarian and Rector of the Memorabilia, Brother Armbruster, and their battles grow so frequent and intense Abbot Paulo has to intervene personally. Paulo sides with Armbruster about keeping rare volumes chained for security reasons, but with Kornhoer on temporarily removing a crucifix to make room for a study lamp. Kornhoer's test of his system is successful, producing light unlike anything humans have seen outside the sun for 1,200 years. He choreographs the unveiling to the Latin text of Gen. 1.1-5, the First Day of Creation. Taddeo is amazed Kornhoer, working from fragments, is able to leap over years of experimentation to produce a functioning dynamo and lamp. He wonders what Kornhoer



could accomplish in a proper machine shop and why he is wasting his time as a monk. Dom Paolo says only Kornhoer can decide that. Flattered by Taddeo for his engineering genius and offered a partnership, and Kornhoer is conflicted, confessing his vocation is Religion, in which work is prayer, not play, as his invention seems. Kornhoer leaves it to the abbot to decide if he may accept the scholarship to the collegium Taddeo offers.

## **Father Lehi, AOL**

Prior of Leibowitz Abbey in the 38th century, Lehi is Abbot Zerchi's nervous assistant.

## **Pope Leo XXI**

The 26th-century pontiff who canonizes St. Leibowitz in New Rome, Leo XXI is a frail, simple man in a moth-eaten white cassock. He speaks curia talk, only because it is expected of him. He thanks Francis for discovering the materials that have convinced him to add Leibowitz to the canon of the saints and commiserates with the loss of the illumination Francis is bringing to him as a personal gift. He assures Francis the 15 years he has spent on the work is not wasted, because it allows the drab real relic to reach New Rome. Through Aguerre, the Pope gives Francis a bag containing enough gold to redeem the illumination on his way home.

## **Hongan Os ("Mad Bear")**

The ruler of the Plains clans, whose nickname is earned in his youth for killing a bear bare-handed, Os is a just and kindly man, more merciful to his animals than his warriors, and careful about the sensibilities of the superstitious, grass-eating allies he needs. Knowing his clans are superior to the squeamish Eastern grass-eaters, Mad Bear breaks taboos and risks tribal restlessness to deal with messengers from Texarkana. He is willing to stop raiding his Eastern rival, Hannegan, as long as he provides arms and supplies. A joint war on Laredo is left implicit, but fits Mad Bear's plans of expelling the farmers who have encroached on his ancestral grazing lands. Taddeo, en route to Leibowitz Abbey, asks for and is granted an armed escort. As war spreads, the Laredans are divided between those who want to go home as ordered and those who want to fight Hannegan to the death. Thus weakened, the Laredans gradually fall to Mad Bear's hit-and-run assaults, who burns shamans to get even with the tribal gods that have betrayed him and threatens to become a Christian if their gods will slaughter his enemies.

## **Brother Patrick, AOL ("Pat")**

Pat is Abbot Zerchi's waddling secretary.



## The Poet

A one-eyed, philosophical thorn in Abbot Paulo's side, the Poet has occupied Leibowitz Abbey's guesthouse but must vacate it for the visit of the renowned scholar, Thon Taddeo Taddeo. The Poet, who has stocked his bedroom with stolen sacramental wine, insists his freakish bald, blue-headed goat is not stolen, but won in a game of mumbly-peg from the abbot's old friend, the Old Jew, Eleazar Benjamin. The abbot insists the Poet vacate the room immediately, scrub it next day, and return the goat to Benjamin, who he suspects the Poet is keeping up-to-date on activities in the abbey. The Poet crashes a special dinner for Taddeo and his entourage, infuriating the soldiers by revealing their compromising drawings of the abbey's defenses, and generally acting the fool. When the abbot grinds the Poet's toe under his heel to make him leave the table, the Poet removes his artificial eye and positions it to keep watch of Taddeo in his absence. Weeks later, the Poet disappears mysteriously, leaving behind his glass eye. The abbot observes it mitigates the Poet's bipolar personality. The Poet's non-poetic death and fate as buzzard food concludes Part 2 of the novel. He cannot resist watching a troop of cavalry overtake a band of fleeing civilians or stabbing an officer whose sloppy style in beheading a woman offends him. The soldiers shoot the Poet in the stomach and leave him and the groaning officer to die. The officer so annoys the Poet he crawls over and gives him both absolution and a coup de grace, before settling to await his agonizing end.

## Thon Esser Shon

The most radical of Thon Taddeo Pfardentrott's colleague at the collegium, Shon is working to create living protoplasm from just six basic ingredients. Abbot Paulo makes a special point of extending to Shon an invitation to study the Memorabilia.



# Objects/Places

## Albertine Order of Leibowitz (AOL)

The monastic order established by New Rome to preserve human history in the wake of the Simplification. Permission comes 12 years after Isaac Edward Leibowitz grows convinced his wife has perished in the Flame Deluge, joins the Cistercians, is ordained priest, and collects a band of followers. The order is named after Albert the Great, teacher of Thomas Aquinas and patron of men of science. Its first habit is burlap rags and bindlestiffs (bedrolls), matching the uniform of the simpleton mob. Brothers are divided into two groups, "Bookleggers" and "Memorizers," and spend centuries preserving any scrap of knowledge they can find, regardless of content, in hopes some day someone will want it and begin a renaissance. Featured abbots include Dom Arkos (26th century), Dom Paulo (32nd century), and Dom Zerchi (38th century.) In the 38th century, the Order heavily recruits space veterans in anticipation of continuing its historic mission on other worlds, should Earth be destroyed by a final nuclear holocaust. A team of 27 monks led by Joshua will travel to Centuaurus Colony to establish a suborder, the Visitationist Friars of the Order of St. Leibowitz of Tycho, charged with missionizing whatever worlds human inhabit. They will pass on 4,000 years of continuity and keep alive the memory of Earth to which they may never return.

## APLAC

The 38th-century apparatus designed to transcribe, translate, and transmit messages, APLAC is called the "Abominable Autoscribe" by its dissatisfied honor, Dom Zerchi, likening it to the dragon that bites St. George. North American English has evolved into several nearly unintelligible dialects and Latin consists of Vulgate and Modern (including Anglo-Latin) variants, making it necessary for computers to prepare correspondence in language(s) the writer does not know.

## The Asian Coalition

The 38th-century political entity charged with breaking international law and detonating a nuclear weapon, the Asian Coalition denies responsibility and takes to the World Court its demands the Christian Coalition be punished for an explosion at Itu Wan. When Texarkana launches a sneak attack on its missile launchers in space, the Asian Coalition retaliates by destroying its capital city, beginning mankind's final chapter.

## The Fallout Shelter

A vestige of the mid-20th century, intended to keep people alive in case of a nuclear attack, fallout shelters have been transformed in post-Fire Deluge mythology into a beast with whom Blessed Leibowitz himself once battled, exorcising and baptizing him,





and thus ending the deflowering of virgins. Brother Francis discovers a shelter near his desert hermitage containing relics of Leibowitz's wife's demise, but Abbot Cheroki orders it sealed pending New Rome's decision on Leibowitz's canonization. Francis' dream of a grand shrine rising over the shelter does not come to pass, but a town, Sanly Bowitts, does develop on the site.

## **The Flame Deluge (Diluvium Ignis)**

The universal nuclear holocaust that destroys American-European civilization in the mid-1960s, the Flame Deluge throws civilization back to a hunter-gatherer, feudal stage, leaving the Roman Catholic Church the sole unifying principle. Radioactive fallout creates massive populations of monstrous genetic defects, many of whose victims are forced to marauding the desolate countryside.

## **Green Star Relief Stations**

The government of Texarkana's means of triaging with victims of radiation poisoning, Green Star assigns red, yellow, or green tags to people, the red ones being informed of provisions of Public Law 10-WA-3E, which authorizes euthanasia for those requesting it after suffering a lethal dose. Mercy Camp Number 18 sets up two miles down the highway from Leibowitz Abbey, and Dom Zerchi dispatches novices to picket operations.

## **Leibowitz Abbey**

A Roman Catholic institution situated on the now-deserted road from the Great Salt Lake to Old El Paso, the abbey survives because of the near-by oasis. For rare pilgrims, the abbey is an unofficial shrine to an unofficial saint, and for novices make their vocational vigil during Lent, it serves as a relatively comfortable motherhouse. Over the centuries, a town, Sanly Bowitts, grows up near the abbey, which in times of trouble asks the monks for sanctuary from invaders. By the 38th century, parts of the abbey like the refectory are in bad repair, and modern facilities are built, but located across a six-lane highway, to preserve the atmosphere of the historic grounds. The addition includes a refectory that resembles an industrial lunchroom, but built cruciform and adorned on one wall with sacred images.

## **The Memorabilia**

The Memorabilia are the collective archives of the Albertine Order of Leibowitz (AOL), preserving the surviving sum of pre-Deluge human knowledge, regardless of its importance, validity, or comprehensibility. In the 32nd-century, Thon Taddeo Pfordentrott studies the collection thoroughly and discovers fragments of seminal 20th-century physics texts. By the 38th century, with nuclear holocaust likely, the Memorabilia are





microfilmed for preservation on another world, as part of New Rome's survival plan, *Quo peregrinator grex*.

*Quo peregrinator grex*

Pope Celestine VIII's plan, published in A.D. 3749, for preserving the apostolic succession on another world, should the rulers of the Earth destroy the planet with newly-rediscovered nuclear weapons, the proclamation is activated on three-days' notice.

## The Pope's Children

Also referred to as the "Pope's Nephews," they are the normal-looking offspring of genetic monsters in the 26th century resulting from fallout from the Flame Deluge of the mid-20th century. The Church maintains facilities to house these unfortunates, but not the one in the Valley of the Misborn, near where Francis is robbed of his illumination. Pope Leo XX ends debate over whether offspring of genetic monsters in whom the controlling gene is recessive, thus rendering them outwardly normal but inwardly void of heart, should be relegated to the category of animals and made subject to extermination. The Pope takes a pro-life stance, insisting they must be allowed to be born and raised decently.

## Sanly Bowitts

Sanly Bowitts is the village that grows up in the desert near Leibowitz Abbey, over the site of the Fallout Shelter in the six centuries after its discovery by Brother Francis. By the 38th century, it is a small but thriving agricultural town.

## The Simplification

The era of mass murder and terror that follows the Flame Deluge, the Simplification is a determined effort to wipe out not only the nuclear scientists who create weapons of mass destruction and the rulers who employ them, but also all record of pre-Deluge human civilization, that their children - proud "Simpletons" - can begin afresh. Sporadic violence continues for four generations, but by then society has too radically changed for a renaissance to occur as the Albertine Order of Leibowitz (AOL), founded to preserve human knowledge, intends. St. Leibowitz is martyred by a mob of Simpletons.

## The Zone Defense Interior (ZDI)

A 38th-century bureaucracy in the Empire of Denver, the ZDI orders all private radio transmitters off the air after a mysterious nuclear explosion in Asia, and restricts civil aviation after a full-blown nuclear exchange destroys Texarkana City.



## Social Concerns And Themes

A Canticle for Leibowitz is very much a novel of the Cold War — not because it engages in the partisan polemics of the time, but because it transcends those causes to address a higher issue, the precarious survival of human life in the Nuclear Age. The novel assumes a devastating nuclear war that has nearly destroyed civilization and goes on to explore humanity's attempt to rebuild the world. As society progresses from a Dark Age to a second Renaissance and finally to a new age of nuclear confrontation, the same flaws that nearly destroyed humanity before emerge once again and culminate in a second, even more destructive conflagration. The great question posed by Miller in A Canticle for Leibowitz is the question that continues to haunt the contemporary world: for all man's knowledge, for all his power, for all his scientific and technological sophistication, has he the wisdom to avoid disaster?

While progress in the novel seems only, ironically, to initiate a destructive downwards cycle, Miller never condemns science or technology, for he recognizes that human knowledge and human tools are in themselves morally neutral. Indeed the order of monks that the novel traces through nearly two thousand years of history is founded in response to the Great Simplification, a postwar attempt to stamp out the possibility of war by killing the scientists and enforcing ignorance. While the monks have their foibles and superstitions, and while their preservation of knowledge will in fact contribute to a second war, their basic insight is clearly that of the author: It is only what people do with the power given them by science and technology that can be judged as good or evil.

Critics often note that A Canticle for Leibowitz is one of the few science fiction novels to incorporate an existing formal religion into its imaginary world (as opposed to creating one of its own). But while Catholicism plays a key role in the novel, it is important to recognize that the novel is not Roman Catholic in any narrow or dogmatic way. One might suggest that Miller is more interested in the ethical tradition embodied in Catholicism and in its abundance of images which celebrate human acceptance of responsibility than he is in its supernatural doctrines.

For it is in the abdication of responsibility for one's own actions that Miller locates a major cause of the human failures that pervade the novel and provoke its final tragedy. Miller does not oppose Church to State, or Faith to Reason; he opposes a tradition of conscience, of human accountability, to a kind of moral anarchy — the attitude that "although I build the bomb, I am not responsible for its use or that if my enemies do such and such, it is they, not I, who are responsible for my retaliation." As long as everyone blames someone else, Miller suggests, there can be no resolution of the dilemmas that confront humanity. This insight is perhaps best expressed by a dying monk who recognizes that before anyone can hope to improve the world, he must first accept that "The trouble with the world is me," rather than seeking to evade: all responsibility.



# Techniques

A Canticle for Leibowitz is based on three separate shorter works published during the 1950s. Since the different parts are so widely separated in time, each has a separate cast of characters (except for Benjamin who is more a peripheral commentator on the action than a protagonist) and a different set of political, social, and technological problems. The danger a writer faces in such a situation is that the work may lack unity — it may seem to be three distinct stories on related themes that have been conveniently packaged together as a book, but not a novel. Miller overcomes this difficulty brilliantly, in part by the essential thematic unity of his work, but also by his use of a variety of images and motifs that serve both to link the three parts and to emphasize their significant differences.

The novel's progression from Dark Age through Renaissance to Nuclear Age is viewed from within the confines of a monastery founded by Isaac Edward Leibowitz (a scientist and Jewish convert who dedicated himself to the preservation of knowledge during the Great Simplification and was martyred by angry "Simpletons"). The Monastery and the monks who live there, as they develop through the ages, are a key linking device, as are the traditions, rites, and structures of the Catholic Church. All of these help to establish a background of continuity against which changes can be measured. The Memorabilia, the monastery's collection of artifacts, books, and manuscripts preserving the past, provides yet another link and another sign of change as it develops from a collection of misunderstood relics to a comprehensive record of the past that helps to bring about a new age of learning — and of danger.

Miller also uses motifs that recur in all three parts to suggest both continuity and change: mutants, whose very existence constitutes a reminder and a warning; buzzards that circle the monastery in times of danger; a statue, supposedly of Saint Leibowitz but apparently modeled after Benjamin, with his sardonic and knowing smile that mocks human folly; the violent deaths suffered by a number of monks; and finally the enigmatic figure of Benjamin himself.

Having established continuity, Miller is able to stress change. The period of time covered by each section grows progressively shorter (from thirty years to three years to a few months), more crowded with changes (political and technological), and more ambiguous.

The world of Part 1 is harsh but in some ways simple; by Part 3 it seems that there are no more clear-cut moral decisions, no possibility of certainty. Miller has, in a sense, encapsulated human history in its pattern of accelerating change and complexity. Perhaps the most striking indication of the changes among the three parts and of the morally ambiguous nature of progress can be seen in the deaths suffered by monks. Francis (Part 1) is shot from behind by robbers as he prays his rosary — a quick and nearly painless death; Marcus Apollo (Part 2) is drawn and quartered after being flayed alive by a tyrant, and his friend Dom Paulo dies of ulcers brought on by the anxieties of the age; Dom Zerchi (Part 3) dies buried under piles of radioactive rubble, his world

literally blown apart by the forces of technological change that humanity has failed to control.



# Themes

## Time

As an epic tale spanning 18 centuries and dealing with monks under vows of poverty, obedience, and humility, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* inevitably portrays individual lives as inconsequential. Leibowitz Abbey is responsible from the time of its founding during the dark days of the Simplification with overcoming mankind's determination to forget everything that contributed to the Flame Deluge. For six centuries after the mid-20th-century nuclear holocaust that reduces mankind to the hunter-gatherer stage, the monks indiscriminately preserve anything that falls into their hands, sealing originals in lead-lined, airtight casks in a darkened library. Some learned monks suspect the Memorabilia is in fact largely an "Inscrutabilia" of incomplete, disjointed scraps, but the Order remains obedient to its mission of copying and recopying everything by hand, trusting someday someone will find it useful in rebuilding the lost heritage. By the 32nd century, such a renaissance is on the horizon, led by secular scholars, who question whether the Church should be trusted to administer the legacy any longer. Thon Taddeo Pfordentrott is amazed at the wealth of the collection he had suspected before receiving access, and rapidly accumulates enough notes to keep him and his colleagues busy for decades systematizing and organizing. He is amazed when one of the monks instinctively reinvents the dynamo and arc lamp from partial descriptions, skipping over the decades of experimentation he would have used. Another monk, the Brother Librarian, resents the Memorabilia being used at all. Books are meant to be preserved, not used, in his view. In another six centuries, mankind has surpassed its 20th-century high-point and again threatens to destroy itself, so the Order microfilms the Memorabilia to preserve it for human beings on distant planets to be able to remember the Earth which had once been their ancestors' home.

## Art

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* discusses art in several ways, primarily by following the creation and shifting fate over centuries of a wooden carving of St. Leibowitz, a widowed 20th-century weapons scientist who becomes a priest and founds an order dedicated to preserving human knowledge from the Flames Deluge and Simplification that claims his life. The 26th-century carving is interrupted when the abbot finds Brother Fingo's work too individualistic, but as Leibowitz's canonization nears, allows him to complete it, Fingo's image features crinkly eyes and a wry smile that Francis finds familiar but cannot place. Abbot Arkos is troubled by the smile and relegates the finished statue to his private office, when visitors from New Rome are offended by it. In the Vatican for the canonization, Francis notes the official icon is quite different. Fingo's statue remains in the abbot's office in 32nd-century Dom Paulo's day and is better admired, but Paulo knows his successors will probably prefer a modern plaster rendering, since artistic tastes change, generally devolving. Indeed, the carving is exiled to a damp basement and decays for centuries until the abbey's last leader, Dom Zerchi, restores it because



of the enigmatic smile. Contrasting with St. Leibowitz's image is an insipid rendering of a Christ-like figure the Green Star organization erects outside its euthanasia center. It is typical of contemporary Christian art, showing Jesus as a slightly effeminate embracer of all rather than the judge of the universe as classical iconography prefers. Behavioral psychologists have advised its creators on how best to welcome the doomed to their fate.

## Moral Responsibility

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* examines two interrelated moral questions of warfare and the right to life. The first generation of nuclear scientists, Leibowitz's colleagues, are granted the benefit of the doubt. They may not have known their work would lead to the Flame Deluge and create generations of genetic mutants. Over widespread objections, including some Catholic thinkers, the Pope insists any human conception must be allowed to come to term and the offspring, however deformed physically or mentally, must be cared for and brought to maturity. No human can be categorized as an animal and done away with. In the 26th century, humanity is reduced to a hunter-gatherer existence and the Pope as in medieval times summons the faithful to make just war on barbarians and schismatics. By the 32nd century, the Dark Age is giving way to light and 20th-century science is being rediscovered and understood, Abbot Paulo argues with the secular scientist Thon Taddeo Pfordentrott he and his colleagues have an obligation not to give in again to rulers' demands for weaponry. The Flame Deluge has proved the risk, and it is immoral to allow the unthinkable to happen again. Taddeo argues expediency. He cannot risk his collegium's future by displeasing his sovereign.

By the 38th century, Man is back in space and for two centuries has managed to contain nuclear energy with only two mistakes. A detonation in Asia, however, sparks a confrontation that results in the destruction of the capital city of Texarkana. The government has made provisions for legally euthanizing citizens who absorb a lethal dose, which brings it in conflict with Abbot Zerchi, who staunchly defends the historic Catholic stand that suffering born willingly and offered up to God as a sacrifice is pleasing to him. Dr. Cors, who must look into the suffering faces of the people he triages, cannot accept this premise, particularly for non-Catholics. Why not allow them a quick, painless death. They square off over a crippled Catholic widow and her horribly-burned child. The mother accepts the Church's teaching for herself, but cannot understand how her innocent child, who cannot understand the abstract preaching, should be allowed to suffer. Zerchi demands her obedience, but maternal pity wins out, and the peaceful monk is so incensed he assaults the doctor, whose dedication and empathy he admits. Pinned in the wreckage of his abbey, Zerchi struggles to practice what he has so dogmatically preached, offering up his draining life to Christ for the woman and baby who could not bear to do so.



# Style

## Point of View

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller, Jr., is told in the third person past tense by an objective, albeit generally sympathetic and friendly narrator. It is important to realize *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is written and published in 1959, prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965.) Vatican II, particularly the early sessions, while Pope John XXIII lived, re-examined many of the medieval practices seen in the novel and reformed the liturgical rites that are portrayed in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* extending forward some eighteen centuries. Positing a massive nuclear confrontation the world feared in 1959 - and came dramatically to the brink of in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 -- the novel heightens and makes immediate the tough bioethical problems, primarily euthanasia and abortion, that the Roman Catholic Church in fact wrestles with under less trying conditions in the 1960s and 1970s. The papacy of the future reaches absolute answers consistent with those of post-Vatican II popes (Paul VI and John-Paul II), but framed in ways that are distinctly medieval. The debates and decrees on church-state matters and just war doctrine are less convincing in light of Vatican II. The action of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* spans 18 centuries and uses select characters, monastic and secular, to voice the moral and political questions important in four eras, as humanity destroys, rebuilds, and destroys itself anew. Should scientists develop weapons of mass destruction? Should they - and can they - control the uses to which politicians put their inventions? Can the Church, which becomes de facto the only repository of surviving human knowledge, control the use of that knowledge to prevent new horrors, or must it remain a neutral resource? Or is the Church's only legitimate role to pray? *A Canticle for Leibowitz* raises basic questions of a new Renaissance in an era when human science is shown as having returned to space and surpassed the 20th century technologies that have brought on a new Dark Age. Mankind has achieved technologies like communication satellites in geosynchronous orbit and Star Wars-like antiballistic missile systems that in reality are developed only years and decades after 1959, when human-made spacecraft are still few and primitive.

## Setting

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller, Jr., is set in the vast, arid, and desolate vistas of the American Southwest whose conditions are heightened by a nuclear holocaust in the late 20th century. The "Flame Deluge" throws humankind back to hunter-gatherer economies, with some chieftains beginning to think of spreading power to neighbors as the novel opens in the 26th century. During the violently iconoclastic "Simplification" that follows the Flame Deluge, the Roman Catholic Church, referred to as "New Rome," because the Eternal City is one of the municipalities that are consumed in the 20th century, forms a new monastic order to preserve what it can of surviving human knowledge in the so-called Memorabilia housed at remote Leibowitz Abbey, located somewhere along the former highway between Utah's Great Salt Lake





and the ruined cities of what used to be New Mexico. The of action *A Canticle for Leibowitz* jumps forward in two increments of six centuries each to examine Leibowitz Abbey in the 32nd and 38th centuries. In the 32nd century, scientists have fought off the ignorance of the Simplification, realize the significance of the Memorabilia, and are at the point of utilizing its contents to rebuild civilization, but warlords are battling for control, and the monks face the moral question of whether potentially destructive technologies should be allowed to redevelop. One vicious and ambitious warlord dreams of politically reuniting the entire North American continent.

By the 38th century, North America is still fragmented but its various sovereign states and those in Europe have formed a loose confederation for mutual defense and an Asian Coalition is its major opponent. A World Court has loosely-defined authority and Man has again ventured into space, advanced its technology beyond 20th-century levels. The moon, Mars, and a planet orbiting Alpha Centauri have been colonized. Leibowitz Abbey has expanded and modernized its facilities and is surrounded by a town connected to the rest of the world by radar-controlled highways. A nuclear base is located nearby. As the novel ends, Man destroys planet Earth completely, but a tiny remnant of the monks escape into space carrying a microfilmed version of the Memorabilia and bishops to preserve the apostolic succession on other worlds.

## Language and Meaning

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller, Jr., is told in standard American English with frequent snippets and even extended passages in ecclesiastical Latin, some explained, and some left to the reader's devices to interpret. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* posits that over eighteen centuries all modern languages evolve, leaving the monks of the Order of Beatus Leibowitz unsure about texts they preserved and unable to communicate with superiors without reliance on a device that transcribes, translates, and transmits messages from and to regional dialects. Latin remains universal but has classical and vernacular versions that even high ecclesiastical dignitaries are unsure of using accurately. Only the odd character of two-headed Mrs. Grales and one other woman in the town that grows up around Leibowitz Abbey speak in dialect, however, supposedly in the Southwestern dialect, which sounds like Cockney. An apostolic delegate on the East coast of North America, speaks a mutually unintelligible Alleghenian dialect.

Much of the action in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is framed by references to the daily offices of the Roman Catholic Rite (Vespers, Matins, Lauds, Prime, Vespers, and Compline) and the novel is filled with biblical allusions to both the Old and New Testaments, particularly Genesis, Exodus, the Major Prophets, the Psalms, and Jesus' confrontations with Temple authority figures as recorded in the Gospels, and the concluding apocalyptic Book of Revelation. The monastic chroniclers of the life and martyrdom of St. Leibowitz and Venerable Francis of Utah are fond of the distinctive style of the Douay-Rheims Bible, similar to the King James Version still predominant among non-Catholic English-speaking Christians at the time *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is published (1959.) The abbot remarks on this, almost apologetically to a visiting secular scholar. Understanding the language of mathematics and physics allows this man to





appreciate and draw useful information from fragmentary documents the monks preserve but cannot understand. Ethical and philosophical debates, which are fairly frequent, are couched in appropriately dense language, which contrast with the generally flowing and descriptive language of the novel's main narrative.

## Structure

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller, Jr., consists of three parts, each bearing a Latin title. *Fiat Homo* ("Let there be Man"), comprising chapters 1-11, follows Brother Francis from adolescent novice discovering a millennia-old Fallout Shelter to a graying, wrinkling pilgrim returning from St. Leibowitz's canonization in New Rome, when he is struck down by a highwayman's arrow and hastily buried by the mysterious wanderer who points him to the shelter. The physical description and a distinctive verbal utterance links this figure with an "Old Jew" who lives as a hermit near Leibowitz Abbey six centuries later in Book 2, *Fiat Lux* ("Let there be light.") *Fiat Lux* consists of chapters 12-23, follows a secular scholar, Thon Taddeo Pfordentrott as he seeks access to and finally searches the abbey's treasure of knowledge, the Memorabilia, for hints to the 20th-century technology that has destroyed the world in the Flame Deluge and to which the survivors have reacted by the Simplification.

Pfordentrott wants to resurrect the ancient science, which Abbot Paulo encourages, but insists the Church is the safest repository for wisdom. Paulo's old friend, Benjamin, the "Old Jew" resembling both Francis' stranger and the statue of St. Leibowitz in Paulo's office, provides continuity between the two parts and sounds a warning of the tragic outcome of Pfordentrott's enterprise that are revealed in Part 3, *Fiat Voluntas Tua* ("Thy will be done.") Constituting chapters 24-30, *Fiat Voluntas Tua* jumps forward another six centuries to depict humanity once again venturing into space and on the brink of a nuclear annihilation more thoroughgoing than that of the 20th century. Leibowitz Abbey has been recruiting monks with experience in space to be ready to execute New Rome's contingency plans for preserving the Memorabilia and apostolic succession on another planet. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* concludes dramatically with Leibowitz Abbey being destroyed and the the pilgrims departing, leaving only deep-water sharks alive to inherit a desolated planet.



## Quotes

"His desire to profess his final and perpetual vows - was it not akin to the motive of the cat who became an ornithologist? - so that he might glorify his own ornithophagy, esoterically devouring *Penthestes atricapillus* but never eating chickadees. For as the cat was called by Nature to be an ornithophage, so was Francis called by his own nature hungrily to devour such knowledge as could be taught in those days, and, because there were no schools but the monastic schools, he had donned the habit first of a postulant, later of a novice. But to suspect that God as well as Nature had beckoned him to become a professed monk of the Order?" Chapter 5, pg. 52.

"'You,' Arkos rubbed his chin and seemed lost in unhappy speculation. 'I can see it too clearly. The Leibowitz cause is shelved. Poor Brother is struck down by a falling brick. There he lies, moaning for absolution. In the very midst of us, mind you. And there we stand, looking down in pity - clergy among us - watching him croak his last, without even a last blessing on the lad. Hell-bound. Unblessed. Unshrived. Under our very noses. A pity, eh?'" Chapter 8, pg. 81.

"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 yeid up her bountiful carrion. Sometimes dinner was only a toad. Once, it was a messenger from New Rome." Chapter 11, pg. 110.

"'Not so loud,' said the nuncio, glancing at the door. 'I'm going to have to send my estimate of this situation to His Holiness, and quickly. But it's the kind of thing that one doesn't dare put in writing. If Hannegan's people intercepted such a dispatch, you and I would probably be found floating face down in the Red river. If Hannegan's enemies get hold of it, Hannegan would probably feel justified in hanging us publicly as spies. Martyrdom is all very well, but we have a job to do first.'" Chapter 12, pg. 116.

"Does the chalice have to be now right this very minute Lord or can I wait awhile? But crucifixion is always now. Now ever since before Abraham even is always now. Before Pfordentrott even, now. Always for everybody anyhow is to get nailed on it and then to hang on it and if you drop off they beat you to death with a shovel so do it with dignity old man. If you can belch with dignity you may bet to Heaven if you're sorry enough about messing up the rug. ... He felt very apologetic." Chapter 14, pg. 145.

"'Hmmm-hnnn! Wise fool!' mimicked the hermit. 'But you always did specialize in paradox and mystery, didn't you, Paulo? If a thing can't be in contradiction to itself, then it doesn't even interest you, does it? You have to find Threeness in Unity, life in death, wisdom in folly. Otherwise, it might make too much common sense.'" Chapter 16, pg. 161.

"To the custodian of the Memorabilia, each unsealing represented another decrease in the probable lifetime of the contents of the cask, and he mad no attempt to conceal his disapproval of the entire proceeding. To Brother Librarian, whose task in life was the



preservation of books, the principal reason for the existence of books was that they might be preserved perpetually. Usage was secondary, and to be avoided if it threatened longevity." Chapter 19, pg. 182.

"But then the words came back to him. *For in those days, the Lord God had suffered the wise man to know the means by which the world itself might be destroyed. ...*" "He also suffered them to know how it might be saved, and, as always, let them choose for themselves. And perhaps they had chosen as Thon Taddeo chooses. To wash their hands before the multitude. Look you to it. Lest they themselves be crucified." Chapter 20, pg. 198.

"The government knows. The government *must* know. Several of them know. And yet we hear nothing. we are being protected from hysteria. Isn't that what they call it? Maniacs! 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 the tension? Political philosophies? 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? God forgive me, I don't mean that. Listen, Joshua - "" Chapter 24, pgs. 239-240.

"Yes, just one thing,' said the abbot, approaching the lectern. '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. And was dropped *only* twice, in sizes smaller than megaton. We all know what could happen, if there's war.'" Chapter 25, pg. 255.

"Teach them, and receive into the Order those among them who are called. Pass on to them the continuity. Be fo Man the memory of Earth and Origin. Remember this Earth. Never forget her, but - *never come back.*' Zerchi's voice went hoarse and law. 'If you ever come back, you might meet the Archangel at the east end of Earth, guarding her passes with a sword of flame. I fee it. Space is your home hereafter. It's a lonelier desert than ours. God bless you, and pray for us.'" Chapter 26, pg. 268.

"He tried to refocus his eyes to get another look at the face of this being, who by gestures alone had said to him: I do not need your *first* Sacrament, Man, but I am worthy to convey to you *this* Sacrament of Life. Now he knew what she was, and he sobbed faintly, when he could not force his eyes to focuso n those cool, green, and untroubled eyes of one born free. ~ ? ??\$??\$?? ??\$??\$ ch sh ???????\*???? "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. Chapter 30, pg. 311.



## Topics for Discussion

How does the Old Jew, Benjamin, fit into the novel? Is his claim of extraordinary longevity plausible?

How does the one-eyed Poet figure in the novel?

Given the stringency of the process of canonization in St. Leibowitz's case, how would you explain the uncertainty of sainthood for Francis and the Poet?

Is Benjamin correct in condemning the Order's involvement in preserving the legacy of the old world rather than concentrating on prayer?

Pick an animal -- buzzards, lizards, wolves, or sharks. Discuss their role in the novel, and how they provide continuity over centuries.

How is race handled in the novel?

How are the Judeo-Christian scriptures used in the novel? Identify a particular allusion and discuss its setting and theme.

How do the liturgical rites of the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church figure in the novel?

## Literary Precedents

A Canticle for Leibowitz belongs to a class of novels and stories that warn against the various calamities threatening the human race in the twentieth century. Nineteen Eighty-Four (Orwell, 1949) and Brave New World (Huxley, 1932) are often cited, although Miller's novel is much closer to Huxley than Orwell in its humor and satiric wit. A Canticle for Leibowitz also may owe a general kind of debt to a large group of stories depicting nuclear wars and their aftermaths (see Andre Norton's *Star Man's Son*, 1952, or Leigh Brackett's *The Long Tomorrow*, 1955, as fairly typical examples; Nevil Shute's *On The Beach* is sometimes cited as an antecedent, but it was published in 1957, after at least two of the stories later incorporated in Miller's novel had already appeared). A Canticle for Leibowitz itself influenced most such stories that appeared after its publication. Critics, observing Miller's concern with Catholicism and his frequent (gentle) satire of Church politics and Catholic foibles, have also suggested a possible influence by J. F. Powers, known for his satire of modern Catholic clerics in books like *Presence of Grace* (1956) and *Prince of Darkness and Other Stories* (1947). Another major science fiction novel dealing with Catholicism is James Blish's *A Case of Conscience* (1958), a work comparable to Miller's in quality and in the seriousness of its concerns, but probably written too late to exert any influence on Miller.



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