CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

i) The Crucible

ii) The Creation of the World and Other Business
'The Crucible', one of the finest plays of Arthur Miller, exhibits the possibility of transformation of a drama into high tragedy. Miller has chosen historically-religious themes of 'Salem-witch' trails to dramatize the pressures of puritan-ruling class alliance on the integrity of the individual. The social element in the play is not limited to the political parallel of McCarthyism with witch-hunting, but extends much beyond it to the question of the individual's integrity in the face of organized challenges by socio-political forces. Miller, while preparing an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's 'An Enemy of the People', which immediately preceded 'The Crucible', was struck by this theme:

"I believe this play could be alive for us because its central theme is, in my opinion, the central theme of our social life today. Simply, it is the question of whether the democratic guarantees protecting political minorities ought to be set aside in times of crisis. More personally it is the question of whether one's vision of truth ought to be a source of guilt at a time when the mass of men condemn it as a dangerous and devilish lie. It is an enduring theme... because there never was nor will there ever be, an organized society able to countenance calmly the individual who insists that he is right while the vast majority is absolutely wrong."

In 'The Crucible' Miller explores the nature of relationship between individual and society more closely than in any other play. "It is not a political parable, like Miller's adaptation of Ibsen's 'An Enemy of the People', but

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a tragedy about the 'Puritan purge of witch-craft'. The big moment is the trial scene, a chilling, blood-curdling, terrify ing depiction of the cause of bigotry and deceit." 1

McCarthyism only provided Miller a contemporary parallel with the actual historical events of the 17th century Salem-witch-hunting. The historical evidence is available in two massive volumes lying in the Essex County Archives at Salem, Massachusetts, where Miller actually went for the material. 2

The play, however, is neither about McCarthyism nor about Salem-witch-hunting. The crucial problem dramatized here is that of human integrity: whether or not an individual should surrender his reasoning and sense of judgement to social pressures. In the new kind of social drama like 'The Crucible', "it is not enough any more to know that one is at the mercy of social pressures; it is necessary to understand that such a sealed fate cannot be accepted." 3

The pity is that most people surrender their judgement and their conscience to such theatre and pressures. Those few, like John Proctor in 'The Crucible' or Stockmann in 'An Enemy of the People', who do not sacrifice their conscience merit tragic recognition. Miller's own statement in this context is pertinent:

"Above all, above all horrors, I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter but one of state administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for the opportunity of doing so." 4

The witch-hunting is only a personification of the forces of disintegration which the author has tried to unravel in the play. It represents the web of social evil which the protagonist is called upon to challenge and which ultimately leads to destruction. The central conflict in the play from which the tragedy ensues is between the individual and the forces of society.

The very opening scene introduces us to the nature of evil the hero is called upon to encounter. It sets the tone of the tragedy by projecting an atmosphere of evil. There is sickness and disease, mistrust and malice, pretence and calumny. Enough evidence is there is the imagery of this scene, which is dominated by treachery, deception and lies, to suggest that the world of 'The Crucible' is a world where "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." ¹ It is a world in which "the best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity. Bereft of conscience, people accuse one another unscrupulously in a bid to avenge old hatreds and enmities. In the commentary preceding the play, Miller, too, refers to it:

"Long held hatreds could now be openly expressed, vengeance taken, despite the Bible's charitable injunctions...... One could cry witch against one's neighbour and feel perfectly justified in the bargain. Old scores could be settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer and Lord; suspicions and the envy of the miserable toward the happy could and did burst out in the general revenge." ²

The last sentence contains the irony of situation dramatized in the play. Amidst such chaos, John Proctor

¹ Quoted from Shakespear's 'Macbeth'
tells Mr. Hale: "I've heard you to be a sensible man, Mr. Hale I hope you'll leave some of it in Salem."  

Our first acquaintance with Proctor convinces us that he is befitting tragic protagonist. The seeds of destruction that eventually sprout forth into the final catastrophe lie buried in the tained nobility of his character. He is a farmer in his mid thirties who has "a sharp and biting way with hypocrites." But he is also a sinner, "a sinner not only against the moral fashion of the time, but against his own vision of decent conduct." His sin is that in a weak moment of passion he yields to the lascivious mehinations of Abigail Williams who is actually an embodiment of evil in the play. But he feels deeply remorseful about it and endeavours to make amends for it; in the whole process he is destroyed. His private sin or evil is matched against the larger social evil in the world outside. The outside evil is represented, in part by Abigail Williams but mainly by the socio-religious forces embodied in Deputy Governor, Danforth, Judge Hawthorne and Reverend Parris.

It was, in fact, the triangular conflict among John Proctor, Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Proctor which, says Miller, made the play first conceivable to him:

"I doubt I shall ever have tempted the agony by actually writing a play on the subject had I not come upon a single fact. It was that Abigail Williams, the prime mover of the Salem hysteria... had a short time earlier been the house servant of the Proctors

2. Ibid., p.239.
3. Ibid.
and now was crying out Elizabeth Proctor as a witch..... her apparent desire to convict Elizabeth and save John, made the play conceivable to me." 1

But the play would not have been a social tragedy if it were to remain confined to this romantic conflict alone. It is enlarged and elevated from what would have been a domestic tragedy to a powerful and disturbing social tragedy. Miller skilfully interweaves the personal and social worlds by juxtaposing the realistic and the non-realistic modes. What appears in the beginning as Proctor's private sin actually sets the whole community in commotion. Like Oedipus's sin of incest which bred disasters for entire Thebes and pushed the people into the tremors of a terrible plague, Proctor's sin leads to a mass hysteria of false accusations; many innocent people are drawn into the vortex of social forces and crushed. In the words of a scholar: "By placing man into the vortex of social forces, Miller has brought tragedy." 2 Proctor's private act of sin leads to social turmoil. Truth and justice are completely subverted. Miller provides the finest blend of realism and expressionism in the form of socio-religious forces that threaten to destroy the individual. In fact, the ensuing conflict is no longer a clash between two individuals; rather it is a conflict between the individual and the authority. The family complex is gradually replaced by the "family-social complex."

Proctor, like Stockmann in 'An Enemy of the People', revolts against institutionalized authority. He says, "I like not the smell of this authority." 3 His struggle

brings to mind Antigone's terrible death for her devotion to a dead brother engages our hearts in Sophocles' play; similarly, in 'The Crucible' Proctor's heroic struggle against an unjust social order breeds human interest in the problem and lifts the action of the play to new heights of tragedy. An identical theme has been dramatized in both the plays; namely, that of organized Governmental machinery pitted against the freedom of the individual and ruthlessly trying to subvert the individual's right of dissent and protect. This thematic parallel between 'The Crucible' and Antigone helps in more than one way. It helps establish the universality of its theme. It also helps reinforce the argument regarding tragedies, along the line of social themes. It is through such archetypal mythical patterns that the theme of 'The Crucible' has been uplifted into a glorious tragic theme.

Irony, which is an important aspect of tragedy, is used as a strong weapon in 'The Crucible'. It is the most vitalizing force in the play which augments its tragic interest. In an interview with Henry Brandon, Miller once said, "A play is made by sensing how the forces in life simulate ignorance you set free the concealed irony, the deadkest joke."1 'The Crucible', it seems, is the best illustration of that statement. Irony is all pervasive in this play and contributes, in substantial measure, to its ultimate tragic impact. Irony, in tragedy, usually involves a tension between the statement and achievement. In 'The

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Crucible' it works both on the level of character and action. On the level of character its finest example is Proctor, who has the reputation of being the wisest and sanest of all the people in Salem, who fight in order to rescue from injustice, but who commits the sin of adultery with Abigail which virtually sparks off the whole tragedy. In this, again he resembles Oedipus who had the reputation of being the wisest and could solve the riddle of the sphinx and whom people always relied upon for help and guidance but who could not see that he actually bore the taint that plagued Thebes. Another character, besides Proctor, is Mr. Hale, who comes as a learned theologian to Salem in order to rescue its people but ultimately ends up saying:

"I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up. Beware, Goody Proctor—cleave to no faith when faith brings blood." 1

Similarly, the irony of situation, too, can be seen at work throughout the play. The knowledge of the spectators is juxtaposed with the ignorance of the characters. Irony springs to surface when lies are extolled and believed in and the truth is brutally set aside. Theocracy becomes a farce and the wisdom of the churchmen mere folly. A pack of pretentious girls led by a vile and lascivious strumpet are able to deceive and hood-wink the entire wisdom of the court. The irony explodes the pretension of Tom Faine's statement that "Ain America the law is King." 2 Law proves a hollow myth. It is not merely the rigid enforcement of law but its

wrong enforcement that results in a blantant miscarriage of justice. The law also fails to cope with the irrational forces at work in Salem and becomes an instrument of subversion. People are convicted and killed on such flimsy charges as are listed against Giles Corey’s wife. Giles says:

"That bloody mongrel Walcott charge her. Y’see, he buy a pig of my wife four or five years ago, and the pig died soon after. So he came dancing in for his money back. So my Martha, she says to him, "Walcott, if you haven't the wit to feed a pig properly, you will not live to own amany," she says. Now he goes to court and claims that from that day to this he cannot keep a pig alive for more than four weeks because my Martha be witch them with her books!" 1

Pigs and poppets serve as reasons good enough to accuse and arrest people. The stroke of irony beneath all this is unmistakable. Jed Harris, one of the directors of the play, once pointed to the irony of situation involved in it: In endover they hanged a dog. The dog said, "I'm not human." They said that is what you say and they hanged the dog. 2 The pungently ironic remark exposes the blind injustice at work in the world of 'The Crucible'. The irony contained in the words of Danforth is also unmistakable:

"This is a sharp time, now, a precise time.... we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up." 3

We as spectators know all the while of the gap that lies between Danforth’s belief and the reality. We know that the time is not really sharp and bright and that they still live in the dusky afternoon when evil continues to befuddle the world by mixing itself with good; we also know that foul is fair and fair is foul. Its best example is found when

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Elizabeth tells Proctor how Abby is being venerated as a saint. She remarks:

"The town is gonna wild, I think... Abigail brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel. And folks are brought before them, and if they scream and howl and fall to the floor... the person's clapped in the jail for bewitching them." 1

The suggested comparison between Abigail and Moses is a master-stoke of Miller's use of irony in this play. It reveals the extent to which evil is rampant in the world of 'The Crucible'. Even the best of judges are deceived and confounded. They disbelieve what they see, and believe what they donot see. Note, for instance, the ironic sting in what Parris says, "We are here Your Honor, Precisely to discover what no one has ever seen." 2

Irony is skilfully used in each successive scene of the play until the tragic tension mounts to its climax in Act III. The scene where Proctor brings Mary Warren to confess the truth is very crucial. She makes a deposition that she never say any spirits and that they all had been pretending. But now that she is speaking the truth no one in the court accepts it. Proctor feels exasperated and, in a last bid to save his wife from Abbey's false implications, he confesses lechery with Abby:

"Proctor (Trembling, his life collapsing about him): I have known her, Sir, I have known her." 3

Danforth can't believe what he says and asks Proctor: "You - You are a lecher?" Proctor replies: "A man will not cast away his good name. You surely know that." In a bid to expose Abbey's vengeance, Proctor says:

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2. Ibid., p.300.
3. Ibid., p.304.
"I have made a bell of my honor! I have rung the doom of my good name—you'll believe me Mr. Danforth! My wife is innocent except she knew a whore when she saw one."

The irony is again at work when a confirmation is sought from Elizabeth who, in Proctor's own words, "cannot lie."

Danforth asks Proctor to turn his back and question Elizabeth:

"Look at me! To your own knowledge has John Proctor ever committed the crime of lechery?... Answer my question! Is your husband a lecher?"

Without knowing that Proctor has already confessed, Elizabeth in good faith, tells a lie and faintly says, "No sir, "Like all the lies told by others before her, her lie is accepted as truth by Mr. Hale, who by now seems to serve as a veiled commentator on the action, says:

"Excellency, it is a natural lie to tell; I beg you stop now before another is condemned! I may shut my conscience to it no more—private vengeance is working through this testimony."

The voice of reason is thus submerged and lost in an orgy of lies. Mary Warren, who gives testimony in favour of Proctor a minute ago, finding the balance going against him, shifts back and points at Proctor, "You're the Devil's men!"

Proctor's faith in God is now completely shattered: "I say—I say—God is dead!" He laughs madly and says:

"A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face and your Danforth! For them that quail to bring men out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your black hearts that this be fraud—God damned our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together!"

2. Ibid., p.307.
3. Ibid., p.307.
4. Ibid., p.311.
5. Ibid., p.311.
6. Ibid., p.311.
Frenzied speech not only reveals the agony of John Proctor, it also reminds us of those dark, mysterious, inscrutable forces which play a vital part in the tragic drama of human life. On the level of society these forces are represented by Danforth himself and the ecclesiastical court. The irrationality in their mode of working is referred to by Proctor when he says: "You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore!"¹

The tragic intensity reaches its climax in the last act of the play. By no means becomes perfectly clear to Danforth that the first testimony is fraudulent. Parris also informs him about Abbey’s breaking into his strong box and decamping with thirty one pounds. But Danforth, even though he sees the gross injustice involved, persists on hanging more innocent people because reprieve or pardon would "cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now."² In other words, he must hang more innocent people in order to justify the unjust earlier hangings. The ignominy of a wrong decision and its wide-spread tragic repercussions are already revealed through Hale’s speech:

"Excellency, there are orphans wandering from house to house: abandoned cattle bellow on the high roads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere and no man knows when the harlot’s cry will end his life."³

Thus, once again, reminds us of Oedipus Rex. The potent signs of disharmony in the state match the horror and terror of the plague-stricken Thebes in Sophocles play. In such a

². Ibid., p.318.
³. Ibid., p.319.
chaotic and disorderly world, Hale realizes, it is a folly to be wise. He admonishes practical wisdom and asks Goody Proctor to prevail upon her husband for speaking a lie. He says to her:

"Life, woman, life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, many justify the taking of it. I beg you, woman, prevail upon your husband to confess. Let him give his lie. Quail not before God's judgement in this, for it may well be God damns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride." 1

Hale's pragmatic advice chimes well with Proctor's own sense of practical wisdom. He says, "I want my life." when asked, "you'll confess yourself?" he replies, "I will have my life"2. He knows he is no saint or martyr:

"I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a fraud. I am not that man. My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing is spoiled by giving them that lies that were not rotten long before." 3

He prefers to live by telling a lie that is not a lie rather than die for a truth that is not a truth. He knows too well that he is a sinner and, therefore, cannot mount the gibbet as a saint alongwith innocent people like Rebecca. He also knows the futility of dying for a sin which he never committed.

He tells Elizabeth:

"I'd have you see some honesty in it. Let them that never lie die now to keep their souls. It is a pretense for me, a vanity that will not blind God nor keep my children out of the wind."4

He knows his sacrifice would go waste, so he finally decides to sign the document of recantation. This scene immediately

2. Ibid., p.324.
3. Ibid., p.323.
4. Ibid., p.323.
brings to mind a parallel scene from Shaw's 'Saint Joan'. Thematical ly, there is a lot that is common between the two plays since both of them dramatizes the theme of individual's struggle with authority. The pragmatic heroine of Shaw's play also signs the deed of recantation thinking it would help save her life, but a minute later she tears it to pieces as she discovers that it is only a passport to life without liberty. John Proctor, in a similar manner, tears off the confession on discovering the true intention to make it public. First, it would soil his social image, which he cannot bear; secondly, his confession would be used to coerce others to confess or to damn those who do not. Therefore, he does not want his confession to be made public. He says:

"I have confessed myself. Is there no good penitence but it be public? God does not need my name nailed upon the Church! God sees my name: God knows how black my sins are! It is enough!"

As he sees through the designs of his judges, he warns them:

You will not use me: I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me. 'It is no part of salvation that you should use me!"

He refuses to compromise in order to maintain his rightful image in society. He prefers dying on the ropo to living without his social image. This gives him the noble status of a tragic hero. He finally tells his judges:

You have made your magic now, for now I do think I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with, but white enough to keep it from such dogs.

The ultimate tragic irony is that Proctor is not convicted for the sin he actually commits and confesses openly in the court (i.e. adultery); he is executed for a sin he never

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2. Ibid., p.328.
commits, namely, witchcraft.

In its last analysis, 'The Crucible' is a tragedy on the same pattern as Sophocles' 'Antigone' and Shaw's 'Saint Joan'. The dilemma facing Proctor is the same as faced by Joan, that is, should he or should he not save himself by confessing a liaison with evil? As in the case of Joan, the appeal of his character issues from a wonderful combination of courage and defencelessness. The trial scenes in both the plays are very gripping and disturbing. In the trial scene in Saint Joan "a young girl, alone, is seen and heard fighting for her life against the mightiest powers in the world." The same is true of the trial scene in 'The Crucible', where a young man, dominated by reason and self-respect, is seen fighting with the irrational forces of society. In each case, the protagonist prefers death to a life without honour. Proctor's death sets a seal on his nobility and heroism. The title of the play also finds its true justification in the end. The word "crucible" suggests a vessel which is used for heating and refining metals. Symbolically, it suggests a severe test for purification. For Proctor, the trial becomes a test by fire; his final execution suggest the purification of his spirit and its ultimate triumph. The title actually enshrines this victory.

'The Crucible' might have been timed to the moment and written when McCarthyism was at its peak, but Miller's dramatic imagination saw in the current situation

the scope of a great tragedy. The skill with which he developed the theme is sufficiently attested by the success of this play over several years. The contemporary parallel has no relevance to an appreciation of the play as tragedy. It has some relevance to the social value of the play, since the massive curbs on individual freedom and the whole game of hunting for the non-conformists epitomize the larger evil in the society. Miller dramatizes the same problem again in 'After the Fall' (1964). The basic difference is that while in 'After the Fall' the socio-political dilemma is expressed through the biblical imagery of the fall; it is dramatized through a historical allegorization of the 17th Century Salem Witch-hunting. The contemporaneity of its theme helps extend the historical background to over two and a half centuries and makes us aware of a tragic process underlying its political manifestations. It gives universality to the theme of the play and deepens its tragic impact.

The historical allegorization also helps sustain the tragic effect in yet another way by making the characters and themes assume archetypal and symbolic dimension. The archetypal patterns help peel away the trappings of the moment, and, in Miller's own words, "the present is caught and made historic." We are able to detect the eternal behind the temporal. The play's emphasis shifts from its original mankind, questions relating to individual freedom, justice,

integrity, conscience, responsibility to others, etc. It acquires the dignity and tragic stature of the Greek social tragedy and shows that given a serious concern with man's fate, a social drama, howsoever time-bound, can achieve the dignity and grandeur of a tragedy.
"THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND OTHER BUSINESS"

'The Creation of the World and other Business', which had a brief and unprofitable run in New York in 1972, is both an interesting, complex and perplexing play. Its unusual form and subject matter has in fact, generated a great deal of perplexity and complexity in understanding of the play. Neill Carson explains the surprise and bewilderment of audience in the following words:

"Having come to think of Miller as a realist audiences were ill-prepared for the blend of whimsy and theology in this play reminiscent of medieval drama...." 1

The play has certainly not been able to arouse admiration for its author and it earned a lot of unfavourable criticism from the critics. It has been called an "amusing minor play" 2 and "a sad and embarrassing event" 3 indicating a decline of Miller's powers or a temporary lapse at least. Arthur Miller, Stanley Kauffmann 4 opines, could not deal with the theme skillfully, while O'Neill was able to write his best play "Long Day's Journey Into Night", when he was confronted with the same theme. Kevin Sanders finds it "as a dramatic Cosmic Comedy", and "more like a Flintstone's version of the Book of Genesis." 5 Critics opine that Miller fails in this play because he "loses the control of the philosophical argument between God and Lucifer" 6 and in trying to unravel an eternal

mystery, the author becomes "merely perplexed and perplexing,"¹ and reduced the play to "a pathetic triviality."² Inspite of its apparently novel form, however, Creation is closely related to Miller's other work. In this play the dramatist continues his exploration of the themes of free will, violence and responsibility with which he has been concerned since 'After the Fall' and 'Incident at Vichy'. It is, he says, "the clearest expression of his religious beliefs that he's come to."³

The play probes man's need for morality and the question of whether there is anything which makes our concepts of right and wrong inevitable. It centres on the conflict between God and Lucifer, but Miller's portrayal of these two figures is startlingly original and often puzzling. Lucifer at first seems to represent science or knowledge opposed to God's intuition and faith. Lucifer maintains that 'a thinning out of innocence' (by which he seems to mean ignorance) will lead to knowledge of the inner workings of nature and to increase wonder and praise. Later he argues that since Eve's pregnancy could not have been accomplished without his participation, he deserves some of the credit. He offers to take what he considers to be his rightful place at God's side as a 'corrective' to keep the world from impotent virtue. The enthroning of evil as a reality equal to goodness would, he maintains, eliminate guilt among men by removing the self-hatred which is its cause. If God could be seen to love even the Devil.

then no one need fear his wrath. The wars and hatreds fuelled by a sense of absolute righteousness would come to an end making possible a second paradise on earth.

Against Lucifer’s non-evaluative approach to morality, God opposes his own very subjective response. His distinction between good and evil is not a logical, but an emotional one. God cannot share his position with Lucifer because he does not love him. What Miller seems to be suggesting is that while love is perhaps the most God-like of human qualities, it is nevertheless limited, irrational and even dangerous.

A second important theme in the play is the nature and function of creativity. Like Shaw, Miller equates creativity in certain ways with the primal urge of life itself. Here too God and Lucifer are opposed — God the instinctive creator, Lucifer the rational critic. But the function of creativity is even more interestingly contrasted in the characters of Adam and Eve. Once outside Eden, Adam and Eve begin to discover the profound differences between their two natures. The most startling discovery is that, contrary to Adam’s expectations, God has chosen to multiply mankind through Eve. While this might seem on the surface to be a mark of his favour, it is in reality the most glaring illustration of the irrationality of the world. For in the universe outside of Eden. It is ‘the hungriest bird who sings best,’ the most violent act which appears most majestical. In such an inverted order, child birth is at once the most privileged, the most creative, the most divine of acts, as well as the most cruelly painful. No unreasonably, therefore, Eve feels that God’s curse is entirely
on her, and she finds herself instinctively drawn more to the logical counsel of Lucifer than to the inscrutable will of God. At the moment of delivery, however, she is caught up in a feeling of oneness with God. Taking his hand she exclaims:

"I am the river abounding in fish,  
I am the summer sun arousing the bee,  
As the rising moon is held in her place  
By Thine everlasting mind, so am I held  
in Thine esteem."

In a feeling of exultation God sweeps Eve away in a dance which is the purest and most joyous moment of communion between the human and the divine in the play.

Compared to Eve, Adam seems to be hopelessly bumbling and ineffectual. He is shown as a traditionalist who clings to what he accepts as the rules of existence, and is at a loss without constant direction from a superior. He is far less practical than Eve, feels the loss of God's companionship more keenly, and dreams continually of Paradise. If Adam is more 'otherworldly' that Eve, however, he does not seem to be possessed of those creative powers sometimes associated with otherworldly men.

Almost the only thing Adam and Eve have in common is their capacity for violence. Both parents at different times wish their unborn child dead although neither actually attempts to kill it. When Cain is born, he is declared by God to be innocent but imperilled by the evil in the world. Pointing to Cain, God tells Eve:

Here is thine innocence returned to thee which thou so lightly cast away in Eden. Now protect him from the worm of thine own evil.

2. Ibid., p.68.
The development of Cain into a murderer proceeds in a series of stages that will be familiar to readers of Miller's plays. Cain's hatred on his brother is based on his conviction that he has been displaced. He senses (correctly) that Abel is his parent's favourite, and wonders why he has been given the back-breaking labour of tilling the earth while his brother need only tend the sheep. Cain's uncertainty about himself is increased when he becomes disillusioned with his parents. He first discovers that they were expelled from the garden, then he is shocked to learn of his parent's (and especially his mother's) sexuality.

"But you never said you were actually... animals... God could never have wanted my mother going around without any clothes on!" 1

The effect of this revelation on Cain is a heavy sense of guilt and a need to find the law that will define his nature.

"We've been living as though we were innocent. We've been living as though we were blessed:... if we might show us his face and tell us how we are supposed to live." 2

Cain's search for meaning leads him first of all to wish for a return to innocence, and in the pursuit of that end to invent an elaborate ritual of sacrifice. The divine figure who first appears to Cain's

2. Ibid., p.73.
altar, however, is not God but Lucifer who proclaims a doctrine which seems to offer the innocence desired

A second time I come with thine awakening, Mankind!
Nobody's guilty any more
And for your progeny now and forever
I declare one massive, eternal, continuous parole:
From here on out there is no sin or innocence.
But only Man. 1

The religion of total freedom which Lucifer proclaims, although it seems at first to be a celebration of love, very quickly degenerates into an orgy of lust. When God appears, Lucifer proposes that mankind can be better served by a religion which offers two deities - one the God of what-men-are, and a second, the God of what-they-hope. Once again God declines to share his throne.

When God responds to the offerings on the altar, he does so in a completely subjective manner (choosing Abel's sacrifice because he likes lamb better than onions). Cain feels slighted and humiliated by the rejection of his offering, however, and in a fit of jealous rage kills Abel. When later he questions the 'justice' of God's choice, God replies in some surprise, 'When have I ever spoken that word?' He explains that his actions were a kind of test out of which he had hoped Cain would have emerged stronger; How will (mankind) be shepherded as I have shepherded thee? Only if the eye of God opens in the heart of every man; only if each himself will choose the way of life, not death. For

otherwise you go as beasts, locked up in the darkness of their nature.

Confronted by the murder of Abel, none of the survivors can admit a share in the crime. Eve blames God, Adam blames no one, and Cain knows no blame at all. In a fit of exasperation God offers to turn control of the world over to Lucifer. But Adam and Eve realise that a world in which there is no concept of guilt or responsibility is a world without love. The play ends with the couple reconciled with God, Lucifer still free to seduce mankind, and Cain condemned to wander the earth as the first alienated man, a fixed smile on his lips and anguish in his heart. God disappears into the stars leaving Eve as mystified as before. In the end it is Adam who makes the first halting step towards a solution. He realises that the only thing which separates man from the animals is his sense of responsibility, and that the prerequisites to understanding are love, forgiveness and mercy.

The Creation of the World is Miller's most explicit treatment of certain themes which are central to his work. What is significant about the play is that the conflicting forces (the way of life and the way of death) are here shown as complementary. Man's need for justice is no less compelling than his need for love, and yet, Miller seems to be saying, they are incompatible. Similarly, reason, curiosity and pleasure seem at times
to be as admirable and as necessary as instinct, obedience and self-control at others. In the end, the contradictions in the world remain unresolved.

The story of Adam and Eve had been in Miller's mind when he wrote 'The Price' and (obviously) 'After the Fall'. It suggested to him another way of contrasting the standpoints in his ongoing argument. On one hand, man seems dedicated to self-aggrandizement. As the knowing Solomon says, "it's already in the Bible, the rat race.... The minute she (Eve) laid her hand on the apple, that's it..... There's always a rat race, you can't say out of it." On the other hand, as the hopeful Quentin speculates, knowing this to be true may not preclude "forgiveness." "Courage" and "love" may still be "feasible":

Is the knowing all? To know, and even happily that we meet unblessed; not in some garden of wax fruit and painted trees, that lie of Eden, but after, after the Fall, after many, many deaths.

In The Creation of the World these standpoints are discussed at length by God and Lucifer. God builds his relationship with the first humans on mutual trust, then tests that bond by ordering them to stay away from the Tree of Knowledge, and later by (according to Lucifer) "setting them up for a murder." Even after Adam and Cain fail these tests, love continues to be God's chief gift and man's central choice. Humanity will be properly guided.
only if the eye of God opens in the heart of everyman; only if each himself will choose the way of life, not death.... I made them (humans) not of dust alone, but dust and love; and by dust alone they will not, cannot long be governed.

 Appropriately, Adam ends the play with a plea to Eve and "to the world" for "mercy."

 Lucifer, who presents his case even more loquaciously than God, advocates freedom from such responsibility. He proposes that God do away with priority between good and evil in order to prevent strife between the two allegiances. Dissent among rival factions in society or within the individual would cease: "so people would never come to hate themselves, and there's the end of guilt. Another Eden, and everybody innocent again."

 God calls this "a cosmic comedy where good and evil are the same." But Lucifer intends to free men from the obligation to make moral distinctions because he disbelieves in their capacity to live honorably ("what is Man beyond his appetite?"). Indeed, after the murder of Abel an "outraged" God concurs: "you are all worthless! This is a chaos you want, and him (Lucifer) you shall have - the God who judges nothing, the God of infinite permission. .... I see now that your hearts' desire is anarchy."

 Lucifer particularly abhors guilty consciences. He tries to avert the fire murder to forestall the consequent "remorse" and "fear of God" that will keep men dependent on divine forgiveness, perpetually suspended
between "high promise and deadly terror." So he demands that Cain "face him (Abel) with indifference":

Kill love, Cain, kill whatever in you cares; Murder now is but another sort of praise to God! Don't praise Him with a death! ... If man will not kill man, God is unnecessary!

Without love there would be no jealousy, hatred, and murder when love is rejected no "fear of being unacceptable," no guilty subservience, no cyclic alternation between the violation and the renewal of trust. "There is no consolation, women!" Lucifer declares to Eve after Abel's death; "unless you want the lie of God, the false tears of a killer repenting!" And to Cain: "you're the one free, guiltless man. Tell God you have no need for Him! Speak out your freedom and save the world!"

Miller's nontraditional, amoral Devil wants to prevent crime, not cause it ("I've got to keep them out of trouble, not get them into it").

His concern for mankind is motivated by concern for his own welfare, both being rooted in his cardinal principle, self-interest. "And will I ever be more than a ridiculous angel until I murder His (hopes)?" On Cain's "shoulders may I climb the throne." God understands this motive. Regarding Lucifer's campaign to acquaint Adam and Eve with forbidden knowledge, He comments "that's all you're after, to grind away their respect for Me.... Nothing is real to you. Except your appetite for distinction and power..... It's only his power this Angel loves!" For Lucifer, however, self-interest is

universal: he thinks God has tempted Adam with the apple so that enlightened humans will "magnify Your glory to the last degree." He also accuses God of "setting up" Abel's death to perpetuate His authority. "God wants a murder from you," he informs Cain,

So he (sic) may stand above your crime, the blameless God, The only assurance of Mankind, and his (sic) power is safe. God wants power, not morals. 1

Each antagonist sees the will to power animating the other, and they agree that it animates man too. God makes sexual innocence the sign of obedience, self-control, respect, and love, but the emergence of lust signals the birth of self-will. "You had to have power; and power is in you now," He rebukes Adam, "but not Eden any more."

Cain, who "killed for pride and power and in the name of love," also sacrifices rapport with God. God conceives self-will as man's fall, Lucifer conceives it as man's hope. 2

The Creation of the World simplifies the continuing dialogue in Miller's writing, but it is a difficult dialogue to conduct. As Miller sees them, one value or motive inevitably negates the other: self-interest ends in guilt when a need to care for others speaks out, and dedication to others ends in betrayal when a need to gratify the self speaks out. As polarized constructs, neither possesses absolute validity. If egoism appears mean and directionless, the alternative

to Lucifer's specious cynicism appears to be equally unworkable since man will not love his God or his brother for long. Translated into particular commitments (as opposed to philosophical debates), love turns out to be dangerous and unstable. Neither tendency can triumph, nor can the two coexist, a paradox that has challenged and frustrated Arthur Miller throughout his career.¹

Although 'The Creation of the world' is based on the Biblical account of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, it too is predicated on the legal violation that occurred some time ago in the Garden of Eden, and which can be seen metaphorically or literally as a legally precedent of considerable significance to present day society.²

Miller's further explorations of the present in terms of past in 'Incident at Vichy', 'The Price', and 'The Creation of the World' have demonstrated once again that he views the theater and his contribution to it as "a serious business, one that makes or should make man more human, which is to say less alone." Martin has aptly remarked:

"The creation of the world is also about aloneness, the kind that results from moments nearly existential when man stands on the brink between murder and forgiveness, innocence and guilt." ³

In 'The Price', Miller returned to his family theme to point out the psychological price they pay for their inability to resolve misunderstandings from the past.

¹ Moss, Leonard. 'Arthur Miller', p.90.
³ Ibid.
Two brothers who have been separated for sixteen years come together briefly, but leave singly and alone by the end of the play. The family configuration in the play is supplied by the Genesis, which consists of a father (Adam), his wife (Eve), two dissimilar sons (Cain and Abel) and the grandest Kibitzer of all (Lucifer).¹

The "respective psychologies and moral values" of Walter and Victor Franz "conflict at the heart of the social dilemma" in a recurring father son situations. The same can be said of the irreconcilable agreement between God and Lucifer in The Creation of the World and Other Business."²

The philosophical expositions of Miller about human potentials lacks logical clarity, especially in regard to Lucifer's stand on love and guilt. According to Lucifer, people would not "come to hate themselves if guilt were nonexistent: they would be as unoppressed by conscience as animals. Each individual would live in Satanic ignorance, worshiping only himself, who no capacity to value virtue (the worship of all creation). Since guilt comes from knowing one has chosen evil even though good is preferable, Lucifer wishes to do away with distinctions between the two ("there is no sin or innocence"). When he seduces Eve by introducing her to the principle of egoism, he hopes to weaken her dependence on God and to enlist her in his own service. But in encouraging her to the principle of egoism, he hopes to weaken her dependence on God and to enlist her in his own service. But in enduring her disobedience he ironically enables her and Adam

2. Ibid.
to learn how to distinguish between good and evil, and so attain a new kind of understanding that makes moral choice possible.

Miller, of course, may have intended to show Lucifer's position to be false or self-contradictory. If, for further illustration of this point, Lucifer desires a world in which "there is no sin or innocence," how could be remain "perfectly evil"? If self-love were elevated to an absolute status, how could it and its contrary be "equally real"? If, like Walter and Victor, Lucifer and God represent incompatible values (one a "God of what-they are," the other "in charge of improvement"), then God (like Victor) correctly rejects the attempt at reconciliation. But where does this leave Cain? Neither God nor Lucifer wants him to commit murder; the archetypal outcast he identifies with neither party. Yet he kills in the name of both—to satisfy his ego, and out of love for God! Cain's involvement with these opposing principles requires an explanation more precise than that offered by God in the remark, "Cain killed for pride and power and in the name of love. "Because God and Lucifer polarize their attitudes, their commentary works against clarifying the complexities suggested by Cain's "dilemma." Lucifer's notion that "if man will not kill man, God is unnecessary might be true. One cannot judge its truth, however, without further information about the distress mechanisms that interrupt love and motive murder.