THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

OF T. S. ELIOT

APPROVED:

Arthur M. Sampley
Major Professor

Harry F. Sneggs
Minor Professor

E. S. Clifton
Director of the Department of English

Robert B Toulouse
Dean of the Graduate School

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF T. S. ELIOT

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Howard W. Laing, B. A., Th. M.
Denton, Texas
August, 1967

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

T. S. Eliot has been acknowledged as "a poet of spiritual experience."[1] In his early poetry, however, he does not evidence a belief "in an absolute spiritual reality."[2] One of the vital studies in the Eliot corpus, therefore, is to observe, and hence be aware of, his change from scepticism to Christian belief. This thesis will concern itself with the development of the religious thought of Eliot as it is expressed in his poetry and plays.

Although the term "religious" could refer to many religions, religion for Eliot came to mean Christianity.[3] This thesis will limit itself primarily to the development of his religious thought as it relates to Christianity. Other religious influences will be introduced if they have a modifying or possible modifying effect upon his grasp of Christianity as it is commonly understood. This will be a vital point to

---

[1]Carol H. Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice from Sweeney Agonistes to the Elder Statesman (Princeton, 1963), p. 34.

[2]Kristian Smidt, Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot (London, 1961), p. 122.

[3]T. S. Eliot, "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," Selected Essays of T. S. Eliot (New York, 1950), p. 427.

watch because it has been suggested that in Four Quartets especially, Eliot may have gone beyond Christianity.[4]

A number of factors would have simplified an attempt to follow the development of his religious ideas. The task would have been simplified if Eliot had purposely left behind more autobiographical detail. C. S. Lewis, for example, a contemporary professor and poet, wrote an autobiography of his early years up to the time of his conversion in a volume entitled Surprised by Joy. Eliot, on the other hand, made little effort to leave autobiographical information behind and even stated in his will that there was to be no official biography.[5] His poetry and prose and information from friends who knew him must be, therefore, the primary sources for gleaning material for this undertaking.

In addition to more autobiographical detail, less troublesome times would have diminished the measure of difficulty in discovering his religious development. His efforts to capture the complex times in which he lived, as well as his own experiences in those times, negate the possibility of an easily understood poetry, no matter how lucidly it is set forth. In

---

[4]Neville Braybrooke, T. S. Eliot: A Critical Essay (Grand Rapids, 1967), p. 46.

[5]Ibid., p. 42. "Lewis and T. S. Eliot met one another for the first time in 1961 at Lambeth Palace where they worked together on the Archbishops of Canterbury and York's Commission for the Revision of the Psalter." (C. S. Lewis, Christian Reflections, edited and arranged by Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, 1967), p. xiii)

explaining the metaphysical poets, Eliot also revealed his own aims:

> It is not a permanent necessity that poets should be interested in philosophy, or in any other subject. We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.[6]

Another factor that would have made this study not as demanding would have been for the poet not to have been such a pure poet. He always aspired, however, for poetry to be poetry and not something else. If he had been less of a poet and more of a propagandist, his worth as a poet would have been greatly lessened. This is a case where one is pleased that the task of discovering his thought is difficult, and it is difficult since his religious ideas can only be discovered indirectly, especially in his early poetry. His conviction of what poetry should be requires this. He does not think that poetry should set forth a belief; poetry should convey what it feels like to hold a particular belief.[7] What Eliot himself feels is expressed by images and symbols, so that these images and symbols must be understood in each context in order to extract the idea and observe the progression of thought.

---

[6]Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays, p. 248.

[7]T. S. Eliot, "The Social Function of Poetry," On Poetry and Poets (New York, 1964), p. 9.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of autobiographical detail, despite the variety and complexity of the civilization he had to write about, and despite the nature of his poetic expression, his voice is present, as his essay "The Three Voices of Poetry" makes clear:

> The first voice is the voice of the poet talking to himself--or to nobody. The second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small. The third is the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse; when he is saying, not what he would say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character.[8]

The poet speaking to himself--"what he would say in his own person"--is the authentic voice of the poet and can usually be discerned, even behind the mask of a Prufrock, a Gerontion, or a Tiresias. All three voices, however, speaking in and through his poetry and plays, should of themselves give sufficient light on his religious development.

The plan of this thesis is to proceed through his poetry and plays chronologically. Four chapters will cover the four periods of his life: Chapter I (1888-1920), Chapter II (1921-1927), Chapter III (1927-1935), and Chapter IV (1935-1965). A brief biographical sketch of the immediate period to be covered will be given first, followed by the consideration of his poetry or plays relevant to the subject.

The biographical sketch will help to give perspective to the background of the poetry. At times biographical information

---

[8]Eliot, "The Three Voices of Poetry," On Poetry and Poets, p. 96.

can shed much light on the meaning of a poem. An attempt, however, to reconstruct the genesis of a poem or play is not the primary task of this paper; besides, such an endeavor of discovering sources the author used, when and where he wrote, with what purposes, and under what influences is at best only suggestive and may be completely inaccurate. C. S. Lewis made the following pertinent observation concerning the efforts of scholars to reconstruct the origins of his own works:

> My impression is that in the whole of my experience not one of these guesses has on any one point been right; that the method shows a record of 100 per cent failure. You would expect that by mere chance they would hit as often as they miss. But it is my impression that they do no such thing.[9]

A chronological approach to the development of the religious thought of Eliot has not been done before or at least has not been made known and available; hence, this fact plus the measure of difficulty of the task makes the undertaking necessary and important.

---

[9]C. S. Lewis, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," Christian Reflections (Grand Rapids, 1967), pp. 159-160.

CHAPTER II

THE NONRELIGIOUS THOUGHT

This opening chapter will trace the development of the poet's religious thought during the first thirty-two years of his life, from his birth in St. Louis on September 26, 1888, to his publication of Poems in London in 1920. Since it covers such a lengthy period, it must of necessity be highly selective, covering only those aspects of Eliot's background, influences, and writings that are relevant to the subject.

Eliot lived the first seventeen years of his life at 2635 Locust Street, St. Louis. He was the youngest of a family of seven, although the sixth, a daughter, died before he was born. The Eliot family was a distinguished and a religious one. Dr. William Greenleaf Eliot, Eliot's grandfather, was a Unitarian minister and the Chancellor of Washington University; Dr. Eliot's eldest son, Thomas Lamb Eliot, was a Unitarian pastor in Oregon; Henry Ware Eliot, another son and Eliot's father, was a successful businessman; Edward Cranch Eliot, Henry Ware Eliot's brother, was a lawyer; Charlotte C. Eliot, Eliot's mother, was a fairly good poet; and Charles William Eliot, a third cousin once removed of Eliot's grandfather, was a president of Harvard. Both the Eliot family and Eliot's maternal ancestors, the Stearns family, came from Massachusetts. When

the poet's father died in 1919, Mrs. Eliot moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The form of religion that Eliot received in his early years was Unitarianism, an extreme form of Protestant thought, even an extreme form of liberalism. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who has sometimes been called the father of modern liberal theology, and William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) were held in high esteem among the Unitarians. Dillenberger and Welch give the following summary of Unitarianism:

> Unitarianism first appeared as a protest against objectionable features of the early nineteenth-century orthodoxies, particularly as found in the Calvinistic churches. One central item of dispute was, of course, the doctrine of the Trinity, which the Unitarians thought incompatible with the unity of God. . . . But the Unitarians were equally concerned to protest against such doctrines as original sin, total depravity, infant damnation, the wrath of God, predestination, and traditional notions of the atonement. Such doctrines, they felt, made God immoral, violating conscience and every rational standard of morality, and were contrary to New Testament teaching. Christian doctrine ought instead to emphasize the moral perfection, the goodness and mercy of God, the work of Christ in leading men to a righteous life, the goodness of man, and the demand for true holiness of Christian living.[1]

Eliot later realized that Unitarianism, which was so strongly emphasized by his grandfather and mother, actually excluded itself from Christianity. Smidt quotes the following comment made by Eliot in the Criterion, July 1931:

> I was brought up outside the Christian Fold, in Unitarianism; and in the form of Unitarianism in which I was instructed, things were either black or white.

---

[1]John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development (New York, 1954), pp. 224-225.

> The Son and the Holy Ghost were not believed in, certainly; but they were entitled to respect as entities in which many other people believed.[2]

Eliot's background was also influenced by a slight admixture of Catholicism. He told Smidt that an engraving of Murillo's Immaculate Conception had hung in his parents' home and had made an enduring impression on his mind, an impression that can be traced in Ash-Wednesday particularly.[3] In addition, possibly the Irish nursemaid Annie Dunne, a friend of young Eliot, was one of the first to interest him in Catholicism. It should be stressed, however, that this is a mere possible interest, not a belief. In the fourth "Prelude," written between 1911-1914 after his return from Paris, he seems to allude to Jesus and the Virgin Mary:

> I am moved by fancies that are curled
> Around these images, and cling:
> The notion of some infinitely gentle
> Infinitely suffering thing.[4]

But in the following three final lines of the poem he expresses a cynical revulsion to the "infinitely gentle / Infinitely suffering thing":

> Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
> The worlds revolve like ancient women
> Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

The early schooling of Eliot was in a Mrs. Lockwood's private school rather than in the public schools. He next

---

[2]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 3. [3]Ibid.

[4]T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950 (New York, 1952), p. 13. All other references to the poetry and plays of Eliot will be from this volume unless otherwise stated.

attended Smith Academy, a preparatory department of Washington University. In his last year there, he wrote his first published poems, which appeared in the Smith Academy Record in 1905. Smidt wrote that he referred to them later as "verses in the manner of Don Juan, tinged with that disillusion and cynicism only possible at the age of sixteen."[5] He entered Harvard in 1906, taking his A.B. degree in 1909, his M.A. in 1910, and after a year at the Sorbonne, working toward his Ph.D. from 1911 to 1914.

In his undergraduate study at Harvard he continued his studies in Greek, Latin, and French, took two years of German, and studied Italian, especially in connection with the requirement to read Dante's Divine Comedy in the original. It is important to mention his language study because this study will take him into literature that will prove influential upon his life. He had been taught Greek and Latin previously at Smith Academy. Howarth recapitulates in the following the poet's program in the classical courses:

> Out of the eighteen courses which made up his undergraduate program, seven were classical. He took Greek literature in his first year; Greek literature, Greek prose composition, the history of ancient art, and the history of ancient philosophy in his second; and two Latin literature courses, a general view of the poetry, and the Roman novel, in his third.[6]

Concerning Italian, Howarth has mentioned, as other critics

---

[5]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 7.

[6]Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot (Boston, 1964), p. 66.

have pointed out, that the poet's interest in Dante can be related to the Harvard tradition.[7] Beginning with Ticknor in 1819 and following with Longfellow, Lowell, and Charles Eliot Norton, these professors took their students into European literature, and at the center of the teaching was Dante. It was at Harvard that Eliot began to puzzle out the Italian of the Divine Comedy. His first published essay on Dante appeared in The Sacred Wood in 1920, the second was issued by Faber on September 27th, 1929, and a third was delivered in a talk at the Italian Institute, London, on July 4th, 1950. In the 1950 essay, "What Dante Means to Me," he said, ". . . I still, after forty years, regard this poetry as the most persistent and deepest influence upon my own verse. . . ."[8]

Although the influences upon Eliot were many at Harvard, at least some of the other ones relevant to our subject should be introduced at this time, especially a transforming book and three professors: Irving Babbitt, George Santayana, and Josiah Royce. Concerning the book, Howarth mentions the discovery: "In December 1908, Eliot had made a transforming discovery, by picking up, in the Library of the Harvard Union, Arthur Symons' book on The Symbolist Movement in Literature."[9] Through this book Eliot was introduced to Laforgue and other

---

[7] Ibid., p. 72.

[8] T. S. Eliot, "What Dante Means to Me," To Criticize the Critic (New York, 1965), p. 125.

[9] Howarth, Figures Behind T. S. Eliot, p. 103.

writers such as Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Corbiere. It was Laforgue who taught Eliot the colloquial style of writing. Laforgue did not influence the religious thought of Eliot but his manner of writing. The mannerisms of Laforgue, however, were abandoned before he wrote "Gerontion."[10] A more enduring influence upon Eliot was Irving Babbitt, Professor of French Literature. Smidt stated that Professor Babbitt was "far and away the most important influence in his Harvard days. . . ."[11] He was an anti-romanticist and believed in classicism and tradition; he was also a humanist, and one wonders how strongly this humanism influenced the poet in these formative years. Smidt also made some penetrating comments concerning Eliot and his reaction to Babbitt's humanism:

> The main subject on which the disciple was later to differ from the master was that of humanism. Babbitt, for all his abhorrence of eccentric individualism or sloppy enthusiasms, was an idealistic believer in human nature, its power to keep itself under an "inner check" and the possibility of creating a sound society by rational discipline. Eliot may have absorbed these views at first, but he later found them incompatible with Christian orthodoxy. He underwent a similar revulsion with regard to Babbitt's interest in primitive Buddhism.[12]

Eliot studied philosophy under Professor Santayana on both an undergraduate and graduate level. Santayana was sceptical and "regarded systems of philosophy as inventions for evading the absurdity of the world, an absurdity which he accepted 'compulsorily and satirically,'" and he "early rejected the dogmas

---

[10]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning (Chicago, 1961), p. 29.

[11]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 12. [12]Ibid., p. 13.

of his Church."[13] Another Harvard Professor of Philosophy was Josiah Royce, under whom Eliot was led to take an interest in F. H. Bradley. "In the field of philosophy," wrote Smidt, "Bradley was incomparably the most important influence on Eliot."[14] Eliot absorbed Ethical Studies (1876), The Principles of Logic (1883) and Appearance and Reality (1893), and wrote his dissertation on Bradley and Meinong. Smidt has given an excellent summary of Bradley's religious beliefs:

> In religion Bradley is a complete sceptic. "Like morality," he says, "religion is not ultimate. It is a mere appearance, and is therefore inconsistent with itself." "Religion," he goes on, "naturally implies a relation between Man and God. Now a relation always . . . is self-contradictory." Man, on the one hand, is a finite subject, yet, on the other hand, apart from God, he is merely an abstraction. God again is a finite object. But sundered from relations God is emptiness.[15]

Eliot's own beliefs are disclosed in his dissertation, Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley. A brief analysis of the essence of the thought of the dissertation should be given at this time in order to show what Eliot will be thinking about and working on between approximately 1911 and April of 1916, when it was completed. His interpretation of immediate experience necessitates the idea that man is inescapably excluded from absolute experience. "Everything, from one point of view, is subjective; and everything, from another point of view, is objective; and there is no absolute point of view from which a decision may be

---

[13]Howarth, Figures Behind T. S. Eliot, pp. 84-85.

[14]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 13. [15]Ibid., p. 160.

pronounced," wrote Eliot.[16] Since there is no absolute point of view, then all positions are only relatively true according to the individual experience of each person or finite center. Eliot says, therefore, ". . . what is subjective is the whole world--the whole world as it is for me--which, because it is (for me) the whole world, cannot be contrasted with anything else objective."[17] In the notes to The Waste Land, Eliot quotes Bradley's Appearance and Reality concerning the soundness of subjectivism:

> My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it. . . . In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.[18]

Eliot goes on to say, "And outside of the objectivity of objects appearing to finite centres, there is no objectivity at all."[19] ". . . so far as experiences go," he continues, "we may be said in a sense to live each in a different world."[20] ". . . reality exists only through its appearances" and there is a ". . . circle described about each point of view."[21]

---

[16]Eliot, Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley (London, 1964), pp. 21, 22.

[17]Ibid., p. 24.

[18]Eliot, "Notes on 'The Waste Land,'" The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 50.

[19]Eliot, Knowledge and Experience, p. 141.

[20]Ibid., p. 149. [21]Ibid., pp. 40, 141.

Eliot's philosophy is certainly one of the explanations for the fragmentation, disorder, and loneliness of the isolated egos of his early poetry. However firmly he may have held Unitarianism, his only faith now is a sceptical subjectivism, a philosophy which is far removed from the objective and absolute reality of Christianity that he will ultimately accept.

Before Eliot took up his work toward the Ph.D. at Harvard, he spent the year of 1910-1911 in France and in Paris, where he took private French lessons from Alain-Fournier, and courses at the Sorbonne. When he attended Bergson's lectures at the Sorbonne, he underwent, as Eliot called it in A Sermon (1948), "a temporary conversion to Bergsonism."[22] While in Paris, he was also attracted to the French poets, especially Baudelaire, who of all the French writers had the deepest influence on Eliot.[23] It was also in 1910 that he first read Charles-Louis Philippe's Bubu de Montparnasse, a novel that supplied Eliot with imagery for the third of the "Preludes," which was written in Paris.[24]

In looking back over his early years before 1914, one finds that both the Unitarian doctrines and much of the literature that he was studying ran counter to the Christianity that he later accepted. The thought of his New England

---

[22]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 17.

[23]Wallace Fowlie, "Baudelaire and Eliot: Interpreters of their Age," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, edited by Allen Tate (New York, 1966).

[24]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 20.

Puritan heritage, the religious ideals of his own family, and the optimism of men like Babbitt were certainly being questioned by this young poet, who was without a sure objective reality to stabilize him. He was indeed in the throes of scepticism. The most evident indication of this scepticism was the poetry which he wrote during this period: 1909-1911. This poetry, which will be considered at this time, was published, along with his six 1915 Oxford poems, under one cover in a slim book, Prufrock and Other Observations, by the Egoist Press in the summer of 1917. According to Grover Smith, this early poetry contains "the themes of dejection in solitude and grief for the unattainability of an idea."[25]

The approach to his early poetry will be different from that to much of his remaining poetry because his early poetry has little religious thought to introduce; it is non-Christian poetry with a vision about things irrelevant and unrelated. Individual poems, therefore, will not be separately analyzed in detail. An excellent chronology of these early published poems is given by Smidt:

> The following poems of the Prufrock collection (1917) seem to have been composed before 1912: "Conversation Galante" (1909), "Portrait of a Lady" (1910), "Preludes" (1910), "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" (1910), "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1910-11), "La Figlia che Piange" (1911). The remaining poems of the collection would have been composed in 1915.[26]

Eliot does two things in this poetry: he indirectly reveals--not intentionally--his own self through the imaginary

---

[25]Ibid., p. 25. [26]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 18.

characters he creates, and he reveals the condition of contemporary life as he sees it. Elizabeth Drew contends, as do many other critics, that both the poet and contemporary society are in his poetry: "The early poems show us 'the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history,' and the condition of the poet as a part of it. For he differs from others in the same environment only in his awareness of his plight."[27] The poet is part of contemporary life and is aware of it. This is a vital point to substantiate because it helps to explain his increasing search for something that will bring order to his present chaotic state. In "East Coker" he expressed this fact that only those who realize they are sick will seek out a physician who will help them:

> Our only health is the disease
> If we obey the dying nurse
> Whose constant care is not to please
> But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
> And that, to be restored, our sickness
> must grow worse.[28]

Eliot's "The Pensées of Pascal" (1931) is a key essay to describe this sequence that leads to faith:

> The Christian thinker--and I mean the man who is trying consciously and conscientiously to explain to himself the sequence which culminates in faith, rather than the public apologist--proceeds by rejection and elimination. He finds the world to be so and so; he finds its character inexplicable by any non-religious theory: among religions he finds Christianity, and Catholic Christianity, to account most satisfactorily for the world and especially for the moral world within; and

---

[27]Elizabeth Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry (New York, 1949), pp. 31-32.

[28]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 127.

> thus, by what Newman calls "powerful and concurrent" reasons, he finds himself inexorably committed to the dogma of the Incarnation. To the unbeliever, this method seems disingenuous and perverse: for the unbeliever is, as a rule, not so greatly troubled to explain the world to himself, nor so greatly distressed by its disorder; nor is he generally concerned (in modern terms) to "preserve values."[29]

This period of the poet's life precedes the final stage of scepticism that culminates in his faith in Christianity.

Eliot's own person will be considered first in relation to his religious thought, and then, briefly, in relation to his description of contemporary society. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is probably the best poem of the group and is representative of the others. Prufrock, wrote Kenner, is "a name plus a Voice," "a possible zone of consciousness," "the generic Eliot character."[30] And yet, according to Stephen Spender, a lady who knew Eliot well from 1913 onwards said the characters of his early poetry were not Eliot: "They were characters in a scene which he thought represented what life was like."[31] Outwardly the characters would be unlike Eliot, but inwardly what they thought and felt was probably close to Eliot's own thoughts and feelings. In fact, all of the associations of the poetry would only be known by Eliot himself, as Smidt has so wisely observed:

---

[29]Eliot, "The Pensées of Pascal," Selected Essays, p. 360.

[30]Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet (New York, 1964), pp. 40-41.

[31]Stephen Spender, "Remembering Eliot," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, edited by Allen Tate, p. 58.

> What often constitutes a difficulty to the readers of Eliot's poetry is the fact that the associations are not just those of the fictitious characters of the poems. If Eliot had simply invented a stream of consciousness for Prufrock or Gerontion he might have made all of it psychologically quite plain. But the associations are obviously his own, and sometimes too private to be completely intellible to the reader.[32]

Prufrock is a tragic figure, and it is appropriate, consequently, that the epigraph of the poem is about a man in Dante's Inferno. Canto XXVII is about Guido da Montefeltro, a Franciscan, who is being punished for giving fraudulent advice at the instigation of a great priest. He confesses to abusing his intellect for practicing tricks and undercover ways:

> Gli accorgiment e le coperte vie
> Io seppi tutte; e si menai lor arte,
> Ch'al fine della terra il suono uscie.[33]

Prufrock also abuses his intellect, only in a different way: he engages in romantic daydreaming. His ideal is a perfect relationship between the sexes. The poem is about a sensitive person's frustrating desire to attain to his illusory notion of love:

> I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each
> I do not think that they will sing to me.[34]

This frustration is heightened by his timidity and lack of

---

[32]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, pp. 132-133.

[33]Dante Alighieri, Inferno, Vol. I of The Divine Comedy, translated into blank verse by Louis Biancolli, 3 vols. (New York, 1966), p. 112. All other references from The Divine Comedy will be from this work.

[34]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 7.

confidence even to attempt a goal less than ideal:

> In the room the women come and go
> Talking of Michelangelo.[35]

Here is the agony for physical love beyond his attainment but not beyond his desire. His hell is his passionate desire for unattainable ideals. "The Love Song" is a tragic satire because there is neither love nor song for Prufrock in the singing that he hears. When he awakes out of his daydreaming, he experiences the sensation of drowning because he is unable to cope with the facts of life as he sees them:

> We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
> Till human voices wake us, and we drown.[36]

The Hell of "Prufrock" is a state of life on earth, just as the Purgatory of Ash Wednesday is for the most part a different plane of life on earth, and the Paradise of Four Quartets is the highest level of living on earth. Prufrock's frustrated life is a hell on earth.

It may be difficult to empathize with this odd character in his dilemma since it does not seem tragic enough. His frustrations may even strike one as humorous, as when Prufrock thinks about what to say to the woman he contemplates visiting:

> Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
> And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
> Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?[37]

He has actually done these things, but if he told her, she

---

[35] Ibid., p. 41. [36] Ibid., p. 7. [37] Ibid., p. 5.

would consider him ridiculous indeed. In The Elder Statesman, Lord Claverton's explanation of his faults to Charles helps us to realize that Prufrock's oddities may not be so strange:

> It's hard to make other people realize
> The magnitude of things that appear to them petty.[38]

"Portrait of a Lady" (1910) is a description of four encounters between a young man and the lady during a year's time and of the man's gradual attempt to disentangle himself from any obligation to her. The dash after "committed" in the epigraph suggests that he has wronged her in some way. Grover Smith mentions a plausible solution:

> By penetrating to the depths of the lady's lonely and empty life, the young man has committed a psychological rape; this is far worse than fornication, for he has not respected her human condition.[39]

The poem, however, does not seem to condemn the young man in any way. Nevertheless, neither the woman nor the young man have experienced a satisfactory love relationship. In addition, both suffer from boredom and loneliness. This theme of loneliness is not only personal with Eliot but also part of the human condition; it will become one of the main themes of his poetry. The woman is mistaken when she thinks he is her friend, for he says to himself, "I keep my countenance, / I remain self-possessed" (p. 10).

There is something seriously wrong with this young man,

---

[38]T. S. Eliot, The Elder Statesman (New York, 1959), p. 110.

[39]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 14.

as with Prufrock, which lies below the surface. This man may think he is self-possessed, but he does not have a mind of his own; he is unable to distinguish between right and wrong. To him there are no objective moral values to stabilize him because everything is in a state of change; he does not even have a soul since he has denied its reality. The influence of F. H. Bradley and the Greek philosophy of Epicurus and Lucretius was strong in the poet's life at this time. Smidt condenses the essence of Bradley's thought about the soul in the following: "Change--in time, space or circumstances--alters the identity and proves the unreality of whatever is subject to it, whether ideas, persons, or objects."[40] In "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" the speaker says,

> So the hand of the child, automatic,
> Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running
> along the quay.
> I could see nothing behind that child's eye.[41]

The child functions automatically, without volition. It has no more personality than the cat and crab mentioned in the same context. In the fourth "Prelude" the man's soul is a mere collection of anxious impressions which will soon fade away:

> His soul stretched tight across the skies
> That fade behind a city block,
> Or trampled by insistent feet
> At four and five and six o'clock.[42]

---

[40]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 123.

[41]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 15.

[42]Ibid., p. 13.

In the Preludes there does not seem to be a living entity moving toward a meaningful goal. Almost all of the early poems end bleakly.

Epicurus and Lucretius held that the soul was made up of atoms combined by chance. This is similar to Eliot's view of the soul in the third "Prelude":

> You dozed, and watched the night revealing
> The thousand sordid images
> Of which your soul was constituted.[43]

Such a concept of the soul explains the irrelevance and unrelatedness of things since souls so constructed could only be superficially similar, unrelated, and meaningless.

The vision of life in these poems is that life is boring, fragmentary, and frustrating. Eliot, however, not only reveals his own vision in his early writings but also his view of contemporary life. Whether the social environment is that of the sophisticated or the plebeian, the environment of both is ugly and trivial. "Portrait of a Lady" and "Preludes" illustrate the two backgrounds. The note of despair in his poetry is caused by the outer world as well as by his inner world. The modern civilization of St. Louis,[44] London, Paris, and Marburg left him despondent. The corruption of society will be stressed even more in the 1920 Poems.

In the three years after 1911 Eliot was engaged in his graduate study at Harvard, and wrote almost no poetry. After

---

[43] Ibid., p. 13.

[44] Howarth, Figures Behind T. S. Eliot, pp. 42-55.

completing his residence work, he spent the summer in Germany, and then in the autumn of 1914, after the declaration of war, he went for a year to Merton College, Oxford, a year devoted to reading the Posterior Analytics with Professor Joachim. On September 22, 1914, he had his first visit with Ezra Pound, who was to give Eliot his personal critical attention until about 1921. The following July, Eliot was married to Miss Vivienne Haigh-Wood, an English woman. In 1916 the Bradley thesis was completed, sent back to Harvard, and accepted, but the war prevented his return to complete the formalities for the degree. The following are the six poems written at Oxford in 1915 and included in the Prufrock collection (1917): "Morning at the Window," "The Boston Evening Transcript," "Aunt Helen," "Cousin Nancy," "Mr. Apollinax," and "Hysteria."

Before a brief consideration of these poems, it is of great importance that a few aspects of his graduate study be mentioned. The study of Indian Sanskrit and philosophy for two years with Professor Charles Lanman was one of the subjects of his graduate study that later influenced his poetry. The final section of The Waste Land and the middle section of "The Dry Salvages" are two passages where Eliot utilizes this fund of knowledge. Early Sanskrit literature "is a religious literature, of praise, prayer, and sacrifice to the gods."[45] It was through this oriental literature that Eliot gained knowledge of Buddhism, a religion with an emphasis on asceticism

---

[45] Ibid., p. 202.

and renunciation, which meant the renunciation or abandonment of one's household life. Another influence, mentioned previously, was Josiah Royce, Professor of the History of Philosophy. Royce's The Problem of Christianity, written about the time of Eliot's graduate study, clearly set forth the fact of man's sin and his need of atonement. This could have been one of the influences that brought about the gradual change in the poet's life following his years at Harvard, a change that ultimately culminated in his conversion.

This gradual change may have had its inception at the time of his graduate study, and that which may be a partial cause of this change will be the last of the three Harvard influences that will be mentioned at this time. The possible partial cause of this change may have been his doctoral thesis on Bradley. In the following rather lengthy but vital reference, Conrad Aiken, in his Ushant, states the fact that Eliot's thesis marked the most radical point that Eliot (or Tsetse, as Aiken called him) would reach:

> From the Tsetse's brilliantly analytic and destructive thesis in epistemology at Harvard, in the year when D. had come back (in order to take his degree) to the colonial house in Church Street, from the windows of which he could observe the Tsetse, with the newly acquired Malacca cane of his, on his way to Sanskrit, or the humanities discoursed upon by Irving Babbitt--that year of the dinners at the Greek restaurant--from this remarkable thesis, which had contributed much to the "fixing" of D.'s implicit intellectual or philosophic position, adding, as it did, the basic "why" as to the values of knowledge, the Tsetse was gradually to retreat, as if that magnificent vision, into the apparent chaos which blazed and swarmed and roared beyond the neat walls of Eden, was one he found insupportable. Thenceforth, like the Salmon, leaving behind him the outrages

> of ocean, together with its wilder freedoms, he would ascend the ancient river of a more peaceful culture, where the banks were trim, and the views symmetrically landscaped; and, mounting from cataract to cataract, or hierarchy to hierarchy, of accepted order, would at last achieve what no American ichthyolater had achieved before him, and find himself, at Canterbury, after the pilgrimage of pilgrimages, in the very presence of the Ichthos. That the achievement was unique and astounding, and attended, too, by rainbows of creative splendor, there would be no doubt. Indeed, it was in the nature of a miracle, a transformation. But was it not to have been, also, a surrender, and perhaps the saddest known to D. in his life?[46]

Howarth says, "What conception of Eliot's outlook at that extreme point lies behind Aiken's leaping figure?"[47] What brought about this halt and change which brought Eliot to Canterbury? Howarth suggests that Aiken means that the Eliot of 1913-1916 valued the world that the senses enjoy; then he suggests that Eliot gradually reversed the direction of his thinking and valued the inner life and road of renunciation; however, much later in his writings--after Aiken's Ushant was written--the Eliot of 1913-1916 was "resuscitated. Only, a balance has been struck: the self that loves the senses is no longer in battle with a self that fears them."[48] Grover Smith wisely entitles his chapter dealing with the 1911-1919 period as "Debate of Body and Soul."[49]

---

[46]Conrad Aiken, Ushant (New York, 1952), pp. 215-216.

[47]Howarth, Figures Behind T. S. Eliot, p. 206.

[48]Ibid., p. 209.

[49]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 30.

The 1915 Oxford poems which were mentioned previously are satirical. Except for "Morning at the Window," they are ironies evidently aimed at typical people Eliot had known in greater Boston; in them Eliot the reformer is beginning to emerge. The poetic sketches could be called satires of an almost dead Puritanism. Mr. Appollinax seems to be the only person free from the Bostonian taint.

Eliot earned his living in London at first as a school teacher. For one term he taught at High Wycombe, Bucks., and for four terms at the Highgate School, London, until the summer of 1917. For the following eight years, until 1925, he worked as a clerk in the Colonial and Foreign Department of Lloyds Bank. In addition to this work, he was assistant editor of Ezra Pound's progressive review called The Egoist from 1917-1919; he also wrote for other periodicals, especially for the Athenaeum in 1919-1920. Ezra Pound was his primary influence during these years. It was Pound who introduced him to Gautier, a poet who was to influence the style of Eliot in this period. Through Pound, Eliot was also influenced by T. E. Hulme in a literary way; in the twenties, Hulme will influence Eliot in a religious way as well.[50]

Eliot's poetic output in the 1917-1920 period included his four collected French poems (1916-1917) and his 1920 Poems, first called Ara Vos Prec; Ara Vos Prec is a reference to the words of Arnaut Daniel in Canto XXVI of the Purgatorio.

---

[50]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 23.

The publication of his early essays in The Sacred Wood also occurred in 1920.

The 1920 poems that are relevant to his religious thought are satires primarily against the Church. "The Hippopotamus" (1917) is one of the earliest poems in Ara Vos Prec and is written in Gautier's quatrain, as are six of the other poems. According to the epigraph, the Church is likened to the lukewarm church of the Laodiceans mentioned in Revelation 3:14-22. The other epigraph is a message from St. Ignatius to the Trallians to revere the leadership of the Church. Evidently the hippopotamus represents the Trallians. In some ways, the poem puts one immediately in mind of the parable of the lost sheep. Jesus said, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). The sinner would be the hippopotamus and the ninety-nine, pointing to the Pharisees and scribes who were too self-righteous to realize their need (Luke 15:2), would be the Church. "The Hippopotamus" is not necessarily a satirical attack upon Christ or Christianity, but it is an attack upon the self-righteous, self-sufficient, lukewarm Church that is supposed to help the average man, not accumulate "dividends" and refreshment for its own selfish ends. Even Christ is on the outside of such a Church (Revelation 3:20), knocking to get in, for emanating from the institution is a "miasmal mist," that is, an unwholesome, poisonous mist. The poem could be

defending the flesh against the unnecessarily harsh strictures of a hypocritically austere Church.

"Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" (ca. 1918) is also a satire on the declension of the Church. In the body and soul debate, the outer man wins out over the inner man in this poem. Sweeney fares better than the presbyters or Origen. Again, however, the satire is against the religious institution, not against Christ. The paintings visible in the service speak reverently of the "unoffending feet" of the "Baptized God." The hypocritical presbyters involved in the service ignore the spirit (stanzas one and five) and the heretical and ascetic Origen--who has influenced the Church doctrinally--has rejected the flesh (stanza two). On the other hand, the paintings of the local church support the truth of the Incarnation and of the Trinity (stanzas four and five). Grover Smith suggests a plausible interpretation of the difficult seventh stanza:

> The seventh stanza, introducing the neuter bees whose "hairy bellies" spread pollen, "Blest office of the epicene," characterizes the work common to the presbyters and Origen. This is, namely, to pass as intermediaries between the stamen of the Logos and the pistil of humanity and thus (needlessly) achieve a union already consummated in the Incarnation.[51]

Sweeney is the counterpart of Eliot's hippopotamus and the opposite of Origen's asceticism and the presbyter's hypocrisy. He is outside the Church and in need of the Word, the Incarnate Christ. "Through Sweeney, therefore, the poem contrives,"

---

[51]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 44.

states Grover Smith, "by means of the bath symbol, a kind of vindication of the brawny natural man, with his carnal appetites, against duplicity and asceticism."[52]

"Gerontion," (1919) the final poem to be considered in this chapter, is a poem primarily of religious despair. This note has been struck before, but not so poignantly. In addition, for the first time in Eliot's writings, except for the reference in "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service," Christ becomes an issue in a poem. For one with a Unitarian background, this is an advance indeed.

Gerontion is an old blind man who is thinking about his past, especially about his past sins. Having been unable to find anything in life to bring him complete satisfaction, he has grown apathetic: "I an old man, / A dull head among windy spaces" (p. 21).

The poem then continues with the quotation from Matthew 12:38 concerning the request of the Pharisees for a sign from Jesus that He is the Messiah. The sign that Jesus gave was that of his bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 12:40; John 2:19). Eliot, however, gave the Incarnation as the sign. Throughout his poems, the Incarnation, rather than the resurrection, was to be his approach to the significance of Jesus. In this poem, however, Jesus is not only the Incarnate Son but also Christ the tiger. The beginning of each year is a reminder to Gerontion that he, as well as secular Europe, has

---

[52]Ibid., p. 45.

ignored the significance of the sign and therefore must face the visitation of the divine displeasure. People like Gerontion, Mr. Silvero, Madame de Tornquist, and Fraülein von Kulp must answer for "depraved May," the season of Christ's crucifixion. The evasion of light by darkness is expressed in the pathetic phrase, "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?"

Gerontion proceeds to explain his reason for no religious commitment with the phrase "Think now," which could be addressed to himself, the reader,[53] or Christ.[54] Christ as auditor seems unlikely since he is referred to in the third person elsewhere in the poem and since "How should I use them for your closer contact?" seems more applicable to a woman than to Christ. Concerning the lines about history, Gerontion is probably explaining to himself or the reader that life is a puzzle, history an endless labyrinth which makes no sense. Also, history cannot find the Word, and he is in time, in history. This part of the poem may also express Eliot's difficulty concerning a religious faith in his early years:

> Gives too late
> What's not believed in, or if still believed,
> In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
> Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
> Till the refusal propagates a fear.[55]

Concerning the lines about the senses, Gerontion has probably

---

[53] Ibid., p. 59.

[54] John Crowe Ransom, "Gerontion," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 148.

a woman in mind. His life is sexually as well as spiritually sterile:

> I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
> How should I use them for your closer contact?[56]

There is a passage in Ash-Wednesday which aptly summarizes "Gerontion," as well as possibly Eliot's spiritual condition at this time:

> And the light shone in darkness and
> Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
> About the centre of the silent Word.[57]

Gerontion and Eliot are still in "the unstilled world," still outside "the centre of the silent Word." They are a part of darkness swaddling the "word within a word."[58] Therefore the vision of what is after death is not a pleasant thought:

> De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
> Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
> In fractured atoms.[59]

By way of a recapitulation of Eliot's religious thought in the period from 1888 to 1920, one concludes that during this time he was not a believer in Christianity. However, his religious thought did change and develop. Before entering Harvard at the age of eighteen, he was instructed in Unitarianism, a liberal theology in which the Son and Holy Spirit were not accepted as deity. In those early years, there was only a peripheral admixture of Catholicism in the Henry Ware Eliot household. Between 1906 and 1914, Eliot was primarily involved in his studies at Harvard, where he became especially

---

[56] Ibid., p. 23. [57] Ibid., p. 65.

[58] Ibid., p. 21. [59] Ibid., p. 23.

interested in philosophy. In philosophy, F. H. Bradley was the most important influence on him. The doctoral dissertation on Bradley unfolds Eliot's thought, the essence of which contended that man cannot know absolute reality and that reality exists only through its appearances, which is an appearance only relatively true; man is imprisoned in his own isolated ego and can know no point of view but his own and can only apprehend things subjectively by his own consciousness. The poet's thought was also molded by Babbitt's emphases, particularly humanism. The poetry which Eliot wrote in this entire period is non-Christian poetry. Even the poetry of 1909-1911 reveals a subjectivism in philosophy and a scepticism in theology. The poems express a vision of life that is boring, fragmentary, and frustrating, especially in attaining a satisfactory love relationship. There is in addition a disgust for the human body. The Oxford poems of 1915 are satirical in nature, frequently attacking not Christianity itself but Christendom, particularly Bostonian Puritanism. About 1915, Eliot began a gradual retreat from the philosophical position of his dissertation toward a pathway which would ultimately lead him to the Church of England. Gerontion, the concluding poem, is a poem of religious despair, in which for the first time Christ becomes an issue; the difficulties hindering religious faith are too overpowering, however, and the poem ends with the poet outside any center of spiritual repose.

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSITION TO THE THOUGHT OF ANGLO-CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

In the poetry especially prior to Gerontion (1919), the mind of each character is isolated from the minds of others. Eliot's study of Bradley led him to say, "I can know no point of view but my own."[1] Therefore, a direct communication with other people or with God is unattainable. And the awareness of the existence of other finite centers, in addition to the far distant center--God, leads to a sense of frustration, disorder, and fragmentation. The philosophy of the isolated ego could be epitomized in the term individualism.

In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), there comes to explicit expression a concept concerning a way out of this individual solitude in the prison of one's own soul, and this concept predominates in the poetry of 1921 to 1927, which will be considered in this chapter. Even though "Tradition and the Individual Talent" fits chronologically into the preceding chapter, it will be considered at this time because it introduces the concept of Eliot's thought that comes to poetic expression in this period prior to The Hollow Men (1925).

---

[1]Eliot, Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley, p. 141.

The rationale behind Eliot's transition from the individualism of his early poetry to the concept of collectivism expressed in The Waste Land (1922) is presented ably by J. Hillis Miller:

> By extending these directions of his thought he transforms the idealism of the solitary self into what might be called a "collective idealism." The basic presupposition of this change is the assumption that everything which exists at all for man has a mental existence. How could he otherwise know of it? This slips over into the idea that what exists outside the sphere of the individual ego is not an objective world of time, space, and matter, but an impersonal subjective realm, a realm in which everything already has a mental existence. If the separate ego could bring itself to sacrifice its centrality it might dissolve the walls of its prison and find itself in possession of a universal kingdom of subjectivity, a kingdom as wide as all time and space. The self by abnegating itself might achieve that all-inclusiveness it seeks. Through self-effacement, infinite expansion, but only if a collective consciousness is already there waiting to be entered.[2]

The "universal kingdom of subjectivity" is defined in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in Part I, which deals with the theme of tradition:

> He must be aware that the mind of Europe--the mind of his own country--a mind which he learns in time to be more important than his own private mind--is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen.[3]

The mind of one individual should not limit itself to its own isolated self, but by sacrificing its primacy, it eliminates

---

[2]J. Hillis Miller, "T. S. Eliot," Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965), pp. 155-156.

[3]Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Selected Essays, p. 6.

isolation and becomes a part of the living and orderly mind of a vast subjective world, the mind of Europe:

> What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.[4]

In Part II of the essay, the subject of individual talent is the theme. A poet's creative task is presented by the analogy of the catalyst. Concerning the impersonal theory of poetry being illustrated, Eliot stated that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."[5]

Miller says in the following that as a result of Eliot's definition of tradition and his description of the poet's part in that tradition, Eliot has expanded his philosophy concerning the subjective mind of the individual to include the collective mind of humanity:

> This impersonality is achieved by a turning inside-out of the enclosed sphere of the self so that its private emotive core disappears and the poet's consciousness enters the surrounding medium of the collective mind. Only in this way can the poet succeed in "surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done."[6]

The collective mind will be one of the concepts to be observed in the poetry and drama written during the period covered by this chapter.

---

[4] Ibid., p. 7. [5] Ibid., p. 8.

[6] Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 158.

In addition to the collective mind concept, another factor that must have greatly concerned Eliot in this critical pre-conversion period is that of the illness of his wife, Vivienne. Before 1927 they had lived for a number of years in a small home at 57 Chester Terrace. It was during these years, according to Sir Herbert Read, that she became ill:

> I was a close witness of the tragic progress of his first marriage. Vivienne was a frail creature and had not been married long before she began to suffer from serious internal ailments. These exasperated an already nervous temperament and she slowly but surely developed the hysterical psychosis to which she finally succumbed. Eliot's sufferings in these years were acute, but only once did he unburden himself to me. . . . Though eventually legally separated, he remained single so long as his first wife was alive.[7]

Stephen Spender also refers to Eliot's burden during these years, but adds in the following that it was about the time of his public acknowledgement of the Anglo-Catholic faith that he was separating from his wife:

> I did not realize when I met him in 1928 that Eliot was just traversing a period of great unhappiness, when he was separating from his first wife, who was on the verge of insanity and who later did become insane. It is true that in conversation with outsiders, Eliot gave no indication of this, and with his closest friends, I am sure, he never showed any sign of pitying himself.[8]

Frank Morley mentions the gradual separating of Eliot and Vivienne, as he tells it, in 1933: "I can neither conceal nor evade the fact that when Tom returned from Harvard at the

---

[7]Sir Herbert Read, "T. S. E.--Memoir," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 23.

[8]Spender, "Remembering Eliot," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 59.

end of June, 1933, he did not return to Vivien but came to Pikes Farm."[9] She was under the care of her relations in London.[10] In 1947 she died in a mental hospital. Ash-Wednesday was dedicated "To My Wife." This does signify the love they reportedly had for each other despite her illness and his inhibited and inhibiting quality.

Robert Giroux points out that Eliot's second marriage brought him great happiness:

> In retrospect, the most striking single aspect of the years (nearly twenty) during which I was privileged to know him as a friend is the contrast between the rather sad and lonely aura that seemed to hover about him in the earlier period, and the happiness he radiated in the later one. "Radiant" may seem an odd word to apply to T. S. Eliot, yet it is an accurate description of the last eight or so years of his life, and this was due of course to his marriage in 1957 to Valerie Fletcher. More than once in those years I heard him utter the words, "I'm the luckiest man in the world."[11]

The Waste Land was written by a person who was suffering, and surely the tragedy of his first marriage included a part of that suffering. Possibly the poet would have looked at the waste land of this world with different eyes if his first marriage had been like his second. It is difficult not to at least think of Vivienne in parts of the poem:

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

---

[9]Frank Morley, "A Few Recollections of Eliot," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 104.

[10]Ibid., p. 105.

[11]Robert Giroux, "A Personal Memoir," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 337.

"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think."[12]

Before considering The Waste Land and the other relevant poetry of this period, it is important to mention that Eliot's conversion, which did take place during this period, was not sudden like that of the Apostle Paul's in Acts 9. Smidt has quoted a part of the poet's 1932 talk on "Christianity and Communism" that is relevant to the subject of his conversion:

> Towards any profound conviction one is borne gradually, perhaps insensibly over a long period of time, by what Newman called "powerful and concurrent reasons" . . . At some moment or other, a kind of crystallisation occurs, in which appears an element of faith . . . In my own case, I believe that one of the reasons was that the Christian scheme seemed to me the only one which would work. . . . That was simply the removal of any reason for believing in anything else, the erasure of a prejudice, the arrival at the scepticism which is the preface to conversion. And when I say "work", I am quite aware that I had my own notion of what the "working" of a scheme comprehends. Among other things, the Christian scheme seemed the only possible scheme which found a place for values which I must maintain or perish (and belief comes first and practice second), the belief, for instance, in holy living and holy dying, in sanctity, chastity, humility, austerity. And it is in favour of the Christian scheme, from the Christian point of view, that it never has, and never will, work perfectly. No perfect scheme can work perfectly with imperfect man.[13]

It is clear that he had not arrived at the acceptance of the Christian scheme when he wrote The Waste Land. Stephen Spender remarks that "recent critics seem to read Eliot's conversion of 1927 into The Waste Land which was published in

---

[12]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 40.

[13]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, pp. 28-29.

1922."[14] He deals that theory a devastating blow when he makes reference to a conversation between Eliot and Mistral:

> Incidentally, if Eliot's own views are to be considered, I once heard him say to the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral that at the time when he was writing The Waste Land, he seriously considered becoming a Buddhist. A Buddhist is as immanent as a Christian in The Waste Land.[15]

The poem is more ecumenical in belief than anything else, for it links together not only Buddhism and Christianity but Greek ideals as well.

This idea of ecumenism is in keeping with the plan of the poem because Eliot is attempting to know and express not simply his own point of view but the whole human story. His philosophical approach has enabled him to submit to the collective consciousness of mankind. Possibly his philosophy drove him to the literary works that would express this past. "His mind had already absorbed the whole literary and cultural tradition of Europe, as well as a great deal of Asiatic religion and philosophy," comments Miss Drew concerning Eliot's preparedness to write The Waste Land.[16] Conrad Aiken, in a review of The Waste Land in The New Republic on February 7, 1923, stated that "Mr. Eliot's sense of the literary past has become so overmastering as almost to constitute the

---

[14]Spender, "Remembering Eliot," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 39.

[15]Ibid., p. 40.

[16]Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, p. 64.

motive of the work."[17] In agreement with this, Smidt comments, ". . . it is much nearer the mark to call the poem 'a personal comment on the universe.'"[18] Smidt is referring to E. M. Forster's impression of the poem. Possibly J. Hillis Miller has stated best the meaning of the poem:

> In "The Waste Land" not modern life but all history is organized by the myth of the Grail quest. The implied assumption is that human life falls into certain ideal patterns, patterns which are constantly re-enacting themselves in new forms and new contexts. . . . "The Waste Land" takes elements from the most diverse times and places, Philomel and Cleopatra, Mrs. Porter and Lil, St. Augustine and Mr. Eugenides, and reveals their secret conformity to the universal story he found in From Ritual to Romance.[19]

The Waste Land appeared without notes in the first issue of The Criterion in October, 1922. According to Conrad Aiken, who had known Eliot intimately for fourteen years before the publication of The Waste Land, Eliot wrote it in Switzerland in the winter of 1921-22.[20] Grover Smith says he took the trip for medical care and that "before returning to London, after an absence of three months, he visited Pound at Paris and left the draft with him."[21]

---

[17]Conrad Aiken, "An Anatomy of Melancholy," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 197.

[18]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 149.

[19]Miller, Poets of Reality, pp. 176-177.

[20]Aiken, "An Anatomy of Melancholy," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, pp. 194-195.

[21]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 68.

In observing the development of Eliot's thought with reference to The Waste Land, a sketch of the content will be given. There are both order and disorder in the poem. It is the elements from the Grail legend which provide Eliot with an orderly framework for presenting the disorder of the whole human story. Miss Drew has given an excellent summary of the essence of the Grail legend:

> . . . it always concerns a land which has been blighted by a curse so that it is arid and waterless, producing neither animal nor vegetable increase. Its plight is linked with that of its ruler, the Fisher King, who, as a result of illness or of a wound, has become sexually impotent. The curse is removed when a Knight appears who must ask the question as to the meaning of the Grail and the Lance--said in Christian terms to be the lance which pierced Christ's side at the Crucifixion, and the cup from which he and the disciples drank at the Last Supper. In some versions the mere asking of the question cures the King and saves the land. In others the knight must go through various ordeals, culminating in that of the Chapel or Cemetery Perilous.[22]

The Waste Land suffers from a failure in love, the subsequent degeneration of love into lust, and a failure in faith. The quest in the poem is a failure. As Grover Smith points out, the action turns on two crucial incidents:

> . . . the garden scene in Part I and the approach to the Chapel Perilous in Part V. The one is the traditional initiation in the presence of the Grail; the other is the mystical initiation, as described by Jessie L. Weston, into spiritual knowledge. The first, if successful, would constitute rebirth through love and sex; the second, rebirth without either. Since both fail, the quest fails, and the poem ends with a formula for purgatorial suffering, through which Tiresias may achieve the second alternative after patience and self-denial--perhaps after physical death. The counsel to give, sympathize, and

---

[22]Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, pp. 60, 61.

> control befits one whom direct ways to beatitude cannot release from suffering.[23]

In Part I, "The Burial of the Dead," Tiresias, as the Fisher King, meets the Grail-bearer, the young girl bringing her love, at the Hyacinth garden. At the initiation, both words and sight fail him as he is unable to ask the indispensable question of the Grail initiation:

> --Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.[24]

Because of his failure, he receives his wound and, in addition, becomes blind. The remainder of the poem before the initiation in Part V describes his experiences in the waste land. Eliot's note on Tiresias indicates that his one person struggling for deliverance is aptly symbolized and made universal in Tiresias, where both sexes meet in one person:

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.[25]

Hence, as Grover Smith states, the various personages in the poem refer to the same person:

---

[23]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 71.

[24]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 38.

[25]Ibid., p. 52.

> The sibyl (Madame Sosostris), the youthful Grail-bearer (the hyacinth girl), the quester (variously characterized, for example as "the young man carbuncular"), and the Fisher King embody facets of the one personality struggling to attain salvation.[26]

In Part II, "A Game of Chess," the subject is sex in marriage apart from love, whether in the upper class or the lower class; and in Part III, "The Fire Sermon," the subject is sex outside of marriage, which becomes mere lust. The first three parts of The Waste Land speak of the initial failure in love and its subsequent degeneration. Part III concludes with the idea of rejecting all burning by means of asceticism.

The expression "Gentile or Jew" in Part IV, "Death by Water," could refer to the equal guilt of both as it is presented in Romans 1--3. If one turns his own wheel, the wages will be death (Romans 6:23).

Part V, "What the Thunder Said," presents the quester in his final initiation, seeking peace by means of religion. The thunder, or a god, speaks the three words of the Indian myth from the Upanishads: give, sympathize, and control. But the quester can no more perfect such religious works than he could achieve love. Therefore he is unable to escape out of the prison of self:

> I have heard the key
> Turn in the door once and turn once only

---

[26]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 70.

We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.[27]

In the concluding lines, the quester, realizing he is not going to be healed, takes three passages for a measure of support. These fragments, however, as Elizabeth Drew says, "bring no sense of organic union and renewed life."[28] J. Hillis Miller sums up succinctly the apparent impasse at this point of the development of Eliot's religious thought:

> The quality of the life of the mind of Europe is exactly the same as the experience of the solitary ego. Though Eliot has expanded his mind to include all history he is within the same prison, the prison of the absence of God, errancy from God: "The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries / Bring us farther from GOD and nearer to the Dust" (CP, 147). Like the little world of the self-enclosed ego, the larger world of history is characterized by fragmentation, aimless motion, loveless-ness, frustrated longing.[29]

This prophet of the past has courageously and without guile looked at the human story. He has attempted to bear a great deal of reality. He has faced the illusions, the fictions, the pretensions of life. "His greatness will rest on the fruitful recognition of disorder," says Frank Kermode.[30]

Although not one of his major poems, Eliot's next work, The Hollow Men, is a vivid revelation of the rejection of his philosophy of collective subjectivism and his recognition of

---

[27]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 49.

[28]Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, p. 88.

[29]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 178.

[30]Frank Kermode, "A Babylonish Dialect," T. S. Eliot: A Man and His Work, p. 236.

a specific objective reality outside of himself: the Church. The Church, with an emphasis upon the Virgin Mary, is recognized now as "The Hope / Of empty men."[31]

In the Appendix of The Poetry of T. S. Eliot by D. E. S. Maxwell, Mr. Maxwell has arranged the poem as it was published in its separate stages of development: "Doris's Dream Song" appeared in the Chapbook in the autumn of 1924, "Three Poems" appeared in the Dial for March, 1925.[32] Part V of "The Hollow Men" was first printed in Poems 1909-1925. The significant Part IV concerning "the perpetual star" and "Multifoliate rose" was first published in the Criterion for January, 1925.

The central epigraph of The Hollow Men, "Mistah Kurtz--he dead," indicates that Conrad's Heart of Darkness sheds light on the poem. For one thing, Mr. Kurtz was a hollow man. Marlow states that the wilderness "had found him out early" and it "echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core."[33] Marlow also suggests that Kurtz became "the hollow sham" when he turned from his original aspirations: "My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas."[34] His hollow character is also implied when Marlow says of Kurtz's death, "The voice was gone. What else had been there?"[35]

---

[31]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 58.

[32]D. E. S. Maxwell, The Poetry of T. S. Eliot (New York, 1961), pp. 215-219.

[33]Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, edited by Robert Kimbrough (New York, 1963), p. 59.

[34]Ibid., p. 69. [35]Ibid., p. 71.

Heart of Darkness points out several times what Kurtz had aspired to be. The Company's chief accountant at the mouth of the big river informs Marlow that Kurtz "is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else."[36] He also later learns that Kurtz is "a gifted creature," especially possessing "the gift of expression."[37] The most significant revelation concerning Kurtz in relation to The Hollow Men is that Kurtz represents the European mind: "His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz."[38] In Kurtz, Eliot found a person who represented his own rejection of his philosophy of collective and subjective idealism. Kurtz says, "I had immense plans" and "I was on the threshold of great things."[39] Kurtz's own document on the "Suppression of Savage Customs" before he wrote the postscriptum reveals his idealism. Lionel Trilling is right when he observes that Kurtz "is at once the most idealistic and the most practically successful of all the agents of the Belgian exploitation of the Congo."[40]

The hollow character of Kurtz symbolizes for Eliot the emptiness and inadequacy of his own idealism, and the death of Kurtz symbolizes for Eliot the abandonment of his own former philosophy. As J. Hillis Miller has observed, "'The

---

[36]Ibid., p. 25. [37]Ibid., p. 48.

[38]Ibid., p. 50. [39]Ibid., p. 67.

[40]Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture (New York, 1965), p. 20.

Hollow Men' is an eloquent analysis of the vacuity of subjective idealism, and the state of the hollow men appears in Eliot's later work as the 'distraction, delusion, escape into dream, pretence'. . . ."[41] This dream-kingdom aspect of the hollow men in Eliot's The Hollow Men is also the dream-like quality of the very words of Kurtz: "They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares," says Marlow.[42] The whole story of Kurtz has "the dream sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of a struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams."[43] The "horror" of the knowledge of "the adventures of his soul on this earth"[44] did not come to Kurtz until the very last,[45] but Eliot pictures himself, in contrast to Kurtz, as still a hollow person before death with the possibility of hope. The writings of Conrad represent Eliot's transition from The Hollow Men to Ash-Wednesday: "It remained for Conrad to explore nihilism to its depths, and, in doing so, to point the way toward the transcendence of nihilism by the poets of the twentieth century."[46]

---

[41]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 181.

[42]Conrad, Heart of Darkness, p. 67. [43]Ibid., p. 28.

[44]Ibid., p. 71. [45]Ibid., p. 59.

[46]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 6.

The second epigraph, "A penny for the Old Guy," is the phrase used by children when they solicited money for fireworks on Guy Fawkes Day, November 5th; the children used a stuffed effigy of Guy Fawkes, the "Old Guy," as a way to beg pennies for their fireworks. Hence, the effigy of Guy Fawkes and the person of Mr. Kurtz are both appropriate symbols of the hollow men of Eliot's poem, except that Eliot's hollow men do not have the conviction of a Kurtz or a Fawkes. In contrast with these two "violent lost men" the hollow men seem unable to even make a spiritual decision: "Let me go no nearer / In death's dream kingdom / Let me also wear / Such deliberate disguises."[47] These empty souls are pathetic excuses for humanity.

The poem in its Chapbook form of 1924 began with the word "Eyes," but the exact significance of these eyes was vague.[48] The additions to the Criterion poems of 1925, however, present a solution:

> Sightless, unless
> The eyes reappear
> As the perpetual star
> Multifoliate rose.[49]

These images are immediately suggestive of Dante. Conrad's description of Marlow's descent into the heart of darkness was patterned after Dante's descent into the Inferno, as Conrad makes clear: ". . . it seemed to me I had stepped

---

[47]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 57.

[48]Ibid., p. 56. [49]Ibid., p. 58.

into the gloomy circle of some Inferno," confesses Marlow.[50] Eliot again, in this crucial poem and at this pivotal point of his life, has Dante's terminology and theology in mind as he envisions the only possible hope left for him and men like him: "empty men." "Empty men" are the only men who are, so to speak, savable because they recognize that only some objective and absolute reality outside of their independent egos can rescue them from the horror that they now spiritually perceive. They are men who, before perceiving a hope, perceive the horror of their hollowness and destiny, which Eliot was later able to express so eloquently in Murder in the Cathedral:

> . . . the Void, more horrid than active
> shapes of hell;
> Emptiness, absence, separation from God;
> The horror of the effortless journey to the empty land
> Which is no land, only emptiness, absence, the Void.[51]

But, in addition, they saw a ray of hope. The eyes mentioned before are said to "reappear / As the perpetual star." The "perpetual star" is Mary, who is described as such in Canto xiii of Paradise:

> The name of that fair flower that I invoke
> Each morning and each evening urged my whole mind
> To contemplate the largest flame of all.
> And when the quality and quantity
> Of the living star that triumphs above, as
> It has triumphed below, were imaged in my eyes,
> From inside of Heaven a torch descended. . . .[52]

---

[50]Conrad, Heart of Darkness, p. 17.

[51]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 210.

[52]Dante, "Paradise," The Divine Comedy, p. 93.

Her eyes are mentioned in Canto xxxiii:

> Then her eyes were raised to the eternal light,
> Into which none must think any other
> Creature's eye can look with such clarity.[53]

The "Multifoliate rose" is the Church, of which Mary is a part; it is spoken of in Canto xxxi:

> And thus it was that the sacred army, which,
> In the shedding of his blood, Christ made his bride,
> Appeared to me in the figure of a rose.[54]

In the "star" and the "rose" are seen the Anglo-Catholic faith that Eliot will ultimately turn to, although this poem ends in despair because of the presence of "the Shadow." The shadow is, as Miller expresses it, self-hindered by a particular philosophy:

> The 'Shadow' . . . is the paralysis which seizes men who live in a completely subjective world. Mind had seemed the medium which binds all together in the unity of an organic culture. Now it is revealed to be the Shadow which isolates things from one another, reduces them to abstraction, and makes movement, feeling, and creativity impossible.[55]

The Hollow Men, therefore, reveals Eliot's despair at being unable to accept at the present time the Anglo-Catholic faith to fill the vacuum resulting from the rejection of his former philosophy.

Eliot's next creative work, Sweeney Agonistes, was written about the same time as The Hollow Men. Although he is known primarily as a poet, he also became a distinguished playwright. He evidenced an interest in drama early in his

---

[53]Ibid., p. 134. [54]Ibid., p. 124.

[55]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 181.

literary career by his publication of the essay "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" in The Sacred Wood (1920). His efforts as a practicing playwright spanned about thirty-four years: Sweeney Agonistes, his first experiment in poetic drama, was completed about 1924[56] and The Elder Statesman, his last play, was published in 1958.

In turning now to a play of Eliot's it is only natural to begin with an inquiry concerning why he chose "to devote the major part of his creative energies in his later years to the theater."[57] In 1933, in his conclusion to The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, he gave the following reason, a reason that may have been germinating in his mind as early as 1924:

> The most useful poetry, socially, would be one which could cut across all the present stratifications of public taste--stratifications which are perhaps a sign of social disintegration. The ideal medium for poetry, to my mind, and the most direct means of social 'usefulness' for poetry, is the theatre. In a play of Shakespeare you get several levels of significance. For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the character and conflict of character, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more musically sensitive the rhythm, and for auditors of greater sensitiveness and understanding a meaning which reveals itself gradually.[58]

Eliot envisions, therefore, a social mission for himself through the theater where his poetry with its several levels

---

[56]Carol H. Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice, p. 51.

[57]Ibid., p. 3.

[58]Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London, 1964), pp. 152-153.

of significance will best reach all classes of society. In his essay "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" (1920), he makes it clear, however, that poetic drama should be "pure" and not a mere popularization:

> Possibly the majority of attempts to confect a poetic drama have begun at the wrong end; they have aimed at the small public which wants "poetry.". . . The Elizabethan drama was aimed at a public which wanted entertainment of a crude sort, but would stand a good deal of poetry; our problem should be to take a form of entertainment, and subject it to the process which would leave it a form of art.[59]

Eliot did take his art seriously, for in addition to avoiding the sacrifice of poetry for the sake of popularization, he avoided the sacrifice of poetry for the sake of propaganda. He wrote, "What I want is a literature which should be unconsciously, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian."[60]

In all of his plays, he endeavored to create a poetically pure and socially useful drama. This is true with his first dramatic experiment, Sweeney Agonistes. It is in two parts. "Fragment of a Prologue" was published in the New Criterion in October 1926 and "Fragment of an Agon" in January 1927, both under the general title of Wanna Go Home, Baby? In 1932 the title of the two fragments was changed to Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama.

---

[59]Eliot, "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama," The Sacred Wood (New York, 1966), p. 70.

[60]Eliot, "Religion and Literature," Selected Essays, p. 346.

Such an esoteric title suggests that his drama was undergirded by dramatic ideals appropriate to a new kind of contemporary drama. There are, indeed, underlying dramatic ideals, and the major ones are given succintly by Carol Smith:

> . . . a chorus to convey a response to the hero's dilemma which would correspond to the audience's response, colloquial speech rhythms to enhance the total "rhythm" of the work, conventions from the Greek ritual drama and Greek sources for plot situations, and the development of integrated levels of meaning in his plays.[61]

Of these ideals, the ideal of the conventions from Greek ritual drama and Greek sources for plot situations should be elaborated on because Greek literature is a frequent source for Eliot's plays. The title Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama points to the Old Comedy of Aristophanes. In the primitive ritual procedure, there was first the procession of worshippers of Phales going to the sacrifice, followed by the sacrifice and accompanying prayer, and concluded with the Agon: "the beginning of the sacrifice in its primitive form--the conflict between the good and evil principles, Summer and Winter, Life and Death. The good spirit is slain, dismembered, cooked and eaten in the communal feast, and yet brought back to life."[62] It is the god who is sacrificed and brought back to life. In "Fragment of a Prologue," preparation for the sacrifice is the underlying theme, and in

---

[61]Carol Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice, p. 13.

[62]Francis M. Cornford, The Origin of Attic Comedy (London, 1914), pp. 103-104.

"Fragment of an Agon," the Agon, or conflict, death, and resurrection are the themes.

It may appear that Eliot's drama is unnecessarily difficult. However, it should be understood that he is utilizing the discoveries in anthropology, such as J. G. Frazer's The Golden Bough, and in Greek drama, such as possibly Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy, to present in a fresh form the essence of Christianity. For example, Eliot used the death-rebirth process of the gods of Greek literature as a type of the death and resurrection of Christ. In addition, this death-rebirth idea is applied to St. John of the Cross's process of the purgation of desire in order to bring the soul into eternal union with God. Since a segment of society knew about and respected anthropology more than theology, the poet took this same secular society from the known into the unknown, from the mythical into the mystical, from the annual Agons into the eternal ecstasy. He was practicing Dante's procedure of ascending "to the eternal from the temporal."[63]

In brief, the plot of the first fragment centers around two superficial, superstitious, lower-class London prostitutes, Dusty and Doris, who live in a shabby flat. They are pathetic individuals without an awareness of spiritual dimensions. Sweeney depicts their boring life as nothing but "Birth, and copulation, and death." Together with the four

---

[63]Thomas Caldecot Chubb, Dante and His World (Boston, 1966), p. 749.

male companions who visit them they represent the unawakened worshippers of Phales. Sweeney, in the second fragment, represents the one who seems to be in the process of passing from darkness to light, from purgation to spiritual union. Through the story of a murder, he re-enacts to those still in darkness possibly his own battle or Agon. The atmosphere of the drama seems to be similar to The Hollow Men; Sweeney seems to be positive in his rejection of something. He is not in the same spiritual category with Doris. And yet he seems to still be in the "Shadow" of the former poem. Sweeney is the epitome of the theme of all of Eliot's dramatic work to follow: "the dilemma of the spiritually aware individual forced to exist in a world unaware of spiritual reality."[64] His problem is being able to communicate what he knows to such a spiritually blind person as Doris:

> I gotta use words when I talk to you
> But if you understand or if you dont
> That's nothing to me and nothing to you
> We all gotta do what we gotta do.[65]

It is not known when Eliot could say, as Thomas Becket says in Murder in the Cathedral, "I am . . . / A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ," but one is aware that as early as 1924 he was writing with spiritual insight. It is especially noticeable in The Hollow Men that the only religion singled out for consideration is Christianity. This is an

---

[64]Carol Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice, p. 12.

[65]Eliot, The Collected Poems and Plays, p. 84.

obvious change from The Waste Land. Eliot will always have an appreciation for other religions, but as he will later write in The Rock, they were, in contrast with Christianity, "shot with darkness":

> And the Spirit moved upon the face of the water.
> And men who turned towards the light and were known of the light
> Invented the Higher Religions; and the Higher Religions were good
> And led men from light to light, to knowledge of Good and Evil.
> But their light was ever surrounded and shot with darkness. . . .[66]

A little later in the same context he brings Christianity into contrast with the previously mentioned religions:

> Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time,
> A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history: transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time,
> A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning.
> Then it seemed as if men must proceed from light to light, in the light of the Word,
> Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative being; . . .[67]

It has been pointed out in this chapter that, as Read had observed, 1925, the year of The Hollow Men, was "the year of religious crisis" and that the poem was one of the most significant "from a confessional point of view."[68] It would be impossible to enumerate all of the factors that brought

---

[66] Ibid., p. 107. [67] Ibid., pp. 107-108.

[68] Read, "T. S. E.--A Memoir," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 34.

Eliot to this crisis; Eliot himself would not have known them all. It would probably be safe to say, however, that he was influenced most by what he read. Reading was one of the primary sources of influence upon his life. What Miller has observed concerning Eliot's criticism could be said about most all of his writing:

> Eliot's criticism is the expression of a judicious mind locked in his study, surrounded by books, making discriminations, comparisons, and abstractions in a region of pure subjectivity.[69]

It would be profitable to inquire, therefore, into any reading between about 1922 and 1925 which would have been conducive to leading him to Christianity, especially to the Catholic wing of the Anglican Church.

The Catholic persuasion of the Anglican Church stressed the sacraments, the liturgy, and the writings of the early fathers, but it was not the Roman Catholic persuasion. In the twentieth century, the term Anglo-Catholic has been applied to the high church element in the Anglican Church. As far as an influence to the Anglican Church is concerned, Eliot has acknowledged the influence of Lancelot Andrewes. The poet was already reading Andrewes before April, 1921.[70]

Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626 A.D.), an Anglican divine, was one of the most learned clergymen of his day. In his biography of Andrewes, Richard Isaacson, the amanuensis of

---

[69]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 167.

[70]Howarth, Figures Behind T. S. Eliot, p. 222.

Andrewes, wrote that Andrewes received his B.A. degree in 1575 and his M.A. in 1578, both from Pembroke Hall, Cambridge; his B.D. degree was taken in 1585 from Jesus College, Oxford; and his D.D. was taken from Pembroke Hall, Cambridge about 1589.[71] Canon Overton, in the Dictionary of National Biography, wrote that Andrewes was master of fifteen languages and unrivalled in his knowledge of patristic theology.[72]

In his 1926 essay on Andrewes, Eliot stated that it was Hooker and Andrewes who helped to make the English Church "more worthy of intellectual assent."[73] Andrewes's sermons were not only intellectual but spiritual--he is said to have spent about five hours a day in private prayer. The centrality of Christ and the importance of the Scriptures were Andrewes's primary emphases.[74]

Eliot suggested that a proper introduction to the five volumes of his sermons in The Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology would be to read his Nativity Sermons, which were published separately.[75] These seventeen sermons on the Incarnation were Christmas Day sermons preached before King James

---

[71]Henry Isaacson, "The Life and Death of the Late Reverend and Worthy Prelate, Lancelot Andrewes, Late Bishop of Winchester," Andrewes' Minor Works. Life. Indexes. Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, XI (Oxford, 1854), v-viii.

[72]John Henry Overton, "Lancelot Andrewes," Dictionary of National Biography, editors, Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, I (London, 1908), 402.

[73]Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 301.

[74]Ibid., p. 304. [75]Ibid.

between 1605 and 1624. The Incarnation, Eliot commented, was an essential dogma to Andrewes;[76] it was also an essential dogma to Eliot. Of all of the sermons that Eliot could have used to illustrate Andrewes's style, he selected a passage from a Christmas sermon on Luke 2:11; a portion of this passage will be quoted here:

> I know not how, but when we hear of saving or mention of a Saviour, presently our mind is carried to the saving of our skin, of our temporal state, of our bodily life, and farther saving we think not of. But there is another life not to be forgotten, and greater the dangers, and the destruction more to be feared than of this here, and it would be well sometimes we were remembered of it. Besides our skin and flesh a soul we have, and it is our better part by far, that also hath need of a Saviour; that hath her destruction out of which, that hath her destroyer from which she would be saved, and those would be thought on. Indeed our chief thought and care would be for that; how to escape the wrath, how to be saved from the destruction to come, whither our sins will certainly bring us. Sin it is will destroy us all.[77]

Although Eliot would never possess the knowledge of the Scriptures that Andrewes possessed, it would probably be not too much to say that during these years before 1925 he was growing in sympathy not only with Andrewes's style but with his theology as well. Edmund Wilson has observed that the English seventeenth century divines were a richer source of spiritual nourishment for Eliot than the Anglican communion of his day.[78] Lancelot Andrewes was certainly a seventeenth century divine who influenced Eliot, possibly at first by his style and later by his emphasis on the Incarnation.

---

[76] Ibid. [77] Ibid., pp. 306-307.

[78] Edmund Wilson, "T. S. Eliot," Axel's Castle (New York, 1959), p. 127.

Although the influence of Dante on Eliot has been mentioned previously, his influence should be stressed in the context of these years before Eliot's conversion as being more than academic. Dante may have been one of the major influences behind Eliot's choice of preferring the Catholic wing of the Anglican communion. Aiken refers to the appeal of Dante during the twenties:

> In the winter of 1921-22 I was in London, living in Bayswater, and Eliot and myself lunched together two or three times a week in the City, near his bank: thus resuming a habit we had formed many years before at Cambridge. He always had with him his pocket edition of Dante.[79]

The message of The Divine Comedy could lead a person to have faith in the objective reality of the triune God.

It is evident that by 1929, the date of his essay on Dante, he had profound insights into the Vita Nuova and The Divine Comedy. In the Vita Nuova section of this essay, he discusses the importance of interpreting the love story of Dante and Beatrice from the standpoint of final causes.

> The attitude of Dante to the fundamental experience of the Vita Nuova can only be understood by accustoming ourselves to find meaning in final causes rather than in origins. It is not, I believe, meant as a description of what he consciously felt on his meeting with Beatrice, but rather as a description of what that meant on mature reflection upon it. The final cause is the attraction towards God.[80]

The term "final cause" refers to the purpose that is at work

---

[79]Aiken, "An Anatomy of Melancholy," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 194.

[80]Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 234.

in the universe. Emile Caillíet, Stuart Professor of Christian Philosophy at Princeton Seminary until his retirement in 1960, explains the meaning of philosophy's terminology of the four causes by using an artist and his brass statue as an illustration:

> In this case, brass constituted the material cause. To be sure, it took an artist to make the statue. He may therefore be considered as the efficient cause of the process. The "Blueprint" he followed acted as the formal cause. The finished statue proves to have been the final cause.[81]

Dante's personal experience of falling in love with Beatrice became an experience of intense significance: God was revealing Himself through her. The actual objective Beatrice, even in The Divine Comedy, always remained herself, the thirteenth century Florentine girl, but, in addition, she was, as an image, the God-bearer, the instrument by which God communicated Himself. To Dante, the romantic experience had theological implications; he interpreted it from the viewpoint of final cause. His attraction for her was, as he thought about it, also an attraction for God who loved him and made all love possible. Life was meaningful because divine Light and Love were all around him in this life and in the life to follow. Erich Auerbach, one of the foremost Dante critics of the twentieth century and the author of Mimesis, wrote that "Dante's gift to posterity" was to restore to people the true sense of purpose that they had lost.

---

[81]Emile Caillíet, The Recovery of Purpose (New York, 1959), p. 27.

Because of its significance, his profound observation will be quoted, even though it is rather lengthy:

> In the history of modern European culture, there is, indeed, a constant which has come down unchanged through all the metamorphoses of religious and philosophical forms, and which is first discernible in Dante; namely, the idea (whatever its basis may be) that individual destiny is not meaningless, but is necessarily tragic and significant, and that the whole world context is revealed in it. That conception was already present in ancient mimesis, but carried less force, because the eschatological myths of the ancients lent far less support than Christian doctrine and the story of Christ to the conviction that the individual is indestructible, that the life of the individual on earth is a brief moment of irrevocable decision.[82]

Dante's poetic expression of the meaningful Christian scheme of things could have been another of the "powerful and concurrent reasons" leading Eliot to the objective reality of Christianity which he at least hinted at in the later poetry of this period.

Eliot was also reading during this period the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross, whose two prose works, The Ascent of Mount Carmel and The Dark Night of the Soul, helped shape the theological thinking of Eliot's later poems, especially Ash-Wednesday. Leonard Unger has given a helpful summary of the theology of these two books:

> In each of these St. John gives counsel for the religious experience of purgation and explains that those who would attain union with God must enter a condition of the soul called the "dark night." This condition is of two stages: the dark night of sense and the dark night of spirit, in which sense and spirit respectively

---

[82]Erich Auerbach, Dante: Poet of the Secular World, translated by Ralph Manheim (Chicago, 1961), p. 176.

> are purged. The Ascent, counsel for the active way of purgation, is intended for proficients; The Dark Night, counsel for the passive way, for beginners. "The passive way is that wherein the soul does nothing, and God works in the soul, and it remains, as it were patient."[83]

The epigraph of Sweeney Agonistes is from the Ascent of Mt. Carmel, Book I, Chapter IV, which indicates that Eliot was reading St. John of the Cross as early as 1924.

It was especially after T. E. Hulme's Speculations was published in 1924 that Hulme's religious ideas were to mean something to Eliot. Hulme was a classicist, "distrusted humanism," and "believed strongly in the reality of Original Sin and the inability of man to attain perfection by any human effort."[84] The doctrine of Original Sin would be in agreement with Eliot's Puritan conscience. In Axel's Castle, published in 1931, Edmund Wilson remarked concerning Eliot's conversion that it seemed "less an Anglo-Catholic conversion than a reawakening of the New Englander's conscience, of the never quite exorcised conviction of the ineradicable sinfulness of man."[85] Wilson has a point, but he does not take into account the full Anglo-Catholic influence upon Eliot, some of which has been pointed out in connection with Eliot's reading.

---

[83]Leonard Unger, "Ash Wednesday," T. S. Eliot: A Selected Critique, edited by Leonard Unger (New York, 1948), p. 350.

[84]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 23.

[85]Wilson, "T. S. Eliot," Axel's Castle, p. 127.

In addition to his reading, another factor that may have had an effect upon his future thought was his breakdown at the time he was writing The Waste Land. Howarth attributes it to exhaustion from double-living: "wage-earning faithfully and efficiently pursued, intellectual conquests pursued at the same time."[86] The breakdown could have been caused also by frustrations from inward turmoil, which is plausible since the early twenties is the period of inward debating before the ultimate crisis between 1925 and 1927. A person who passes through a breakdown is often not the same person.

Not only inward changes in his person but outward changes in the postwar world had an impact upon his life and thought:

> Possibly 1926 marks the beginning of a spiritual awakening and a growth of independence. "Only from about the year 1926," says Eliot, "did the features of the post-war world begin clearly to emerge. . . . From about that date one began slowly to realize that the intellectual and artistic output of the previous seven years had been rather the last efforts of an old world, than the first struggles of a new."[87]

His reading, his breakdown, and his impressions of the changes taking place in the post-war world are suggested as some of the causes bringing him to his confession expressed in The Hollow Men and Sweeney Agonistes.

This chapter concludes that Eliot was still under the influence of his philosophy, as he expressed it in his dissertation, when he wrote The Waste Land; however, in this poem he

---

[86]Howarth, Figures Behind T. S. Eliot, p. 234.

[87]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 27.

expanded his idea of subjective idealism to a collective idealism, an idea that was in harmony with his insights expressed in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." It was also pointed out that among the various religions he was particularly impressed with Buddhism at the time The Waste Land was written. Contrary to the interpretation of many, it is not a Christian poem. The Hollow Men was primarily his confession of the emptiness of his philosophy and his perception of the Church as his only hope, although he concluded that a "Shadow" was hindering his acceptance of it. The "Shadow," as was pointed out, was the medium of his own mind--in essence, his philosophy--but in addition to the "Shadow" referring to the subjective side, Read suggests that it could refer to the objective side as well, "the moral judgment, the Tables of the Law, the Commandments" of Christendom as he was learning to understand it.[88] Sweeney Agonistes, an early experiment in drama, was written about the same time as The Hollow Men and presents the same experience of conflict and new spiritual awareness as The Hollow Men. It also, however, does not express a satisfactory attainment of an objective reality outside of the self. Instead of faith there is fear; the fear of facing the "eyes" in The Hollow Men is expressed as fear in meeting the waiting "hangman" of Sweeney Agonistes. This period concludes with his fear on the verge of faith. His

---

[88]Read, "T. S. E.--A Memoir," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 37.

reading, breakdown, and impressions of the new post-war world are in themselves adequate explanations of the causes that brought him to this turning point.

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY EXPRESSION OF ANGLO-CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

This chapter will continue the development of the religious thought of Eliot from 1927 to 1935. In addition to his confirmation in the Church of England (1927), primary consideration will be given to the personal poem concerning his conversion to the Christian faith, Ash-Wednesday, to his choruses of a pageant, The Rock, and to his first independent full-length drama, Murder in the Cathedral.

Eliot was baptized and confirmed into the Church of England in 1927.[1] In 1928 he declared himself, in the Preface to For Lancelot Andrewes, as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion."[2] He made the following comment about this quotable statement of his beliefs at the Convocation Lecture delivered at the University of Leeds in July, 1961:

> Well, my religious beliefs are unchanged, and I am strongly in favour of the maintenance of the monarchy in all countries which have a monarchy; as for Classicism and Romanticism, I find that the terms have no longer the importance to me that they once had. But even if

---

[1]Eliot, "To Criticize the Critic," To Criticize the Critic (New York, 1965), p. 15.

[2]Eliot, For Lancelot Andrewes (Garden City, 1929), p. vii.

> my statement of belief needed no qualification at all after the passage of the years, I should not be inclined to express it in quite this way.[3]

It was stressed in the previous chapter that this decision was not made suddenly but gradually. Arthur Mizener points out that it was five years after The Hollow Men "before Eliot began, in Ash-Wednesday, to find where else to go."[4] This statement is not accurate. Even in The Hollow Men, Eliot saw the Church as the only hope for empty men. In addition, his reading of Andrewes, Dante, St. John of the Cross, and Hulme during the twenties suggests the direction of his thought. This is legitimate evidence, especially with regard to Eliot, for he recommended in his essay on Dante in 1929 the method of reading the writings that influenced an author:

> But the next step after reading Dante again and again should be to read some of the books that he read, rather than modern books about his work and life and times, however good.[5]

Also, by 1926 Eliot was already attending the early communion services, as Sir Herbert Read learned one morning while spending the night in the Eliot home at 57 Chester Terrace:

> I remember how on one such occasion I woke early and presently became conscious that the door of my room, which was on the ground floor, was slowly and silently being opened. I lay still and saw first a hand and then an arm reach round the door and lift from a hook the

---

[3]Eliot, To Criticize the Critic, p. 15.

[4]Arthur Mizener, "To Meet Mr. Eliot," T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Hugh Kenner (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), p. 23.

[5]Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 236.

> bowler hat that was hanging there. It was a little before seven o'clock and Mr. Eliot was on his way to an early communion service. It was the first intimation I had of his conversion to the Christian faith.[6]

The fact that even his close friends did not know of his decision indicates in the case of Eliot not a lack of courage or enthusiasm but humility and honesty (as well as the shyness that he always had) with regard to the expression of his faith. These factors should be taken into consideration when his Christianity is suspect as being more a matter of the head than of the heart. In 1929 Edmund Wilson, for example, describes Eliot's religious fervor for For Lancelot Andrewes as a "low blue flame."[7] Smidt answers such charges in the following:

> But he never wraps it up in stock phrases to which he cannot give personal assent, nor does he affirm more than he safely may. On the contrary, one often feels that he understates his religious views, and is overscrupulous in revealing the limitations of his religious sensibility.[8]

His religious sensibility, therefore, is more like that of the Apostle John than that of the Apostle Peter. In The Gospel According to John, John refers to his own conversion only indirectly (John 1:40) and never refers to himself at all in the Gospel except as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"

---

[6]Read, "T. S. E.--A Memoir," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 22.

[7]Wilson, "T. S. Eliot and the Church of England," New Republic, LVIII (April 24, 1929), 283-284.

[8]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 32.

(John 13:23). Personality makes a difference in human conduct. Like John, Eliot was a quiet, humble, meditative type of person. In addition, when he wrote Ash-Wednesday, he was a comparatively new convert and had not had time to grow and mature in the knowledge of the Christian faith. He was a man in poetry but a baby in the faith. Simons makes a wise observation when he points out that in America "there seems to be a special temptation to require of poets more than they can give."[9] Eliot is not a theologian presenting the larger claims of Catholicism, but a poet presenting, as in the case of Ash-Wednesday, a brief moment of religious experience in an age that believes religion to be a kind of defeatism and puts all its hope for man in finding the right secular order."[10]

Ash-Wednesday was published in 1930, but Part II had already appeared as "Salutation" in December of 1927, Part I as "Perch'io non spero" in the spring of 1928, and Part III as "Al som de l'escalina" in the autumn of 1927. It is a personal poem concerning Eliot's struggle, after his initial act of faith in God, to relinquish that which might hinder his acceptance by God and to attain complete redemption in God.

The first day of Lent, the traditional forty days before Easter, is called Ash Wednesday. Frank Colquhoun offers the following explanation of the day:

---

[9]J. W. Simons, "Beliefs and Poetry of T. S. Eliot," Commonweal, LXXI (October 30, 1959), 160.

[10]Allen Tate, "On Ash Wednesday," T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 131.

> The title derives from the discipline in the ancient Roman Church of sprinkling ashes on the heads of penitents with a view to their being restored to Communion at Easter. The Sarum Missal contained a service for the blessing of the ashes, which were intended to be a mark of humiliation, contrition, and mourning (see, e.g., Isa. 61:3; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 11:21).[11]

Grover Smith comments that this day "is a day of weeping and fasting and of repentance for the sins of the past, when Christians seek God's help to turn them back toward Him and away from the world."[12]

Before the poem begins, therefore, he has already decided for the Church as the answer to the waste land condition. Helen Gardner supports this observation:

> In Ash Wednesday the choice has been made. Choice and decision are not its subject. It is not a single continuous poem, but a group of poems on aspects of a single theme. In religious terms the theme is penitence, and penitence can be defined as a proper attitude to the past, a recognition of the present and a resolve for the future.[13]

Part I of Ash-Wednesday, as well as the entire poem, could be epitomized in the word repentance, which word, of course, is related to the theme of redemption. Part I commences with this idea of repentance:

> Because I do not hope to turn again
> Because I do not hope
> Because I do not hope to turn. . . .[14]

---

[11]Frank Colquhoun, "Ash Wednesday," Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids, 1960), p. 69.

[12]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 139.

[13]Helen Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot (New York, 1959), pp. 113-114.

[14]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 60.

Eliot has used an exact word to indicate the meaning of repentance: "turn." Repentance is a biblical concept and the Greek word for it, μετάνοια means "a change of mind, turning about." When one repents, he turns from something to something. This is illustrated in 1 Thessalonians 1:9: ". . . and how ye turned to God from idols. . . ."[15]

In the first three strophes, the poet expresses the fact that his decision has been so fundamental that he does not hope to turn back to his former ways again. These strophes, as well as the remainder of the poem, set forth his acts of resignation, acts which are appropriate to such a day as Ash Wednesday. In essence, what he gives up is his former way of thinking: collective idealism. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he wrote about his aspirations for the mind of Europe, aspirations which are again in mind in this poem:

> Because I do not hope to turn
> Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
> I no longer strive to strive towards such things
> (Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)
> The vanished power of the usual reign?[16]

Possibly the second strophe speaks of his turning away from his subjective method of creating poetry. Instead of responding to the objective world directly, his former method was to write about it as it was mirrored to him in his subjective consciousness:

---

[15]William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago, 1956), p. 513.

[16]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 60.

Because I cannot drink
There, where trees flower, and springs flow,
for there is nothing again.[17]

The third strophe refers to his awareness that there is no such thing as the simultaneous existence of all of history:

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place . . .[18]

Possibly this change of insight with regard to literature is illustrated in the following contrast. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he concludes that one should live in what is not "merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living."[19] In "Lancelot Andrewes," however, he comments about "the dreary cemetery of literature" where the remains of Andrewes's reputation will ultimately be placed.[20]

Despite the things he is giving up, he is not depressed about it; nor is he a "low blue flame." He exults, "I rejoice that things are as they are" and "Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something / Upon which to rejoice."[21]

The three strophes, with their emphasis on repentance, indicate a beginner on the pathway to redemption. There is,

---

[17] Ibid. [18] Ibid.

[19] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Selected Essays, p. 11.

[20] Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," Selected Essays, p. 299.

[21] Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, pp. 60-61.

however, a note of uneasiness about his present position. The decision has been so right for him that he does not hope to turn again, but there may lurk in his mind the thought that he might desire the old way again. Also, he does not hope to turn again, but now that he has made his decision, he feels like an exile in the eyes of the Lady who is his intercessor: "I renounce the blessed face / And renounce the voice."[22] The Lady has withdrawn from him so that the purgation of his will might the better take place. Eliot had learned the philosophy concerning purgation from the Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross.

This work of purgation has been going on because the poet refers to himself as "the aged eagle."[23] This is a picture of the purging of the old nature, which the Apostle Paul terms the "old man":

> That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man. . . . (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The opening twenty-five lines indicate that the decision against "the old man" has been made and that, because of it, he is enjoying a certain amount of relief. From the echo of the "Kyrie," "And pray to God to have mercy upon us," unto the end of Part I, the need for patience and submission is stressed.

---

[22] Ibid., p. 60. [23] Ibid.

Part II of Ash-Wednesday describes the note of hope in the acceptance of death. The devouring work of the leopards and the presence of the Lady have given him hope concerning his possible redemption. Since the leopards are white and are the agents of purgation, they symbolize agents of good. The "three white leopards" is not a biblical allusion but, as Elizabeth Drew points out, a mythical one:

> They are in the tradition of all the devouring myths in which the hero is swallowed and emerges regenerated, just as the scattering of the bones tells of the same psychic reality as the dismemberment of Dionysus or of Osiris. The leopards are devouring beasts, but obviously at the same time beneficent ones. Their whiteness and their quiet pose show them to be harmless: they lose terror in beauty. Moreover, as the bones know very well, the loss of the parts devoured by the leopards has made it possible for the brightness of the Lady to shine upon them.[24]

The presence of the intercessor gives hope to him that his bones, like those of Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, shall live. He, therefore, welcomes renunciation:

> And I who am here dissembled
> Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love
> To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.[25]

Here we see Eliot renouncing a temporal immortality; he is indifferent now to the aspiration of joining Homer and Dante and others in the simultaneous order of literature.

In addition to the leopards and the lady, we have the wind. The wind is the only one able to give life to these

---

[24]Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, p. 107.

[25]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 61.

bones: "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27). The wind is a type of the Spirit of God in the Scriptures (cf. Ezekiel 37:9, 10; John 3:8; Acts 2:1, 2; 2 Peter 1:21). There is hope of redemption because of the presence of the wind.

Part II concludes with the litany to the Lady which George Williamson succintly summarizes: "The litany of the bones offers their salutation to the Lady of paradoxes who is now the Garden which reconciles all paradoxes."[26]

In Part III, the poet, like Lot's wife, looks back retrospectively into the past and sees himself at various stages of giving up "the old man" and the old way of life. The third stair reveals the earthly delights that still have attraction:

> At the first turning of the third stair,
> Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit
> And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
> The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green
> Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
> Brown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
> Lilac and brown hair;
> Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of
> the mind over the third stair,
> Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
> Climbing the third stair.[27]

The "slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit," as many critics have suggested, has a strong sexual connotation, and

---

[26]George Williamson, A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot (New York, 1957), p. 174.

[27]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 63.

the "music of the flute" could refer to poetry. As he is moved by what he sees in retrospection, he thinks, "Lord, I am not worthy / Lord, I am not worthy / but speak the word only."[28] The later part of the statement is both an expression of unworthiness and faith (Matthew 8:8-10).

In Part IV, the past continues to be the subject. Here, however, the past has memories not of earthly, sensuous delights but of the Lady "wearing / White light folded, sheathed about her folded."[29] This illumination gives him sufficient present knowledge to redeem present and past time. She, like the Holy Spirit in the Christian, is able to guide him into truth: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . ." (John 16:13). Ash-Wednesday speaks of the redemption of time as well as the redemption of the soul:

> The new years walk, restoring
> Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring
> With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem
> The time. Redeem
> The unread vision in the higher dream
> While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.[30]

Time is redeemed when a man yields to time as it is arranged by God rather than by man. Time should be viewed and used according to God's perspective and purpose.

For the purpose of his purgation, the Lady withdrew in Part II. In Part III and Part IV, with her word missing because of her absence, he thinks about the past. Although the

---

[28] Ibid. [29] Ibid., p. 64. [30] Ibid.

intermediary word is also not present in Part V, the Word, Christ, is present in the world and in the darkness where he is (John 1:10, 11). The poet feels he is both an exile from the Lady and from Christ. He feels unworthy and out of contact with both and prays for the veiled sister to pray for those who offend her.

Part VI, the conclusion of Ash-Wednesday, commences with a "time of tension between dying and birth."[31] The opening twenty-four lines speak of this crisis. In this place of solitude, "three dreams [sensual enjoyment, poetic beauty, and heavenly redemption] cross / Between blue rocks."[32] "Between the blue rocks" is the place of decision. The yew-tree is a symbol of victory over death. Grover Smith points this out:

> The portent of his deliverance is the voice of "the other yew," evidently the voice of life and immortality, just as the whispers shaken from the first yew by the divine breath were voices of the dead past, hopeless desire, and death.[33]

The poem concludes with a prayer to the Holy Virgin. Here the Lady and the Holy Virgin are symbolically one. The Lady, like Beatrice, has served as a mediator between this one near despair and the intercessions of the Virgin. In this prayer to the Holy Virgin, he prays that he will possess self-control and that he will be able to experientially know that "Our peace [is] in His will."[34] Eliot's comment on this

---

[31] Ibid., p. 66. [32] Ibid.

[33] Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 156.

[34] Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 67.

well-known line of Dante is probably the best commentary on it:

> And the statement of Dante seems to me literally true. And I confess that it has more beauty for me now, when my own experience has deepened its meaning, than it did when I first read it. So I can only conclude that I cannot, in practice, wholly separate my poetic appreciation from my personal beliefs.[35]

The final lines speak, therefore, with a note of hope concerning redemption because he knows and desires to live by the great principle that can bring him deeper and deeper into the vital center which is God. Although there remains a condition of tension, that principle will continually lead him to "the still point of the turning world."[36] It is redemptive to reconcile one's life to the "still center," and this concept will be more fully developed in Eliot's later poetry, especially Four Quartets.

Except for the mysticism of John of the Cross, Eliot's thought in Ash-Wednesday is in harmony with Catholic Christianity. The rationalizing mysticism of the Spanish mystic, however, is not precisely biblical, as a comparison with St. Paul's discussion of sanctification in Romans 6--8 will readily reveal. Paul says that one can immediately "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4) when he continually reckons by faith upon the finished work of Christ for his sin nature (Romans 6:11-13; 8:1-4). There is no mention of a "dark night

---

[35]Eliot, "Dante," Selected Essays, p. 231.

[36]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 119.

of the soul" in the New Testament or anything remotely equivalent to it. John of the Cross, a solitary, independent, and creative Catholic, "pursued strongly," says Charles Williams, "the Way of the Rejection of Images, the Negative Way. He wrote: 'If a man wishes to be sure of the road he travels on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark.' 'There is only one method, that which makes empty.'"[37] Williams goes on to say that John of the Cross, for his strange approach to spiritual things, suffered persecution and imprisonment from the priests and Fathers of his own Church.[38] Although many would not agree with him doctrinally, his spiritual walk with God was commendable. The twentieth century Spanish mystic, Antonio Machado, describes John of the Cross as "the spirit of ardent flame."[39] It is not appropriate to call Eliot, who manifests such similar spiritual devotion in this poem, a "low blue flame." It is unlikely that a nominal member of the Church of England would even be willing to attempt to practice the way of detachment and love presented by this Carmelite saint, this companion of St. Teresa. Possibly Eliot was originally attracted to him because he was one of the greatest Christian poet-mystics.

---

[37]Charles Williams, Descent of the Dove (Grand Rapids, 1939), p. 180.

[38]Ibid., p. 181.

[39]F. C. Happold, Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology (Baltimore, 1964), p. 325.

The "Ariel Poems" were written at about the same time as Ash-Wednesday, and since they approximate Ash-Wednesday in its religious thought, they will be treated briefly. The four poems were contributed between 1927 and 1930 as something like a Christmas card for Faber and Faber's "Ariel Poems" by contemporary writers. These Christmas poems give additional evidence of Eliot's preoccupation with the theme of the Incarnation.

"Journey of the Magi" (1927) is a monologue by one of the wise men who came to see the one "that is born King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2); he is one, like Eliot, who has accepted the Incarnation as a historical fact. In addition, the man from the east has an insight similar to Simeon's (Luke 2:25-35); the wise man comprehends that the Messiah was born in order to die: "were we led all that way for Birth or Death?"[40] The capitals indicate the significance of the birth and death of Jesus: Incarnation and Redemption. This birth had a profound affect upon the Magi: "this Birth was / Hard and bitter agony for us, Like Death, our death."[41] The words "our death" and "another death" should be interpreted with reference to the mysticism of St. John of the Cross, which teaches the way of negation.[42] At least one of the Magi

---

[40]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 69.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 123.

realizes he needs to pass through a period of purgation as preparation for union with the one whose birth he came to acknowledge.

Eliot's concluding lines are a rare and memorable description of the predicament of the wise men at the time of the transition from one dispensation to another:

> We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
> But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
> With an alien people clutching their gods.[43]

A dispensation is a "distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose."[44] They became aware that a new economy was being established on earth, even for the Jews, but they had to return home to their kingdoms which had not seen the light of the new day. So great was the change in their lives that they felt like strangers in their own kingdoms. This is another way for the poet to express the "turn" of Ash-Wednesday that had taken place in his own life.

"A Song for Simeon" (1928), a prayer of Simeon's while waiting for death after seeing the infant Jesus, attempts to catch the spirit of Simeon's thought in accordance with Luke 2:25-35. The note of disappointment that he will not participate in the struggles of the early Christians is foreign to the passage in the Scriptures, where contentment reigns in the soul of Simeon. The poem concludes with the idea that

---

[43]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 69.

[44]Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today (Chicago, 1965), p. 29.

his concern for future believers is too heavy a burden for his tired, dying body; that burden is not for him, having seen the Lord's salvation. His feeling concerning the imminency of his death is expressed beautifully: "My life is light, waiting for the death wind, / Like a feather on the back of my hand."[45]

"Animula" (1929) is the description of a certain type of person who passes through childhood into adulthood, while still remaining a child spiritually:

> Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
> Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
> Unable to fare forward or retreat,
> Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,
> Denying the importunity of the blood,
> Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom. . . .[46]

This poem differs, however, from The Hollow Men with its empty men, for in "Animula," the soul not only eventually sees but actually lives for the first time when, facing death, it is forced to think about the spiritual realities set forth in the Anglo-Catholic faith: "Living first in the silence after the viaticum."[47] The poem ends sadly with a request to pray for those especially who did not have either the opportunity or time for even "the silence after the viaticum," yet who were individuals in the same spiritual plight as "the simple soul" described in the poem. "Animula" presents the pathetic picture of a soul whose only memory of Christmas before the time

---

[45]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 67.

[46]Ibid., p. 71. [47]Ibid.

of death is that of the "brilliance of the Christmas tree" in childhood. That seems to be the point of this poem as a Christmas poem: the lights were seen but not the Light until the light of life was almost out.

"Marina" (1930), according to Elizabeth Drew, "is the only purely joyous poem Eliot has ever written."[48] The context of this poem of joy is that of Pericles' reunion with Marina, his daughter, in Shakespeare's Pericles. Whereas the "Journey of the Magi" is based on a sermon by Lancelot Andrewes, which was preached before King James at Whitehall in 1622, and "A Song for Simeon" is based on Luke 2, "Marina" is based on a myth. King Pericles is the speaker of the monologue, which, at the climax of his awakening, registers his thoughts and feelings upon the discovery of his daughter Marina. She is more than a daughter in this poem; she is a Christ-image, as Beatrice was, as an image, the God-bearer, the instrument by which God communicated himself. Grover Smith has made an excellent observation of a source which sheds light on Marina:

> In "Marina" the dream child comes with almost a religious epiphany, and it is hardly accidental that the phrase "Given or lent?" echoes Alice Meynell's line, "Given, not lent" in her poem "Unto us a Son is given," referring to Isaiah, chapter 9.[49]

However, Marina is not an image of the Child of "Journey of

---

[48]Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, p. 127.

[49]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poems and Plays, p. 132.

the Magi," but she is an image of His resurrection and of the resurrection of believers, of whom He is the first-fruits. "The voyage in Marina," comments Helen Gardner, "discovers in the ocean an island, and sees again a beloved face. Its theme is not the immortality of the soul, but resurrection."[50]

There is a progression of thought in these "Ariel Poems." In "Journey of the Magi" and "A Song of Simeon," an old man enters into the significance of the birth of Jesus, but is unable for various reasons to enter into his death; in "Animula," an old man has discovered the meaning of that death, as it is symbolized by the Eucharist, which was given on the verge of his own death; in "Marina," an old man discovers the full-orbed splendor of the Christian message, including resurrection. The "Ariel Poems" depict the writings of a comparatively new believer who is gaining insights into the faith from which he will not turn again. From the exhaustion of spirit of "Journey of the Magi," one is brought to the vitality of spirit of "Marina." Helen Gardner emphasizes the overall transition of thought at this period of Eliot's life: "As The Hollow Men is the bridge between The Waste Land and Ash-Wednesday, Marina is the bridge between Ash-Wednesday and Four Quartets."[51] The lines near the conclusion of "Marina" remind one of the spiritual dedication of both Ash-Wednesday and Four Quartets:

---

[50]Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot, p. 126. [51]Ibid.

> This form, this face, this life
> Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
> Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
> The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.[52]

In this poem, one also finds, however, the conflict between the world within and the world without, the body and the spirit which Eliot has not been able to resolve. He is near to accepting the body and the senses in "Marina," as J. Hillis Miller points out:

> These images appeal to all the senses, not just to eyesight, and they show Eliot beginning to know a real world by means of a real body engaged in that world. This return from idealist isolation to a physical world is one dimension, and not the least moving, of "Marina."[53]

The idea of the new center of awareness of "Marina" is approached from an opposite viewpoint in the two sections of a poem called Coriolan. In "Marina," the old man is aware of the reality of "a world of time beyond" him; in "Triumphal March" (October, 1931), the pagan general is not aware of this supernatural world of reality:

> O hidden under the dove's wing, hidden in the turtle's breast
> Under the palmtree at noon, under the running water
> At the still point of the turning world. O hidden.[54]

Not the presence but the absence of spiritual awareness is stressed.

The narrator of the poem is a person observing this triumphal march of the Roman general with his army. The poem

---

[52]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 73.

[53]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 185.

[54]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 86.

intimates that the narrator perceives that the famous general does not care for the people who ignorantly claim him as a saviour and that the source of spiritual wisdom and strength is hidden from him. The general does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, which Spirit is symbolized by the "dove's wing."

"Difficulties of a Statesman" (winter, 1931) adds information concerning the inward thoughts of the man, as the previous section presents the outward trappings. Coriolan is different from Shakespeare's Coriolanus, a primary source of the poem, because Coriolan is like a weak, spoiled mama's boy. The populace, however, cannot see beneath the outward appearance of the man. He is nothing apart from politics and military power. "Difficulties of a Statesman" is Eliot's "ironic comment on the futilities of statesmanship without a centre in some reality more permanent and more satisfying to the nature of man than that of government machinery."[55]

Another triumphal entry of history is implicit in the poem. In obedience to the "still point of the turning world," Christ "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). He was the still point incarnate; the general knew nothing of such a center. This "still point" will be one of the main themes of Eliot's religious thought in the subsequent poems and plays.

---

[55]Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, p. 139.

Before the publication of Eliot's next contribution to drama, The Rock (1934), his Selected Essays was published in 1932, followed by The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism in 1933. Among the essays in Selected Essays which have not been mentioned and that are particularly pertinent to his religious thought are "John Bramhall" (1927), "Thoughts After Lambeth" (1931), "Religion and Literature," and "The Pensées of Pascal" (1931). The lectures of The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism were prepared in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the autumn of 1932 and were delivered at Harvard University during the winter of 1932-33.

The Rock is actually not a drama but a pageant, and largely a prose pageant at that, and in addition, Eliot states in his prefatory note to the play that he is literally the author of only one scene and the choruses. The choruses, which will be our primary consideration, are incorporated in all editions of his Complete Poems. In the spring of 1934 at Sadler's Wells, The Rock was presented on behalf of the Forty-Five Churches Fund of the Diocese of London, a fund which was established to build and endow new churches in the fast-growing sections of London.

At the recommendation of E. Martin Brown, the Forty-Five Churches Fund invited Eliot to assist in writing the pageant, especially the choral verses. According to Brown, the

choruses received an "overwhelming response.[56] Despite the deadline pressures under which they were written, Grover Smith wrote, "Musically, whatever their dramatic deficiencies, these rank among Eliot's best poems."[57]

In The Rock, the "low blue flame" of For Lancelot Andrewes becomes "the silver trumpet."[58] His faith is now clearly expressed and with conviction. He is a poet with a mission; he has a message to communicate.

The very title of the play indicates his acknowledgment of the Church of England, especially the Anglo-Catholic wing. His preoccupation with the theme of the Incarnation is again evident. In Chorus VII, the Incarnation of Christ radiates "the light of the Word" in the midst of the dim light of other religions and in the midst of the darkness of the world. In addition to the birth of Christ, his Passion and Sacrifice are stated, and possibly Eliot is describing his own discipleship in the context of those lines:

> Then it seemed as if men must proceed from light to
> light in the light of the Word,
> Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of
> their negative being;
> Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always
> before, selfish and purblind as ever before,

---

[56]E. Martin Browne, "T. S. Eliot in the Theatre," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 120.

[57]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 174.

[58]Edward Shillito, "The Faith of T. S. Eliot," Christian Century, LI (August 1, 1934), 994.

> Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always
> resuming their march on the way that was lit by the
> light;
> Often halting, loitering, straying, delaying returning,
> yet following no other way.[59]

". . . yet following no other way," says Eliot. That way is the way of Catholic Christianity, as his statements concerning the Eucharist make clear:

> And the Son of Man was not crucified once for all,
> The blood of the martyrs not shed once for all,
> The lives of the Saints not given once for all:
> But the Son of Man is crucified always
> And there shall be Martyrs and Saints.[60]

Eliot is saying, as the Catholics do, that the sacrament of the Eucharist is also a sacrifice, a sacrifice that will continue until the end of time. In "East Coker," Eliot may have in mind the actual transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ and the subsequent eating of the "bread" by the congregation:

> The dripping blood our only drink,
> The bloody flesh our only food.[61]

When the bread and wine are made the body and blood of Christ, the Incarnate Christ is bodily present. The doctrine of the Incarnation seems to be the central principle of Catholicism. According to J. Hillis Miller, Gerard Manley Hopkins, a nineteenth century Catholic poet, believed that "the chief attraction of Catholicism is the doctrine of the Real Presence.[62]

---

[59]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 108.

[60]Ibid., p. 106. [61]Ibid., p. 128.

[62]Miller, The Disappearance of God: Five 19th Century Writers (New York, 1965), p. 6.

This doctrine was an attraction to Eliot, too. "The point of intersection of the timeless / With time"[63] not only took place in history at the birth of Christ but, according to the Catholic position, it also takes place at each observance of the sacrament of communion. Of course, the impingement of the timeless upon time may also take place during times of meditation and prayer and even at unexpected moments.[64] Kristian Smidt points out that Eliot is occupied with the Catholic position over that of the Protestant:

> He leans to Catholicism in stressing the dogma of Incarnation rather than that of Atonement; the perfection of the will and religious discipline rather than the intensity of faith; penance, confession and purgation rather than judgment; communal rather than private worship. Such things as the adoration of the Virgin and the belief in the intercession of saints are more superficial Catholic elements in his poetry.[65]

The concept of the perfection of the will is stated several times in The Rock: "Let us therefore make perfect our will / O God, help us."[66]

Some concepts of his religious thought are both Catholic and Protestant. Individuals and churches in both believe that man is a sinner unable to redeem himself: ". . . for the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately

---

[63]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 136.

[64]Ibid. [65]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 210.

[66]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 110.

wicked."[67] Man on his own will not make spiritual progress: "The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries / Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust."[68] Since men now live in an age that has widely rejected the Incarnation, they are part of "an age which advances progressively backwards."[69] Both Catholics and Protestants proclaim also the importance of the interdependence of Christians:

> What life have you if you have not life together?
> There is no life that is not in community,
> And no community not lived in praise of GOD.
> Even the anchorite who meditates alone,
> For whom the days and nights repeat the praise of GOD.
> Pray for the Church, the Body of Christ incarnate.[70]

The classic passage of Scripture on the co-inherence, as Eliot's friend Charles Williams would call it, of the Body of Christ is Ephesians 4:12-16. Paul speaks of Christ, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16). The Church is able to build up itself because each member of that body is equipped with a spiritual gift or gifts to make its own unique contribution. In Chorus IX, Eliot sets forth one of his rare affirmations concerning the acceptance of the human body:

---

[67] Ibid., p. 105. [68] Ibid., p. 96.

[69] Ibid., p. 108. [70] Ibid., p. 101.

> For Man is joined spirit and body,
> And therefore must serve as spirit and body.
> Visible and invisible, two worlds meet in Man;
> Visible and invisible must meet in His Temple;
> You must not deny the body.[71]

This is a definite change, for his "early poetry is dominated by disgust for the body."[72]

Although The Rock may not be his best poetry, it is an important document on his religious thought of the thirties, his "period of militant Christianity."[73]

Eliot's first full-length drama, Murder in the Cathedral, was written for the Canterbury Festival of June, 1935. George Bell, Bishop of Chichester and a pioneer in bringing a rapprochement between the Church and creative arts, invited Eliot to write a play for this Festival. The play was to be presented at the Chapter House and by mostly amateur actors.

This drama, of course, is based upon the history of King Henry II and Thomas Becket (1118-1170 A.D.), archbishop of Canterbury, and their differences over the rights of Church and State. Some rash words of Henry inspired four knights of his household to set out for Canterbury, where they ultimately killed Thomas in his cathedral church. Eliot interprets these historical facts as a contest between "brute power and resigned holiness."[74]

---

[71]Ibid., p. 111. [72]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 184.

[73]Carol H. Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice, p. 18.

[74]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 195.

The play is made up of two parts, with an interlude between them in which the archbishop preaches his Christmas morning sermon in the cathedral. As far as the person of Becket is concerned, Part I deals with his inward conflict, resulting from the temptations of the four tempters; Part II deals with his outward conflict, resulting from the persecution of the four knights. The interlude looks both ways: the sermon reveals the fact that Becket has profited by the inward conflict and is prepared for the outward conflict, whatever it may turn out to be.

In Part I, the fourth tempter comes nearest to defeating Becket because Becket himself has thought on this man's arguments. The tempter urges the archbishop to seek martyrdom because he would be able to accomplish more that way: "Saint and Martyr rule from the throne."[75] The tempter also argues, "Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest / On earth, to be high in heaven."[76] The eyes of Thomas Becket are opened shortly to his own sinful flaw, and he replies,

> Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain:
> Temptation shall not come in this kind again.
> The last temptation is the greatest treason:
> To do the right deed for the wrong reason.[77]

In his sermon, Becket points out that should one through pride will his own martyrdom, he would negate the possibility of being a true martyr:

---

[75]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 191.

[76]Ibid., p. 192. [77]Ibid., p. 196.

> A martyrdom is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom.[78]

Here we are also introduced to a frequent religious thought of Eliot: Complete freedom of action comes only when one is submissive to the will of God. When this is accomplished, one always has rest and peace in his labours. As Becket puts it, ". . . the wheel may turn and still / Be forever still."[79]

An interesting feature of the play is the spiritual development of the women of Canterbury, the Chorus. They not only comment on the events they witness but also mature as a result of these events. E. Martin Browne, in agreement with Helen Gardner, goes as far as to say that the Chorus is the actual protagonist in the play:

> Here is the finest writing: here is the real development, for the core of the drama is not in Becket's struggle towards martyrdom (already near completion when the play begins) but in the progress of the Christian community, represented by the Women, from fear through sympathy and shared guilt to repentance and thanksgiving.[80]

Robert Speaight, who played Becket more than a thousand times, said the "play won immediate critical acclaim."[81] After the play's first performance at the Chapter House, it

---

[78]Ibid., pp. 199-200. [79]Ibid., p. 182.

[80]Browne, "T. S. Eliot in the Theatre," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 123.

[81]Robert Speaight, "Murder in the Cathedral," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 185.

was presented six months later at the tiny Mercury Theatre at Notting Hill Gate. Except for brief intervals, it ran at the Mercury Theatre and in the West End from November, 1935, to March, 1937. It then went on two long provincial tours, and early in 1938 it was presented in Boston and New York. Concerning the play's success in Britain, Robert Speaight commented, "The success of Murder in the Cathedral in Britain owed a great deal to the support of the Church of England. The play was, after all, an Anglican classic. . . ."[82]

It has been debated whether or not the play is a tragedy or a comedy. Carol Smith's middle position is probably the best one:

> Thus the events in Murder in the Cathedral are presented as neither tragic or comic, but Christian, for Thomas goes to glory although he suffers martyrdom. In Eliot's conception of drama, neither laughter nor tears is the desired response, but rather peace which passeth understanding.[83]

Becket comforts the priests before his martyrdom with these words:

> I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven,
> a whisper,
> And I would no longer be denied; all things
> Proceed to a joyful consummation.[84]

Not fear at what may befall a person, whether martyrdom as in the case of Becket or consequent suffering as in the case of the women, but faith in God and submission to His will

---

[82] Ibid., p. 191.

[83] Carol Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice, p. 102.

[84] Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 209.

whatever His will may bring form the central thought of the drama. The play centers around the theme of martyrdom, which is more of a Catholic emphasis than a Protestant. The women are prototypes of all religious worshipers to follow who will seek help and inspiration from a great hero-saint.

Since this chapter, especially in Ash-Wednesday and the "Ariel Poems," has analyzed Eliot's expression of his conversion, it would be amiss to neglect a consideration of Pascal, whose own conversion was similar to Eliot's and in whom Eliot found a kindred spirit. Pascal was also a man of eminence, for he was a French scientist, writer, and Christian thinker who had a profound influence upon Western thought. Ernest Mortimer, a clergyman in the Church of England who made a life-time study of Pascal, quoted in his book on Pascal these following words by Jacques Chevalier, professor and Pascalian scholar: "He is to France," writes Professor Chevalier, "what Plato is to Greece, Dante to Italy, Cervantes and S. Theresa to Spain, Shakespeare to England."[85] Eliot expressed his own respect for Pascal in his essay called "The 'Pensées' of Pascal" written during this period, 1931:

> . . . I can think of no Christian writer, not Newman even, more to be commended than Pascal to those who doubt, but who have the mind to conceive, and the sensibility to feel, the disorder, the futility, and the meaninglessness, the mystery of life and suffering,

---

[85]Ernest Mortimer, Blaise Pascal: The Life and Works of a Realist (New York, 1959), p. 183.

> and who can only find peace through a satisfaction of the whole being.[86]

Sir Herbert Read said that Eliot was more like St. John of the Cross than Pascal because Eliot was not one of those who doubt.[87] However, such a statement is in direct contradiction to Eliot's own words. H. S. Davies gives the following account of a conversation with Eliot following a dinner together in 1934:

> There was, he quietly observed, a great difference between the Marxists and himself, not only or merely in the content of their beliefs, but even more in the way in which they were held. "They seem so certain of what they believe. My own beliefs are held with a scepticism which I never even hope to be quite rid of." This helped me to appreciate, among other things, his natural affinity with the Anglican Establishment of the seventeenth century, for the religious verse of Donne and Herbert turns almost as much on doubt as on faith, and even more on the constant interplay between the two.[88]

Pascal was born in 1623, and, because of ill-health since infancy, died in 1662 at the early age of thirty-nine. His notable scientific experiments and publications took place, for the most part, before 1654, the year of his conversion, which was the direct result of the influence of Jansenism. His Provincial Letters was a defense of the Jansenists against their Jesuit adversaries. About the last five years of his life were spent writing down on scraps of

---

[86]Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 368.

[87]Read, "T. S. E.--A Memoir," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 36.

[88]H. S. Davies, "Mistah Kurtz: He Dead," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 360.

paper, as thoughts came to him, the material for what he planned to be, as Eliot phrased it, "a carefully constructed defence of Christianity, a true Apology and a kind of Grammar of Assent, setting forth reasons which will convince the intellect.[89] These fragments, found after his death, compose what came to be known as the Pensées, which was first edited by the Jansenists in 1670. The influence of the Pensées on Four Quartets especially will be discussed in the next chapter.

Besides the guidance and comfort of the Pensées, Eliot must have been struck to some extent by Pascal's unique account of his conversion. Pascal, on the night of his conversion, November 23, 1654, made a written record of the revelation, and for the eight remaining years of his life "took care to sew and unsew the paper in the lining each time he changed his coat.[90] In this document, found after his death and now known as the Memorial, the centrality of the one who became incarnate, Jesus Christ, is evident throughout, as the following quotations from it reveal: "Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy. . . . 'This is the eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and the one whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.'

---

[89]Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 359.

[90]Cailliet, Pascal: The Emergence of Genius (New York, 1945), p. 133.

Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ."[91] Eliot himself became ". . . inexorably committed to the dogma of the Incarnation."[92]

In a discussion of the mystical experience of Pascal, who was not a mystic, Eliot seems to draw a parallel to his own experience when he says that "there is no reason to doubt its genuineness unless we choose to deny all mystical experience . . . what can only be called mystical experience happens to many men who do not become mystics."[93] One wonders how Eliot knew this unless he himself had experienced what Jesus was talking about to Peter upon his confession of faith: ". . . flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). Eliot reflects on his own mystical experience in Ash-Wednesday, especially the first three strophes.

Possibly Eliot was influenced by Pascal's Jansenism. Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638), Bishop of Ypres, sought the purification of Romanism along Augustinian lines. Bergsten says "the Jansenistic view of man as fundamentally corrupt is often reflected in Eliot's writings. . . ."[94] Eliot does write about the sinfulness of man's nature, as was revealed in The Rock, but one could not be dogmatic in claiming that it necessarily came from Pascal's influence.

---

[91]Ibid., pp. 131-132. [92]Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 360.

[93]Ibid., pp. 357-358.

[94]Slaffan Bergsten, Time and Eternity: A Study in the Structure and Symbolism of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets (Stockholm, 1960), p. 85.

Another significant influence upon Eliot during this period and the period of his life that followed was Charles Williams, a writer and a member of the staff of the London office of the Oxford University Press until his death in 1945. In an Introduction to Williams' novel All Hallows' Eve, published in 1948, Eliot acknowledges that he was introduced to Williams in the late twenties and that his reading of his novels began shortly before and continued as each novel was published in the succeeding years.

They both had many things in common. For one thing, both were active Anglo-Catholics. A reading of Williams' Descent of the Dove (1939), a short history of the Holy Spirit in the Church, leaves one impressed with his enthusiasm for Catholicism, although he was such a believer in the co-inherence that he could speak well for men like Luther by saying, "He had been delivered into assurance," and he "had drunk of the intoxicating Blood."[95] Both Williams and Eliot had an admiration for some of the same writers: Dante, Cloud of Unknowing, St. John of the Cross, and Pascal, writers which were discussed at length in Descent of the Dove.

Possibly their both being Anglo-Catholic had something to do with the similarity of their religious thought. They equally emphasized the Incarnation. In fact, Williams's emphasis on the affirmative way is based on the doctrine of the

---

[95]Williams, Descent of the Dove, p. 167.

Incarnation; he frequently mentions the following part of the Athanasian Creed: "Not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood unto God."[96] The Lord's coming in flesh proves that matter is not necessarily evil, and the purpose of His coming indicates that flesh is capable of salvation. Williams's writings are so imbued with the implications of the Incarnation for believers that one wonders how Eliot could possibly have escaped being influenced by this friend he admired so much. In The Rock Eliot said, "You must not deny the body." He came to accept this idea with a little more frequency in his later poems and plays. In connection with the Incarnation, Williams is enthusiastic for the idea of the Real Presence in the Eucharist:

> The co-inherence of matter and Deity as a presence became as liturgically glorious as it was intellectually splendid, and the performance of the dramatic Mysteries and Miracles celebrated in many places through a long summer's day the Act in the present sacrament as well as in history and in the soul.[97]

Williams points out here that the Act, or the "point of intersection" as Eliot puts it, takes place in the sacrament, history, and the soul.

A few other parallels should be mentioned between these contemporaries. Eliot may have learned about the "dance," as it relates to the "still point," from Williams as well as from Dante. Concerning the joy of the Archdeacon in War in Heaven, Williams speaks of the inner dance:

---

[96] Ibid., p. 59. [97] Ibid., p. 119.

> Its dance became a more vital but therefore a vaster thing. Faintly again he heard the sound of music, but now not from without, or indeed from within, from some non-spatial, non-temporal, non-personal existence. It was music, but not yet music, or if music, then the music of movement itself--sound produced not by things, but in the nature of things.[98]

According to Williams, in the same novel, the dance can be imitated by the "Adversary" as well as originated by God; it is said of Barbara under the evil influence of Gregory, "this then was the outer sign of the inner dance he had himself known."[99] For a second parallel, Eliot's emphasis on the perfection of the will in Murder in the Cathedral, for example, was also stressed by Williams in Many Dimensions: Lord Arglay forewarns Chloe by saying, ". . . you gave your will to the Will of That which is behind the Stone."[100] "When the time comes He shall dispose as He will, or rather He shall be as He will, as He is," comments the Archdeacon to Kenneth in War in Heaven.[101] The stranger, in War in Heaven, encourages Lionel to rest in God's will: "But God only gives, and He has only Himself to give, and He, even He, can give it only in those conditions which are Himself."[102] The acquiescence of man's will in God's will is an integral theme in the writings of these two poet-playwrights. In addition to the inner dance and the perfection of the will, a third parallel concerns

---

[98]Williams, War in Heaven (Grand Rapids, 1930), p. 117.

[99]Ibid., p. 161.

[100]Williams, Many Dimensions (Grand Rapids, 1931), p. 228.

[101]Williams, War in Heaven, p. 180. [102]Ibid., p. 251.

the affirmative and negative way, which will be taken up in the next chapter in connection with Eliot's play The Cocktail Party.

Eliot's own comment concerning that aspect of Williams which most impressed him would be an appropriate way to conclude this brief treatment of Williams as an influence on Eliot:

> To him the supernatural was perfectly natural, and the natural was also supernatural. And this peculiarity gave him that profound insight into Good and Evil, into the heights of Heaven and the depths of Hell, which provides both the immediate thrill, and the permanent message of his novels.[103]

In summary, this chapter concludes that Eliot's religious thought of this period developed from immaturity to a relative maturity in Catholic Christianity. At some moment or other prior to the writing of Ash-Wednesday (1927-1930), his thought crystallized to the point where an element of faith which would satisfy him ended when he embraced Christianity, especially Catholic Christianity. Ash-Wednesday is an expression of what he experienced or thought about soon after his conversion. He sees his previous philosophical ideas and personal aspirations from a new perspective, and he does not hope to turn back to the old way again. He is sure he is on the right path, but he appears a bit gloomy over the future prospect of the purgations which he knows he needs. He views

---

[103]Eliot, "Introduction," All Hallows' Eve by Charles Williams (New York, 1967), p. xiv.

Christian growth through the extra-biblical mysticism of John of the Cross, a mysticism which pursued the negative way and which was disapproved of by the priests of his own Church. The "dark night" of John of the Cross cast its shadow over Ash-Wednesday. The "Ariel Poems" (1927-1930) reveal the same genuine but immature religious thought and growth of Ash-Wednesday, except "Marina" (1930), which is a poem of pure joy concerning one's hope in the full-orbed splendor of the Christian message. Thus "Marina" forms a bridge between Ash-Wednesday and The Rock (1934). The Choruses from The Rock are an explicit silver trumpet-like expression of his militant Christianity; they are an avowal of his faith in the Incarnation, the sacrament of the Eucharist, the perfection of the will, the sinfulness of man, and the community of believers. Murder in the Cathedral, like The Rock, is a religious play written upon request. It teaches that one must do, not out of fear but faith, the will of God for the right reason. There is a Catholic emphasis on martyrdom and the religious veneration of the hero-saint. Eliot's writings of this period lean much more to Catholic than to Protestant doctrine, although such doctrines as original sin are common to both. In addition to some of the influences referred to previously, Pascal and Charles Williams were formidable influences during this period. Pascal was an attraction because he appealed to the intellectuals with their doubts and he set forth reasons to convince the intellect

concerning the reasonableness of Christianity. Williams was an attraction to Eliot not only because of the similarity of their religious emphases but also because Williams was so much at home in both the natural and supernatural realms. Eliot likewise attempted to experience what it means to live at the intersection of the timeless with time.

Eliot's relative religious maturity has now prepared him to create his religious masterpiece, Four Quartets, and to convey indirectly through his next plays his message to secular society.

CHAPTER V

THE LATER EXPRESSION OF ANGLO-CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

Eliot's masterpiece,[1] Four Quartets (1935-1942), and his first play written expressly for secular society, The Family Reunion (1939), will be given primary consideration in this chapter setting forth the religious thought of the poet in the fourth and last period of his life (1935-1965). Eliot's last three plays, The Cocktail Party (1949), The Confidential Clerk (1953), and The Elder Statesman (1958), will be analyzed briefly, presenting through a sketch of each play any additional material which would advance to the apogee of his religious thought.

Were it not for the central theme uniting "Burnt Norton" with the following three Quartets, it would be preferable, possibly, to take the Quartets and plays in chronological sequence. The Family Reunion was written and published in the interval between "Burnt Norton" and "East Coker." In this chapter, however, the Quartets will be considered as one poem and will be analyzed prior to The Family Reunion and the remaining three plays.

---

[1]Helen Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot, p. 2.

Of the Quartets, "Burnt Norton," at least, had its origin, in different ways, in Ash-Wednesday, The Rock, and Murder in the Cathedral. Kristian Smidt has pointed out the following similarities between "Burnt Norton" and the fourth and fifth parts of Ash-Wednesday:

> The first movement of Burnt Norton, the vision in the garden, corresponds very closely to the fourth part of Ash-Wednesday, the main difference being that the earlier poem is centred about a female apparition which is absent or only implied in the later poem. The fifth section of Ash-Wednesday begins with meditations on the Word, the still point and the light shining in darkness, which are the main themes of Burnt Norton, II; it then considers 'those who walk in darkness,' which is also the subject of Burnt Norton, IV. These sections of Ash-Wednesday, then, might almost be considered as a first draft of the later poem.[2]

Despite these similarities, it was not until 1934, when The Rock was published, that Eliot's thought underwent a revolutionary change. In Ash-Wednesday, the only way of morally redeeming the past was by patience and endurance. Through meditation on the past, the past might take on new meaning. In The Rock, however, the past is preserved "as an objective, eternal fact present in the mind of God."[3] This idea, undeveloped in The Rock,[4] is expatiated on in "Burnt Norton." Hence, the similarities of Ash-Wednesday with "Burnt Norton" are superficial in comparison to those between The Rock and "Burnt Norton." Concerning Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot

---

[2]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 217.

[3]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 257.

[4]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, pp. 107-108.

himself has revealed that "Burnt Norton" had its origin partly from lines left over from this play.[5]

Four Quartets is a poetic meditation on the theological theme of the union of time with the timeless. Man is able to redeem, conquer, and transcend time by rejecting the false pattern of history, derived from his partial knowledge, and by recovering the true pattern of history, the objective pattern of God's timeless presence in time. "The true pattern is God's order of history, an objective rather than subjective design organized around the central event of the Incarnation."[6] The essence of Eliot's religious thought in the Four Quartets is to be found in this theme concerning time and the timeless, a theme developed and advanced in each successive Quartet. Such supporting themes as history, redemption, love, and poetry are all relevant to this theme of time and interact with it.

"Burnt Norton" opens with a reflection on the problem of all time being perhaps simultaneous. Eliot's conversion may have directed him to ponder over God's attribute of eternity. In one sense, past, present, and future are simply "now" to God because He sees the past and the future as vividly as He sees the present moment. Hence, He calls Himself "I am" (Exodus 3:14). Eliot reasons, therefore, that if all time is always present, then it cannot be redeemed, that is, altered or changed in any way. This is the poet's superficial answer

---

[5]Ibid. [6]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 187.

because in Part II he will propose how time can be conquered. At this time, however, he states that "What might have been and what has been" both have a simultaneous existence of an individual kind and, therefore, are unchangeable as far as he suggests at this point. "What might have been" is the aspect of the problem being scrutinized in Part I. The remaining lines of this section describe an experience of a happy might-have-been moment in the speaker's youth. It is an imaginary event which never took place, but is as significant to the poet as possibly any actual event of his past. He concludes without a solution by saying that experiences, whether real or imaginary, have one destiny, the irremediable present. The reality that human kind cannot bear is the lost potentiality which is never to be fulfilled. It is utterly without purpose, he thinks, therefore, for the memory to disturb "the dust on a bowl of rose leaves . . ."

The drift of the initial strophe of the second movement is that there is a pattern to all motion in the universe, a pattern which is distorted, however, by human interference. The "Garlic," "sapphires," and "mud" possibly refer to gluttony, avarice, and flesh (the sinful nature) of man, whereas "clot," "bedded," and "axle-tree" may refer to the blood (Atonement), manger (Incarnation), and still point, the tree of the cross.[7] Man hinders himself from seeing moments and movements meaningfully.

---

[7]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 261

From the thought of pattern, Eliot proceeds in the second strophe to think about how this pattern can be seen: from the perspective of "the still point." The true pattern is God's design for the universe and for all that takes place in the universe. He is also the source of the dance--the movement of life itself. The "still point" becomes the theme in the remainder of this second movement. "Neither flesh nor fleshless" may refer more to the Son than the Father. The Son is not flesh in the sense that man is; that is, the Son does not have sinful flesh: ". . . God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh . . ." (Romans 8:3). Therefore, He is not flesh in the sense that He has flesh apart from sin. On the other hand, His body is no less real thereby; He is not fleshless. Eliot's "still point," however, is surely, like Dante's "point," trinitarian.

Possibly Dante was the source of Eliot's "still point" as an image of the Godhead. It is an extra-biblical image, but it does convey a biblical truth. Dante's use of the "point" is of interest for the light it throws on Eliot's image. One of the first references in Dante to the idea of the point is found in Canto XIV of Paradise where the poet uses the image of water in a vessel to illustrate how he moves toward God who surrounds everything, as well as towards God who is at the center of all things: "From center to rim, and from rim to center, / Water will move in a round container /

According to whether struck inside or out."[8] In Canto XVII, Dante refers to "that point / In relation to which all time is present"[9] and in Canto XXIX, he refers to the Point "Where every 'where' and every 'when' are centered . . . in his infinity outside of Time, / Beyond all other compass, at his pleasure, / Eternal love unfolded in new loves."[10] With reference to the first part of the last quotation, one cannot help comparing one of the concluding lines of "Burnt Norton": "Quick now, here, now, always--" It is ridiculous to see time wasted without an awareness that God is present in every "where" and every "when," here, now, and always. Dante's Point, however, does not exclude the idea of the Trinity. In the last Canto of the Paradise, the Canto that Eliot says is "the highest point that poetry has ever reached or ever can reach,"[11] Dante sees this Point or center of "Living Light" dilating, so to speak, into three circles:

> There appeared to me in the profound and bright
> Reality of that exalted light
> Three circles, of three colors and one size.
> As rainbow by rainbow, one seemed reflected
> By the second, and the third seemed a fire
> That breathed as much from one as from the other.[12]

The concluding strophe of the second movement is about the experience at the still point and the remembrance of that

---

[8]Dante, "Paradise," The Divine Comedy, XIV, 53.

[9]Ibid., XVII, 66. [10]Ibid., XXIX, 116.

[12]Dante, "Paradise," XXXIII, 136.

experience. When one has the experience, such as the moment in the rose garden, it does not happen in time. Only the remembrance of it occurs in time. The experience itself is one of freedom, release, exaltation, and illumination. It is equivalent to the rest for one's soul which the Son gives the surrendered believer (Matthew 11:29), the ". . . peace of God, which passeth all understanding . . ." (Philippians 4:16), spoken of by Paul, or the tranquillity achieved from being in the will of God, as Dante puts it.[13] Conversion was the religious experience of Ash-Wednesday, but communion is the religious experience of Four Quartets. The biblical parallel to Four Quartets, as far as experience is concerned, would be The First Epistle of John, which expounds the theme of fellowship with the Father and the Son. Eliot goes on to say that a person cannot redeem time, however, by his experiences out of time; time is conquered in time by the instrumentality of memory as it ponders the past from the divine perspective:

> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the harbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered; involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered.[14]

"The approach to the meaning can be made by allowing present moments to fall into the past and become part of the objective pattern of God's presence in history," comments Miller with

---

[13]Ibid., III, 11.

[14]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 119-120.

much insight.[15] It is when one is involved with the past by the aid of memory that the divine pattern and purpose for his experiences can be seen. Spiritual reflection on the echoes in our memory can make them meaningful. The emphasis on the memory in Four Quartets may denote an influence of Pascal: "Memory is necessary for all the operations of reason," wrote Pascal in his Pensées.[16] He also said, concerning the center, "The great and the humble have the same misfortunes, the same griefs, the same passions; but the one is at the top of the wheel, and the other near the centre, and so less disturbed by the same revolutions."[17]

The third movement contrasts the three ways to live with reference to time: by a "dim light" in which the world moves, which results in continued bondage to time, or by the ways of "daylight" or "darkness," either of which can result in the transcendence of time, bringing one to the still point. Life in "a dim light" is a life in "a place of disaffection," which is parallel to the "indifference" of "Little Gidding," Part III; it is also a life "empty of meaning," only made bearable by distractions. Pascal writes much about these distractions, calling them diversions: "As men are not able to

---

[15]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 187.

[16]Blaise Pascal, Pensees, translated by W. F. Trotter (Chicago, 1952) XXXIII, Great Books of the Western World, Section VI, Fr. 369, 236.

[17]Ibid., Section II, Fr. 180, p. 204.

fight against death, misery, ignorance, they have taken it into their heads, in order to be happy, not to think of them at all."[18] He also comments, ". . . diversion amuses us, and leads us unconsciously to death."[19] As Eliot puts it, ". . . human kind / Cannot bear very much reality."[20] By contrast, the way of "daylight" is the way of "plenitude," the way of "abstention from movement," the way of the rose garden experience; the way of "darkness" is the way of "vacancy," the way of "Internal darkness," the way of the negative mystic such as John of the Cross. Eliot commends both ways. The two ways are Eliot's application of the second epigraph of "Burnt Norton": "The way up and the way down are one and the same."[21]

The brief fourth movement considers how the passing of time has buried the "day," the daylight moment of illumination, and how the "black cloud" of change has carried the sun away. The poet then seems to ask in prayerful supplication concerning the future possibility of uniting with the still center, either by the sudden intrusion of a shaft of sunlight, symbolized by the initiative of the flowers (the Son and the Virgin), or by the way of darkness, symbolized by the "fingers

---

[18]Pascal, Pensées, Section II, Fr. 168, p. 203.

[19]Ibid., Fr. 171.

[20]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 118.

[21]Ibid., p. 117.

of the yew" (death). The bird (possibly a type of Christ or the Spirit), as in the first movement, signifies hope of communion with "the still point."

The thought of the opening lines of the final movement is that the patterning of the words of a poem or the score of a musical composition moves like a Chinese jar still moves in its stillness, and this observation leads one to the perception that beneath the surface movement and apparent confusion of this world, there is a pattern, a pattern pre-written by the sovereign God. The words and music move in time, but the pattern is timeless. When the pattern is seen as a whole, it is understandable that "the end precedes the beginning, / And the end and the beginning were always there / Before the beginning and after the end." Each word or note is a part of the timeless pattern, and, therefore, "all is always now." The stillness or still point is present at every point along the periphery of the poem, or composition, or world.

The words "Crack," "slip," and "will not stay in place" were possibly suggested from the following passage from the Pensées, which would again illustrate how much Eliot was saturated with Pascal:

> When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. . . . But our whole groundwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses.[22]

---

[22]Pascal, Pensées, Section II, Fr. 72, p. 183.

Since "What might have been" has been the aspect of the problem of time under consideration in "Burnt Norton," it is to be expected that the concluding strophe will return to the problem and resolve it. "Desire" concerning "What might have been" is movement, but it stands between "Love," "the cause and end of all movement." What might have been" is recognized by God, who is Love (1 John 4:8), and one's experience concerning it can be meaningful when seen as a part of God's true pattern. The "shaft of sunlight" is a tap on the shoulder by the hand of Sovereign Love; therefore, one should knock the dust off the neglected rose leaves and meditate on the "might have been." When it is not done,

> Ridiculous the waste sad time
> Stretching before and after.[23]

"East Coker," needing less explanation than "Burnt Norton," will be considered briefly. Before publishing this second Quartet in 1940, Eliot visited the village of East Coker in August, 1937, a village in southeast Somersetshire from which the Eliot family moved to America. "East Coker" is an appropriate title, therefore, for a poem about the theme of succession. It is concerned with the "antithesis of pattern and chaos."[24]

The first movement describes the succession of building and decay, of traditional observances, such as marriage, and

---

[23]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 122.

[24]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 217.

of seasons. The stress in the entire poem is on time rather than the timeless, on "what has been" rather than "what might have been." The quotation concerning marriage from The Boke Named the Governour by Sir Thomas Elyot, a grandson of Simon Elyot of the village of East Coker, implies Eliot's own acceptance of the body. In this passage and his concluding plays, the acceptance of the body is indicated primarily by the theme of marriage.

In contrast with the succession of natural processes of the first movement, the second movement describes the succession of chaos upon chaos and the inability of "November," as in the first strophe, or "quiet-voiced elders," as in the second strophe, to find a meaningful pattern to hand down to those in the spring and summer stages of life. Knowledge gained from past experiences is only of limited value:

> The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been. We are only undeceived
> Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm.[25]

Therefore, man can never adequately understand history. Any philosophy of history which is not biblically oriented will be found wanting. Eliot probably has the Second World War in mind in the symbols concerning planetary warfare. Eliot knew his Bible well if he referred to 2 Peter 3:10 in the line concerning the "destructive fire," a remarkable passage envisioning

---

[25]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 124.

destruction by the fire of nuclear fission. It is more likely, however, that Eliot has in mind Heraclitus' war of the elements, in which fire is both the beginning and the end. It is a symbol of a chaotic condition. In the light of chaotic conditions and man's inability to cope with them, "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire / Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless."[26]

In the third movement, the major theme of succession concerns the progression of the generations into the dark, a death, however, which Eliot uses as a transition into another kind of death, "the darkness of God," which was considered also in the third movement of "Burnt Norton." Illumination and stillness can be achieved by patience and submission as well as by the "moment in the rose-garden" of "Burnt Norton." In fact, even such a moment of ecstasy motivates one to a deeper spiritual maturity:

> The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
> Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
> Of death and birth.[27]

Spiritual progress is made by practicing the mysticism of John of the Cross, as it is set forth in the concluding lines of the third movement.

A humble person is aware of his weaknesses, his sins. Being reminded by the "nurse" (the Church) of his sickness, he comes willingly to the "surgeon" (the Saviour) for forgiveness of his sins. He comes to realize that even the

---

[26] Ibid., p. 126. [27] Ibid., p. 127.

"purgatorial fires" of God's present disciplinary dealings are for his benefit. They are a sign not of less love but of more love, for ". . . whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth . . ." (Hebrews 12:6). Such is the essence of the fourth movement.

Thomas P. McDonnell has critized Eliot for not being a Christ-centered poet:

> Frankly, there is very little blood of Christ to be found in the poetry of T. S. Eliot. That is to say, Christianity is there in the "religious" poems, but hardly ever do you find Christ there.[28]

Such a criticism seems inaccurate in the light of lines in the fourth movement of "East Coker": "The dripping blood our only drink, / The bloody flesh our only food."[29]

The terminal movement speaks first of the succession of twenty years of effort as a poet and then of all of the successions of generations burning in every moment that he lives. The pattern becomes more complicated as he grows older, and he recommends, as a result of this complication, the attempt to establish communion with the still point not only out of time--by the absence of movement--but in time as well by taking the dark road of patience and submission recommended in the Quartet:

> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity

---

[28]Thomas P. McDonnell, "T. S. Eliot: Christian Poet," America, XCIV (October 8, 1955), p. 45.

[29]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 128.

> For a further union, a deeper communion
> Through the dark cold and the empty desolation . . .[30]

By its emphasis on the possibility of attaining stillness through a patient movement in time, "East Coker" is an advance on the religious thought of Eliot on time in "Burnt Norton," which stressed "abstention from movement." Eliot was striving to experience the timeless in time. This fact refutes the following hypothesis of Lynch concerning Eliot's dissociation in connection with time and the timeless:

> . . . with relation to time and its problems, his own poetic images show a tendency to keep bouncing and leaping off this line in the direction of "eternity" and all its analogues. It does not evince a native inclination to pursue the possibilities of the line itself.[31]

It might be better to point out that despite Eliot's poetic image of the "timeless," he sought to stay in time. It is his word "timeless" that is inaccurate, a fact which will be considered at the conclusion of the Four Quartets.

The destruction and wastage resulting from unrelenting time is the unifying theme of "The Dry Salvages" (1941). Two metaphors control the content of the first movement: the river is a metaphor of the life of man and the sea is a metaphor of history and pre-history. The river is descriptive of human nature; the sea is descriptive of the apparently meaningless flux of history, which according to Helen Gardner,

---

[30] Ibid., p. 129.

[31] William F. Lynch, S. J., "The Theological Imagination," The New Orpheus: Essays Toward a Christian Poetic (New York, 1964), p. 127.

denies the cyclic view of history, the biological interpretation of history, and the doctrine of progressive improvement.[32]

The meaning of the sestina of the second movement is clouded by the vagueness of the sixth line in stanzas one, three, and six. Smidt's interpretation seems best: "I take 'the calamitous annunciation,' 'the last annunciation' and 'the one Annunciation' to represent the Fall, the Last Judgment and the Incarnation respectively."[33] Following the sestina, the lines are built around the "moments of happiness" and the "moments of agony." These moments are the reason why the pattern of time ceases to manifest mere sequence. When the "moments of happiness" are permitted to fall into the past, their meaning, by the aid of memory, can be perceived:

> We had the experience but missed the meaning,
> And approach to the meaning restores the experience
> In a different form, beyond any meaning
> We can assign to happiness.[34]

In addition, the "moments of agony" "are likewise permanent . . ." These two moments were presented in "Burnt Norton" and "East Coker" respectively. God uses both the peak and trough periods to bring meaning into the undulating lives of believers.

---

[32]Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot, p. 171.

[33]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, pp. 218-219.

[34]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 133.

The third movement is an excellent illustration of Eliot's use of other religions (in this case the fusion of ideas from Hinduism and Buddhism) to communicate in a fresh way his own religious thought. Grover Smith has given the following concise summary of Eliot's "almost ironic use" of the two religions in this third movement:

> In both Eastern religions the goal of action or non-action is release from the Wheel. But in "The Dry Salvages" it is rather the fulfilment of the premise that only through time, time is redeemed. As the present redeems the past by renewing its meaning, so the present redeems the future by preparing a meaning for that; but only the present holds the moment of experience, and all experiences are present. Therefore the present is the "real destination" of those who "fare forward."[35]

Although Eliot does change the concept of time to harmonize with Christianity, he does not change moral concepts which reflect the moral law of God written in the hearts of all men (Romans 2:15). For example, the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita to be indifferent to the fruits of action while one is honestly engaged in ordinary activity does not take Eliot beyond Christianity if he did accept it. The teaching of Krishna involves a moral principle common to Christianity and many religions. C. S. Lewis calls these traditional values the Tao simply to illustrate the reflection of the objective reality of the moral law in all religions.[36]

---

[35]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 282.

[36]C. S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man (New York, 1962), pp. 51-61.

In comparison to Ash-Wednesday, there is little institutionalism in Four Quartets. The Church as a nurse was referred to briefly in "East Coker," and now Mary is brought on the scene in the fourth movement of "The Dry Salvages." The lyrical prayer to Our Lady for the men on dangerous voyages points again to Eliot's Catholic thought.

By means of divination, man is involved with time, especially past and future, as the opening lines of the fifth movement indicate. On the other hand, the saint is absorbed in apprehending the intersecting point of the timeless with time. Possibly Philippians 3:12 was the source for that appropriate word "apprehend": ". . . that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus," exclaimed Paul concerning his single aim to know Christ more intimately. The saint dedicates himself to apprehending both the moments of agony by "a lifetime's death in love, / Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender."[37] On the other hand, most of us, says Eliot humbly, miss even the moment of illumination by inattention. The two classes of believers were described in different words in The Rock:

> Our age is an age of moderate virtue
> And of moderate vice
> When men will not lay down the Cross
> Because they will never assume it.
> Yet nothing is impossible, nothing,
> To men of faith and conviction.[38]

---

[37]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 136.

[38]Ibid.

That which both classes experience, however, is Incarnation. All of Eliot's religious thought centers around and is controlled by this pivotal doctrine. He does not say the Incarnation because he desires to include in that word not only the Incarnation of the Word at Bethlehem but also the Incarnation at each Eucharist and the Presence of the Incarnate Christ at every moment in time. The God-man is a vindication that the "impossible union" is an eternal reality. The union of the "spheres of existence" of the timeless and time, of the transcendent and the immanent, of the immaterial and the material, of the divine and the human "is actual, / Here the past and future / Are conquered, and reconciled, . . ."[39] Hence, there are two ways to live in the light of the Incarnation: wrong action is bondage to the one dimension of past and future, a clinging to that dimension; right action is freedom from this one dimension to live realistically in the present where the timeless is given and taken. Wrong action is driven by "daemonic" powers from below; right action appropriates the "source of movement" from above. In Christ, one experiences the actuality of living within time and out of it. The occupation of the saint, therefore, is to till the significant soil, the land where the timeless and time intersect: the continuous return to the present moment. C. S. Lewis has expressed Eliot's exact thought:

---

[39] Ibid.

. . . receive the massive thrust
And surge of the many-dimensional timeless rays converging
On this small, significant dew drop, the present that mirrors all.[40]

"Little Gidding" (1942) was named after Little Gidding of Huntingdonshire, which was the seat of an Anglican religious community founded in 1625 and which was visited three times by King Charles I. The ruined chapel, neglected after the community broke up in 1647, was rebuilt in the nineteenth century. Eliot made a visit there in 1936. "Little Gidding" develops the theme of time as history in relation to the purifying fire.

The "Midwinter spring" of the opening strophe, which is "not in time's covenant," is an image of a visitation of the "Pentecostal fire," the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; cf. Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Matthew 3:11-12). The second strophe asserts that the purpose for the visit to the village and the chapel is changed beyond one's expectation; there comes an end of the merely temporal. According to the poet in the third strophe, the purpose is prayer, bringing one to the point of intersection with the timeless.

Returning to the imagery of the earlier Quartets, the opening lyric of the second movement probes the succession of decay, destruction, and death symbolized by the four elements of Heraclitus. Restoration is needed to liberate one from moral degeneration, symbolized by physical disintegration.

---

[40]Lewis, "Re-adjustment," Poems (New York, 1965), p. 102.

At the "intersection time" during the London of the blitz, a ghost, possibly Robert Browning,[41] one with "brown baked features," discloses what Eliot should do about the "gifts reserved for age": "From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit / Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire / Where you must move in measure, like a dancer."[42] "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19) now is the essence of the admonition.

The third movement recommends the way of detachment--the way of liberation--by which the memory permits things to become part of the past, and then sees that the pattern of the past is "transfigured," that its source is divine rather than human:

> See, now they vanish,
> The faces and places, with the self which, as it could loved them,
> To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.[43]

The mind discovers, as the fifth movement declares, that ". . . history is a pattern / Of timeless moments."[44] The purpose of Eliot's drama, as well as his poetry, is to help the audience to

> perceive a pattern behind the pattern into which the characters deliberately involve themselves; the kind of pattern which we perceive in our own lives only at

---

[41]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 220.

[42]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 142.

[43]Ibid., p. 142. [44]Ibid., p. 144.

> rare moments of inattention and detachment, drowsing in the sunlight.[45]

When history, such as the political and religious civil war of England, is transfigured, then the effect is the purification of the fundamental reasons for prayer at the chapel at Little Gidding: "And all shall be well and / all manner of thing shall be well / By the purification of the motive / In the ground of our beseeching."[46] In this second strophe, framed by the two allusions of Dame Julian of Norwich, love, according to her understanding, is the motive of disinterested beseeching.

The "fire sermon" of the fourth movement is a Catholic one. Man's only alternative from the fire of damnation is the fire of purgation, which, of course, is devised by love as preparation for paradise.

The first part of the final movement asserts that as each phrase of a sentence is an end and a beginning, because in the total poem the "complete consort" is dancing together," so each death is an end and a beginning in the total web of interchangeability in human history. In addition, by seeing the pattern of God in history--". . . history" as "a pattern / Of timeless moments"--one can see the pattern's revelation of the significance of each moment. This explains why "A people without history / Is not redeemed from time . . . ." "The

---

[45]Eliot, "John Marston," Elizabethan Essays (London, 1964), p. 194.

[46]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 143.

historical sense is necessary to release the recognition that God is present in each moment as it passes."[47] Since history is composed of timeless moments, "History is now and England. / With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling."[48]

The majestic finale of the fifth movement is an end and a beginning; because of the synthesis of the meaning of the Four Quartets, it is an end and because of the emphasis of the message, it is a beginning. "We shall not cease from exploration . . ." because "We must be still and still moving / Into another intensity / For a further union, a deeper communion . . ."[49] with "the still point"[50]--the triune "knot of fire"--who is the source of "the longest river," which is life. At that center, all is known "for the first time" because it has "become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern."[51] The perspective of the vision of the timeless in time alters the view of man in time. The thought of the Four Quartets is expressed abstractly in the passage following the opening thirteen lines:

> The bird's call told of the eternal presence of the point of intersection: 'Quick now, here, now, always--.' East Coker revealed that the only timeless wisdom is humility: 'a condition of complete simplicity.' The Dry Salvages told of the vocation of the saint 'a lifetime's death in love': '(Costing not less than everything.)'

---

[47]Miller, Poets of Reality, p. 188.

[48]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 145.

[49]Ibid., p. 129. [50]Ibid., p. 119. [51]Ibid., p. 142.

> In Little Gidding strife and sin and death are conquered by the voice which says 'All shall be well.'[52]

The three Dantean-type lines are difficult, but possibly they mean that "all shall be well" when the "tongues of flame," an image of the expressions of man controlled by the Spirit of God, are in unity in the "crowned" Trinity-knot, where all opposites are reconciled, and the fire of love[53] and the rose of desire "are one."

Since a key term of Eliot's masterpiece is "timeless," it would be amiss to neglect at least a brief analysis of it. Despite Eliot's mature understanding of Christian thought when he wrote Four Quartets, his thinking was still tainted by a philosophical idea that was not (possibly without his being aware of it), strictly speaking, biblical. He held that eternity is timeless. This is a philosophical concept as old as Plato's Timaeus[54] and as recent, from Eliot's standpoint, as Bradley,[55] and Eliot could have learned it from the works of either or from someone else. The teaching of the Old and New Testaments is that eternity is endless time. In the New Testament, the terms καιρός and αἰών clearly express the New Testament concept of time: καιρός means a

---

[52]Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry, p. 199.

[53]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 296.

[54]R. G. Bury, trans., Plato with an English translation (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), VII of the Loeb Classical Library, 37c6--39e2.

[55]Smidt, Poetry and Belief, p. 211.

"point of time" as well as a "period of time"[56] and αἰών means an "age."[57] Concerning καιρός there are various time points or καιροί, past, present, or future, that have a special importance in the unfolding of God's redemptive program (John 7:6; Acts 17:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9; 1 Timothy 6:14-16). Concerning αἰών there are both defined and undefined ages mentioned in the New Testament. It is significant that the plural of αἰών is used to mean eternity. Out of the plethora of verses that could be cited, Romans 9:5 will serve to illustrate this concept of time: "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever ('unto the ages,' αἰών), Amen." Endless time, therefore, is the meaning of eternity in the New Testament, not timelessness. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for eternity, עוֹלָם, has the same basic meaning as αἰών ("endless time").[58] The Scriptures teach, therefore, that "eternity is conceived as different from time only with respect to its unlimited character."[59] Basically, Eliot's interpretation

---

[56]Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 395.

[57]Ibid., p. 26.

[58]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the New Testament, translated by Edward Robinson (Oxford, 1955), p. 762.

[59]Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 69.

of God in eternity is orthodox, for he upholds God's Lordship over time, as the Scriptures show (1 Timothy 1:17), and believes that the Eternal One knows and controls the total time line in its endless extension. The poet's "timeless" idea, however, gives the impression that God is in some remote other sphere; after all, the Scriptures teach that even a part of the heaven of the eternal state will be a literal holy city upon a renovated earth for endless time (Revelation 21:1--22:5). One must confess, however, that the "intersection of endless time with time" does not sound nearly as poetic.

As a transition from Four Quartets to Eliot's last four plays, it would be in order to give his statement of the "function of art" from his essay "Poetry and Drama":

> For it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation.[60]

His poetry and plays, like Dante's Virgil, aspire to guide others to that goal.

In Family Reunion (1939), Eliot abandoned the shabby flat of Sweeney Agonistes, the historical setting of Murder in the Cathedral, and favored the drawing-room world of polite society. The verse is somewhat closer to contemporary speech than that in the previous plays.

---

[60]Eliot, "Poetry and Drama," On Poetry and Poets, p. 94.

The Family Reunion is about Harry Monchensey's discovery of the reasons for his feelings of guilt and his departure on his "pilgrimage of expiation." This is the inner drama of the play. The outer drama, carrying the action, centers around a family reunion at Amy Monchensey's request upon the occasion of the celebration of her birthday. Harry, her eldest son, has been absent for eight years. His mother's plan is, since his wife is no longer living, for him to take over as head of the home at Wishwood. Her three younger sisters and her deceased husband's two brothers, in obedience to the dominant Amy, are to encourage Harry to carry on at Wishwood as if nothing has changed at home and as if nothing has happened to him since he left home. Harry's two brothers are unable to attend the reunion because of accidents. Because of the inner drama, Harry departs, after about three hours, causing the death of his mother from heart failure.

The inner drama involves Eliot's theme of redemption. Harry is setting forth on a pilgrimage of expiation, but the question is, whose sin is he expiating. The answer leads into the heart of the drama. For one thing, Harry is troubled over the fact that he thinks he pushed his wife off a boat. He is suffering from something else, however, because, strangely, his conscience does not bother him much concerning that situation. Through Dr. Warburton, Harry learns that his parents were not happily married. Aunt Agatha, later in the play, tells Harry the full story. When Harry's father

fell in love with Agatha, during her summer vacation at his home, he decided to kill his wife and marry Agatha. She talked him out of it for the sake of the unborn baby (which was Harry, their first child). From Agatha's story, Harry learns that a curse has been set in motion upon him because of this loveless marriage and murderous desire. This explains why he is haunted by the Furies; they are divine instruments to direct him to the task of expiating a family curse and his own sins (his sinful desire to kill his wife).

The concept of the curse is founded upon a biblical principle: ". . . I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exodus 20:5; cf. 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9). The idea of the curse is present also in the great trilogy by AEschylus, the Oresteia, which is Eliot's source for The Family Reunion.

The religious thought centers around the Catholic teaching that, after confession, some temporal punishment for past sins remains. The "pilgrimage of expiation," spoken of by Agatha at the conclusion, explains Harry's "pilgrimage" as an atonement for the removal of the curse brought on by the sins of the family:

> And the curse be ended
> By intercession
> By pilgrimage
> By those who depart
> In several directions

For their own redemption
And that of the departed--
May they rest in peace.[61]

The specific flaw of the family is "failure in loving."[62] A part of Harry's future will be to learn to love.

This psychological tragedy ends, therefore, with an anticipation of a future family reunion because Harry, in accepting the Furies who become the Eumenides or "bright angels," will be guided in God's will: "In that realm alone, by the quasi-redemptive sacrifice of Harry as the family's Isaac, will occur the true family reunion."[63]

Eliot was in his sixties when he wrote his comedies: The Cocktail Party (1949), The Confidential Clerk (1953), and The Elder Statesman (1958). Their greatness resides in their "speakability" and "reading of life."[64] In such a brief consideration of these plays, possibly the best approach would be to observe the development of the religious thought as it is related to either the negative way, which contends that "God may be reached by detaching the soul from the love of all things" or to the affirmative way, which contends that "all things are to be accepted in love as images of the Divine."[65]

---

[61]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 293.

[62]Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot, p. 154.

[63]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 211.

[64]Gardner, "The Comedies of T. S. Eliot," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 181.

[65]Carol Smith, T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory in Practice, p. 157.

The plot of The Cocktail Party centers around two couples: one married, Edward and Lavinia, and the other unmarried, Peter and Celia. Sir Henry helps Edward and Lavinia to see their common problem: he is incapable of loving and she is incapable of being loved. Their solution is to accept themselves as they are and to make the best of a poor start. As they leave the office, Sir Henry says, "Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence."[66] They are admonished to take the affirmative way. Celia, on the other hand, under Sir Henry's guidance, chooses as her calling the negative way. She has a serious guilt feeling. Her conversion comes in her recognition of sin to atone, and the fruit of her conversion is seen in this vision of love, which results in privation and death as a single missionary. The framework of The Confidential Clerk, with vocation as its theme, is the outgoing confidential clerk, Eggerson, and the incoming clerk, Colby Simpkins, of a London financier, Sir Claude Mulhammer. Sir Claude has ignored his true vocation until it is too late; Colby comes to accept the will of God for his life, even though that choice may not lead to "success." His calling may take him toward the negative way. Eggerson is almost a pure illustration of the affirmative way. Colby is concerned that Eggerson's garden is more real than his. Eggerson's garden is the place for both work and prayer and

---

[66]Eliot, The Complete Poetry and Plays, p. 357.

represents the ideal of the integration of the spiritual and the material. In his garden, God walks among the vegetables. This is a step forward for Eliot because he had difficulty rejecting the negative for the affirmative way. Despite this blending of the Mary and Martha qualities, Eggerson is "a personality unenriched by our highest secular values," and this"conception involves a more powerful reversal of worldly values than anything Eliot had written before."[67] Possibly this touch of negation is a matter of education. The weakest play of the three, The Elder Statesman, presents with simplicity the last days of Lord Claverton, who has retired after a successful political career and has decided to live at Badgley Court, an expensive convalescent home, with Monica his daughter, who wishes to marry Charles Hemington. To his daughter, Claverton finally takes off his mask and learns "the wisdom of humility" of "East Coker." His life is also reminiscent of "the gifts reserved for age" of "Little Gidding." He also learns, with regard to Monica and Charles, to accept human love and to see the relationship between human and divine love. This may be the nearest Eliot comes to rejecting the negative for the affirmative way. It is one of the few times when St. John of the Cross must yield to Dante. In these plays, there is a definite progression toward the acceptance of the affirmative way without rejecting the values

---

[67]Gardner, "The Comedies of T. S. Eliot," T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, p. 176.

of the negative. They reveal the trend of his religious thought until his death in 1965.

At a risk of oversimplification, the conclusions of this chapter concerning the progression of Eliot's thought in the Four Quartets, The Family Reunion, and the three comedies will be set down. Four Quartets, like Milton's Paradise Lost, seeks to vindicate the ways of God to man. The theme, the union of time with the timeless, holds "that the world is an organ of the divine purpose."[68] The essence of the Quartets is that man is able to redeem time by humbly acknowledging that his knowledge is false because it is partial and distorted, and by recovering the true pattern of history, the objective pattern of God's timeless presence in time. The true pattern of history can be recovered, first of all, by reconciliation, on the basis of redemption, and communion with the still point. The still point, which became a visible and historical reality at the Incarnation, intersects time, not only at the Incarnation, but also at the Eucharist, and at each moment of time. The experience of communion with the still point can be achieved by sudden moments of illumination and by patience and submission. Then these moments, when surrendered to the past, will be redeemed as they are made meaningful in the light of the objective pattern or design of the presence of God in history. "What might have

---

[68]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 297.

been" of "Burnt Norton" and "what has been" of "East Coker" can both be redeemed by the process mentioned. Each Quartet supplies insight into the redemption of time from its respective context: time as simultaneous ("Burnt Norton"), successive ("East Coker"), destructive ("The Dry Salvages"), or purified by fire ("Little Gidding"). Such is the essence of Four Quartets on time. Doctrinally, Eliot believed the still point represented the Trinity and believed the Incarnation as historical fact, the acknowledgement of which fact is the test of orthodoxy (1 John 4:2). He made it clear, despite criticism, that the blood of Christ was in his poetry. His avowal of Catholic doctrines such as the Eucharist, purgatory, prayer to Mary, and purgation is evident. The Church is nominally mentioned, but mysticism continues to be emphatically stressed. The concept of time of Hinduism and Buddhism is rejected. There is progress in the Quartets in his acceptance of the human condition, and acceptance is stressed particularly in the final strophe of "Little Gidding." This optimistic mood becomes the "significant soil" of the three comedies, where the affirmative way becomes increasingly accepted and where it reaches its highest peak in The Elder Statesman, in which the affirmation of marriage is also an affirmation of the body. There is a more human Eliot in the Quartets and later plays. The Family Reunion grows out of the same soil as Murder in the Cathedral and is concerned with the Catholic doctrine of expiation of temporal punishment.

All of Eliot's writings of this period, however, continue to dilate into greater dimensions of human sympathy, compassion, and love, which is the fragrance of practical Christianity:

> And all shall be well and
> And all manner of thing shall be well
> . . . . . .
> And the fire and the rose are one.[69]

---

[69] Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 145.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this thesis on the development of the religious thought of T. S. Eliot, the chronological analysis of the poetry and plays in the four chapters on the successive periods of his creative work has revealed a transformation in his religious thought from a vision of disorder, derived primarily from his philosophy of subjectivism, to a vision of pattern behind the disorder, derived from his acceptance of the objective reality of the Incarnate Christ of Christianity. This transformation may be seen in its respective stages by a paragraph summary of each of the four chapters.

Chapter I traced Eliot's religious thought during the first thirty-two years of his life (1888-1920). He was brought up outside the fold of Christianity, in Unitarianism. During his undergraduate and graduate years at Harvard, his religious thought almost dissipated under the formidable influence of the philosophy of F. H. Bradley. His doctoral dissertation on Bradley contended that man is unable to know absolute reality, a contention that negated the possibility of knowing the God of Unitarianism. Since all men are imprisoned in their isolated egos, they can know no point of view but their own and can only apprehend things subjectively. Although

Bradley was the most important influence on Eliot in philosophy, Irving Babbitt, with his emphases of classicism, tradition, and humanism, was the most important overall influence on him. However, possibly Eliot's New England Puritan heritage overcame the Unitarian teaching concerning the goodness of man and caused him to listen to Babbitt's humanism with reservations. The early poems in Prufrock and Other Observations reveal life as boring, fragmentary, and frustrating. With his nonreligious theory, life could not appear otherwise to Eliot. The Bradley thesis, which was the most radical point in philosophy that Eliot would reach, was a turning point, for thereafter, he began a gradual retreat from a philosophy which, according to his thinking, became increasingly insupportable. He also began a gradual reversion from the outer life to the inner life, from the body to the soul, and not until the 1940's was he able to achieve a measure of equilibrium between an acceptance of the body as well as the soul, an acceptance of the way of affirmation as well as the way of negation. The debate between body and soul was conspicuous in his 1920 Poems, with the body remaining yet in the ascendency. Some of the poems in this collection were satires against the Church, presumably the Church of England. In "Gerontion," Christ, for the first time, became an issue for Eliot. The poem, as well as this initial period of Eliot's life, ended in despair; Gerontion was unable to bring himself to a religious commitment. The "pattern" that would later be

presented in Four Quartets was not seen, for the view of history in "Gerontion" was an endless labyrinth that made no sense.

Chapter II covered the crucial pre-conversion years (1921-1924) and the year of crisis (1925) which culminated in his conversion to Christian belief. The thought expressed in "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919) marked a transition into this second period of his life (1921-1927). This famous essay explains the rationale behind his transition from the isolated subjectivism of his early poetry to the collectivism expressed in The Waste Land (1922). By self-effacement, Eliot thought, one could possess the mental existence of an impersonal subjective realm: the mind of Europe. Hence, he expanded his philosophy from the subjective mind of the individual to include the collective mind of humanity. This factor explains the ecumenical nature of the religious thought, as well as the numerous quotations, of The Waste Land, although Eliot himself was contemplating the acceptance of Buddhism at the time of its writing. Eliot came to recognize, however, that the mind of Europe was merely the mind of the solitary ego written large. The quality of life was the same for both. The waste land of the poem was characterized by a failure in love, and its subsequent degeneration into lust, and by a failure in faith, with other companion characteristics such as fragmentation and aimless motion. The poem of crisis, The Hollow Men (1925), was Eliot's analysis of the

emptiness of collective idealism and his recognition of an objective reality outside of himself, Catholic Christianity, which would satisfy him religiously and, it might be added, culturally, for Eliot contended that the culture of a people was an incarnation of its religion. Eliot, intellectually sensitive, was attracted to that wing of the Anglican Church which was nearest to the larger tradition of Europe. Because of the "shadow" of The Hollow Men, however, the poet expressed an inability to accept Catholic Christianity. Sweeney Agonistes also implies an impasse, a stopping short of positive faith. Eliot accepted Christian belief in 1925 or 1926. The early twenties were years of sadness and suffering for him. Overwork resulted in a nervous breakdown; and the illness of his wife, who by 1928 was on the verge of insanity, resulted in their separation. These sufferings, along with the rejection of his philosophy, caused him to seek something to fill the emptiness. His reading of Lancelot Andrewes, Dante, Hulme, and John of the Cross during this period indicates not only his hunger for spiritual sustenance but also adequately explains his choice of Catholic Christianity.

The trend of the religious thought of Eliot's poetry in the mid-twenties was toward Catholic Christianity. Any indication of scepticism was felt to be but a preface to conversion. Suspicions were vindicated when in 1928 he announced his avowal of Anglo-Catholicism. He had been baptized and confirmed into the Church of England in 1927. His first work

thereafter was Ash-Wednesday (1927-1930), another confessional type of poem like The Hollow Men, only at this time Eliot was on the other side of the "Shadow." In Ash-Wednesday, Eliot had turned from his former philosophy, his subjective approach to poetry, and his aspiration for a temporal immortality and had turned to the claims of Catholic Christianity, with its teachings concerning the Virgin Mary and purgation. Except for the extra-biblical mysticism of John of the Cross, the poet's religious thought was in harmony with Anglo-Catholicism. Eliot's interest in the redemption of time was expressed in its incipient form in the poem. The Ariel Poems (1927-1930) were similar to Ash-Wednesday in that they revealed a new believer's attempt to gain insight into the significance of the Gospel, the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. With its emphasis on pure joy, "Marina" was a rare poem. The experiences of rapture were rare moments in Eliot's Christian poetry and plays; suffering and purgations prevailed. Even in Four Quartets, the realm of religious experience was more purgatorial than paradisiacal. In "Marina" the poet was near to an acceptance of the body and the senses. The "low blue flame" of his first Christian writing became "the silver trumpet" in The Rock and Murder in the Cathedral. His belief in the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and transubstantiation was evident in The Rock, as were the Catholic-Protestant emphases on the interdependence of Christians, original sin, and spiritual gifts. Also in The Rock, there was a brief affirmation

of the human body. Murder in the Cathedral, an Anglican classic, again revealed Catholic Christianity in its theme of martyrdom. In addition to the authors mentioned in the first two chapters, Pascal, a Catholic, and Charles Williams, an Anglo-Catholic, were formidable influences on the poet in this third period (1927-1935). Pascal's conversion, which was similar to Eliot's, and Pascal's Pensées, which was a defense of Christianity, were both helpful to Eliot. In Charles Williams, the poet also found a kindred spirit. Eliot was especially impressed with the ease with which Williams was at home in both the natural and supernatural realms, a vital balance that Eliot was never able to maintain.

Chapter IV limited itself to an analysis of the religious thought of Eliot's masterpiece, Four Quartets, and his play, The Family Reunion. Four Quartets and, to some extent, the play were dominated by one major question: Is time redeemable? Such a question may have had its inception as early as 1910-1911 when Eliot attended Bergson's lectures and may have been pondered over for years. The question received a brief treatment in Ash-Wednesday. Eliot's thought concerning this question underwent a revolutionary change in The Rock. There the past was preserved in the mind of God in the present as an objective, eternal fact. This idea was expatiated on in Four Quartets, particularly in "Burnt Norton," the first Quartet. In "Burnt Norton," even a "might have been" experience of the past can be made meaningful--can be redeemed or altered-- by

surrendering this moment of illumination out of time to the past where, in time and by the aid of memory, it will be recognized as a part of God's pattern of providence. The terms "time," "timeless," and "pattern" are key words in Eliot's later poetry. The poet used the extra-biblical image of "the still point" to represent the timeless Trinity. Communion with the still point can be experienced by means of the way of "the moment in the rose garden" and by "darkness," the way of negation of John of the Cross. "East Coker" stressed the fact that one can arrive at the still point by taking the dark road of patience and submission, suggesting again the mysticism of John of the Cross. Because of man's limited knowledge of the true pattern, Eliot rejected any historicism which was not biblically oriented. The primary contribution of "The Dry Salvages" was Eliot's concept concerning the intersection of the timeless with time by Incarnation. This historic intersection illustrated Eliot's point that history is a pattern of such timeless moments. According to "Little Gidding," the pattern of history can be transfigured when the divine pattern is seen behind the human pattern. This perspective can bring a calm conviction to the spirit of man that "All shall be well." Eliot fulfilled the biblical test of orthodoxy by his acceptance of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Eliot's contention, however, that eternity is "timeless" is a philosophical idea rather than a biblical one. According to the Old and New Testaments, eternity is endless time. The religious thought of

The Family Reunion centers around the Catholic teaching that for certain sins a temporal punishment remains following confession. In Eliot's concluding three comedies, The Cocktail Party, The Confidential Clerk, and The Elder Statesman, there was a progression toward the acceptance of the affirmative way, without, at the same time, rejecting the negative way. He arrived at establishing a balance between the physical and the spiritual. Four Quartets and the later plays present a more human Eliot and one who was more concerned for society. His two books, The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture, were prose presentations of that concern.

Eliot's religious thought originated in Unitarianism, dissipated to a great extent in a non-religious subjective and collective idealism, and culminated in Catholic Christianity. From the viewpoint of Anglo-Catholic Christianity, his thought was orthodox, except possibly for such doctrinal adulterations as the mysticism of John of the Cross and as the philosophical idea of timelessness, which adulterations, however, are peripheral in comparison to the cardinal doctrine of the Incarnation. The Incarnation of Christ was the unifying doctrine of all of Eliot's religious thought. It was this doctrine that indicated to him the patterns of providence, the pattern of timeless moments in time; it was this doctrine that helped him to restore to the poetry of the twentieth century the concept of immanence, making him the poet of the

moment; it was this doctrine that provided him with a rationale for the acceptance of the body. In essence, it provided him with a unique doctrinal approach to vindicate the ways of God to man. Eliot made no attempt to present the total claims of his Church. Some of the doctrines avowed, however, were the Trinity; the Incarnation, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection of Christ; the Church, with its interdependence of believers, the Eucharist, and transubstantiation; original sin; Satan; and an eschatology which was limited to a belief in hell, purgatory, and heaven. A Kingdom of Christ on earth would never be realized. Even his envisioned Christian society would be spiritually mediocre, needing constant reform. Eliot was, in his own way, concerned about society and culture, although the primary weakness of his poetry and plays is a practical one: his inability to empathize very much with the human condition. He was not, as has been suggested, an Apostle to the Gentiles; rather, unlike Prufrock, he became like John the Baptist after all, a forerunner providing prepared soil for the Gospel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Books

Alighieri, Dante, The Divine Comedy, translated by Louis Biancolli, 3 volumes, New York, Washington Square Press, 1966.

Andrewes, Lancelot, Andrewes' Minor Works, Life Indexes, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Vol. XI, Oxford, John Henry Parker, 1854.

_____, Andrewes' Sermons, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Vol. I, Oxford, John Henry Parker, 1841.

Bury, The Rev. R. G., translator, Plato, The Loeb Classical Library, Vol. VII, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1952.

Conrad, Joseph, Heart of Darkness, edited by Robert Kimbrough, University of Wisconsin, New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1963.

Eliot, T. S., Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964.

_____, The Complete Poems and Plays, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1952.

_____, The Confidential Clerk, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1954.

_____, The Elder Statesman, London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1959.

_____, Elizabethan Essays, London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1934.

_____, Essays Ancient and Modern, London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1936.

_____, For Lancelot Andrewes, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1929.

_____, Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley, London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1964.

_____, On Poetry and Poets, New York, Noonday Press, 1964.

_____, The Sacred Wood, Essays on Poetry and Criticism, New York, Barnes and Noble, 1966.

_____, Selected Essays, New York, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1950.

_____, To Criticize the Critic, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965.

_____, The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England, London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1964.

Howarth, Herbert, Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964.

Pascal, Blaise, Pensées, translated by W. F. Trotter, Great Books of the Western World, edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins, Vol. XXXIII, Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952.

Weston, Jessie L., From Ritual to Romance, Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957.

Williams, Charles, All Hallows' Eve, London, William Heinemann, Limited, 1938.

_____, Descent Into Hell, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949.

_____, Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939.

_____, He Came Down From Heaven, London, William Heinemann, Limited, 1938.

_____, Many Dimensions, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949.

_____, War in Heaven, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books

Aiken, Conrad, Ushant, New York, Peter Smith, 1952.

Anderson, George K. and Walton, Eda Lou, This Generation, Chicago, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1949.

Arndt, William F. and Gingrich, F. Wilbur, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1956.

Bergin, Thomas G., Dante, New York, The Orion Press, 1965.

Bergsten, Staffan, Time and Eternity, A Study in the Structure and Symbolism of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets, Stockholm, Scandinavian University Books, 1960.

Braybrooke, Neville, T. S. Eliot: A Critical Essay, Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective, edited by Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967.

Brown, Francis, Driver, S. R., and Briggs, Charles A., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1955.

Cailliet, Emile, Pascal, The Emergence of Genius, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1945.

_____, The Recovery of Purpose, New York, Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1959.

Chubb, Thomas Caldecot, Dante and His World, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1966.

Cornford, Francis M., The Origin of Attic Comedy, London, Edward Arnold, 1914.

Cullmann, Oscar, Christ and Time, The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, translated from the German by Floyd V. Filson, Philadelphia, The Westminister Press, 1949.

Dillenberger, John and Welch, Claude, Protestant Christianity Interpreted Through Its Development, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.

Drew, Elizabeth, T. S. Eliot, The Design of His Poetry, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949.

Gardner, Helen, The Art of T. S. Eliot, New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1950.

Happold, F. C., Mysticism, A Study and an Anthology, Baltimore, Penguin Books, Inc., 1964.

Jones, David E., The Plays of T. S. Eliot, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1960.

Kenner, Hugh, The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot, New York, The Citadel Press, 1964.

_____, editor, T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962.

Lewis, C. S., The Abolition of Man, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1962.

_____, Christian Reflections, edited by Walter Hooper, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967.

_____, Poems, edited by Walter Hooper, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965.

_____, Surprised By Joy: The Shape of My Early Life, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955.

Matthiessen, F. O., The Achievement of T. S. Eliot, New York, Oxford University Press, 1959.

Maxwell, D. E. S., The Poetry of T. S. Eliot, New York, Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1961.

Miller, J. Hillis, The Disappearance of God: Five 19th-Century Writers, New York, Schocken Books, 1965.

_____, Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965.

Mortimer, Ernest, Blaise Pascal, The Life and Work of a Realist, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1949.

Nestle, D. Eberhard, Novum Testamentum Graece, Stuttgart: Wurt, Bibelanstalt, 1953.

Ryrie, Charles Caldwell, Dispensationalism Today, Chicago, Moody Press, 1965.

St. John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel, Garden City, New York, Image Books. 1958.

_____, The Dark Night of the Soul, New York, Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1957.

Smith, Carol H., T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice From Sweeney Agonistes to the Elder Statesman, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1966.

Smith, Grover, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Taylor, A. E., A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1928.

_____, Plato, The Man and His Work, Cleveland, The World Publishing Company, 1964.

Trilling, Lionel, Beyond Culture, Essays on Literature and Learning, New York, The Viking Press, 1965.

Unger, Leonard, T. S. Eliot, University of Minnesota Phamphlets on American Writers, No. 8, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1961.

Williams, Charles, The Figure of Beatrice, A Study of Dante, New York, The Noonday Press, 1961.

_____, The Image of the City and Other Essays, selected by Anne Ridler with a Critical Introduction, London, Oxford University Press, 1958.

Williamson, George, A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot, New York, Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964.

Wilson, Edmund, Axel's Castle, A Study in Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959.

_____, The Bit Between My Teeth, A Literary Chronicle of 1950-1965, New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1965.

Zylstra, Henry, Testament of Vision, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958.

Articles

McDonnell, Thomas P., "T. S. Eliot: Christian Poet," America, XCIV (October, 1955), 45-46.

Shillito, Edward, "The Faith of T. S. Eliot," Christian Century, XI (August, 1934), 994-995.

Simons, J. W., "Beliefs and Poetry of T. S. Eliot," Commonweal, LXXI (October, 1959), 160.

Spender, Stephen, "Literature," in The Great Ideas Today, edited by Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler, Chicago, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1965, 166-211.

Wilson, Edmund, "T. S. Eliot and the Church of England," New Republic, LVIII (April, 1929), 283-284.

Essays in Collections

Auerbach, Erich, "The Survival and Transformation of Dante's Vision of Reality," in Dante, A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by John Freccero, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965, 9-13.

Scott, Jr., Nathan A., editor, The New Orpheus, Essays Toward a Christian Poetic, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1964.

Tate, Allen, editor, T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, New York, Delacorte Press, 1966.

Unger, Leonard, editor, T. S. Eliot: A Selected Critique, New York, Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1948.

Encyclopedia Articles

Harrison, Everett F., editor-in-chief, Baker's Dictionary of Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1960.

"Lancelot Andrewes," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. I, 14th edition, Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Overton, John Henry, "Lancelot Andrewes," Dictionary of National Biography, edited by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, Vol. I, London, 1908.