

### CHAPTER 3: ELIOT'S CRITICAL ESSAYS AND CRITICAL WORKS ON ELIOT

In the last chapter, I outlined the English Church — its origins, its history and development, and its relationship to English society. I presented the development primarily on the basis of worship and theology, especially as expressed in the high-church, or Anglo-Catholic, tradition. In addition, I presented religious developments in America, focusing primarily on the tradition in which T. S. Eliot was raised — Unitarianism, with elements of Puritanism and the Puritan Jeremiad tradition, as well as with elements of general and generic American values and religion. I also reviewed Eliot's personal development from that American tradition to his conversion to Anglicanism — a matter treated briefly also in the first chapter introduction, as well as in the fourth chapter on *The Waste Land*. From the history of the English Church tradition, I clarified Eliot's Anglican orientation as high-church, relating it to the strongest recent English expression of that tradition in the form of the Oxford Movement. Thus, the last chapter looked primarily at the Oxford Movement and its high-church values and themes — Incarnation, ecclesiology, ritual and ceremony, and other elements listed at the end of that chapter — noting the place of the Oxford Movement in the larger Church and in the history of the English Church and the English nation. The Oxford Movement was influenced by those who came before, either by way of reaction or affirmation, and the Oxford Movement, in turn, influenced traditions in the Church and nation that came after. While mainly the religious traditions were considered, social and literary elements came into play, as well. Against this background of the English Church and the Oxford Movement, and with a sense of the greater influence of the Movement more generally on society and the nation, I turn to a more specific consideration of what elements we find of the Oxford Movement, and of the high-church Anglo-Catholicism that grew out of it, in Eliot's critical writings. Discussion of these elements as they appear in Eliot's prose will demonstrate their influence on his thinking, will reinforce the growth of Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism, and will reveal further the rationale for applying such a liturgical analytical approach to Eliot's poetry and drama.

From the brief historical sketch of the Anglican Church in the previous chapter, it is plain to see how the disputes over liturgy and theology were anything but cordial, resulting in considerable conflict over various matters. After all, it must be remembered, as Dom Gregory Dix has pointed out in his landmark book on the liturgy, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, published in 1965, the year of Eliot's death:

Ever since the sixteenth century we Anglicans have been so divided over eucharistic doctrine, and we are to-day so conscious of our divisions, that there is scarcely any statement that could be made about either the eucharist or our own rite which would not seem to some of one's fellow churchmen to call for immediate contradiction on conscientious grounds. It is quite understandable. These things go deep behind us. Two archbishops of Canterbury have lost their lives and a third his see, in these quarrels. One king has been beheaded and another dethroned; many lesser men have suffered all manner of penalties from martyrdom downwards on one side and another. These things have left their traces, tangling and confusing our own approach to the matter in all sorts of irrelevant ways. Besides the conscious inheritance of different intellectual and doctrinal positions from the past, and inextricably mingled with it, is another inherited world of unconscious misunderstandings, prejudices, assumptions, suspicions, which are only accidentally bound up with theological terms and which yet come into play instantly and secretly and quite irrationally with their use.<sup>1</sup>

Many lost their lives or positions as a result of the religious developments in England — there was much at stake. And that history continues to influence subsequent events, theology, and people. It might well be appropriate to look into the deeper issues, political and religious, that made for executions and loss of life as a result of religious and worship orientation, but that is for another study. Suffice it to say for the purpose of the current study, these religious and liturgical matters were sometimes weighty and dangerous issues that exacted a considerable cost from some, so the importance and impact of these issues on the larger society and culture must not be minimized.

It is a given, therefore, that a society's religious orientation and values, as well as an artist's own personal religious orientation and values, greatly affect that society and its structure, as well as playing a major role in an artist's own life and work. Indeed, artistic works can reflect, challenge, or enhance a society's values. The mutual interaction between social norms and art or artists is significant. So it is quite appropriate to discuss an artist's personal values and faith in the

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1. Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 1945 (New York: Seabury, 1982) 613-614.

context of the society in which the artist produces his or her work, and from that analysis to discover some other, perhaps deeper, elements or meanings in the artistic production. Naturally, one's religion determines a great deal of one's values and message. This is also true of artists; therefore, an artist's religious orientation becomes a crucial framework for understanding the artist and his or her output. Such is definitely the case with England and its state Church, as well as being the case with many artists. Such is also the case individually with T. S. Eliot. At this point, this chapter turns to a consideration of the more specific influence the Oxford Movement had on art and society, more specifically on literature, and most specifically on the literary critical work of T. S. Eliot.

As noted in the previous chapter, some of the Oxford Movement leaders were, themselves, writers of some sort. Besides producing the movement's better known Tracts and hymns, both Keble and Newman wrote poetry. A contemporary, J. A. Froude, called the poetry of Keble's *The Christian Year* "poetry of a particular period, not for all time, but considered that it was excellent of its kind, especially in comparison with earlier English religious poetry which was not ... poetry at all."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the obvious danger of "religious" poetry is that its intent is often religious inculcation, which often runs at cross purposes with artistic expression, thus quickly compromising the poetic art. Usually, either the poetry is strong while religious sentiments are being questioned or challenged, or the religious inculcation value is present in the form of mediocre to bad poetic language. Froude acknowledges this in the latter portion of his comment, having deemed Keble's efforts "excellent *of its kind*." Nonetheless, in the first part of his comment he also acknowledges the limited value of Keble's poetry. Faber goes on from here to say more bluntly of Keble's poetry that it possesses

no observation behind the images he employs; no thought behind his emotion; no emotion behind his thought, since there is no thought there, nothing but simple assertion. ... There is not even any great technical skill. The rhymes, the rhythms, the vocabulary are without distinction — mere "crockery," as he himself deprecatingly described his verses to Hurrell Froude. If it had not been for the fact that *The Christian Year* was "religious" poetry, removed from serious criti-

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2. Geoffrey Faber, M.A., *Oxford Apostles: A Character Study of the Oxford Movement* (London: Faber, 1933) 91.

cism by its hallowed associations, it would have sunk into swift oblivion.<sup>3</sup>

And in the midst of this, Faber quotes T. S. Eliot's criticism, that the poetry has "no 'mechanism of sensibility.'"<sup>4</sup> Faber continues for the next few pages of his book to cite examples of religious doggerel from both Keble and Newman,<sup>5</sup> leaving one to question the true value of the literary influence and output of the Oxford Movement.

However, the work of the leaders of the movement was more in the areas of theology, tract writing, ministry, hymns, and worship. Their literary output was secondary, at best. Nonetheless, after Faber's harsh, if apt, criticism, Shane Leslie offers a gentler perspective on the literary work of the Oxford Movement leaders: "The effect of the Oxford Movement upon literature was immense, taking the works of Newman alone. ... The Oxford Movement was not slow to slip into the novels," going on to note various novels by Dickens, Thackeray, and even Disraeli — the connections involve characterizations, descriptions of church settings and architecture, and use of ecclesiastical themes. And then he goes on to add that "The Æsthetic Movement [including Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, Oscar Wilde, Tennyson, Christina Rossetti, Walter Pater, and others] sometimes resembles a pagan offshoot of the Oxford Movement." Leslie sees the effect continuing in the conversion and poetic production of Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in a very brief outline, Leslie traces the further literary influences, direct and indirect, of the Oxford Movement.

Along the same lines as Shane Leslie, S. L. Ollard, in his *A Short History of the Oxford Movement*, adds, "In literature the Oxford Movement has certainly left its mark; in poetry, in prose, and among the English novelists, its followers have already won an abiding fame." Ollard goes on to affirm the religious writings of Newman, Isaac Williams, and F. W. Faber, and he adds specifically, "In Christina Rossetti (1830-94) the Movement possessed one who has been described as 'the most perfect poet that ever, in the English tongue, linked the highest aspirations

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3. Faber 91-92.

4. Faber 91.

5. Faber 91-95.

6. Shane Leslie, *Oxford Movement 1833-1933*, Science and Culture Series, gen. ed. Rev. Joseph Husslein, S.J., Ph.D. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1933) 150-164, esp. 150, 151, 158.

of religion with the most exquisite expressions of poetry.’ To her ‘the Catholic theology of the English Church was the very breath of life,’ and her art as well as her life was wholly coloured by it.” Ollard then proceeds to discuss the hymn writers, theologians, historians, architects, and scholars influenced or spawned by the Movement, and he adds a discussion of even further results of the Movement in the areas of church life, schools and education, and societies.<sup>7</sup> Simply put, whether one takes the more critical view of Geoffrey Faber or agrees with the more affirming views of Leslie and Ollard, we can certainly see the breadth of influence of the Oxford Movement on various aspects of English society, especially literature. So it should be no surprise to see elements of the Oxford Movement in T. S. Eliot’s life and writings, especially around the time of, and after, Eliot’s conversion.

Eliot’s having become a confessed Christian of an “anglo-catholic” bent already places him in the high-church camp within the Anglican Church, as previously noted. And when we consider how Dom Gregory Dix has summarized the intensity of the English Church’s development — to the point of many people losing lives or positions, including archbishops of Canterbury and even kings — we can begin to sense the depth and importance of any specific position taken with regard to the Church. Identifying oneself with a specific group within the English Church, as did Eliot, carries with it some history and intensity that may or may not be felt by most. Nonetheless, given the background, this becomes a more interesting and important consideration with regard to Eliot’s works than a simply pietistic assessment of his conversion may indicate.

Indeed, for many readers, Eliot’s conversion is of little or no significance, especially when considering Eliot’s earlier creative works or his literary critical production. Others, like Harold Bloom, are troubled by Eliot’s influence on poetry and criticism, especially from a religious perspective. In his introduction to a collection of essays on Eliot, Bloom relates his own difficulties growing up “Jewish, Liberal and Romantic” under Eliot’s Christian influence on the Academy.<sup>8</sup> Another critic, Richard Shusterman, demurs from discussing the Christian aspect of Eliot’s criti-

7. S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* (London: Faith, 1963) 145-166, 167-188, esp. 145.

8. Harold Bloom, Introduction, *T. S. Eliot*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea, 1985) 1, 2, 4-5, esp. 1.

cism for two reasons: first, he considers himself a “‘free-thinking,’ secular Jew,” one against whom he feels Eliot writes in *After Strange Gods*; and secondly, he feels Eliot’s Christianity, with regard to “its importance for his philosophy of criticism,” is overemphasized, despite its significance in Eliot’s life.<sup>9</sup> Still other readers and critics even attempt to ignore or deny the facts of Eliot’s conversion and disregard Eliot’s own confession of faith and the religious aspect of even his later poetry and prose. While it certainly need not concern anyone to trifle with the obvious, incontrovertible, and personally confessed facts of Eliot’s conversion to Anglican Christianity, the effects of that conversion on his later creative works, and the more generalized influence of Eliot’s Christian views on literature and poetry as indicated by Harold Bloom and others, it does become necessary to establish more strongly the effects of Eliot’s specific identification with high-church Anglicanism. Given the emotional charge of such specific orientations within the Church, as noted above, this consideration of Eliot’s high-church perspective has more than passing interest or significance. I will indeed discuss how Eliot’s development towards, and ultimate conversion to, a high-church form of Anglicanism affects certain of his creative works, both early and late, in the next two chapters. Here, however, I will assess some of Eliot’s critical writings as revealing this specifically high-church orientation. Granted, many of Eliot’s critical writings, especially his earlier critical works, are comments on specific literary works or authors. However, critical essays from the time surrounding his formal conversion reveal the influence of high-church Anglo-Catholicism on Eliot and his thinking, and some of his later critical works reveal also a strong desire for a Christian society.

### *The Sacred Wood*

A year after his conversion to Anglicanism, Eliot writes, in the preface to *The Sacred Wood*, that, as of 1928, he has “passed on to another problem not touched upon in this book: that of the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times.” Eliot clarifies: “And certainly poetry is not the inculcation of morals, or the the direction of politics; and no

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9. Richard Shusterman, *T. S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988) 3.

more is it religion or an equivalent of religion, except by some monstrous abuse of words"<sup>10</sup> — at this point, he sounds like he agrees with Faber's criticism of the poetic efforts of the Oxford Movement's leaders noted above. In that same vein, in his essay on Dante at the end of *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot says of Parmenides and Empedocles that "They were not interested exclusively in philosophy, or religion, or poetry, but in something which was a mixture of all three; hence their reputation as poets is low and as philosophers should be considerably below Heraclitus, Zeno, Anaxagoras, or Democritus."<sup>11</sup> But Eliot begins the concluding paragraph to his preface by adding, "On the other hand, poetry as certainly has something to do with morals, and with religion, and even with politics perhaps, though we cannot say what."<sup>12</sup> And while the essays in *The Sacred Wood* focus clearly on literary criticism and poets, this preface of 1928, written after his own conversion, reveals a shift in Eliot's understanding of morality and religion as regards its place in poetry and criticism.

In the concluding essay on Dante, written as early as 1920, Eliot acknowledges:

But poetry can be penetrated by a philosophic idea, it can deal with this idea when it has reached the point of immediate acceptance when it has become almost a physical modification. If we divorced poetry and philosophy altogether, we should bring a serious impeachment, not only against Dante, but against most of Dante's contemporaries.

Dante had the benefit of a mythology and a theology which had undergone a more complete absorption into life than those of Lucretius.<sup>13</sup>

Here, Eliot is clarifying the difference between poetry written to function as philosophy or theology, as per Faber's criticism of the Oxford Movement poets, and poetry written from a sincere, internalized, integral faith orientation, theology, or philosophy. Dante, as Eliot sees him, writes from this internalized philosophy and theology. Eliot adds later, in a 1929 essay on Dante:

Dante's debt to St. Thomas Aquinas ... can easily be exaggerated; for it must not be forgotten that Dante read and made use of other great mediaeval philosophers as well. ... But the question of what Dante "believed" is always relevant. ...

10. T. S. Eliot, Preface to the 1928 Edition, *The Sacred Wood: Essays On Poetry and Criticism*, 1920 (New York: Methuen, 1986) viii, ix.

11. T. S. Eliot, "Dante," 1920, *The Sacred Wood: Essays On Poetry and Criticism*, 1920 (New York: Methuen, 1986) 161.

12. Eliot, Preface to the 1928 Edition, *Sacred Wood* x.

13. Eliot, "Dante" (1920), *Sacred Wood* 162-163.

My point is that you cannot afford to *ignore* Dante's philosophical and theological beliefs, or to skip the passages which express them most clearly; but that on the other hand you are not called upon to believe them yourself. It is wrong to think that there are parts of the *Divine Comedy* which are of interest only to Catholics or mediaevalists. ... In reading Dante you must enter the world of thirteenth-century Catholicism. ... I will not deny that it may be in practice easier for a Catholic to grasp the meaning, in many places, than for the ordinary agnostic; but that is not because the Catholic believes, but because he has been instructed.<sup>14</sup>

From this point, Eliot's understanding and appreciation of mediaeval philosophy and theology are evident. The fact that he recognizes Dante's "thirteenth-century Catholicism" as a religious tradition necessitating a certain amount of instruction sets his religious understanding above a more pietistic orientation that would simply appreciate the faith aspect of Dante's work. And just as Eliot has noted Dante's dependence on and use of Thomistic theology, I shall be looking at Eliot's debt to Oxford Movement high-church Anglicanism. After all, as Eliot says of Dante, we "cannot afford to *ignore* [the author's] philosophical and theological beliefs, ... but ... on the other hand [we] are not called upon to believe them [ourselves]." But, as Eliot says of Dante's readers, we, too, must be "instructed" and understand them. That being said, it is fair, then, that I press on to a closer consideration of a selection of Eliot's prose.

In the Introduction to *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, editor Frank Kermode sees Eliot's criticism as far from a unified, seamless body of work, coming from "different dates and different stages of his life." He says that Eliot

proposed to divide it into three periods. During the first he was writing for the *Egoist*, in which appeared what is arguably his most influential single essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The main influences on his work at this time were Ezra Pound (and through him Remy de Gourmont and Henry James) and Irving Babbitt, who at Harvard introduced Eliot to the philosophy of Humanism and whose traditionalist doctrines were reinforced, a little later, by the ideas of T. E. Hulme and Charles Maurras.

The second period, from 1918 to about 1930, was primarily one of regular contributions to the *Athenaeum*, edited by Middleton Murray, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, edited by Bruce Richmond; and the third primarily one of lectures and addresses.<sup>15</sup>

Kermode adds that "the third stage is not so much creative as speculative."<sup>16</sup> Given Eliot's pro-

14. T. S. Eliot, "Dante," 1929, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 221-222 [sic].

15. Kermode, Frank, ed., Introduction, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 11-12.

16. Kermode, Introduction, *Selected Prose* 14.



cess of conversion during 1926 and officially in 1927, an important influence, developing in the second period, is his newfound faith perspective. Then, as his third stage develops, Eliot's criticism becomes more speculative, as Kermode says, being focused on religious and social concerns together.

While I would agree with Kermode's dividing up Eliot's career into three stages, I would do so for another purpose. The first stage would be the time prior to Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism; the second, the time around his formal conversion, both leading up to, during, and just after; and the third the time of his mature Christian writings. My concern for the purpose of this chapter rests mostly with the works around the second stage, the time of Eliot's formal conversion and the high-church religious themes of those works. This seems a pivotal time in Eliot's life — a time when he would have been most conscious of the specifics of his religious conversion. Karen T. Romer, of Brown University, shares my perspective in her assessment of the importance of this most pivotal second stage in Eliot's life and writings. Writing about the liturgical style of language in Eliot's poetry of this period, Romer says :

The so-called middle period of Eliot's poetry includes *The Hollow Men*, *Ash Wednesday*, the Ariel Poems, and "Coriolan," which were all written after Eliot's conversion to the Anglican Church, and at a time when he was presumably most deeply aware of the language and literary tradition of the Church. One finds in the poems of this period a preoccupation not with the Bible as the authority or doctrine per se, nor with the declaration of a new-found personal faith, but rather with Christianity as expressed through the Anglican liturgy. To a man fascinated with relationship of the individual with his tradition, with the loneliness and estrangement of men, with the complexities of time, with symbolism, and with exploring the weight of associative context that could be borne by words or groups of words, the Christian faith as expressed in the liturgy was ready-made for Eliot's special concerns.<sup>17</sup>

This is true of the poetry of this period, as I shall discuss in the fifth chapter, and it is likewise true of Eliot's prose of this time, as well. Eliot's prose displays his primary preoccupation with Anglo-Catholicism, the liturgy, and high-church ideals, over and against simply pietistic faith concerns. I shall focus here on what I call the second stage in Eliot's life of faith and writing. But first, I shall touch on a few works from the first period, noting views that reveal a tempera-

17. Karen T. Romer, "T. S. Eliot and the Language of Liturgy," *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature* XXIV.3 (Spring 1972): 120. I shall discuss this essay further in my fifth chapter.

ment receptive to the kind of religious themes of the Oxford Movement summarized in the previous chapter.

### "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," published in 1919, Eliot's respect for an author's poetic ancestral tradition echoes the organized Church's dependance on, and Eliot's later respect for, apostolic tradition. As noted in the previous chapter, the Anglican Church's struggles with its creedal and confessional traditions helped form it into a historical, theological church, as against a less structured, personally oriented, individual-oriented, and emotion-oriented organization. If those two are seen as opposite ends of the spectrum of ecclesiastical identity, then Eliot might be expected to be strongly on the former end of the scale, with more respect for the traditional and historical over and against the personal and individual. His statements here on poetic tradition, exemplify the beginnings of, or Eliot's natural inclination toward, that perspective. Granted, Eliot acknowledges the individual identity and talent in writing, but sees it in regard to its place in the larger tradition when he says, "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists."<sup>18</sup> And in one of his own passages, which Eliot, himself, would later quote, in his 1923 essay "The Function of Criticism":

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.<sup>19</sup>

18. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 1919, *The Sacred Wood: Essays On Poetry and Criticism*, 1920 (New York: Methuen, 1986) 48-49. See also T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 1919, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 37-38.

19. Eliot, "Tradition" (1919), *Sacred Wood* 50 [sic]; qtd. in T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," 1923, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 68 [sic]. See also Eliot, "Tradition" (1919), *Selected Prose* 38-39.

With a minor adjustment of subject, Eliot's statement could also be applied to the establishment of the Anglican Church as something new within the tradition of the old, which, once grafted in, becomes every bit as much a part of the larger tradition. As regards the Church, this passage could also be seen to specify the *via media* nature of the Church, as midway between two existing extremes within the larger Church or as a carefully conservative development within the larger and older tradition.

In even stronger terms relating to the personal aspect, Eliot states: "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."<sup>20</sup> Brian Lee notes, in his little book *Theory and Personality: The Significance of T. S. Eliot's Criticism*, that the terms "sacrifice" and "extinction" come from different vocabularies. The first comes from the religious-metaphysical vocabulary, and the second from the scientific vocabulary. It is enough for my purpose that he notes the religious character of terms such as "surrender," "ideal order," "temporal," "timeless," and "sacrifice."<sup>21</sup> These words are not just religious-metaphysical, but they ring of martyrdom, which reminds us of the early centuries in the life of the Church in which believers would sacrifice themselves for something larger. Of course, pietists can make much of a word like "surrender," but it is clear from the context that Eliot's use here has more to do with tradition and the larger structure than with the elimination of personality or individuality as an end in itself. In ecclesiastical terms, this is in direct contradistinction to the American religious way of thinking and shows Eliot well on his way to what we might call a more Anglican way of thinking.

"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."<sup>22</sup> In the Church, much as the individual and one's personality are appreciated and encouraged, they are ultimately subsumed under the more

20. Eliot, "Tradition" (1919), *Sacred Wood* 52-53. See also Eliot, "Tradition" (1919), *Selected Prose* 40.

21. Brian Lee, *Theory and Personality: The Significance of T. S. Eliot's Criticism* (London: Athlone, 1979) 48-49, esp. 49.

22. Eliot, "Tradition" (1919), *Sacred Wood* 58. See also Eliot, "Tradition" (1919), *Selected Prose* 43.

important corporate identity, especially in the more historically and liturgically oriented end of the Church continuum. As to this matter of the rôle of the poet's emotion in art, Eliot offers, simultaneously perhaps his most quoted and his most misunderstood statement: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."<sup>23</sup> While I would like to work this notion of the "objective correlative" more into my discussion here, there is enough confusion about the clarity of the expression to recommend bypassing it so as not to add the confusion or divert my own concerns.<sup>24</sup> Suffice it to say, this sounds like Eliot's attempt to continue on a more objective, less subjective, train of thought, in the sense of one's subjective emotions and experience being communicated through more objective means and becoming relevant only in their objective value to the larger group. F. O. Matthiessen points out Eliot's use of the same concept when analyzing the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes as being less personal, subjective, and emotional than John Donne's sermons. He quotes Eliot as saying, "Andrewes' emotion is purely contemplative; it is not personal, it is wholly evoked by the object of contemplation, to which it is adequate; his emotion is wholly contained in and explained by its object."<sup>25</sup> This sense of the term links it more closely with the objectivity of a more Catholic perspective, as well, as compared to a more personally oriented, Protestant perspective. Eliot continues to develop his understanding of the poet's or critic's personal emotions or sentiment getting in the way of true art in his 1920 essay, "The Perfect Critic."<sup>26</sup>

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23. T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet," 1919, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 48 [sic].

24. I refer the reader to Frank Kermode's very brief outline of the confusion surrounding the expression and its history on pages 16-17 of his Introduction to *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975).

25. F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry* (Boston: Houghton, 1935) 157.

26. T. S. Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," 1920, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 53.

### "The Function of Criticism"

In "The Function of Criticism," Eliot goes on to clarify that the artist who "surrenders himself" to his own "trifling differences which are his distinction" is a "second-rate artist." Then, in a statement that links Eliot's discussion of art in traditional versus personal terms with my own analogous discussion of the Church's understanding of corporate tradition versus individual faith, Eliot quotes Middleton Murray: "Catholicism stands for the principle of unquestioned spiritual authority outside the individual; that is also the principle of Classicism in literature." And taking this analogy even further, even to the point of presaging Eliot's later three-fold self-identification, Eliot again quotes Murray:

The English writer, the English divine, the English statesman, inherit no rules from their forebears; they inherit only this: a sense that in the last resort they must depend upon the inner voice.... If they (the English writer, divine, statesman) dig *deep enough* in their pursuit of self-knowledge — a piece of mining done not with the intellect alone, but with the whole man — they will come upon a self that is universal.... The man who truly interrogates himself will ultimately hear the voice of God.<sup>27</sup>

Eliot adds:

The inner voice, in fact, sounds remarkably like an old principle which has been formulated by an elder critic in the now familiar phrase of "doing as one likes".... It [Murray's digging *deep enough* [*sic*] in the pursuit of self-knowledge] is an exercise, however, which I believe was of enough interest to Catholicism for several handbooks to be written on its practice. But the Catholic practitioners were, I believe, with the possible exception of certain heretics, not palpitating Narcissi; the Catholic did not believe that God and himself were identical.<sup>28</sup>

Eliot makes a careful distinction here of a more proper Catholic view over and against Murray's position, which is more open to questions of clarity. Further, in this essay, Eliot's thoughts begin to develop along issues of what is right and differentiating between Classicism versus Romanticism and outside authority versus inner voice. After asking "what is right?," Eliot chooses Classicism, specifically French Classicism over English Romanticism. Eliot ultimately equates the inner voice to "Whiggery" and favors "common principles for the pursuit of criticism" in his second comparison, of which he asks, "Why have principles when one has the inner

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27. Eliot, "Function" (1923), *Selected Prose* 69, 70, 71 [*sic*].

28. Eliot, "Function" (1923), *Selected Prose* 71.

voice?"<sup>29</sup>

At this point, in 1923, Eliot is certainly thinking in the categories, and using the language, of the Church, with analogous comments on literature and religious issues. His citing of Murray's English writer, divine, and statesman anticipates and coincides directly with Eliot's "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion."<sup>30</sup> In the preface to the 1928 edition of *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot adds of himself and Middleton Murray, "I believe that both Mr. Murray and myself are a little more certain of our directions than we were then."<sup>31</sup> Specifically, Eliot, and perhaps also Murray, have "passed on to another problem not touched upon in [*The Sacred Wood*]: that of the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times."<sup>32</sup> During this period in his life, the time through the early 1920s, Eliot was writing the above essays, as well as completing and assembling his great poem, *The Waste Land*. Above, I noted some of those developing religious concerns in Eliot's critical essays of that period. In the next chapter, I shall discuss in detail *The Waste Land*, especially considering it in terms of Eliot's developing religious orientation. Here, however, I continue to focus on Eliot's religious concerns as he moved into the period of his more overtly and consciously religious phase.

#### *For Lancelot Andrewes*

In 1926, Eliot gave the Cambridge Clark Lectures and wrote essays on the Metaphysical poets,<sup>33</sup> most of whom were clergy, and so they sometimes touched on religious images or themes. John Donne was one of the best of those poets, and Donne had largely given up poetry upon his conversion and his entering the priesthood of the Anglican Church. Donne wrote only a handful of religious poems after his conversion and turned instead to writing sermons, which, of

29. Eliot, "Function" (1923), *Selected Prose* 72-73.

30. T. S. Eliot, Preface, 1928, *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (Garden City: Doubleday Doran, 1929) vii.

31. Eliot, Preface to the 1928 Edition, *Sacred Wood* viii [sic].

32. Eliot, Preface to the 1928 Edition, *Sacred Wood* viii, cited above.

33. David A. Moody, ed., "Chronology of Eliot's Life and Works," *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) xvi.

course, were read by many as fine examples of the art of preaching.<sup>34</sup> Eliot read some of those sermons, and he wrote about Donne's prose, specifically in comparison to the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes. It appears that Eliot, having once thought John Donne to be an excellent writer of strong metaphysical wit and possessing a powerful sermon style, was later introduced to the sermons of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes by William Force Stead, thus prompting an interesting, and perhaps telling for Eliot, comparison between the two priests.<sup>35</sup> The process that began here took from 1923 to 1927 to complete, but that span of time does not include the earlier part of Eliot's quest. As Gordon has pointed out, Eliot had already begun reading Donne's sermons in 1919, during a period of Eliot's life, from 1917 to 1921, in which he found himself in various London churches during his lunch hour — at first looking for quiet and solitude, and then for religious inspiration and comfort. When Eliot finally began the formal conversion process, he had already been attending the Eucharist in 1926 and had spoken to Stead in 1926. Then, the first formal step in 1927 was obviously baptism, since as a Unitarian Eliot had never been baptized in the name of the Trinity — a primary concern throughout the history of the Church, especially in the liturgical churches. The process went on to include the second formal step of confirmation — the act of a bishop laying hands on the baptized person's head and praying for the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is a very proper liturgical procedure in a more liturgical church. Finally, the third formal step of confession nine months later completed Eliot's three-fold process — again, a formalized confession is typical of the more liturgical churches, and in fact is seen by many as the third sacrament.

Obviously, these elements of Eliot's process of conversion display a very liturgical or high-church orientation, with concern for trinitarian baptism, episcopal confirmation, and individual confession to a spiritual director. Lyndall Gordon goes so far as to clarify that this high-church

34. Joan Webber, *Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne*, (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1963). Webber was working primarily with the ten-volume *The Sermons of John Donne*, from Berkeley, edited by George R. Potter and Evelyn Simpson, 1953-1961. I refer the reader to this study for further insight into John Donne and for a deeper appreciation for what Eliot and others appreciated in Donne's work.

35. Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (New York: Farrar-Noonday, 1977) 125-127, 130-131. See also Lyndall Gordon, "Conversion," *T. S. Eliot*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea, 1985) 81-83, 85-86.

orientation is in line specifically with the Oxford Movement. In notes on an envelope in 1923 or 1924, Eliot described his more Puritan roots as being thin, without a proper, more Catholic understanding of the reality of sin. He sought a fuller, more formal, and more ritualistic faith, with prayers and sacraments. His goal was for "prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action," the elements of a more mature, more liturgically oriented, more intellectually oriented, and more regulated faith. He wanted a more theological structure that included an understanding of sin. He also wanted a church less dependent on individual clergy and their preaching and more centered on creeds, sacraments, ritual, and tradition. He no longer sought the excitement of a youthful passionate conversion, as Gordon suggests might have been his desire in 1914, but looked more toward a life-long commitment to prayer and spiritual growth — a more contemplative faith, if you will. Eliot also sought rest and relief from his anxieties and from his sense of guilt. The events that had pressed him in the early 1920s were resolving themselves, during these years of his conversion, in a change of marital status, change of vocation, change of nationality, and change of faith. And beyond the anxieties he was suffering, Eliot had some degree of guilt to deal with, according to Gordon and others. Hence, this was a perfect church orientation for Eliot. This more high-church orientation fit with Eliot's needs to resolve anxiety, provided him with a means to deal with his guilt, addressed his need for a historical and creedal ecclesiastical tradition, and fit squarely with his desire to identify more closely with his English roots and with his family's older religious and cultural heritage. Further, its ritual and liturgical orientation fit with his personality and with his intellectual and aesthetical requirements. Given Eliot's spiritual quest through much of his life, beginning with his family background and his readings in mysticism in school, through his religious questions in his works, including his more conservative observations and ideas in his criticism, his need for a more ascetic form of confession, and his Christian criticism and poetry in his later career, the Anglican Church, and most specifically the Anglo-Catholic movement within it, was made to order for Eliot.

A question comes up here with regard to Eliot's high-church leanings. If he was indeed looking to replace his thin Unitarian and Puritan roots with a historical, creedal, traditional



Church, some ask why he did not become a Roman Catholic. Simply, the Anglo-Catholic tradition within English Church satisfied both Eliot's high-church leanings and his desire to identify nationally with the English, as well. Also, the Eliot family roots were English, both religious and nationally. Both of Eliot's biographers, Lyndall Gordon and Peter Ackroyd, agree in their responses to that question, adding to the reasons listed in the previous paragraph. Gordon says that Eliot felt Anglo-Catholicism "would allow his mind [more] scope" than Roman-Catholicism, and "the truth of the scriptures [were] only dimly traced and must be verified by individual judgement." In this regard, Anglicanism was truly a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Eliot's American Protestant, Puritan, and Unitarian beginnings. Anglo-Catholicism gave him the historical and conservative structure and discipline without the excess of acquiescence and dogmatism he associated with Roman Catholicism — which made for the best of both worlds. Gordon also cites Eliot's "return to the religion of the remote English ancestors he recalled in 'East Coker.'" She adds that Eliot also saw Anglicanism as beginning with Elizabeth and "flourishing under [her] and the scholar-clerics who had dignified it in the seventeenth century."<sup>36</sup> Ackroyd says, rather bluntly, that Eliot "was not to enter the Roman communion — for one thing, it smacked of republicanism and the Boston Irish — and already, before his formal conversion, he was undergoing regular training and attending early morning services in the Church of England." Ackroyd also concurs with Gordon regarding Eliot's perceived "return to the religion of his English ancestors." And Ackroyd adds a comment from Eliot's "Lancelot Andrewes" essay that acknowledges the "Church, exemplified in the writings of Hooker and Andrewes, as deriving from a broadly European tradition — expressive of the finest spirit of English culture but not as a result parochial or provincial."<sup>37</sup> As regards Eliot's specifically Anglo-Catholic orientation, Ackroyd adds:

He became attached to the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England, precisely because he saw in it the continuation of such a tradition. Its emphasis upon the apostolic mission of the Church, and upon the importance of

36. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 127. See also Gordon, "Conversion," *T. S. Eliot* 83. This perspective was presented in the second chapter.

37. Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (New York: Simon, 1984) 159-160.

sacramental worship, afforded (for those who wished to look for it) the kind of historical and ritualistic continuity which were for Eliot the essential elements of faith. Furthermore, the ties of the English Church with the political and social life of the nation, as well as with the monarchy, encouraged him to believe that here, if anywhere, a formal synthesis was to be found. Eliot, in fact, brought with him a sense of tradition and an instinct for order which the English themselves rarely possess, and it may seem something of a sophistry to locate the glories of the Tudor polity within the Church of England of the nineteen-twenties. Eliot himself was quite aware of the fact, but that did not prevent him from making his own act of faith. His genuine desire for a national church which retained its Catholic inheritance led him to do so and, if this seems to be the work of deliberation rather than instinct, that is because in part it was.<sup>38</sup>

To this, Russell Kirk adds his rationale. First, Kirk acknowledges Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism as having been a scandal to Bloomsbury. Then he notes the specific influence of the Oxford Movement's John Henry Newman on Eliot, adding the often-asked question about Eliot's not having followed Newman to Rome. He lists what he sees are the reasons, which are good additions to the above:

The Church of England's liturgy was interwoven with the body of great literature he knew so well; the Church of England's splendid architectural monuments were all about him; the Church of England's consecration of the English state still endured—however precariously; the preachers and scholars of the Church of England, from the reign of Elizabeth onward, had filled his mind in recent years. In London, the Catholicism of Rome seemed an exotic thing, more Irish than Latin. Eliot would profess the Catholic faith in its Anglican establishment.<sup>39</sup>

In short, the Anglican Church had incorporated the best of the Roman tradition, while still remaining distinctly English, which, for Eliot, was the litmus test. Thus, Eliot's desire for both a new religious identity and a new national identity came together nicely in his choice of the Anglican Church for his new faith. And a part of that double change of identity brought with it what Eliot called a royalist perspective. Lyndall Gordon clarifies the interconnections between Eliot's royalism and his Anglo-Catholicism, while at the same time reinforcing Eliot's choice of the Anglican over the Roman tradition:

Eliot did not make it easy for his contemporaries to understand his conversion. In 1928 he announced rather curtly that he was an "Anglo-Catholic in religion." It ... was coupled with dogmatic beliefs in royalism and classicism. ... He did not make it clear that his royalism and classicism were subsidiary to his Christianity and should be taken in a special way. By royalism Eliot did not mean George

38. Ackroyd 160.

39. Russell Kirk, *Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (Peru, Ill.: Sherwood Sugden, 1984) 144.

V or any living ruler but an ideal similar to Sir Thomas Elyot's, a hope that the majesty, propriety, and responsibility of an ideal ruler would reform people from above. He believed, like Maurras, that church and king should work together. The king, he said later, "had not merely a civil but a religious obligation toward his people." Similarly, Eliot invoked classicism to uphold a Christian education.<sup>40</sup>

These statements serve to clarify even further Eliot's trifold self-identification and indeed show that his royalism and classicism are subsumed under his religious identity. Further, as subsumed positions, the latter two also serve to clarify our understanding of Eliot's religiosity. Specifically, the statement about the king's rôle, both civilly and religiously, reveals the truly Anglican cast of Eliot's religious understanding.

The quotation about the king's dual rôle in English society in the Lyndall Gordon passage above comes from Eliot's second essay in *For Lancelot Andrewes*, entitled "John Bramhall." John Bramhall was "Bishop of Derry under Charles I and Primate of Ireland under Charles II" and, like Lancelot Andrewes, "is not known as he should be known, and his works are not read as they should be read." Eliot places Bramhall, too, in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, saying he "was the stoutest inheritor of the tradition of Andrewes and Laud."<sup>41</sup> In that essay, Eliot says that he is not capable of dealing with the history, but states that "Bramhall's life includes an important part of the history of the Church and the history of England." This helps to set up Eliot's comparison of two contemporaries, Hobbes and Bramhall, specifically in a debate about the relation between Church and state. As Eliot does with Donne in comparison to Andrewes, as I shall discuss next, Eliot strongly challenged Hobbes as regards his views of the rôle of the king in favor of Bramhall's belief in the "divine right of kings: Hobbes rejected this noble faith. ... To Bramhall the king himself was a kind of symbol, and his assertion of divine right was a way of laying upon the king a double responsibility. It meant that the king had not merely a civil but a religious obligation toward his people."<sup>42</sup> This places Gordon's quotation above more in context and indeed reinforces Gordon's statement about this, that Eliot's "royalism and classicism were subsidiary to his Christianity." And indeed, Eliot's later life and writings bear that out.

<sup>40</sup>. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 132. See also Gordon, "Conversion," *T. S. Eliot* 87.

<sup>41</sup>. T. S. Eliot, "John Bramhall," 1927, *For Lancelot Andrewes* (London: Doubleday Doran, 1929) 27-28.

<sup>42</sup>. Eliot, "John Bramhall" (1927) 28-29, 38.

The first essay in *For Lancelot Andrewes*, the title essay, comes at a pivotal time in Eliot's life. Moving from the seventeenth-century poets, including Donne, more specifically to Donne's sermons, Eliot was exposed to the sermons of Donne's contemporary, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, in 1926, by William Force Stead. It may have been that Stead thought Andrewes would effect in Eliot some sort of spiritual development, which evidently it did. But Stead also rightly understood that Andrewes' style, ideas, and orientation would appeal to Eliot. And this was true to the extent that Eliot began to see Donne in a different light, as a more popularly oriented preacher. Thus, as we turn to Eliot's title essay, "For Lancelot Andrewes," written and first published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 September 1926, we see Eliot open with a very full and ecclesiastically correct reference to Andrewes as "The Right Reverend Father in God, Lancelot, Bishop of Winchester" — the first name being sufficient and proper in such cases, together with his called rôle — followed by his date of death, "died on September 25, 1626," which, in more high-church traditions — traditions which observe Saints' days — indicates also the saint's birth date into heaven. Eliot continues by praising Andrewes' memory, affirming his respected reputation, asserting his fitness to have been Archbishop of Canterbury, recommending his *Private Prayers* for personal devotions, and lamenting the minimal exposure of his great sermons, as specimens of English prose if nothing else. The reasons Eliot gives for Andrewes' sermons' lack of appeal to a wider reading audience are that they are "too well built to be readily quotable; they stick too closely to the point to be entertaining. Yet they rank with the finest English prose of their time, of any time."<sup>43</sup> This is not only in keeping with a higher understanding of the Church over and against a more popular orientation, but also in keeping with Eliot's own attitude about intellectual information and poetry over and against the general population — which is often one of the reasons given for the general or popular sense of the difficulty and inaccessibility of the modern poets.

43. T. S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (Garden City: Doubleday Doran, 1929) 3. See also T. S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *The Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 179. The original publication date is given in Frank Kermode, Appendix A: Notes, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 310.

After concisely identifying Andrewes for the many who have not heard of him or read his sermons, Eliot first places him in the historical context of the Anglican Church. Here, Eliot sees the seventeenth-century divines as real leaders in the full establishment of the Church of England under Queen Elizabeth. This makes Eliot one of those who saw the true beginnings of the Church of England, in its purest sense as the *via media*, occurring under Elizabeth, as was discussed more fully in our second chapter.<sup>44</sup> Eliot says:

The Church of England is the creation not of the reign of Henry VIII or of the reign of Edward VI, but of the reign of Elizabeth. The *via media* which is the spirit of Anglicanism was the spirit of Elizabeth in all things. ... In its persistence in finding a mean between Papacy and Presbytery the English Church under Elizabeth became something representative of the finest spirit of England of the time.<sup>45</sup>

Such a comment by Eliot at this time in his life suggests that he has done some reading or been instructed in the history of the English Church, about which he seems to have had his own opinion or perspective. It is clear that Eliot is comfortable with the more traditional aspect of the *via media* of Elizabeth's day, which elsewhere is attributed to her and referred to as the "Elizabethan Settlement." It must be remembered that the Church at this time under Elizabeth was swinging back and forth between Protestantism and a more Catholic stance. A more conservative understanding, i.e., in the sense of a more Catholic perspective, of the *via media* under Elizabeth comes from her strong dislike of the Puritans, her helping to establish the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, and her continuation of Apostolic Succession. Eliot, from this perspective and for his discussion of Andrewes over and against Donne, knew what the high-church tradition was and held a definite and strong preference for it.

Also for Eliot, Andrewes represents the best of the seventeenth-century English Church. Eliot notes that "ordinary observers" know the names Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, but they "should" also know Andrewes, adding, "a Church is to be judged by its intellectual fruits, by its influence on the sensibility of the most sensitive and on the intellect of the most intelligent, and it

<sup>44</sup>. This distinction was discussed in more detail near the beginning of my second chapter. For clarification, I refer the reader there, or to a good history of the Church of England.

<sup>45</sup>. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 4. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 179.

must be made real to the eye by monuments of artistic merit.”<sup>46</sup> In his discussion, Eliot includes George Herbert, Christopher Wren’s architecture, and the intellectual appeal of Hooker and Andrewes. Just this focus, if we look back to our second chapter, is in line with the high-church preference for outward elements of worship, art and beauty, and architecture, as well as intellectual and theological clarity, confessional purity, and ecclesiastical heritage. This high-church orientation is strongly reinforced by Eliot’s comparison of the sermons of Latimer with those of Andrewes, of which he says, “Latimer, the preacher of Henry VIII and Edward VI, is merely a Protestant; but the voice of Andrewes is the voice of a man who has a formed visible Church behind him, who speaks with the old authority and the new culture. ... Andrewes is the first great preacher of the English Catholic Church.”<sup>47</sup> Here, Eliot distinguishes not only between sermon styles, but also between Protestant and Catholic orientations, referring to Latimer as “merely a Protestant.” Also, note that in talking of Andrewes, Eliot refers to his “voice,” not only as representing the larger Church, but also as a reference to the Word of Incarnational theology, another hallmark of Anglo-Catholic theology, leading in turn to a fuller ecclesiology. So naturally, Andrewes’ “voice” culminates in the larger “formed visible Church” that stands as the heritage “behind” Andrewes. And finally, Eliot names Andrewes not just as *one* of the first great preachers of the Anglican or even Anglo-Catholic tradition, but as “the first great preacher of the English Catholic Church.” This establishes Andrewes firmly in the Anglo-Catholic tradition as a founder and leader, and Eliot’s preference for Andrewes is a part of his own personal religious orientation at this early point in his shifting religious life.

Eliot moves to a comparison of Andrewes to Donne, relegating Donne to a “lower place.” His reason is Donne’s greater popular appeal, which is in turn based on Donne’s more personal presentation. “About Donne,” he continues, “there hangs the shadow of the impure motive; and impure motives lend their aid to a facile success. He is a little of the religious spellbinder, the

46. Eliot, “Lancelot Andrewes” (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 5. See also Eliot, “Lancelot Andrewes” (1926), *Selected Prose* 180.

47. Eliot, “Lancelot Andrewes” (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 8. See also Eliot, “Lancelot Andrewes” (1926), *Selected Prose* 181.

Reverend Billy Sunday of his time, the flesh-creeper, the sorcerer of emotional orgy.<sup>48</sup> Joan Webber, in her book about the rhetoric of Donne's sermons, alludes to this remark of Eliot's with agreement; however, she adds clarification and qualification on behalf of Donne so as not to sound as if she is offering "further proof of T. S. Eliot's claim." Webber calls Donne's style "baroque," distinguishing it from the "mindless ... degeneration" of the style in later revivalist preaching, and compares Donne's baroque style to Lancelot Andrewes' "highly compressed, knotty, rational, and calm style" to which she refers as "metaphysical."<sup>49</sup> While Eliot admits Donne's mental training, he goes on to say that Donne's "experience was not perfectly controlled, and that he lacked spiritual discipline."<sup>50</sup> In this, Eliot questions a reputation built on popular appeal based on spellbinding preaching techniques of a decidedly Protestant character — like those of the Reverend Billy Sunday, the early twentieth-century sermonic and evangelistic predecessor of the Reverend Billy Graham. He challenges Donne's motives and, therefore, his popular success. In a classic challenge to more pietistic and Protestant attitudes, Eliot questions Donne's use of emotions, calling it an "orgy" that is "not perfectly controlled," because he "lacked spiritual discipline." These are all qualities — personality and use of emotions — that set apart pietists and Protestants from those of a more Catholic stance who appeal more to doctrine and history.

Against these qualities of Donne Eliot juxtaposes Andrewes' "devotion to private prayer (Andrewes is said to have passed nearly five hours a day in prayer) and to public ritual which [he] bequeathed to William Laud; and his passion for order in religion." This again reinforces Andrewes' more liturgical attitude. So to those who have read Donne's sermons, Eliot recommends Andrewes' sermons, starting with *Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity*, being "Christmas Day sermons preached before King James between 1605 and 1624." King James being "himself

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48. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 10. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 182.

49. Webber 48.

50. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 10. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 182.

a theologian," Andrewes was able to display his "erudition" and "originality" instead of simply being "popular."<sup>51</sup> Obviously, the topic for these sermons is the Incarnation, again a topic more common and better suited to more high-church clergy, for whom a solid understanding of Christ's Incarnation would lead in turn to a clearer understanding of how Christ embodies himself in the Church — concisely put, good Incarnational theology leads to good Ecclesiastical theology, or ecclesiology, of which good eucharistic theology was a part, all of which was important more to those of the high-church movement. Eliot reveals his understanding of this important aspect of Andrewes' theology, saying that in these Incarnational sermons, Andrewes "never alluded to the question of predestination, to which the Puritans, following their continental brethren, attached so much importance. The Incarnation was to him an essential dogma."<sup>52</sup>

Next, Eliot moves to a discussion of what he calls random passages from Andrewes' sermons, notably sermons on the Incarnation. First, he demonstrates Andrewes' unpacking of the titles given for Christ in the most traditional Incarnation text, Luke 2. However, before long he is discussing Andrewes' main point, that of our need for salvation, as Eliot quotes Andrewes: "But that which He came for, that saving we need all; and none but He can help us to it." Then, as Eliot proceeds to discuss more of the prose technique of Andrewes, he continues quoting about the need for salvation from sin for eternal life. It may well be that here is Eliot's pivotal point, a point at which he is becoming converted, his "ecstasy of assent."<sup>53</sup> Eliot then touches on the true nature of the Incarnation, the Word becoming flesh, which is a central notion of the Church, especially the more liturgical element within the Church, and which undergirds a proper high-church eucharistic theology and, in turn, a proper high-church ecclesiology.

A further clarification of the specificity of Eliot's conversion comes clear as we consider the end of his essay on Lancelot Andrewes. Returning to his comparison of Andrewes and Donne,

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51. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 13-14. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 183.

52. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 14. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 183.

53. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 15-18, esp. 17, 15. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 184-185, esp. 185, 184.



Eliot feels "Donne is a 'personality' in a sense in which Andrewes is not," and that Donne's sermons, completely unlike Andrewes', are more out of Donne's personal experience and are a "means of [Donne's] self-expression," while "Andrewes is wholly absorbed in the object." This appreciation of Andrewes over and against Donne is in keeping with Eliot's objective correlative. Eliot goes on to say, "Of the two men, it may be said Andrewes is the more medieval, because he is the more pure, and because his bond was with the Church, with tradition. His intellect was satisfied by theology and his sensibility by prayer and liturgy. ... Donne is much less the mystic; he is primarily interested in man. He is much less traditional."<sup>54</sup> Thus, Eliot concludes by attributing to Andrewes "a place second to none in the history of the formation of the English Church."<sup>55</sup> So at this pivotal time in Eliot's life, we see his strong leanings to an Anglo-Catholic position over and against the more personally orientated, less traditional, less medieval and mystical, perspective of John Donne. As most would say, this is about as far a religious development as Eliot could have made, being as far from his family's religious roots as possible, short of a conversion to Roman Catholicism. However, as also previously discussed, his conversion to the seventeenth-century high-church tradition, which flowered most fully in Oxford Movement Anglo-Catholicism, incorporated his desire to become English as well as a high-church Christian. And it is all here at this pivotal time in his life and in this pivotal essay.

### *The Criterion Essays*

By the middle of 1926 and early 1927, Eliot is on his way to his formal June 29, 1927, conversion and baptism. Beside the above essays published during this time, we also have some references to his faith in brief essays in *The Criterion*. In his capacity as editor of *The Criterion*, which was published from 1922-1939, Eliot read and commented on several books in each issue, besides writing numerous essays and commentaries for the first part of each issue. Also in his

54. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 21-22, 22-23. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 187.

55. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *For Lancelot Andrewes* 24. See also Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), *Selected Prose* 188.

capacity as editor, he would have read the commentaries of other authors on other books and publications. Indeed, the list of topics, reviews, contributors, and reviewers is impressive for its breadth and depth, revealing *The Criterion* as a strongly intellectual publication for those of very catholic interests. Russell Kirk has noted the amount of space taken up in *The Criterion* for religion and ethics between 1925 and 1930.<sup>56</sup> May it suffice to offer a few specific references to essays that stand out in support of my thesis. Specifically, I refer briefly to two essays, one from the May 1927 issue, and one from the August 1927 issue.

In the first, Eliot discusses intelligence versus emotionalism, especially in the context of Roman Catholicism and atheism. This, in turn, enables him to move on to a discussion of Mr. J. Middleton Murray's *The Life of Jesus*, against which Eliot argues as the orthodox believer against the heretical Murray. He calls Murray, here, a "merely orthodox Unitarian," even while Eliot praises the best of Unitarianism as being "emotional reserve and intellectual integrity." To Murray's questioning the "miracle" of the resurrection, Eliot adds,

Mr. Murray accepts, in quite an Unitarian way, the healing of the sick—faith healing; he accepts the casting out of demons, and admitting that he leaves loopholes of psychotherapy for himself, this is quite one of the best parts of the book, for it implies that for Mr. Murray Evil is quite real. But generally Mr. Murray tends to rationalize. ... [He] leads his train of disciples into the wilderness."<sup>57</sup>

It is interesting that in his newfound orthodox Anglican Christianity, Eliot compares Murray's position to Unitarianism, all but calling Murray a heretic — which would be the perspective of orthodox Christianity as regards Unitarianism, as noted in our previous chapter on the history of the English Church and Eliot's religious heritage. And anticipating my discussion of *The Waste Land* in the chapter to follow, it is interesting to note Eliot's accusation of Murray's leading his disciples into the *wilderness*.

In the essay in the August 1927 issue, Eliot analyzes a lecture by Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*. He challenges Russell for trying to make his religious orientation seem the result of reason, instead asserting that "in the end we should be forced to agree that there is no

56. Kirk 155-156.

57. T. S. Eliot, Book Reviews, *The Criterion, 1922-1939: In Eighteen Volumes*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1967), vol. V, no. 2 (May 1927) 253-257, esp. 256, 257.

cause: it just happened." He agrees with Russell's statement, "I do not think that the real reason why people accept religion is anything to do with argumentation. They accept religion on emotional grounds." Eliot adds that this also applies to Russell's own orientation, as well, despite Russell's desire to "Conquer the world by intelligence." Finally, he says that Russell's "Atheism is often merely a variety of Christianity," moving on to distinguish among "High Church Atheism," "Auld Licht Atheism," "Tin Chapel Atheism," and "the decidedly Low Church Atheism of Mr. Russell." Eliot says, even further, that "Russell is essentially a low Churchman, and only by caprice can call himself an Atheist," differentiating him from "the genuine Heretic," Mr. Murray. And finally linking low-church with emotional sentimentality, Eliot concludes: "Just as Mr. Russell's Radicalism in politics is merely a variety of Whiggery, so his Non-Christianity is merely a variety of Low Church sentiment. That is why his pamphlet is a curious, and a pathetic, document."<sup>58</sup> What is most interesting about these essays is that Eliot seems to be challenging both emotionalism and rationalism. It seems his understanding of how a person comes to faith is becoming clearer at this point, and while he decries emotionalism generally, he must give some rôle to it in terms of coming to faith. Whatever the case with both emotionalism and rationalism, Eliot tries to maintain a balance and a typically Eliot-like perspective that prefers intellect and tradition to emotion and sentimentality. Finally, his attempt at clarification leads him to link high-church values with the former, his preference, and low-church with the latter.

### *Thoughts After Lambeth*

At this point, I return to some earlier issues, discussed above, in looking at Eliot's pamphlet *Thoughts After Lambeth*, a "*Criterion Miscellany* — No. 30." Lambeth Palace is the London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury and has been for over seven hundred years. In 1867, the Anglican Church began holding major conferences of bishops to discuss theology and the direction of the Church. By 1908, the conferences were scheduled for every ten years. The 1920

58. T. S. Eliot, Book Reviews, *The Criterion, 1922-1939: In Eighteen Volumes*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1967), vol. VI, no. 2 (August 1927) 177-179, esp. 178, 179.

Conference "was esp. important for its 'Appeal to all Christian People' for Reunion, which was sent to the heads of the Christian communities throughout the world. That of 1930, with 308 bishops, returned to the subject of unity, as have all subsequent Conferences. Its leading theme was the doctrine of God." Shortly after his conversion, Eliot was invited to attend the 1930 conference, and subsequently wrote an analysis of it. In his brief work, Eliot ranges freely over the issues discussed at the conference, responding to statements made by various bishops and looking at a couple of specific resolutions in the report of the conference. Again mentioning Russell, Eliot says, in the course of his analysis, "I am sure in my own mind that I have not adopted my faith in order to defend my views of conduct, but have modified my views of conduct to conform with what seem to me the implications of my beliefs. The real conflict is not between one set of moral prejudices and another, but between the theistic and the atheistic faith." This statement naturally affirms his conversion from a more ethically oriented Unitarianism to a faith-based morality. The statement also reminds one of the envelope mentioned above, the envelope on which Eliot noted the dichotomy between the Catholic faith's belief in sin and the Protestant faith's understanding of what is or is not done. Eliot clarifies:

Christian morals gain immeasurably in richness and freedom by being seen as the consequence of Christian faith, and not as the imposition of tyrannical and irrational habit. What chiefly remains of the new freedom is its meagre impoverished emotional life; in the end it is the Christian who can have the more varied, refined and intense enjoyment of life; which time will demonstrate.<sup>59</sup>

Eliot asserts the need for religion, "Without religion the whole human race would die, ... solely of boredom. Everyone would be affected," and he laments, "It is also a weakness of Anglo-Saxons to like to hold personal and private religions and to promulgate them."<sup>60</sup>

There is no good in making Christianity easy and pleasant; "Youth," or the better part of it, is more likely to come to a difficult religion than to an easy one. For some, the intellectual way of approach must be emphasized; there is need of a more intellectual laity. For them and for others, the way of discipline and asceticism must be emphasized; for even the humblest Christian layman can and must live what, in the modern world, is comparatively an ascetic life. Discipline of the

59. T. S. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (London: Faber, 1931) 9, 10. *Thoughts After Lambeth* was published as a separate small volume, and as such, it is not easy to find. However, it was included in the later, 1951 edition of Eliot's *Selected Essays*, for easier reference.

60. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 13, 14.

emotions is even rarer, and in the modern world still more difficult, than discipline of the mind; some eminent lay preachers of "discipline" are men who know only the latter. Thought, study, mortification, sacrifice: it is such notions as these that should be impressed upon the young — who differ from the young of other times merely in having a different middle-aged generation behind them. You will never attract the young by making Christianity easy; but a good many can be attracted by finding it difficult: difficult both to the disorderly mind and to the unruly passions.<sup>61</sup>

Eliot clarifies intellect and emotions and their respective rôles in religion, stressing, characteristically for him, especially the desirability of the former and the discipline of both. He also stresses thought, study, mortification, and sacrifice, which are characteristic qualities of a more medieval and traditional Church.

In further discussion of the distinctions between Roman and Anglican views on certain matters, Eliot asserts that Rome first affirms a principle and then allows for exceptions, while Canterbury enjoys more breadth of differences within its tradition.<sup>62</sup> When Eliot talks about the Sacrament of the Altar, he does so in solidly Anglo-Catholic language, referring to the "Blessed Sacrament" and asking clarification regarding "celebrants" who are or are not "episcopally ordained." He asks further theological clarification of these issues before the Church moves to the "admission of dissenters to the Altar." This, in turn, leads him to a brief consideration of the "Historic Episcopate," asking further clarification about that, as well.<sup>63</sup> With these qualifications, Eliot feels the Anglican Church stands in a unique position to promote Reunion of the major church bodies, since "In such difficult negotiations the Church is quite properly and conscientiously facing-both-ways: which only goes to show that the Church of England is at the present juncture the one church upon which the duty of working towards reunion most devolves."<sup>64</sup> This reinforces Eliot's sense of the Anglican Church's *via media* of Elizabeth's day.

Eliot also returns to the issue of "the Church of England as a 'National Church,'" adding that "the word *national* [*sic*] in this context can no longer mean what it once meant." In an interest-

61. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 16.

62. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 18-20.

63. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 21-22.

64. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 23.

ing development of his earlier statements regarding the national identity of the Church of England and the rôle of the king, civilly and religiously, not to mention his own combination of Anglo-Catholicism and Royalism, Eliot acknowledges the changing nature of the relation between Church and state, saying, "I prefer to think of the Church as what I believe it is more and more coming to be, not the 'English Church', but national as 'the Catholic Church in England.'"<sup>65</sup> This indeed reveals again what Lyndall Gordon asserts about Eliot's royalism or nationalism, that each is secondary to his Anglo-Catholicism. In a further clarification of his Anglicanism over and against his possible leanings toward Roman Catholicism, Eliot also feels:

It is easier for the Church of England to become Catholic, than for the Church of Rome in England to become English. ... If England is ever to be in any appreciable degree converted to Christianity, it can only be through the Church of England. ... I believe that in spite of the apparently insoluble problems with which it has to deal, the Church of England is strengthening its position as a branch of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church in England.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, responding to those journalists who lament the divisions within the Anglican Church, Eliot asserts that such divisions are natural and "healthy," allow for "differences of opinion" as a "good thing for the intellectual life of the Church," and stress "fixity of dogma" over "uniformity of liturgy."<sup>67</sup> And to those journalists who cite the "transit of an Anglo-Catholic to Rome [more] than of that of a plain Low Churchman," Eliot remarks that those persons must go where they can find some rest in their religious tradition, adding, "on the other hand it [Anglo-Catholicism] has helped many more, I believe — one cannot quote statistics in the negative — to remain within the Anglican Church."<sup>68</sup> My sense is that this statement is more autobiographical than it may at first appear, and as such, it is the final word on Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism, and it is also the final word on his feeling no need to follow the Oxford Movement's Newman and others into the Roman Church.

Eliot's conclusion, makes an interesting transition to his later essays on religion and culture.

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65. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 25 [sic].

66. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 27, 28.

67. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 30-31.

68. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 29-30, esp. 30.

Reaffirming the Anglican Church as *via media*, the healthy differences within it, and its Catholicity, Eliot makes a further statement about the universal Church, distinguishing its rôle in the modern world:

I do not mean that our times are particularly corrupt; all times are corrupt. I mean that Christianity, in spite of certain local appearances, is not, and cannot be within measurable time, "official." The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide.<sup>69</sup>

This perspective anticipates the theme of Eliot's later essays, that of establishing a more Christian society.

#### *After Strange Gods*

In the preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*, Eliot mentions three works in preparation, calling them "the small volumes which I have in preparation: *The School of Donne*, *The Outline of Royalism*, and *The Principles of Modern Heresy*."<sup>70</sup> None of these works ever appeared, but the titles indicated the direction of Eliot's thoughts at the time, shortly after his conversion, reinforcing his religious, political, and literary identity in the same preface. And the theme suggested by the third of those titles is partly picked up in the 1934 publication of his 1933 Page-Barbour Lectures at the University of Virginia entitled *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*. First, the title of the book is itself interesting, and Eliot says in this Preface that he "ascended the platform of these lectures only in the role of a moralist." His talk of "Blasphemy" and "[preaching] only to the converted" in the preface and of heresy in the title and in the essays show Eliot using terms and categories usually reserved for discussion of Christian dogma, which he acknowledges in the preface with regards to the word "Blasphemy."<sup>71</sup> As he begins the first lecture or essay, he alludes to his earlier essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and again Eliot

69. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) 31-32, esp. 32.

70. Eliot, Preface (1928), *For Lancelot Andrewes* viii.

71. T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*, 1933 (New York: Harcourt, 1934) 10, 11.

pits tradition against today's "gods," such as "economic determinism," and he defines tradition as "not solely, or even primarily, the maintenance of certain dogmatic beliefs. ... What I mean by tradition involves all those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant religious rite to our conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represent the blood kinship of 'the same people living in the same place.'" Yet, he warns against "clinging to an old tradition," thereby "confusing the vital and the unessential, the real and the sentimental."<sup>72</sup> This serves to set up his stronger statements about tradition and society:

You are hardly likely to develop tradition except where the bulk of the population is relatively so well off where it is that it has no incentive or pressure to move about. The population should be homogeneous; where two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious or both to become adulterate. What is still more important is unity of religious background; and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable.<sup>73</sup>

In the midst of a relatively predictable statement of his preference for homogeneous societies, Eliot includes an unfortunate and infamous phrase that for years has led many scholars and critics to accuse him of anti-Semitism. David Spurr's essay offers one explanatory note. Russell Kirk offers another clarification from Eliot himself:

What later happened to the Jews of Germany and central Europe was to make Eliot a target for those zealous to hunt down "anti-Semites." But, as Eliot told newspaper reporters, he could not be anti-Semitic, because he was a Christian. Eliot said to William Turner Levy, years later, "I am grieved and sometimes angered by this matter. ... I am not an anti-Semite and never have been. It seems to me unfortunate that persons give that odious term such a broad and ill-defined definition. American Jews are sensitive in a way you never find is true of their counterparts in England, although I can realize that there are several reasons for this." Those who so slandered him, he said, "do not know, as you and I do, that in the eyes of the Church, to be anti-Semitic is a sin."<sup>74</sup>

In the present context, such a statement serves to reinforce Eliot's notion of tradition as involving all manner of a society's interaction, especially including its religious rites. Apparently, Eliot has trouble allowing for too much variety or ecumenism in his thinking at this point.

72. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 15, 18, 19. This warning will appear again in *Journey of the Magi*, discussed in chapter five.

73. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 20.

74. Kirk 210. Cf. David Spurr, "Myths of Anthropology: Eliot, Joyce, Lévy-Bruhl," *PMLA* 109:2 (March 1994): 266-280.



Suffice it to say, such may be the thinking of Eliot at this time in his life, but it is not necessarily characteristic of the Anglo-Catholic movement or of the Church of England.

Returning to his clarification of tradition, Eliot first equates it with orthodoxy, which he in turn opposes to heterodoxy or heresy, and next relates the terms to classicism and romanticism, respectively. In his own words, "I wished simply to indicate the connotation which the term *tradition* has for me, before proceeding to associate it with the concept of *orthodoxy*, which seems to me more fundamental (with its opposite, *heterodoxy*, for which I shall also use the term *heresy*) than the pair *classicism-romanticism* which is frequently used."<sup>75</sup> This statement links tradition in a religious sense with classicism in a way reminiscent of Eliot's self-disclosure as "anglo-catholic" and "classicist," in much the same way as he linked his Anglo-Catholicism with "royalism," earlier. Eliot goes on to say that the way he uses the word tradition involves "a good deal more than 'traditional religious beliefs,'" adding, "and though of course I believe that a right tradition for us must be also a Christian tradition, and that orthodoxy in general implies Christian orthodoxy, I do not propose to lead the present series of lectures to a theological conclusion."<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, Eliot differentiates tradition from

the Liberalism which attacked the Church ... "eager to eliminate from the Prayer-book the belief in the Scriptures, the Creeds, the Atonement, the worship of Christ. They called for the admission of Unitarian infidels as fellow-believers. They would eviscerate the Prayer-book, reduce the Articles to a deistic formulary, abolish all subscriptions or adhesions to formularies, and reduce religion to a state of anarchy and dissolution."<sup>77</sup>

Here, Eliot's emphases, and those of William Palmer, whom he is quoting, are traditional, even formulaic, articles of faith for a Christian, especially a historically and liturgically oriented Christian like Eliot.

Finally, toward the end of the first lecture, Eliot acknowledges his old three-fold self-assertion from the preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes* as he continues his analogy of romanticism and classicism in order to contrast heresy to orthodoxy. Instead of labeling himself or herself, Eliot

75. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 21-22 [sic].

76. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 22.

77. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 22-23.

says, a writer should simply be what he or she is. But if the writer simply wishes to adhere to one or both of classicism and Catholicism, theoretically, “he [or she] must not be under the delusion that the connexion is necessarily objective: it may spring from some unity within himself [or herself], but that unity, as it is in him [or her], may not be valid for the rest of the world.” His own comment about his own self-imposed labels he deems “injudicious” in this context. First, he asserts what Lyndall Gordon has already noted, that the three are not coequal. Second, he does not hold the three on the same grounds. Third, he does not see the three as necessarily hanging together. However, he admits to connections among the three for himself, affirming that internal unity he has just recommended instead of some form of objective validity for the world. “I now see the danger of suggesting to outsiders that the Faith is a political principle or a literary fashion.” Here again, even in separating the three, Eliot basically, and primarily, reaffirms the primacy of his religious belief and the secondary relationship of the other two.<sup>78</sup>

In the second essay, Eliot uses the theological understanding of orthodoxy and tradition to elucidate his literary meaning, of course in a way only someone familiar with such a religious orientation would understand. This can be seen in the way he tries to clarify literary orthodoxy as he tries to distinguish between the two uses of the term: “I do not take orthodoxy to mean that there is a narrow path laid down for every writer to follow. Even in the stricter discipline of the Church, we hardly expect every theologian to succeed in being orthodox in every particular, for it is not a sum of theologians, but the Church itself, in which orthodoxy resides.”<sup>79</sup> One can understand Eliot’s use of the term orthodoxy in the sense of the Church’s understanding — that orthodoxy consists in balancing seemingly opposing truths, being theologically inclusive so as not to overlook a balancing position. Heresy, on the other hand, is, as E. Clifford Nelson used to put it, “the emphasis of one truth to the neglect of another equal and balancing truth,” and thus, it is primarily a loss of balance. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is maintaining what Nelson used to call “dialectical tension” — that is, the ability to hold those two equal and balancing truths in

78. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 26-30, esp. 28, 30.

79. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 34.

tandem.<sup>80</sup> It is clear that Eliot is a bit preoccupied with these religious concepts, and his attempts to apply the terms to literature can be a bit confusing, as he reflects on the morality and the insights of a work like Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Nonetheless, this fuller sense of the terms orthodoxy and heresy as they are used in Church history provides a broader sense of the meanings as Eliot intends to use them here for literature. This also helps with Eliot's own contradictions and inconsistencies, which shall be mentioned below.

Eliot claims "not [to be] concerned with the authors' *beliefs*, but with the orthodoxy of sensibility and the sense of tradition." He follows this with an analysis that "most contemporary Anglo-Saxon literature is to be found in the decay of Protestantism." He adds, "I am not concerned with Protestantism itself," but, he continues:

I mean that amongst writers the rejection of Christianity — Protestant Christianity — is the rule rather than the exception; and that individual writers can be understood and classified according to the type of Protestantism which surrounded their infancy. It should include those authors who were reared in an "advanced" or agnostic atmosphere, because even agnosticism — *Protestant* agnosticism — has decayed in the last two generations. ... [It] is this which contributes to the prevailing flavour of immaturity.<sup>81</sup>

This is a rather interesting return to "the decidedly Low Church Atheism of Mr. Russel" in Eliot's *Criterion* book review, discussed above. Eliot is still working with similar concepts and similarly linking atheism or agnosticism with some brand of Protestantism. From here, Eliot attempts to move on, in order to avoid the accusation of being concerned with morality, specifically sexual morality. To that end he turns to a discussion of Irving Babbitt, about whom Eliot says, "His attitude towards Christianity seems to me that of a man who had had no *emotional* acquaintance with any but some debased and uncultured form."<sup>82</sup> And from Irving Babbitt, Eliot moves to Ezra Pound, having connected the two in his mind, perhaps for their cosmopolitanism and their respective non-Christian faith orientations. Discussing Pound, Eliot says, "At this point I shall venture to generalise, and suggest that with the disappearance of the idea of Original Sin,

80. Professor E. Clifford Nelson used to say these things in Church History I and II, St. Olaf College, fall 1972 and spring 1973. Professor Nelson has written extensively on American Lutheran Church History, among other aspects.

81. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 40–41 [sic].

82. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 42 [sic].

with the disappearance of the idea of intense moral struggle, the human beings presented to us both in poetry and in prose fiction today, and more patently among the serious writers than in the underworld of letters, tend to become less and less real."<sup>83</sup> Here, Eliot reveals somewhat of a concern for authors' beliefs, at least in terms of the kind of characters and criticism they produce. And while he could have expressed these concerns in more basic and pietistic religious terms, he does so in terms typical of a more dogmatic, historically oriented Christian, concerned with Original Sin, dogma, and tradition.

As Eliot proceeds to a discussion of Yeats, perhaps it is Yeats who bridges the gap more clearly for Eliot's mix of religious and literary themes. Eliot quotes Yeats as having said in *The Trembling of the Veil*, "I was unlike others of my generation in one thing only. I am very religious, and deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom I detested, of the simple-minded religion of my childhood, I had made a new religion, almost an infallible church of poetic tradition." For Eliot, poetry replacing religion is a restatement of Arnold, but it brings with it "the tendency to fabricate an *individual* religion."<sup>84</sup> Eliot sees Yeats' continuing search for a tradition leading him to Irish nationalism without the English influence, ultimately pursuing religious sources and their undergirding mythology, occultism, and symbolism.

Finally, Eliot ends the second essay with reference to Gerard Manley Hopkins. However, far from presenting this poet "with an air of triumph, as the orthodox and traditional poet," Eliot sees this Jesuit priest poet as not up to the level of others of the modern writers, such as Baudelaire, Villon, or Joyce. Baudelaire and Villon, he feels, are more important religious poets, and James Joyce's work is "penetrated with Christian feeling." He says, when commenting on Hopkins, that "To be converted, in any case, while it is sufficient for entertaining the hope of individual salvation, is not going to do for a man, as a writer, what his ancestry and his country for some generations have failed to do. ... To be a 'devotional poet' is a limitation." Eliot concludes about Hopkins:

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83. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 45-46.

84. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 47-48 [sic].

Hopkins has the dignity of the Church behind him, and is consequently in closer contact with reality. But from the struggle of our time to concentrate, not to dissipate; to renew our association with traditional wisdom; to re-establish a vital connexion between the individual and the race; the struggle, in a word, against Liberalism: from all this Hopkins is a little apart, and in this Hopkins has very little aid to offer us.<sup>85</sup>

I might note here Eliot's use of the word "hope" in his statement of conversion, allowing one to entertain the hope of individual salvation. A more Protestant perspective would be more certain, at least in its language, that individual salvation had already been attained, putting less importance on the notion of hope. Further, Eliot's mention of authors who are less overtly Christian is also contrary to a more Protestant perspective. Most Protestants would much prefer to read an overtly Christian author, even in the sense of Eliot's less accomplished poet, rather than trying to read Christian ideas and values in the works of authors like James Joyce. Eliot's ability to separate these two from each other indicates a stronger mind, a more open personal perspective, and a richer sense of faith going much beyond simple assent and expression.

Here again is the Church's rôle in providing the writer a better contact with reality in the fight of tradition against Liberalism. Eliot concludes the essay, "What I have wished to illustrate ... has been the crippling effect upon men of letters, of not having been born and brought up in the environment of a living and central tradition."<sup>86</sup> Even though Hopkins has this tradition and upbringing, he is still of little help in the larger fight, since his poetry is more devotional and less artistic. Eliot is here doing with Joyce and others just what we are attempting to do with him — to discuss how one's religious tradition can strongly undergird his or her writing, whether intentional or not, whether conscious or conscientious or not. And for Eliot, this means his specifically Anglo-Catholic orientation coming through in the topics and themes of his writing. Or to put it in the words of Geoffrey Hartman, "I did not realise at the time of writing how deeply interpretation was rooted in the need to reconcile past and present, letter and spirit, self and other."<sup>87</sup> This shall be made clear in another way in the next chapter on *The Waste Land*.

85. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 52, 51-52, 53.

86. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 53.

87. qtd. on the title page in Lee. The reference is to Geoffrey Hartman, *The Unmediated Vision* (New York: Harcourt, 1954).

At the end of the first essay of the book, Eliot sets up this second essay as dealing with “the positive effects of heresy” and its “diabolic influence.”<sup>88</sup> He begins this third essay with a discussion of blasphemy, as “not a matter of good form but of right belief,” and he claims to be “reproaching a world in which blasphemy is impossible.”<sup>89</sup> In such a world, blasphemy has lost its impact, Eliot goes on to say, making it less offensive, and thereby less utilized by the forces of evil, such that its presence at all serves now to indicate that “the soul is still alive” — “the perception of Good and Evil ... is the first requisite of spiritual life.”<sup>90</sup> Looking back at the work of George Eliot, Austen, Dickens, and Thackeray, T. S. Eliot sees the latter three as within a more Christian tradition, using George Eliot to lead to his assertion,

that when morals cease to be a matter of tradition and orthodoxy — that is, of the habits of the community formulated, corrected, and elevated by the continuous thought and direction of the Church — and when each man is to elaborate his own [as in the case of George Eliot’s “individualistic morals”], the *personality* becomes a thing of alarming importance.<sup>91</sup>

This prompts him to talk of Hardy’s “self-expression” as a romantic extreme emotionalism, which Eliot feels is a “symptom of decadence.” We have seen this concern for personality, individualism, emotionalism, and romanticism before in Eliot’s work, and here it returns in service of a discussion of blasphemy, heresy, and the diabolic. All this depends on right belief and a clearer sense of Christian tradition. So, as Eliot develops this idea of “the intrusion of the *diabolic* into modern literature,” it is no wonder that he returns to “the doctrine of Original Sin.”<sup>92</sup>

In a closing discussion of D. H. Lawrence, Eliot turns to contrast one’s own “Inner Light” as an “untrustworthy and deceitful guide,” with an awakened spirituality, only by which one becomes “capable of real Good,” while at the same time “[becoming] first capable of Evil.”<sup>93</sup> While Lawrence also condemned “Liberalism, Progress, and Modern Civilisation,” Eliot feels that we need not have waited for Lawrence to do so, and he urges us to likewise, but for right,

88. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 53.

89. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 56.

90. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 57.

91. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 58.

92. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 59-62, esp. 59, 61-62[sic].

93. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 64, 65.

more spiritual, reasons.<sup>94</sup> These are the same issues as Eliot has dealt with before. And he concludes this third and final essay with a comment which includes a quotation of Ezekiel 13:3-4; 14:2-5:

The number of people in possession of any criteria for discriminating between good and evil is very small; the number of the half-alive hungry for any form of spiritual experience, or what offers itself as spiritual experience, high or low, good or bad, is considerable. My own generation has not served them very well. Never has the printing-press been so busy, and never have such varieties of buncombe and false doctrine come from it. *Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets have been like foxes in the waste places. ... And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?*<sup>95</sup>

Here, it sounds as if Eliot is offering the words of the prophet of a national religious tradition as a corrective for the "false prophets" of less traditional, especially modern, literature.

After this essay, Eliot adds "a few words of retrospect and summary," in which he again tries to define his terms. Here, he says again that tradition "must be perpetually criticised and brought up to date under the supervision of what I call orthodoxy," thus taking tradition out of the hands of "mere conservatives."<sup>96</sup> This is his clearest statement of those two terms, but they still leave the matter of literature's relation to Christianity open to question. Eliot adds that we must be able to distinguish what is permanent or essential from what is temporary or accidental, and we must also distinguish between an author's view of life and his or her personality — and these are good points to make, literarily. However, when he adds that we tend to be fascinated by personality, especially by "the *unregenerate* personality," he crosses the line once again into a religiously determined structure into which he fits literature.<sup>97</sup>

These are not the most satisfying essays for either literary or religious interests, but they serve to indicate Eliot's attempt to reassert an over-arching religious structure or guide for society, and thus for literature. Certainly, this thinking comes more out of a desire for social and

94. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 66.

95. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 66-67 [sic].

96. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 67.

97. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (1933) 67-68 [sic].

religious homogeneity than for clear literary analysis on its own terms. Because, while literature comes out of a society and speaks for it, or to it, in some way, it is not necessary that the literature of a society always speak for, to, or out of, the society's more general religious tradition. That would prove limiting to much of literature, especially literature growing out of a very different religious tradition or existing to challenge society and its religiosity. Two elements seem to me to undermine these essays. The first is Eliot's admitted preference for homogeneity coupled with his previous admission, five years earlier, of a religion blended with a political orientation. This could only happen in a country like England with a state Church, a predominantly Christian background, and a largely homogeneous social background. Indeed, it may help to explain Eliot's baptism into the same national Church as the nation he concurrently selected for his citizenship. The second is more awkward and difficult. It has to do with Eliot's critically acknowledged anti-Semitism. England's history of treatment of those of Jewish religion, heritage, and culture has been less than stellar. Evidently, for Eliot, "free-thinking Jews," or as some have pointed out, non-practicing Jews, provided the single most typical, threatening, and contrary force to his conception of English society, tradition, and literature. About that I cannot say much more, at this point, except to remark its unfortunate and unseemly presence in Eliot's work and its availability for criticism and the frequent charge of anti-Semitism. I might add that the non-practicing characteristic is of more concern to Eliot than the Semitic identity, making them more secular and liberal than Jewish.

#### "Religion and Literature"

Two years after giving the above lectures and one year after their publication as essays comprising *After Strange Gods*, Eliot opens his essay "Religion and Literature" with the similar, though somewhat clearer, statement, "Literary Criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint."<sup>98</sup> In this essay, Eliot admits more easily to the fact

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98. T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," 1935, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-harcourt, 1975) 97.



of the lack of agreement on ethical and theological matters, even though he would still prefer and recommend it. Thus, he feels Christian readers must read with more scrutiny. To that end, Eliot offers as his concern the "application of our religion to the criticism of any literature," and moves on to define "religious literature" in "three senses." The first is religious literature as religious document, such as the Bible's value being largely, if not solely, "because it has been considered as the report of the Word of God," rather than as some "monument of English prose." The second is "'religious' or 'devotional' poetry," which can be either the limited work of "*minor*" poets, or the work of "great religious poets in the sense in which Dante, or Corneille, or Racine, even in those of their plays which do not touch upon Christian themes." Then, reasserting his concern "not ... primarily with Religious Literature," but "with what should be the relation between Religion and all Literature," he goes on to say, "the third type of 'religious literature' may be more quickly passed over. I mean the literary works of men who are sincerely desirous of forwarding the cause of religion: that which may come under the heading of Propaganda." However, what Eliot wants in this third instance is "a literature which should be *unconsciously*, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian." Noting what he calls the "gradual secularization of literature," especially in the novel, Eliot sees three phases in which "the novel took the Faith ... for granted," then "doubted, worried about, or contested the Faith," and finally now, a time when "those who have never heard the Christian Faith spoken of as anything but an anachronism." From all this, Eliot concludes, "The common ground between religion and fiction is behaviour. Our religion imposes our ethics, our judgment and criticism of ourselves, and our behaviour toward our fellow men. The fiction that we read affects our behaviour towards our fellow men, affects our pattern of ourselves."<sup>99</sup> And later in the essay, Eliot says it is the reading we do purely for pleasure, even more than the reading we do in order to improve ourselves and broaden our views, that tends to influence us more, and thus requires even closer scrutiny.

In his argument, Eliot refers again to liberals and their conviction that truth comes only by "unrestrained individualism." Eliot's contention is that this "liberalism" and "individualistic

99. Eliot, "Religion and Literature" (1935), *Selected Prose* 98-100 [sic].

democracy” has disconnected us from any earlier tradition of literature: “I am not defending a ‘high’-brow against a ‘low’-brow literature. What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: of something which I assume to be our primary concern.” So Eliot’s fellow readers are to be concerned with what literature they like and what literature they *ought* to like — that is their duty as readers and as Christians. Christians have a duty to “[maintain] consciously certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world.”<sup>100</sup> Eliot concludes this essay:

It is not that modern literature is in the ordinary sense “immoral” or even “amoral”; and in any case to prefer that charge would not be enough. It is simply that it repudiates, or is wholly ignorant of, our most fundamental and important beliefs; and that in consequence its tendency is to encourage its readers to get what they can out of life while it lasts, to miss no “experience” that presents itself, and to sacrifice themselves, if they make any sacrifice at all, only for the sake of tangible benefits to others in this world either now or in the future. We shall certainly continue to read the best of its kind, of what our time provides; but we must tirelessly criticize it according to our own principles, and not merely according to the principles admitted by the writers and by the critics who discuss it in the public press.<sup>101</sup>

This essay seems to pick up on a theme from “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” and then follow that line from *Thoughts After Lambeth*, through *After Strange Gods*. Eliot uses the same language and tries to make the same point as he did in *After Strange Gods*. However, his points are clearer in this essay, since he seems to have had more time to think and set his thoughts down more clearly. His use of tradition and orthodoxy as analogous to literary tradition work better in this essay. And his differentiation between literature and religion seem sharper here, as well. Nonetheless, there is still much for critics to disagree with. First, Eliot’s assumptions that his audience is largely Christian is not a fair one in literary circles. However, the title and Eliot’s reputation should have helped to prepare readers for that approach. Second, it sounds like he is shifting focus from what we like and what we ought to like within good literature for literary reasons to what we like and what we ought to like for religious reasons. This is fine, if one is

100. Eliot, “Religion and Literature” (1935), *Selected Prose* 104-105.

101. Eliot, “Religion and Literature” (1935), *Selected Prose* 106.

addressing a church audience, but it borders on censorship, even if for laudable reasons. And third, Eliot still does not seem to allow for a larger religious scope. I could criticize the work more extensively from that perspective, but my purpose is rather to look at the Anglo-Catholic themes and imagery in the piece. Suffice it to say, Eliot is moving more strongly, and more clearly, in the direction of analyzing and discussing literature from the perspective of his faith.

And when he does so, he often capitalizes the word Faith, meaning the Christian faith. Again, one can really only do this in homogeneous circles or church circles, but it serves to differentiate from faith in more general terms. Eliot is being clearer about his agenda here. He differentiates between the secularism of much modern literature, in his view, and literature that, consciously or unconsciously, has Christian themes. While all literature is spiritual in one sense or another, urging understanding, evaluation, reflection, growth, and/or possible ethical response, not all literature shares the same undergirding set of values, ethical bases, or faith in a supernatural being. Thus, his seems a valid argument, since some writers fit more into a Christian world view, whether consciously or unconsciously. What Eliot proposes we do as Christian readers, as we consider what we *ought* to like, is that we include our Christian world view as part of our evaluation. While we might question the literary critical appropriateness of such a proposal, we can certainly understand it from a Christian or faith perspective. Eliot's concern here is for Christians to appeal to what is, for them, an even larger tradition than that of just literature, which includes literature and culture in its over-arching structure of religious tradition. In the last paragraph, Eliot urges the Christian reader to appeal to his or her "principles" and disregard those of the secular writers, critics, and public press. If he were talking from a more pietistic perspective, he might have appealed to the reader's inner voice, heart, or individual spiritual guidance, against which he writes in reference to Lawrence, noted above. However, his appeal to the Christian reader's "principles" is an appeal to that larger tradition of the faith, founded on the creeds, confessional statements, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Bible, and the overall structure of the Church and its values.

As many of Eliot's later essays reveal, he often includes religious references in his essays, no

matter what the topic. And besides his writing, Eliot was also active in the worship life and parish management of several London parish churches, serving as warden for several of them at different times.<sup>102</sup> Eliot's evident knowledge of the Church of England in his writings, his participation in it, his friendship with those who had strong connections in the Church of England, and his grasp of the history and issues as revealed by his writings, indicate someone for whom the Church has become an important part. As we are seeing, it indeed drove some his thoughts and writings in the years following his formal conversion. This enables Horton Davies, in volume five of his *Worship and Theology in England*, to name Eliot as one of the three principle apologists of the Anglican Church in the twentieth century, along with C. S. Lewis and Dorothy Sayers.<sup>103</sup> Davies' statement is a very strong statement to make about anyone in the Church, especially about a layperson like Eliot, and the more so for his being primarily a poet and critic. But I have been tracing his spiritual development as an Anglo-Catholic throughout this dissertation, and I have shown so far in this chapter how his critical writing became more and more overtly Christian over the years. And these last two works under consideration, given their titles and given Eliot's development up to this point, could certainly stand on their own without comment from me in this context. Nonetheless, at this point, I turn to a look at Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, with an eye to drawing out specifically Eliot's more Anglo-Catholic orientation in the works.

### *The Idea of a Christian Society*

While these are rather long works, brief selections are often anthologized because of the way they indicate the direction Eliot was taking in the essays of his later years. Instead of an exhaustive analysis of both works, since the titles and themes show Eliot has moved on to social

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102. Leonard Pierce, personal interview, 29 September 1995. During my conversation with Mr. Pierce, following the liturgy, this information was shared with me quite matter-of-factly, in passing, by the liturgical assistant for the 1:00 p.m. Eucharist at St. Magnus the Martyr Church commemorating St. Michael and All Angels, or Michaelmas, on 29 September 1995.

103. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: The Ecumenical Century, 1900-1965*, vol. 5 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965) 253.

criticism and a critique of Christian culture, I shall look briefly at some anthologized portions. Primarily, my concern has been to trace the Anglo-Catholic point of view through Eliot's prose as an extension of his conversion and the specificity of it. Such preoccupation with the specifics of Anglo-Catholicism appear mostly around the time and event of Eliot's formal conversion and baptism, as noted above and reinforced by Karen T. Romer's essay. Thus, my primary focus in Eliot's prose has been on those essays leading up to, during, and shortly after his formal conversion. As Eliot moves into his later critical works, more on the order of social criticism, we see a continuation of those same themes and ways of thinking. However, generally as one matures in one's faith, one's views change or shift. In Eliot's case, as he matured in his Christian identity, the specific emphasis of Anglo-Catholic elements became somewhat attenuated as he began to give greater scope to the social ideals that were developing from his Christianity. That is not to say that he became less Anglo-Catholic, but rather that he expanded his views and built on them. He moved to cultural and ethical expression of the faith that had taken hold in him. Thus, in the anthologized fragments of these last two works, I shall primarily be noting the continuation of previous themes, the continuation and development of ideas of prior essays and lectures, and the continuity of Eliot's overall thought and religious understanding. In the next chapter, I shall again look at the pivotal time leading up to Eliot's conversion by a consideration of the religious themes developing in *The Waste Land*. And in the fifth chapter, I shall discuss Eliot's later creative works as they continue to express his developing religious identity. For now, then, I turn to those anthologized portions of Eliot's two essays on Christianity and culture. Also, it might be noted, at this point, that Eliot follows his friend, Dr. Paul Elmer More, the American Episcopalian, in turning to social criticism. But this is a natural direction for a Christian critic, such as Eliot, to take.

In the fragment, "from The Idea of a Christian Society," contained in *Selected Prose*, Eliot returns to many of the ideas he has presented before, though with some development and with much refinement. It is as though these notions have been gestating in him since he first tried to express them in *Thoughts After Lambeth* (1931) and *After Strange Gods* (1933). After almost

quoting the famous passage from St. Paul about “opposing winds of doctrine,”<sup>104</sup> to which we alluded briefly above, Eliot prescribes the need for “conviction” in order to produce good prose over and against “the mass of newspaper leading articles.” Writing in 1939, he asserts that we must “set our own affairs in order” before we can challenge fascism and the “German national religion,” which has been presented by the press as “pagan.” Eliot reminds us that we must recognize that “our aims, like Germany’s, are materialistic,” and stop disguising that fact in the interest of maintaining our impression “that we have a Christian civilization.”<sup>105</sup> Materialism in society Eliot blames on industrialization, contrasting it to Italy’s more agricultural and Catholic compromise. The danger of industrialization, which has been typical of Britain for a very long time, Eliot says, is the “tendency” to become “detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well disciplined.” Against this position, he pits the “Liberal notion,” which he characterizes as thinking that “religion was a matter of private belief and of conduct in private life.” But Christians are not isolated in a private religion, or “sect,” within a reasonably tolerant society. Rather, for Eliot, the “growth of an un-Christian society ... has been breaking down the comfortable distinction between public and private morality.” As this atmosphere continues, Christians will see their generationally handed down tradition and values compromised in a society in which Christians are “de-Christianized” by “unconscious pressure.” The result will be that “the small body of Christians will consist entirely of adult recruits,” like Eliot, Auden, and others among Eliot’s intellectual contemporaries.<sup>106</sup>

This last statement about adult recruits is interesting from the point of view of an adult convert, himself. Psychologically, generational or familial inculcation of Christian values at an early

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104. Ephesians 4:14.

105. T. S. Eliot, “from *The Idea of a Christian Society*,” 1939, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 286 [sic]. See also T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, 1939, *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harvest-Harcourt, 1948) 15-16.

106. Eliot, “from *The Idea of a Christian Society*” (1939), *Selected Prose* 287. See also Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), *Christianity and Culture* 17-18.

age brings with it a certain set of baggage that one must overcome and leave behind, together with the more laudatory elements of the faith that one learns in early youth. Eliot seems on the verge of this insight, to which he does not quite give voice, and perhaps is not quite able to see, especially considering his own adult conversion. Indeed, perhaps he saw it in his own Unitarian, and to some extent Puritan, background against which he became an Anglican. In the rest of his comments noted above, Eliot focuses on a Christian society over and against the liberal society that merely tolerates individual Christians. This fits with his larger sense of a disciplined, less materialistic, unified body of believers with a tradition to undergird them as a group, not just today but over the generations. The more liberal, materialistic, industrial age promotes a separated, alienated, mass of people, or a mob, even, that has no unifying structure and no tradition, even for its toleration of the Christian in its midst. This promotes individualization that even begins to invade the Christian community, and it is this privatized group against which Eliot writes, both socially and religiously. A group of believers more unified by tradition and discipline is what Eliot favors over the more privatized, individualistic Christian — or to put it another way, Eliot favors the Christian of the more established, traditional Christianity of the English Church over and against the more privatized believer of Protestantism, Puritanism, or Unitarianism.

Eliot argues that a uniformity of culture, or the undergirding principles of political philosophy, helps to produce continuity and coherence in politics, art, literature, and behaviour. Thus, “a nation’s system of education is much more important than its system of government” in maintaining wisdom in a society and “[unifying] the active and the contemplative life, action and speculation, politics and the arts.”<sup>107</sup> This focus on the arts and literature, on education, and on an undergirding tradition are in line with Eliot’s ideal, which in turn grows out of his own tradition of Anglo-Catholicism and its values. Also, attention to the contemplative life is not something that has ever been tolerated by the more Protestant branches of Christianity, so Eliot’s sim-

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107. Eliot, “from *The Idea of a Christian Society*” (1939), *Selected Prose* 288–290, esp. 290. See also Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), *Christianity and Culture* 31–33, esp. 33.

ple mention of this as a given relates him more closely to an Anglo-Catholic tradition than to a Protestant or Puritan tradition. As noted in the second chapter, high-church concerns include architecture and art, as well as supporting monastic and contemplative life, none of which are characteristic of the Protestant end of the spectrum of English religious life.

Later, Eliot mentions celibacy, which was more an issue for the Catholic clergy than for the Protestants. He defends it over and against a more narrow view of families and family size, which Eliot finds “unnatural,” preferring a “wider sense” of “conformity to nature.” His defense of this issue reveals how much he still works out of the mindset of the more Catholic Anglicans. And the concluding part of this third section is most interesting, uniting his long-term interest in primitive spiritualities. He recommends “humility” about our own religious traditions, warning us not to look down on those more primitive traditions as superseded by our own or less developed than our own:

And without sentimentalizing the life of the savage, we might practise the humility to observe, in some of the societies upon which we look down as primitive or backward, the operation of a social-religious-artistic complex which we should emulate upon a higher plane. We have been accustomed to regard “progress” as always integral; and have yet to learn that it is only by an effort and a discipline, greater than society has yet seen the need of imposing upon itself, that material knowledge and power is gained without loss of spiritual knowledge and power. ... We need to know how to see the world as the Christian Fathers saw it; and the purpose of reascending to origins is that we should be able to return, with greater spiritual knowledge, to our own situation. We need to recover the sense of religious fear, so that it may be overcome by religious hope.<sup>108</sup>

First, this appeal to ancient religion validates spirituality in general, and especially validates the earliest centuries of the Church. As noted in chapter two, Anglicanism looked especially to the first five centuries of the Church as part of a shared tradition with the Catholic Church. The Church Fathers provided the basis for the greater tradition of the Church, grounded any creedal and confessional statements, and did so in the purity of an as-yet undivided universal Church and as a Church doctrinally closer to the Apostles and their age. Besides that, the more liturgical churches, like the Anglican Church and especially the Anglo-Catholic tradition, have always

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108. Eliot, “*from The Idea of a Christian Society*” (1939), *Selected Prose* 290-291. See also Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), *Christianity and Culture* 49.



looked to the Church Fathers and those first five centuries for purer liturgical expression. More Protestant churches have often overlooked the Church Fathers, completely disregarding tradition, and urging instead *Sola Scriptura* and reaching back only as far as the Reformation.

Further, Eliot's broader reference to a "social-religious-artistic complex" is not only a broader reference to the Church borne of a more deeply intellectual view, but it also expands the concerns of the Church into areas of society and art. As we have already noted, the social concern is part of an ecumenical broadening, and reference to the arts is more high-church. Also, an appeal to primitive religions and their spiritual depth is not something many Protestants would find easy or necessary, preferring to press the exclusivity, superiority, and uniqueness of the Christian tradition, especially for evangelistic purposes. Finally, the Protestant tradition, at least as contrasted to a Catholic or liturgical tradition, puts more stock in what we call a theology of glory, carrying a sense of spiritual arrival, over and against religious hope born out of a healthy fear of God. While both sides might talk of a healthy fear of God, Eliot's has a richer, more historical tradition behind it. In fact, Eliot puts it in terms contrary to what we might expect, and certainly contrary to the way a Protestant would state it. He urges readers to turn to the Church Fathers, thereby "reascending to origins," instead of de-scending to them — the Church's origins are to be seen as equal, even superior, spiritually, to the present age. And, in a characteristic way for Eliot, he says we can then "return, with greater spiritual knowledge, to our own situation." This is the basis of the hero's journey as put forth by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which is classically mythic, as well as a part of Christian religious tradition and spiritual growth.<sup>109</sup> This concept will reappear in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, in which he affirms that his beginning is also his end.

#### *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*

In the brief anthologized portion of *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, Eliot still talks of a "religious-political complex" as "a very advanced stage of civilization." Here, as in the pre-

<sup>109</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Bollingen Series XVII (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1949).

vious work, Eliot sees a need to keep politics, religion, and art together: "Religious thought and practice, philosophy and art, all tend to become isolated areas cultivated by groups in no communication with each other. The artistic sensibility is impoverished by its divorce from the religious sensibility." We have already discussed Eliot's inclusion of art as an important aspect of his religious orientation. As for the relation of religion and culture, Eliot again states, very concisely: "I have already asserted, in my introduction, that no culture can appear or develop except in relation to a religion. ... The development of culture and the development of religion, in a society uninfluenced from without, cannot be clearly isolated from each other. ... [We] may ask whether any culture could come into being, or maintain itself, without a religious basis." Then, in classically high-church language, he adds, "the culture being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people."<sup>110</sup> As presented in the second chapter, focus on the Incarnation is more a high-church or Anglo-Catholic doctrine, as per Eliot's analysis of the Incarnational sermons of Lancelot Andrewes discussed above in Eliot's essay on Andrewes. In addition to the Incarnation allusion, this may be Eliot's clearest statement, yet, of what he means by the relation between Church and state in the larger sense.

Of course, as a state develops, the relation between Church and state can become more complex, and "religious capacity and function" can suffer "differentiation." Eliot admits to the problem of splintering within the Christian tradition and refers specifically to the dangers of "two religions — one for the populace and one for the adepts."<sup>111</sup> This sounds a bit unexpected, given Eliot's desire for a more intellectual laity in *Thoughts After Lambeth*. However, he sees the unifying nature of religion in society being undermined by such religious separation or separatism, which makes even more sense than what we might have expected from him.

The evils of "two nations" in religion are obvious. Christianity has resisted this

<sup>110</sup> T. S. Eliot, "from Notes Towards the Definition of Culture," 1948, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar-Harcourt, 1975) 292, 293-294, 295. See also T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, 1948, *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harvest-Harcourt, 1948) 97, 99, 100-101.

<sup>111</sup> Eliot, "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), *Selected Prose* 295-296. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 101.

malady better than Hinduism. The schisms of the sixteenth century, and the subsequent multiplication of sects, can be studied either as the history of division of religious thought, or as a struggle between opposing social groups — as the variation of doctrine, or as the disintegration of European culture. Yet, while these wide divergences of belief on the same level are lamentable, the Faith can, and must, find room for many degrees of intellectual, imaginative and emotional receptivity to the same doctrines, just as it can embrace many variations of order and ritual. The Christian Faith also, psychologically considered — as systems of beliefs and attitudes in particular embodied minds — will have a history.<sup>112</sup>

Within Eliot's present structure, this is an excellently clear way of expressing what many see as very divergent groups within Christianity. Many Protestants see themselves as having broken away from Rome, returning to what they consider is an unadulterated and purer dependence on Scripture, without the prior millennium and a half of tradition to worry about. For many Protestants, the Christian tradition is simply a constant and consistent degeneration from the purest and earliest days of Jesus and the Apostles. Nonetheless, there are those whose Reformation was much more conservative. Despite the word Protestantism having come from a Lutheran document, Lutheranism tends to see itself as a conservative *reforming* — as still in process — movement, as against the *Reformed* — as in a completed process — churches. An even more conservative reformation took place in England, as discussed in chapter two. Seen this way, parts of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, such as the English Church, can be seen to be well within the longer tradition of the Church catholic, or universal. As such, any divergences are indeed lamentable, yet the faith can survive as one doctrinally unified faith tradition with degrees of variation in areas of intellectual understanding and worship life. This perspective is very much that of the Anglo-Catholic tradition, which sees itself as the *via media* linking two ends of a doctrinally unified spectrum. Eliot's use of the phrase "order and ritual" fits squarely within this high-church tradition.

Eliot next warns against the sense of collective progress in spirituality as in art. This notion was expressed in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, discussed above. Just the same, he allows for some degree of development in "the appearance of *scepticism*" in the sense of "the habit of examining evidence and the capacity for delayed decision" — and this holds both for religion

<sup>112</sup> Eliot, "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), *Selected Prose* 296. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 101.

and for culture. This allowance of scepticism is, as Eliot calls it, "a highly civilized trait," and one which would make many pietists uneasy, who revel in their apparently more secure faith. However, a more intellectual faith allows for such skepticism, and even a neo-orthodox theologian like Karl Barth differentiates between a doubt that undermines faith and a doubt that presses on and enhances faith. Then, again, Eliot talks about the unity and interdependency of religion and culture, how one cannot continue to develop without the other. He also talks about art and religion together as "aesthetic sensibility," "spiritual perception," and "disciplined taste," enabling one to see more clearly and make better judgments in art. Here, Eliot admits to not fully grasping this notion, himself, except "in flashes."<sup>113</sup> But he presses on, having raised some of these issues before, and continues to develop and refine them.

Eliot opts for a universal religion over one exclusive to a certain race or nation — this is a definite leaning toward the more Catholic tradition, at least in the sense of the original meaning of the word "catholic" as universal. And then, he talks of the "problem of evangelization." First, he calls it an oversimplification, even a distortion, not to acknowledge someone else's religiosity just because it may not be like our own. Further, if culture and religion are unified, then we see "that bishops are a part of English culture, and horses and dogs are a part of English religion."<sup>114</sup> This is a curious statement, but one that reinforces the mutuality of religion and culture and is one more statement that helps to make Eliot's understanding of this relationship clearer. Later, Eliot again alludes to "monasticism and the ascetic life" and "contemplative life," this time noting, as we discussed earlier, that "[they are] condemned by extreme Protestantism" as well as "the Puritan antipathy to [them]."<sup>115</sup> Again, Eliot tries to clarify the relation of culture to religion, avoiding the twin errors of simply relating them to each other or identifying the two. Here he alludes to his earlier use of the term "incarnation": "I spoke at one point of the culture of

113. Eliot, "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), *Selected Prose* 296 [sic], 297. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 102, 103.

114. Eliot, "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), *Selected Prose* 297-298. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 104-105.

115. Eliot, "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), *Selected Prose* 299. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 105.

a people as an *incarnation* of its religion; and while I am aware of the temerity of employing such an exalted term, I cannot think of any other which would convey so well the intention."<sup>116</sup>

From these two references, I can be certain that I am on the right track in my assessment of Eliot's high-church orientation in this regard, since Eliot himself mentions Protestantism and Puritanism, and then a few sentences later acknowledges the nature of the word "incarnation" as an "exalted term." He is still working out of the same Anglo-Catholic mindset and language.

In a brief second section, the discussion returns to the rôle of family in the passing on of tradition. An important statement here is, "The primary channel of transmission of culture is the family: no man wholly escapes from the kind, or wholly surpasses the degree of culture which he acquired from his early environment." He goes on to differentiate a proper sense of family, in an extended form, from the sentimentalized nuclear family presented by advertising.<sup>117</sup> Naturally, this is not only true for Eliot's argument, but also true of Eliot, himself. In the second chapter, I traced Eliot's development from Unitarian/Puritan/Protestant roots in New England to the Anglo-Catholic tradition in England. In the present chapter, I have noted Eliot's formal conversion and his thinking before, during, and after, as it comes out in his critical writing. In the next two chapters, I shall trace the same development through his creative works. However, when all is said and done, it may well be found that much of what Eliot ultimately becomes has been present all along, in his personality and in his roots. As Eliot looks to his roots in his English ancestor in Little Gidding, he turns to his own extended family and to his even older roots, culturally and religiously, to which he appeals personally. In the third and last anthologized section, Eliot begins with the wish to clarify his terms once again: "By 'culture', then, I mean first of all what the anthropologists mean: the way of life of a particular people living together in one place. That culture is made visible in their arts, in their social system, in their habits and customs, in their religion. ... [A] culture is more than the assemblage of its arts, customs, and religious beliefs.

116. Eliot, "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), *Selected Prose* 299 [sic]. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 106.

117. Eliot, "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), *Selected Prose* 300-302, esp. 300. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 115-118, esp. 115.

These things act upon each other.” This we have heard before, and Eliot continues to refine and clarify. Again, he refers to the “dominant force” of religion on a culture, to which he adds, in this essay, a disclaimer that “[this] is not a religious talk” and he is “not setting out to convert anybody.” However, he feels the need to add that he, himself, is a Christian, yet that he writes here not as a Christian so much as “a student of social biology”<sup>118</sup> — he simply wants to note Christianity’s rôle in Europe’s art, laws, and thought.

#### Other Critics of Eliot’s Critical Essays

By the time of his social critical works, he had added a religious undergirding to his sense of tradition. As Timothy Materer notes in his essay, “by 1928 Eliot was concerned with the difficulty that a tradition could be valid and available only if the culture that transmitted it was a healthy one.” To clarify his sense of a healthy culture and its need for tradition to be “supervised,” Eliot relates the notion of “orthodoxy.” “But,” as Materer adds, “the problem of a tradition’s dependence on culture and society appeared too complex for any one literary or cultural figure to address.”<sup>119</sup> Peter Dale Scott, in his essay in the same collection, agrees, saying, “His [Eliot’s] two mature volumes of social criticism (the *Idea of a Christian Society* [1939], and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* [1948]) failed, not only to resolve the social and cultural problems they presented, but even to serve as epitomes of Eliot’s political thinking.” Scott sees these two works as interesting examples of the process of Eliot’s thinking. Scott feels Eliot’s best political writing was in the *Criterion* and the *New English Weekly*.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, that was, in part, the purpose of the periodicals that Eliot wrote for and edited. As for Eliot’s own essays, Materer sees the decline of the “creative dialectic” in Eliot’s prose as Eliot lost “the balance between the individual and external authority” and “leaned more and more to the authority side

118. Eliot, “Notes Towards the Definition of Culture” (1948), *Selected Prose* 302-305, esp. 302, 304. See also Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), *Christianity and Culture* 197-201, esp. 198, 200.

119. Timothy Materer, “T. S. Eliot’s Critical Program,” *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 55, 57 (quoting from Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, 67), 55.

120. Peter Dale Scott, “The Social Critic and His Discontents,” *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 60-61, 71, 61.

of this dichotomy.” He cites Eliot’s own recognition of this, quoting Eliot in 1965 as admitting that his “later, relatively detached essays lacked” the “urgency and ‘a warmth of appeal’” of his earlier essays.<sup>121</sup>

David Spurr goes even further in his book, *Conflicts in Consciousness: T. S. Eliot’s Poetry and Criticism*. Spurr analyzes Eliot’s prose as revealing a conflict within Eliot’s own mind. Spurr, too, sees Eliot continuing with the same themes, redefining them as he moves from “Tradition and the Individual Talent” to *After Strange Gods*. Seeming to have broadened his viewpoint, Eliot has instead narrowed it in *After Strange Gods*, Spurr says, perceiving Eliot’s statements favoring a homogeneous community with few religious differences to be exclusionary. When the subtitle, “A Primer of Modern Heresy,” is added, it makes the statements even less palatable for Spurr. Citing Eliot’s negative focus on Jews, Liberals, workers, and degenerate writers as causes or symptoms of disorder of society, Spurr asserts that “Eliot’s essay verges on the pathological.” Referring to the second and third essays of *After Strange Gods*, he continues, “Eliot cannot accept the replacement of religion by poetry, because the poetic process breaks the seal of consciousness and sets free the unknown forces within; it takes us beyond limits better observed for the sake of emotional stability. Religion — at least of the sort that Eliot admires — provides a structure for intellectual control.”<sup>122</sup> I have discussed this elsewhere, noting that Matthew Arnold and others saw poetry as replacing religion in the nineteenth century. Eliot not only makes a contrary statement, but here Spurr sees that statement as a means to control the unconscious impulses that poetry can and does set free. Some may feel this to be a rather strong statement about Eliot’s personality and need to control. Nonetheless, Eliot’s poetry notwithstanding, Spurr’s statements ring true for much of Eliot’s later social critical writing. In reading those works, one gets the feeling of unfinished thoughts, unclarified positions, attempts to refine previous thoughts and writings, and misgivings about various writers and elements of the society around him.

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<sup>121</sup> Materer 59.

<sup>122</sup> David Spurr, *Conflicts in Consciousness: T. S. Eliot’s Poetry and Criticism* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984) 117; 118.

Offering yet another way to understand Eliot's later social criticism, especially Eliot's choice of language and themes and his inconsistencies of thought, Peter Dale Scott relates the context of these essays according to Roger Kojecky's *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism*, a book Frank Kermode feels is the single best volume on Eliot's social criticism.<sup>123</sup> Citing Kojecky, Scott reminds us of the setting for the composition of these last two social critical works of Eliot — Eliot served on a church discussion forum called "The Moot," in which he debated "Roman Catholic Christopher Dawson, ... Christian pacifist John Middleton Murray, and ... German sociologist Karl Mannheim."<sup>124</sup> The Moot was made up of seventeen members, including John Middleton Murray, with up to thirty-five people in attendance, including Reinhold Niebuhr, and they met nineteen times from 1938-1947, with Eliot present at eleven meetings.<sup>125</sup> Another group Eliot attended from time to time was the Summer School of Sociology at Oxford. This was a group of Anglo-Catholics who attempted to apply themselves to social questions and politics from a Christian perspective.<sup>126</sup> In addition to the influence of these groups, Robert Canary has noted the Oxford Movement's Anglican-turned-Roman Catholic, John Henry Cardinal Newman, as another influence on Eliot. Canary cites an essay by David J. DeLaura:

Eliot's High Church Anglicanism was bound to find much to sympathize with in the writings of English Roman Catholic thinkers as well. David J. DeLaura has noted that Newman's analysis of society "played an influential role in T. S. Eliot's social writings in the 1930's and 1940's — a connection still ignored by readers of Eliot who know little of his extensive reading in the Victorian prose writers," though DeLaura, intent on other matters, does not pause to argue this case ("Arnold, Newman, and T. S. Eliot: A Note on the Disappearance of God," 1977).<sup>127</sup>

Newman's influence reinforces not only Eliot's high-church leanings, but also more directly connects both Eliot and his Anglo-Catholicism to the Oxford Movement. Turning to that short essay, we find DeLaura relating Matthew Arnold, John Henry Cardinal Newman, and T. S. Eliot

123. Cf. Roger Kojecky, *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber, 1971). See Frank Kermode's comments in Appendix B of *Selected Prose* 313.

124. Scott 70-72, esp. 71.

125. Roger Kojecky, *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (New York: Farrar, 1971) 237-239.

126. Kojecky 113.

127. Robert H. Canary, *T. S. Eliot: The Poet and His Critics* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982) 131.



to each other on the question of faith and theology. DeLaura begins by citing the correspondence between Arnold and Newman in the 1870s. Arnold wrote a few religious books in the 1870s that were somewhat related to issues in Newman's writings. Newman, however, never read those works, and heard of them through a mutual friend, Henry Parry Liddon, an accomplished preacher and scholar. Liddon had become "a leading figure in the High Church party," along "with Pusey." He and Newman met over dinner in July 1872 with "a mutual friend, R. W. Church, Dean of St. Paul's," and Liddon expressed concern about Arnold's writings to Newman. In a letter to Newman much later in 1887, Liddon says of Arnold that he feels it is "impossible for a sincere Christian to think of him with other feelings than those of the deepest regret that he is not a believer." Evidently, this later letter is similar to an earlier one in 1873, to which Newman had responded, lamenting the possibility of faith being given up as superstitious, with the disappearance of belief in God in the future — hence, the title of the essay. DeLaura sees this as a striking prediction in the 1870s of a "secular and religionless future," signifying "one of the great shifts in modern culture." This, Newman called Liberalism. Citing Newman's "well-known *Biglietto* Speech, in Rome in 1879," DeLaura defines "Liberalism" in Newman's terms as "the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another" and as "the educated lay world" of today. And DeLaura quotes Newman's continuing comment about "Liberalism in religion" as "the view that 'Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact, but miraculous; and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy.'" Thus, for Newman as for Eliot, religion is "no longer 'the bond of society,'" having devolved to a "'private ... possession.'"<sup>128</sup>

In Newman's comments and train of thought, we can clearly hear the echo of Eliot, or rather, vice versa. Concern for a rationalistic age not given to faith, a modern age not given to creedal orthodoxy, and a Liberal age not given to corporate religiosity are strong elements of both writers. On the issues, both are strongly orthodox, conservative, Catholic, high-church, and both

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128. David J. DeLaura, "Arnold, Newman, and T. S. Eliot: A Note on the Disappearance of God," *The Arnoldian* 4.2 (Winter 1977): 2-4.

bravely confront what they see as the dissolution of society as it loses touch with its religious roots. In all this, we can hear Eliot echoing Newman. Indeed, in the last page of DeLaura's essay, that is precisely his contention: "Newman's analysis of the state of civilization, as it entered the Matthew Arnold phase, played an influential role in T. S. Eliot's social writings in the 1930's and '40's — a connection still ignored by readers of Eliot who know little of his extensive reading in the Victorian prose writers."<sup>129</sup> Indeed, it is easy to overlook some of Eliot's influences, especially when we forget his extensive reading. These obvious connections with the writings and thoughts of Newman strongly reinforce not only Newman's influence on Eliot, but also that of the Oxford Movement on his Anglo-Catholicism. Both contributed strongly to Eliot's thinking, his ecclesiastical orientation, his social writing, and his faith.

DeLaura goes on to say, "The ghost of Newman haunts Eliot's analysis of 'a society like ours, worm-eaten with Liberalism,' in his most defiantly negative work, *After Strange Gods*."<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, DeLaura notes Eliot's "drawing back from the fashionable apocalypticism of the time," quoting from Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society*: "we have today a culture which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian. I do not think it can remain negative."<sup>131</sup> Just the same, DeLaura also notes that

the secularization of the human mind and imagination ... is unquestionably real, widespread, and continuous in the last quarter of our century. We have enough evidence to suggest that Newman's fears were indeed "prophetically" right, even though (as he saw) a substantial "remnant" of traditional believers remains. The disappearance of God has gone by stages. ... [Not] until the 1920's had enough "ordinary" men and women entered the "Matthew Arnold" state of mind to bring the new phase of culture into sufficient prominence to evoke widespread comment. ... The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed a mode of "futurology," in which utopias increasingly gave way to nightmares. The 1960's and '70's have discovered that the idea of the "future" is a matter of present "shock" already obsolete by the time it finds its way into print. The extremely complex relations of even a few key figures—such as Newman, Arnold, and Eliot—help us to plot the stages by which we have rather helplessly arrived where we are, an ungreened present which *is* the future.<sup>132</sup>

The language DeLaura uses here, as well as the issue, is characteristic of both Newman and

129. DeLaura 5-6.

130. DeLaura 6.

131. DeLaura 6. DeLaura cites page 10 of a 1940 publication by Harcourt of Eliot's work.

132. DeLaura 6-7.

Eliot. Both assert the need for religious faith as the basis for culture, and consequently both lament the encroaching secularization of culture. While Eliot hedges a bit on the actuality and thoroughness of that secularization as Newman predicts it, he acknowledges it in his writing, and DeLaura affirms it here, both in Eliot's day and in his own, noting what he sees as successive stages in the process. Certainly, while Eliot hedges about this issue in his later career, as DeLaura points out, he certainly gave his generation one of the strongest poems about cultural degeneration and secularization, almost to the point of a nightmare, as I shall discuss in my next chapter, on *The Waste Land*.

Culture's slide into secularism, leaving religion behind as superstition, suggests the arrival of Matthew Arnold's view of poetry replacing religion. Not only does DeLaura note the similarity of language and issue between the two writers, but he notes how both shared the same response to Matthew Arnold — in fact, DeLaura attributes Newman's formulation of his view to his response to Arnold's famous comment. Finally, DeLaura notes that the very title of Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* echoes one of Newman's titles — a point that should be obvious, even though DeLaura is the first to comment on it.<sup>133</sup> This context of Eliot's awareness of and use of Victorian prose must be taken into consideration for a more fair and complete understanding of these social critical works of Eliot. Nonetheless, Scott and others still note the overall failure of Eliot's social critical works. Scott sees the real strength of Eliot's ideas coming through more strongly and creatively in his later *poetry* — he cites A. D. Moody as calling *Four Quartets* Eliot's "true political statement," as well as his "most fully Christian poetry."<sup>134</sup>

In these later essays of social criticism, it is not so much that Eliot repeats his ideas so much as he continues to refine and clarify further. Beginning with *Thoughts After Lambeth*, through *After Strange Gods*, to these later works on Christianity and culture, I have noted Eliot's treatment of the same themes, with some variation in details and definitions. But I have also noted how Eliot continually refines and clarifies those themes in a way that suggests he must have been

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133. DeLaura 6, n. 13.

134. Scott 71-72.

struggling with some unfinished thoughts in the earlier works. His staying on these themes also suggests their importance and centrality for him, which certainly squares with our understanding of him as an Anglo-Catholic first and foremost. As he developed, refined, and clarified his ideas, these later works were able to bring him a stronger reputation among Christians, to the point that Horton Davies can say of Eliot that he is one of the three great apologists of the twentieth century for English Christianity. It may not be that his writing is so overtly Christian in the sense of C. S. Lewis' writing, dealing with matters of personal spirituality and growth. Rather, true to Eliot's personality and theology, he elevates himself above the more personal spiritual approach in favor of a larger perspective on society and culture. And as Eliot, himself, says of James Joyce and Dante, Eliot's own work is imbued with Christian motifs. If at points, his clarity suffers, it is because he is dealing with such large concepts and their interactions and relationships. But as he says, he is not about the business of converting anyone, since he seeks rather to understand the larger workings of the Christian tradition, especially as it impinges on culture. Dealing with such themes, Eliot shows us the depth of his understanding and commitment to see the world in relation to his newfound faith. And dealing with such themes the way he does, with such further refinement and analysis, Eliot shows us his consistent and continuing spiritual maturation as he continues on his journey of faith.

Meanwhile, as Eliot's writing reveals aspects of his spiritual development, we read it looking for his undergirding philosophy, for his process of development, and for his ideas and way of thinking about various topics. Naturally, while Eliot was writing his critical works, reflecting on literature, religion, and society, among other things, other critics in turn were writing their reflections on him and his work and ideas. Since the majority of critics tend to treat Eliot's prose as a unit, commenting on his output as a whole more often than analyzing individual works, I shall discuss their criticism of Eliot's criticism at this point, having presented my own overview of selected prose works of Eliot. Again, I shall concentrate on what those critics find of Eliot's high-church orientation. From Eliot's landmark essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" through his later critical writings, it might well be expected to trace a unified line of thought.

However, as Kristian Smidt points out, even though "Tradition" was what Smidt calls "a programmatic article of general scope" "at the outset of his career," thus setting up an "expectation for more," it was only an "illusion that Eliot was actually providing it." Smidt then lists *The Use of Poetry*, "Religion and Literature," *What is a Classic?*, and *Poetry and Drama* as Eliot's "nearest approach to a systematic treatise." Thus, Smidt agrees with many other critics, noting Leavis and Winters among them, in seeing Eliot's criticism as less than unified and unambiguous.

Smidt cites Eliot's praise of Machiavelli in *For Lancelot Andrewes*, "because his thoughts form no system."<sup>135</sup> I can certainly agree with this perception on the part of those critics, wishing to find in Eliot's critical writings more of a unified, developing line of thought. And while I do not find such in those works, I do find Eliot returning to certain emphases and themes, including those that relate to his Anglo-Catholic orientation.

Smidt notes a shift in Eliot's criticism around 1921, from the issue of the creative process to poetic subjects, by his 1929 essay on Dante, including "damnation, ... purgation and beatitude ... as fit subjects for a poet." Further, Smidt notes Eliot's movement to "metaphysical, political and cultural" subjects, "more systematically to relate his aesthetic opinions to his main beliefs and attitudes in other fields. He soon came to treat religion in a less cavalier fashion than at first, to see that it mattered to art more than he had thought, and, now and again, almost to change his ground by subordinating art to dogma."<sup>136</sup> Certainly, this is the trend I have noted in Eliot. Smidt goes on to note Eliot's separation of art and Christianity, even as late as in a January 1933 commentary. Yet Smidt also notes the need for both, which Eliot states in his 1933 *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. This stands in direct contradistinction to Matthew Arnold's view of poetry supplanting religion. Nonetheless, Smidt also notes the "necessary connection between religion and philosophy on the one hand and poetry on the other." Clarifying this relationship between religion and poetry further, Smidt calls the "connection between poetry and belief ... a practical, not an ideal, necessity." Contrary to Matthew Arnold and others, Smidt

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<sup>135</sup> Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, 1949 (London: Routledge, 1961) 35.

<sup>136</sup> Smidt 49-50.

says of Eliot that "He is particularly emphatic in asserting that literature can be no *substitute* for religion or philosophy, or indeed for anything else that is not art, 'not merely because we need religion, but because we need literature as well as religion.'" <sup>137</sup>

As Eliot's understanding of this issue develops, Smidt traces it through *After Strange Gods* and "Religion and Literature," saying:

In *After Strange Gods*, he apparently subjected art to the rule of religion by deliberately applying the criterion of Christian orthodoxy to a number of writers as the supreme test of the value of their works. In *The Use of Poetry* he gave it as his opinion (his "eccentricity," he called it) that aesthetic studies should be "guided by sound theology," and his essay on "Religion and Literature" exhorts all Christians to maintain consciously, in literature, "certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the test of the world." <sup>138</sup>

Smidt follows this development of thought in Eliot, quoting from Maritain:

God is the fountain of beauty, and beauty belongs to the transcendental and metaphysical order. ... The fine arts ... are an end in themselves and completely disinterested—fruits, to be enjoyed as such. They can help us on the road to salvation, however, by the secondary effects of the emotions that they arouse in us if not as a fulfilment of their proper purpose. For the objects of art can be read as signs of a transcendent reality. ... The sole end of art itself is the work to be done and the beauty of the work. But in its human aspect, as residing in a person, art has a moral significance and is subordinate to the sanctification of man and to the human virtues. ... If a conflict arises between the purposes of the artist creating his works of art and the needs of the man in his spiritual struggles towards the light, then the artist is in duty bound to give way. <sup>139</sup>

This view from Maritain squares nicely with Eliot's own views and serves to clarify them further. Smidt then comments on, what we might call, the religious specificity of Maritain's view: "Implicit in Maritain's aesthetic is a fairly strong faith in the goodness of human nature and in the efficacy of human virtues, a faith which perhaps is natural to a Catholic. His views would have been unacceptable to a Protestant and Puritan philosopher like Søren Kierkegaard, who may be taken to represent an opposite extreme in Christian thought." <sup>140</sup> It is interesting to see Smidt analyze the Christian orientation of Maritain's aesthetic as Catholic over and against a more

137. Smidt 50-52, esp. 52, 51 [*sic*]. For the Matthew Arnold reference, see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) 22-24, which will be discussed briefly below.

138. Smidt 52.

139. Smidt 53-54.

140. Smidt 54.

Protestant or Puritan view. This has been precisely my intent — to unravel the more Catholic point of view as regards Eliot's writings. Smidt usually notes only the broader religious orientation, leaning in a more pietistic or generically Protestant direction, if any. Here, however, he notes the distinction between the two ends of the religious spectrum and says of Eliot that "he seems to be at one with Maritain."<sup>141</sup> Of course, there are further distinctions to be made, and Smidt notes Eliot's New England Puritan background as compromising the degree of agreement with Maritain on certain aspects. Nonetheless, Smidt here makes perhaps the strongest statement in his entire book about the specifically Catholic orientation of Eliot's views — a point we have been pressing, at times over and against Smidt's more general Christian viewpoint.

Smidt considers Eliot's close relating of religion and literature, seeing their common ground as behavior or ethics. In a conversation with Eliot in 1948, Smidt says that Eliot felt "poetry could help us to approach an understanding of an ultimate reality." Just the same, Eliot did not feel that religious themes held a higher place and that poetry should necessarily present a message or belief, Smidt continues. He adds, quoting from *Essays Ancient and Modern*, that Eliot wants "a literature which should be *unconsciously*, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian."<sup>142</sup> Smidt concludes his remarks about Eliot's critical writings by saying, "Eliot speaks as a Christian" when he talks of "religion and aesthetics," while not "[emphasizing] his own faith." As I, too, have noted, Smidt says, "This partly accounts for his failure to completely clarify the relationship between art and religious belief."<sup>143</sup> Above, I noted that difficulty in reconciling Eliot's views on these matters, and that is why Maritain's comments help so much and fit so well with my perspective of what Eliot is trying to say.

In the context of discussing Eliot's self-identification in *For Lancelot Andrewes*, Smidt refers to Maritain: the "'neo-Thomist' revival of which Jacques Maritain was, in Eliot's words 'the most popular and influential exponent,' may have had something to do with the colour of his views." Eliot described Maritain in a review he wrote in 1928 as representing, "beyond its

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141. Smidt 55.

142. Smidt 57, 58-59.

143. Smidt 59.

strictly theological import, a reaction against such philosophies as that of Bergson, against Romanticism in literature and against democracy in government."<sup>144</sup> This in turn lines up with my earlier comments about Eliot's ideological closeness, in terms of his three-fold self-definition, to Middleton Murray, noted above, in the discussion of "The Function of Criticism."

Again, these are the same three categories with the same three positions; and again, as Lyndall Gordon has noted, the latter two are subsumed under the theological position. From there, Smidt notes Eliot's continued interest in the matters of the Anglican faith, specifically citing *Thoughts After Lambeth*, his work on a report entitled *Catholicity, The Rock, and Murder in the Cathedral*. He adds that these last two creative works "both have a good deal of the convert's missionary zeal,"<sup>145</sup> reinforcing what Horton Davies has said of Eliot's important rôle as an apologist in the Anglican Church.

Further, Smidt credits Eliot with bringing out the neo-Thomism of Maritain. Referring to French Symbolism, Smidt calls it a reaction, in part, "against naturalism, and by its belief in a transcendent reality it had strong affinities with Christian and philosophical idealism, though its connection with neo-Thomism is a later phenomenon and to a great extent due to Eliot." Then, Smidt notes the influence of Dante, especially, as well as of "St John of the Cross, Pascal and other great men and women of faith and illumination." And returning to the blend of theology, politics, and literature, he adds:

Right faith is associated in Eliot's mind with Toryism and classicism, and the combination of these elements seem to him to represent the summit of what the cultured mind should aspire to. From Homer and Virgil and their countrymen comes a legacy of maturity and poise, from the Old and New Testaments a sense of the infinite, which meet in the theology of St Thomas, of Hooker and Andrewes, in the poetry of Dryden and the criticism of Johnson.<sup>146</sup>

Smidt notes Eliot's faith orientation, even noting its conservative nature and its links to classicism and royalism, and again, he notes Eliot's appreciation of Dante, St. John of the Cross, and others of a Catholic or mystical bent. So while Smidt rightly sees Eliot's Christianity and spiri-

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144. Smidt 28.

145. Smidt 28.

146. Smidt 238, 239.



tual orientation, he stops short of developing Eliot's high-church or Anglo-Catholic perspective. Nonetheless, with these references also to Hooker and Andrewes, Smidt has certainly apprehended the longer theological movement of which Eliot is a part.

In all fairness, Smidt does include a brief discussion of a basic difference between Catholic and Protestant Christian thinking — a discussion of the type Northrop Frye engages in, outlined below. Smidt differentiates between Catholic and Protestant perspectives, the former viewing the Church and the community as more important and the latter placing more value on the individual believer. All the same, the Catholic position leaves the individual free to “perfect his own soul,” allowing for a more contemplative approach in the process — an approach not usual to Protestants. Smidt continues, “Protestantism tends to reject such religious cloistering, but teaches the need and right of the individual to receive and understand the word of God direct in his own heart and in his own way.” Smidt concludes, as I do, that “Eliot here takes the Catholic position.” Smidt also goes on to opine that determining whether Eliot's poetry is one or the other is not necessary nor of much interest:

He [Eliot] 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 of his poetry.<sup>147</sup>

First, Smidt's brief definition of Protestantism as “the need and right of the individual to receive and understand the word of God direct in his own heart and in his own way” is perhaps one of the better, more concise statements of Protestantism as differentiated from Catholicism, and clearly, it would not be tenable to Eliot. When Smidt goes on to differentiate further between the two, his summary is again succinct and accurate. Catholicism's emphasis on Incarnation, with all that entails for ecclesiology, with discipline, with confession, and with communal worship are hallmarks of the distinctiveness of a high-church understanding of Christianity. Protestantism's stress on the individual, on personal faith, and on private worship, as well as its stress on the

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<sup>147</sup>Smidt 210.

Atonement are equally hallmarks of that tradition, and Smidt has coupled the issues well. While he does not feel the need to pursue this further, especially in the case of what he considers "superficial" elements of Catholic theology in Eliot's work, at least he has set up the profound difference in Christian orientations that shows Eliot's position more clearly as being on one end of the spectrum.

Finally, in discussing Eliot's background and development, Smidt quotes Eliot on his conversion from a 1932 radio broadcast:

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. ... 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 men.<sup>148</sup>

A few years after his conversion and shortly after *Thoughts After Lambeth*, Eliot comments on his conversion in terms of a Catholic nature. First, he makes a direct reference to one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, who later himself became a Roman Catholic, John Henry Cardinal Newman; as cited above, Eliot was aware of, had respect for, and did extensive reading in Newman. Not only does Newman embody a strongly high-church, even Catholic, perspective, but he is also one of the strongest embodiments of the Oxford Movement in particular, which formalized the Anglo-Catholic party — part of the focus of this dissertation. Second, in proper theological fashion, based on a proper understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit leading one to baptism, Eliot acknowledges the long period of development leading up to and culminating in conversion, specifically his conversion. This is an important part of the next chapter, in which the beginnings of Eliot's formal conversion are evident in his earlier poetic works, especially and specifically in *The Waste Land*. When, for Eliot, that process "crystallises," it produces a formal conversion — that is not to say that faith was not already present, that it was not

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<sup>148</sup> Smidt 28-29.

developing over a long period of time, or that we cannot find elements of Eliot's later conversion in earlier parts of his life. Third, Eliot comes through a degree of scepticism — something more pietistic Protestants would have trouble understanding or admitting to. Fourth, the list of “holy living and holy dying,” and “sanctity, chastity, humility, austerity,” are not a usual listing of values presented in more Protestant circles. Words like “sanctity” are part of a process of sanctification, or growing in holiness. Sanctification tends to be part of a more dogmatic religious tradition, and the last three suggest an ascetic or monastic existence. In fact, the three-fold confession or commitment of monastic communities consisted of some combination of poverty, chastity, and obedience or stability of place (for monks in distinction to mendicant friars). Finally, with a nod to Original Sin, Eliot includes the imperfection of a human institution made up of sinful mankind, such that no corner of Christianity can be perfect.

That, for Eliot and others, outlines the process of Christian salvation and stands in direct opposition to the position of Matthew Arnold. Smidt mentions Arnold in passing, reminding us of the same point Terry Eagleton makes about literature *vis-à-vis* religion. Eagleton refers to the position generally understood in nineteenth-century England, propounded by Matthew Arnold, of the “failure of religion.” Eagleton acknowledges Eliot's understanding of religion, its effectiveness, its ritual and symbol, and its unconscious appeal. He goes on to distinguish between the more “pietistic [Protestant] brand ... for the masses” and the “doctrinal inflection ... for the intellectual elite.” Obviously, Eliot would be in this latter category, which for Eagleton and others is more doctrinally based and less pietistic. As religion fails, for the nineteenth-century person and for Arnold, literature is there to fill in the gap. Eagleton quotes “George Gordon, early Professor of English Literature at Oxford [commenting] in his inaugural lecture that ‘England is sick, and ... English literature must save it. The Churches (as I understand) having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature has now a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the State.’”<sup>149</sup> Obviously, that is not how Eliot sees things. Interestingly, especially for Eliot and for the Anglican

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149. Smidt 59; Eagleton 22-23.

Church, the Oxford Movement also comes about during the nineteenth century and revives not only Anglicanism, but high-church Anglicanism. And as the Church develops further into the twentieth century, it begins to take on more social concerns, as well — and that is true of high-church as well as low-church parties.

A critic who has a deep understanding of the variety and specificity of church influences, and probably has a bit more sympathy with the more Catholic end of the spectrum, is Northrop Frye. In his essay "Antique Drum," Frye places Eliot's religious perspective into a larger context. He opens by talking of the parabolic image of the "going-up" and "going-down" of culture. The "going-up one" is the humanistic view, running from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, bottoming out with the "'triumph of barbarism and religion' in the Dark Ages," and turning upward with the increase of learning. Conversely, the "Romantic view is an inverted U rising to its height in medieval 'Gothic' and falling off with the Renaissance." The former developed into a "theory of progress," with a "growing respect for individual freedom, ... democracy, ... and liberalism, with a strong affinity to Protestantism." The latter Frye calls, in terms of *The Waste Land*, the "'down we went' theory," with "the height of civilisation [being] reached in the Middle Ages, when society, religion and the arts expressed a common set of standards and values."<sup>150</sup> Since that peak of "cultural synthesis," the rest is degeneration — "Christendom breaks down into nations, the Church into heresies and sects, knowledge into specialisations." This image fits very well with Eliot's world view in *The Waste Land*, as Frye has alluded to, and it also fits extremely and surprisingly well with Eliot's later social commentary. Taking it a step further, Frye continues: "This view ... is more congenial to such Catholic apologists as Chesterton, and to such literary critics as Ezra Pound. ... Eliot's social criticism, and much of his literary criticism, falls within this framework. He is uniformly opposed to theories of progress that invoke the authority of evolution, and contemptuous of writers who attempt to popularise a progressive view, like H. G. Wells." As noted earlier, "Eliot adopts, too, the rhetorical device,

150. Northrop Frye, *T. S. Eliot* (New York: Grove, 1963) 7-8. See also Northrop Frye, "Antique Drum," 1963, *T. S. Eliot*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea, 1985) 19.

found in Newman and others, of asserting that 'There are two and only two finally tenable hypotheses about life: the Catholic and the materialistic.' Everything which is neither, including Protestantism, 'Whiggery,' liberalism and humanism, is in between, and consequently forms a series of queasy transitional hesitations."<sup>151</sup>

Frye also makes reference to Matthew Arnold's view of religion as a part of society. Eliot's religion, on the other hand, "forms a third level above human society." Frye sees Eliot's view as culture being "aligned with a spiritual reality which is superior to it and yet within it, the kind of relationship represented in Christianity by the Incarnation." Thus, Eliot can talk of culture being the incarnation of a religion. I have demonstrated the importance of the Incarnation to the Oxford Movement Anglicans, not only as a doctrine, but for the concept of the Church it sets up. Eliot's use of the term here is like that used in ecclesiology, extended into the social or cultural realm. But it is clear, as Frye also notes, how Anglo-Catholic theology imbues Eliot's thinking. Such thinking in turn sets up use of other terms like "orthodoxy" to refer to "a conscious and voluntary commitment to the religious aspect of tradition."<sup>152</sup> Frye summarizes what Eliot sees as the distinctiveness of the Catholic tradition:

Religion sees human life in relation to superhuman life, as a kind of continuous imitation of it. This is expressed in certain acts, or sacraments, and in certain forms of thought, or dogmas derived from revelation. Religion cannot be identical with culture, except in the City of God or in a very primitive society; but if religion and culture draw apart, society loses its sense of direction, and the élite and the unreflecting masses become unintelligible to each other. Eliot's conception of religion is thus a sacramental and catholic one: the church is the definitive form of ritual and faith, and the essence of religion is participation in the church. Protestant conceptions of the church would doubtless not be admissible to Eliot if we could suppose he knew what they were. When he says, "the life of Protestantism depends upon the survival of that against which it protests," we are apparently to take this lugubrious pun as representing his understanding of the faith that the head of his church defends.<sup>153</sup>

Frye adds, "Eliot's argument is more pro-Catholic, stressing the importance of contemplative orders in the church."<sup>154</sup> Frye's quotations reinforce my sense of Eliot's high-church orientation,

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151. Frye, *T. S. Eliot* 8. See also Frye, "Antique Drum," *T. S. Eliot* 19-20.

152. Frye, *T. S. Eliot* 12. See also Frye, "Antique Drum," *T. S. Eliot* 22-23.

153. Frye, *T. S. Eliot* 15. See also Frye, "Antique Drum," *T. S. Eliot* 24.

154. Frye, *T. S. Eliot* 16. See also Frye, "Antique Drum," *T. S. Eliot* 25.

with his preference for corporate worship, participation in the Church, and concern for the sacraments, dogma, revelation, contemplative orders, Incarnation, and Original Sin. These notions come up again, both in Eliot and in criticism about Eliot, such that they clearly undergird Eliot's Anglo-Catholic faith tradition:

Then came the Civil War, the Puritan emigrations, including the Eliots from East Coker, the closing of the theatres, the overthrow of everything catholic in the Church of England from the Little Gidding community to Archbishop Laud, and the poetry of Milton. With all this the tradition of English culture fell to pieces, and the modern world was born. For anyone concerned to oppose the tendencies of that world, "the Civil War is not ended," as Eliot was still insisting as late as 1947.<sup>155</sup>

This view certainly helps clarify Eliot's attitudes when he begins writing his later social criticism. Frye notes that Eliot defends Pound and Joyce insofar as they "reflect the influence of Latin and Catholic civilisation" over and against the more "schismatic" "Romantic, Protestant and liberal tendencies in the English tradition."<sup>156</sup> According to Frye, Eliot's religious orientation is no small one, based on faith and worship life, but a larger one based on larger traditions within the Church and influencing culture. Frye concludes his essay by saying that Eliot's social critical works and his poetry have the same undergirding of thinking and viewpoint, enabling the two to inform each other.

It is hoped that in the discussion of this chapter, I have not drawn too much of a caricature of either the Anglo-Catholic or the Protestant traditions. Chapter two clarified Anglo-Catholicism and its themes and values. In presenting this position over and against Protestantism, Puritanism, and/or Unitarianism, the design was certainly not to have represented these traditions unfairly or to have implied too much similarity among them. The intent was to carry the major elements of Anglo-Catholicism through Eliot's prose by way of demonstrating his commitment to Anglo-Catholic themes and values as he left behind his Protestant, Puritan, and especially Unitarian roots. The fact is, as noted above, that as one grows in one's faith, one develops other areas of concern as ways to express that faith. Simultaneous to Eliot's own personal spiritual develop-

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155. Frye, *T. S. Eliot* 19-20. See also Frye, "Antique Drum," *T. S. Eliot* 27.

156. Frye, *T. S. Eliot* 22. See also Frye, "Antique Drum," *T. S. Eliot* 29.

ment, as also noted in chapter two, was the Church's movement toward greater ecumenism and greater social efforts. Both of these help to obscure, somewhat, the specifics of Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism in the course of analyzing his prose. Thus, my focus has been more on the prose just before, during, and just after his formal conversion, where the issues are more clear and easily noticed. The reason for this is two-fold: that Eliot's interests in the specifics of Anglo-Catholicism would be more sharply defined at this point in his spiritual journey, and that the ecumenism and social action of later in the century was not yet in full swing. Thus, there was no design to give less attention to Eliot's later, major, and longer works of religious and social criticism; it is simply that the issues of Anglo-Catholicism we were tracing begin to dissipate in those later works and Eliot takes a decided shift to more socially oriented comment. Naturally, the high church is involved in and cares about such social concerns, but less as Anglo-Catholics and more as Christians.

At this point, having presented the history of the Anglican Church, the high-church movement, the Oxford Movement, and Anglo-Catholicism, and then having clarified those issues in Eliot's own thinking and prose stated most clearly and concisely, the final two chapters turn to Eliot's creative writing — his poetry and drama. First, chapter four will look at *The Waste Land* — at Eliot's developing spirituality as it comes through in *The Waste Land*. Then, chapter five will present some of Eliot's other poetry with religious themes, looking more closely at post-conversion poems like "Journey of the Magi" and *Ash Wednesday*. Much of that chapter will be devoted to *Four Quartets* and to *Murder in the Cathedral*, as the poetic production of a mature Christian.

Certainly, all the critics who have commented on Eliot's faith perspective have not overemphasized the issue, as critics like Shusterman, mentioned above, have suggested. While it might be admitted that the matter could easily become overemphasized, the profound impact that Eliot's faith had on him and on his writing cannot be overlooked. To discuss it as Smidt has done goes far towards a fuller explication of Eliot's thought and writing. I am simply drawing out the more specifically conservative, Anglo-Catholic religious aspect, to be more precise and

specific. After all, Lyndall Gordon has discussed Eliot's religious orientation by way of giving us a clearer picture of Eliot for her biography, and she has focused on his Anglo-Catholicism and even touched on the Oxford Movement as an influence. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, those who are part of the high-church movement, especially considering the history of the development of the Church in England, tend to feel a strong commitment to their high-church heritage. They are not content simply to be seen as Christian, and even less to be seen in a Pietistic or generic Protestant sense — that flies in the face of a proper and precise religious identity for them. This is the more true for Eliot, given his American Puritan, Protestant, and Unitarian roots. Thus, this chapter has provided a clearer picture of Eliot as he speaks more philosophically through his prose. So now I turn to those creative works, and demonstrate that the same spiritual concerns, development, and high-church orientation that I have been discussing in these opening chapters also inform and direct the Eliot's poetry and drama.