CHAPTER - I

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF T.S. ELIOT AND HIS WORK WITH A SPECIAL STRESS ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE

T.S. ELIOT'S LIFE AND PURITAN BACKGROUND.

It was in 1928 that T.S. Eliot declared that he was a Royalist in Politics an Anglo-Catholic in religion and a classicist in literature. While his political position is a matter of dispute and doubt, his classicist-stand received a great-critical attention of innumerable critics, and his claim of religious credentials was more largely overlooked than attended to in a considerable manner. Referring to his decleration of political and religious positions, Cleanth Brooks and R. Pen Warren have to say that it "elicited most of the cat-calls and solemn protests." It is quite natural that the modern age cannot tolerate religious pedantry and political affinity to any of the dead and bygone systems. These are the favourable days for democracies, and Mr. Eliot himself mistook his intellectualist-anti-democratic stance to a sign of royalist-devotion. Even a mere peripheral reading of his poetry and criticism brings forth the point that he is incapable of hero-worship which is a great positive feature of royalism. His conversion to Anglo-Catholicism is a foregone conclusion that he maintained in himself a great love towards religious order. It could not have been possible for him to convert himself without possible self evidencing reasons for the sin and conversion. These reasons by and large are to be found in his faith in religions in general and Christianity in particular. In a way
Christianity persuades people to convert themselves in a faithful lot, and Anglo-Catholicism for its obvious affinity with the Roman Catholicism maintains in itself all the possible venues of attraction for conversion. An intellectual, like T.S. Eliot too, could be attracted to this cult. The reasons for the same can be traced in his upbringing as well as his associations with The Holy Bible itself. While his mother played a major role in making him a believer in religious sanctity, his governess implanted in him a seed of great love towards the rituals as yet he was child.

Our most outstanding poet and most influential literary critic, the legendary figure and "the literary champion of his age," T.S. Eliot was born on September 26, 1888 in St. Louis, in the state of Missouri, the United State of America. He was the seventh and youngest child of Henry Ware Eliot and Charlotte Chauncy Stearns. Both his parents were descendants of New England families of the early settlements. The Eliot-Family is of Devonshire origin and goes back in America to Andrew Eliot (1627-1704) who immigrating in middle life from East Coker, Somerset, was enrolled as "a member of the first church of Beverly, Massachusetts, in 1670." Apparently a cordwainer by trade, he was frequently chosen a Selectman, and finally as a town-clerk. Andrew Eliot's descendants were mainly merchants of Boston, "though the Rev. Andrew Eliot, D.D. (1718-78), a strong Congregationalist and enemy of Episcopalianism, was minister of North Church, and elected President of Harvard, but declined to leave his congregation." T.S. Eliot's grandfather, the Rev. William Greenleaf
Eliot, D.D. (1811-87), went to St. Louis directly after his graduation Harvard Divinity School in 1834, and established the first Unitarian Church in the city and later he founded the Washington University "(which would have been called the Eliot University except for his objection) and became its Chancellor in 1872." He was a man of great activity in public service. He was firm and balanced opponent of slavery and was instrumental in keeping Missouri in the union. "He wove the moral atmosphere of his own family, but also restored life to the religious as well as the educational atmosphere of St. Louis." He laboured very much to establish the "Unitarian Church of Messiah." He abhorred slavery, and foresew its finish, if Missouri could be kept in the Union." He believed that "God was with him." He was a "teetotaller, non-smoker and a very powerful advocate of" prohibition of liquor, not only in Missouri, but throughout the United States." He had a very high sense of duty. Eliot's grandfather had died the year before T.S. Eliot was born, but his influences on Tom was "hereditary". He left behind extensive writings, which were mostly of an ethical and philanthropic nature. Among his writings was a sermon on "Suffering Considered as Discipline".

The Rev. Andrew Eliot's two sons of his four sons entered the ministry, the youngest became the a lawyer. His second son, Henry Ware Eliot (1841-1919), who was named after one of the foremost figures in New England Unitarianism, graduated from Washington University in 1863 and became president. Henry Eliot married
Charlottee Chauncy Stearns (1843-1930) in 1868, the daughter of a commission merchant and trader of Boston and descendant of Issac Stearns, one of the original settlers of the Bay Colony. Issac Stearns had come out with John Winthrop in 1630. Charlotte Chauncy Stearns had "strict standards of conduct." She maintained a very high moral atmosphere in her home and did not permit any one either to drink or to smoke. She worked for the emancipation of woman in St. Louis, and displayed her keen interest in seeking equal rights to her. She was a kind hearted woman and felt extremely cheerful in helping the poor and the needy. Mrs. Charlotte Eliot was deeply interested in verse and was writing and transcribing poetry years before her marriage, at the age of twenty-five, to Henry Eliot. Raising four daughters and two sons, devoting herself to St. Louis community affairs, she still managed to turn out a great amount of verse, much of which "found its way into print in religious journals like the Christian Register or The Unitarian." All her life she wrote poems. Poetry for Charlotte Eliot was a means of exploring and celebrating religious faith. Her poems deal mostly with salvationist themes, rejoicing in Christ's power to heal and redeem. She returns again and again to the "death-and-resurrection aspect of the Christian myth." This is the theme which her youngest son, Thomas Stearns Eliot, continued. Charlotte Eliot was "a woman of strong literary interests, expressing her poetry devotion to the life of the spirit." She was "objective and perceptive enough to recognize early on that he youngest child. Tom was by far the better
.poet; one day she quietly took the boy aside and told him so."19

Among her several contributions to the literature was Savonarola (1926)
her published work also comprised a full-length biography of her
father-in-law, William Greenleaf.

William Greenleaf Eliot's eldest son, Thomas Lamb Eliot, became a
"crusading Unitarian minister, moving still farther west to Portland.
Oregon, Henry Ware Eliot, the second son, disappointed his father by
becoming a very successful brickmaker."20 "He had enough of church
and Sunday school obligations" in home. Another son, Edward Cranch
Eliot, became a successful lawyer, again in St. Louis."22

It is clearly stated that T.S. Eliot's forebears were distinguished
not only for practical genius and commercial enterprise but
scholarship and religious earnestness also. They were honoured among
the most outstanding leaders of that Puritan, earnestly intellectual
and highly exclusive society of Boston which survived as "the
Aristocracy of America untill recent time."23 They were deeply
rooted in the New England Tradition and in the church, and wielded
considerable influence on "the secular as well as the divine affairs
of Boston."24

Eliot's own character was profoundly influenced by the religious and
intellectual atmosphere of his domestic environment. In his critical
essay, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, what Eliot wrote, "The
primary channel of transmission of culture in the family no man
Wholly escapes from the kind, or wholly surpasses the degree, of culture which he acquired from his early environment, applies to himself. There is a great deal in his life which he acquired from his early environment.

Though William Greenleaf Eliot had died in the year before his grandson, was born, he remained a potent influence in his life. "Thomas Stearns Eliot grew up in his grand-father's shadow." T.S. Eliot's mother revered her father-in-law and brought up her children to observe two of his laws in particulars, those of self-sacrifice and public service. He remained a potent influence in all his children's and his grandchildren's lives. "Growing in the poets family was a regorous process." Once Thomas Stearns Eliot told the audience in 1953 at St. Louis:

I never knew my grandfather: he died a year before my birth. But I was brought up to be very much aware of him: so much so, that as a child I thought of him as still the head of the family - a ruler for whom in absentia my grandmother stood as vicegerent. The standard of conduct was that which my grandfather had set; our moral judgements, our decisions between duty and self-indulgence, were taken as if, like Moses, he had brought down the tables of the law, any deviation from which would be sinful. Not the least of these laws, which included injunctions still more than prohibitions, was the law of public Service... (which) operated especially in three areas: the Church, the city, and the University. The Church meant, for us, the Unitarian Church of Messiah, then situated in Locust Street, a few blocks west of my father's house and my grandmother's house; the city was St. Louis--the utmost outskirts of which touched on Forest Park, terminus of the
Olive Street streetcars, and to me, as a child, the beginning of the Wild West; the University was Washington University, then housed in a modest building in lower Washington Avenue. These were the symbols of religion, the Community and Education: and I think it is a very good beginning for any child, to be brought up to reverence such institutions, and to be taught that personal and selfish aims should be subordinated to the general good which they represent.  

T.S. Eliot acknowledged that his early training in self-denial left him permanently scarred by an inability to enjoy even harmless pleasures. Even as a boy, he had a sense of mission. His mother also left a potent mark of Victorian heritage. She thought of her poetry and religion together. "Her bed faced a mantelpiece draped with a velvet cloth on which rested a painting of the Madonna and child, and on her wall there hung an engraving of Theodosius and St. Ambrose. She did not think much of conventional sports and games." T.S. Eliot was the last of seven children and had few playmates and spent most of his time reading. He had a congenital double hernia and his mother was afraid it would rupture, so forbade football and strenuous sports. Mrs. Charlotte was disappointed that her poems had gone almost unrecognized, but she took comfort from her youngest son T.S. Eliot's literary promise. It seems his mother regarded him as "special from the very start." But his father did not share this feeling. Even in his will, Henry Ware Eliot registered disapproval of his son's career, his son's marriage, his son's choice of residence. Eliot as a boy was also a "keen bird-watcher."
Appropriately, T.S. Eliot was a good looking boy, whose face beamed with intelligence. His Harvard friend Conrad Aiken remembered him as fabulously beautiful and sibylline, with a mind that was best of all. He read so much more and so much more widely than other boys of his age that he could (and did) correct their misquotations, and tell them what they meant to say. But he was neither "an aesthete nor a bookish prig; he was a conservative conformist. He was careful to dress correctly, according to the canons of his social class, and to obey the conservative conceptions of his school and college. Eliot was alone, last child of elderly parents, and he was alone too during his student year in Paris. Eliot spent most of his childhood and youth in St. Louis. Around 1890, St. Louis had some fewer than half a million inhabitants, but during his youth it became one of the industrial centres of the Middle West. Young Eliot was exposed to the urban industrialisation and provincialism as well as religious tradition. His mother was attracted towards church enthusiasm, reformist ideas, and fanaticism. The atmosphere of house was religiously strict, despite the moderating forces of Unitarianism. Besides, there was the influence of an Irish governess of whom T.S. Eliot was quite fond in his youth; it was she who first brought him into close contact with Catholicism, and took him to Catholic mass.

At Smith Academy in St. Louis, Eliot was a student from 1898 until 1905. He studied Latin, and Greek, French and German, ancient and modern history, and modern history, and mathematics and English
which was taught as "rhetoric." He was an ardent reader and his reading was extensive. In his final year had studied Hill's Principles of Rhetoric, Othellow, The Golder Treasury, Milton, Macauley, Addison, Burke's Conciliation with America, Vergil's Aeneid Book III and IV, Ovid, Cicero, Homer's Iliad, Racine's Andromaque and Horace, Hugo's Les Miserables, Molièr's Le Misanthrope, La Fountaine's Fables, and physics and chemistry. Byron impressed him considerably; he wrote an epic poem in Baron's manner. First attempts in poetry were printed in The Smith Academy Record. In 1905 and 1906 he enrolled in Milton Academy. In 1906 he enrolled in Harvard University. In his first year at Harvard, Eliot studied German Grammer, Constitutional Government, Greek Literature, Medieval History and English History. He was more intensely exposed to American literary tradition. In the next two years of his Bachelor's course he studied French Literature, Ancient Philosophy, Modern Philosophy and Comparative Literature and others. Hardworking and brilliant, he finished his undergraduate work in three years and graduated himself in 1909. In 1908 Eliot read Arthur Symon's The Symbolist Movement in Literature and it was one of those books that determined his career. It directed his attention to Laforgue and Rimbaud, Verlaine and Corbiere. The French symbolists became his prototypes. Most important reading at this stage was of Baudelaire and Dante. In Baudelaire he found a poet of city, Colourful, pungent and sensous; and one, moreover, who took evil and despair as his central subject. " In Dante he was struck... by the extra-ordinary ease, vividity and clarity of language, with a particular power of
visual imagery, and also by the way in which this acute perception was
ordered into a total vision." 36 He also studied John Donne.

From 1909 until 1910 he studied philosophy at the Harvard Graduate
School and received his Master of Arts degree. At Harvard, he met,
among others, George Santayana, and Irving Babbitt, most prominent
among Romantists and literary historians; both influenced him
profoundly. He attended the lectures of George Santayana and Irving
Babbitt. He went to France. Here at the Sorbonne in Paris, from
1910 until 1911, he studied philosophy and French Literature. After
returning to America, he continued the study of Philosophy at
Harvard. He also studied Sanskrit. In the year 1913 to 1914 he was
appointed as an assistant in Philosophy at Harvard. He was
specially interested in the philosophy of F.H. Bradley and in the
phenomenologists-Meinong and Husserl. Aristotle also belonged to the
field of his research. The culmination of Eliot's Philosophical
studies was "his doctoral dissertation, 'knowledge and Experience in
the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley' which he prepared and wrote between
1913 and 1916." 37

In 1914 the outbreak of the First World War disrupted his plan. He
arrived in Britain with a travelling Fellowship from Harvard. On
September 22, 1914, he met Ezra Pound in London. Eliot went to Oxford
and continued his study at Merton College until 1915. At Pound's
instigation, Harriet Monroe published 'Prufrock' in Poetry. And
slowly his poetic career began to be recognized as his poems were
published time to time. Meanwhile on June 26, 1915, Eliot married Vivien Haigh-Wood, daughter of a painter and landowner. She was few months older than Eliot. When they met, they both were twenty six. "She was at the time a governess in a Cambridge family," but was interested in the arts. Eliot married so quickly and so abruptly that there was no time to inform his other family members. They stayed for a while with Bertrand Russell, who introduced them to the Bloomsbury Group.

Through Ezra Pound, Eliot made acquaintance with a large number of leading and important literary figure of the time. They included Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf and his wife, Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, Ford Madox, W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, and others. 1915-1916 T.S. Eliot taught in a school and began to review for the New Statesman. Though he had finished his Harvard thesis on F.H. Bradley successfully, he decided not to return to USA, and began to work as a part-time extra-mural lecturer for London University. In March, 1917, he joined Lloyds Bank (Colonial and Foreign Department). From June, 1917, he also began to work as an assistant editor of Marriet Shaw Weaver's Egoist. The same year the USA entered the war. Eliot tried to join the US forces in 1918, but he could not succeed because the war ended in November. In 1919, his father Henery Ware Eliot died in January. He by this time began to write for Middleton Murry's Athenaeum and for Times Literary Supplement. It was in 1920 he met J.A. Richards, and in France James Joyce. In 1921, due to overwork, he fell sick and was ill with a stressed marriage. The specialist advised him to put away for three
months. He went to Lausanne for psycho-therapy under Dr. Roger Vittoz.

In September, 1925, Eliot left Lloyds Bank to become a director of Faber and Gwyer (Later Faber and Faber) which published his poems (1909-1925).

In 1926, Eliot gave the Clark Lecture at Cambridge University. He began a regular training to enter the Church of England, on June 29, 1927, Eliot was secretly confirmed in the Church of England. In November he became a British citizen. In 1929, he lost his beloved mother, Charlotte Eliot, who had been a great motivation and encouragement to him in his literary career. On his return from USA in June, Eliot separated from his wife, Vivien, who had been suffering with a sort of incurable mental illness; and he settled in Kensington in the house of the vicar of St. Stephen's Church, Father Cheetham. In 1934 he was appointed as a Church Warden at St. Stephen's and he continued to work as warden till 1959. He began to write religious poems and plays.

In January, 1939, T.S. Eliot discontinued The Criterion. In September, 1939, the second World War began, and Eliot became an Air Raid Warden in Kensington. In June, 1940, he delivered the first Yeats Memorial Lecture in Dublin, and joined the editorial board of Christian News Letter. The Blitz on London began in September. Next month Eliot moved to Shamley Green, in Surrey, for the duration of war. 1945, the war ended. In 1946, Eliot moved to share a flat with John Hayward in Carlyle Mansions, Chelsea Embankment. From now on
he travelled much increasingly to USA and Europe. In 1947, Viven Eliot died in the mental hospital. In 1948, Eliot was awarded 'Order of Merit' in January, and in November, the same year, Noble Prize for literature, in 1950. After the success of his play The Cocktail Party at the Edinburgh Festival in London, Eliot appeared on the cover of Time magazine. In 1956, he lectured on The Frontiers of Criticism to 14000 people in a baseball stadium at the University of Minnesota. In January, 1957, he married his 30 years-old secretary, Valerie Fletcher. He died on January 4, 1965, and was buried in the churchyard at East Coker.

T.S. ELIOT'S CONVERSION AND HIS ANGLO CATHOLICISM

T.S. Eliot's conversion to Catholicism was a cause of "surprise and even scandal to many; of his contemporaries" because he in his early life was of opinion that poetry's power to console could and should exist in complete separation from any set of particular beliefs about the world. Richards observed that "Eliot's great virtue was that he by effecting a complete separation between his poetry and all beliefs, and this without any weakening of the poetry, has realised what might otherwise have remained largely a speculative possibility." It was a view widely held in the twenties, when to Eliot a poetry seemed most remarkable for its "cynicism and even nihilism." But contrary to his immature ideology, Eliot, the descendant of Puritans who had left England to gain religious freedom, had returned into the lap of the old church. He converted to the Anglican-High-Church, which has traditionally drawn members of the aristocracy and the academic circles.
When Eliot visited Rome in 1926 he suddenly fell on his knees before Michelangelo's *Pieta* to the surprise of his brother and sister-in-law who were with him. His entry into the Church of England the following years astonished many friends and readers, "but for Eliot there was no dramatic change," only an 'expansion or development of interests.' Eliot did not turn from atheism to belief nor from spiritual self-reliance to the "support of a church." Eliot in his youth had trusted the inner light, but came to perceive the danger of untempered individualism. In his early poetry he repeatedly gives assent to an impulse to withdraw from the world, but at the age of thirty-eight he found the way back through "the Church of England whose latitudes and tolerance for ordinary sinners provided a corrective to the fanatic edge of his temper." For the Young Eliot the highest good depended on "an imaginative escape from a corrupt civilization into that haven of silence he first experienced as a student in 1910." Eliot, being the last child of elderly parents, was alone and was also during his student-year in Paris in 1910-11. He was alone in marriage, longing to escape the emotional needs, tears, and demands of his wife. The interior solitude, then, was there from the start, but it took a new and deliberate shape from two events in middle age: Eliot's conversion at the age of 38, and his separation from his wife at the age of 44. Eliot's attraction to the lofty reaches of religious life went back to childhood, and the model of the pilgrim in his mother's poems. Afterwards, as a graduate at Harvard, he read about the ordeals of the saints and came to the idea of lifetime burning in every moment.
It occurred to him that "sainthood might be the only valid measure of attainment, but he perceived, too, the likelihood of self-delusion and personal unfitness, and this led him for a decade to discount this course of action, and direct his formidable gifts to worldly success," says Lyndall Gordon. He also thinks that "conversion meant return to the earlier, more overwhelming challenge. He was not simply joining the Church, but declaring himself ready to begin to close the gap between human frailty and perfection." There was "no question of superficiality about Eliot's submission to the Church's authority. He was a thoroughly converted man," Father Hillier, T.S. Eliot's confessor, said about him and stressed his unmistakable humility.

Eliot first visited an Anglican Chapel at Merton College in 1914. He began to frequently visit "Anglican Churches in the city of London, some time between 1917 and 1921, in search of a quiet spot to think during his lunch hours." At first he enjoyed the high Anglo-Catholic St. Magnus the Martyr aesthetically for its splendour; later he appreciated its 'utility when he came there as a sinner.' He was struck, once by "the sight of a number of people on their knees, a posture he had never seen before," because his family was not accustomed to kneel. Once his aunt, Mrs. Charles W. Eliot, wrote censortously to a friend who had joined the Episcopalian Church, 'Do you kneel down in Church and call yourself a miserable sinner? Neither I nor my family will ever do that!' But T.S.Eliot admired this gesture of abasement and worship. Some time during the early
1920s he began to think of the Church "not simply as a place where he could find, now and then, some private consolation, but as a way to a new life." T.S. Eliot craved a stronger, more dogmatic theological structure than was to be found in his purely ethical background. In about 1923 or 1924, T.S. Eliot scribbled on the back of an envelope:

"There are only 2 things—Puritanism and Catholicism. You are one or the other. You either believe in the reality of sin or you don't—that is the important moral distinction— not whether you are good or bad. Puritanism does not believe in sin; it merely believes that certain things must not be done. Idea of Christian society, what Puritanism had lost, is the experience of broken relationship with God which may not be connected with any breach in human relationships. Morality is a means not an end." 56

It is said that Eliot toyed with the notion of becoming a Roman Catholic during his undergraduate, or possibly, graduate days at Harvard. He is said to have obtained a catalogue of Catholic books on religion and philosophy. In his catalogue T.S. Eliot checked numerous titles. He was attracted towards it because of the Catholic concern about evil—a concern in the marked contrast with that of the Unitarianism. He read again and again Paul's Letter to the Romans. Saint Paul talks of the human depravity. Pauline sensibility became the fountainhead of revelation about the universality of sin. He was broken in pieces. So he turned to theology. It was very exciting subject for him. He pretty well said that "theology is the one most exciting and adventurous subject left for a jaded mind." 57 Failure of
his marriage had tormented him. He was worn out. He was searching through the nightmare for authenticity, permanence, and lasting love, which he could have only through the possession of spiritual values. T.S. Eliot contemplated his conversion to Christianity in the face of acute personal problems caused by the emotional separation between himself and his neurotic wife. The problem was Eliot's moral obligation to secure the future of a wife whose health was now "a thousand times worse than when he had married her." 58 By 1925 Eliot was finally convinced that his marriage was doomed. In ten years nothing had really changed—"her condition and their relations had only deteriorated." 59 He longed for comfort and only in religion he was soothed. In a despairing cable and letter to Quinn on April 25 and 26, 1925 Eliot said that "his affairs were in complete chaos." 60 "Eliot's marital and religious crises were inextricably mixed." 61 He could only escape her morally, "only by embracing the ascetic way of the Catholic mystics." 62

William Force Stead drew Eliot's attention to the writings of seventeen century Anglicans, in particular those of the Bishop of Winchester, Lancelot Andrews. "He saturated himself in Andrews's prose." 63 Eliot regretted that "cultural impoverishment which he felt resulted from the reformation." 64 Of all the reformed churches the Church of England retained the closest connection, informal creed and ritual, with the ancient Roman Church. For Anglo-Catholics the pulpit was less significant than the sacraments. Faith centered on the altar and the confessional which had the advantage of being constant, free
from the local limitations of individual limitations. "Eliot was
drawn to the Anglican Church through his historical imagination,
associating its creation with the religion of Elizabeth rather than
with that of Henry VIII," writes Lyndall Gordon. Though he was
tempted to return to the Puritan strength of his family-heritage, a
source of spiritual discipline, but he did not hold the Puritanism
because the Puritans did not believe in the doctrine of Original Sin.
Catholic dogma considers Adam and Eve as the actual ancestors of
mankind, who hereditarily transmitted their original sin to all
later generations. For Puritans the congregational church was simply
a group of individuals joined together by voluntary agreement for
worship-purpose. T.S. Eliot desired for an organic fellowship and
love that was possible in the Holy Catholic Church. "He now aspired
to only keep his soul alive by regular prayer..."66 "Under the
influence of Bishop Andrews and St. John of the Cross he moved away
from his mother's revelatory moment of 'truth' towards more moderate
goals of 'prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.'67 In
1926 he began to attend regularly at early morning communion.

On November 13, 1926 Eliot asked to his friend, William Force Stead---
an Anglican clergyman, if he might be confirmed in the Church of
England. Since he hated dramatic public conversions, he wished for
absolute secrecy. As a Unitarian, Eliot had never been baptized in
the name of the Trinity, so William Force Stead arranged for his
baptism in his own village of Finsworth, in the Cotswolds. On June 29,
1927, the door of Finstock Church were firmly locked and a guard was posted in the vestry while T.S. Eliot stood at the baptismal font, and Stead poured "the waters of regeneration over Eliot's head." At his baptism the priest asked him, "Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desire of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou will not follow, nor be led by them?" And he answered, "I renounce them all." Verse Somerset, a historian, and B.H. Streeter, a theologian of Queen's College, Oxford, were Eliot's godfathers. Next morning Eliot was taken to the Bishop of Oxford, Thomas Banks Strong, at Cuddesdon. In his private chapel the Bishop laid his hands on Eliot's head and said, "Defend, O Lord, this thy servants with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue to be thine forever." Later after nine months, probably in March, 1928, he made the first confession after finding a spiritual director in Father Underhill. Eliot confessed his great relief afterwards saying, "the recognition of the reality of Sin is a New life." "All his adult life he and been haunted by a sense of guilt—most frequently, judging by his poems, sexual guilt and withdrawal itself—which found relief," writes Lyndall Gordon. Eliot wrote to William Force Stead on 15 March, 1928, of his extraordinary sense of surrender and gain, as if he had finally "crossed a very wide, deep river, never to return." So in religion he became "a Catholic and an apologist for Catholicism, but he is not a Roman Catholic." In a letter dated December, 6, 1932, to Sister Mary James Power, T.S. Eliot Wrote:
Perhaps the simplest account I can give is to say that I was brought up as a Unitarian of the New England variety; that for many years I was without any definite religious faith, or without any at all; that in 1927 I was baptized and confirmed into the Church of England; and I am associated with what is called the Catholic movement in that Church, as represented by Viscount Halifax and the English Church Union. I accordingly believe in the Creeds, the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, the sacrament of Penance, etc. 75

In 1928, he declared his literary, political and religious beliefs to be "classist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-catholic in religion." 76 By royalism Eliot did not mean "George V or any living ruler but an ideal similar to Sir Thomas Eloyot's, a hope that the majesty, propriety, and responsibility of an ideal ruler would reform people from above." 77 He believed that "Church and king should work together." 78 Later he said that "King had not merely a civil but a religious obligation toward his people." 79 As Lyndall Gordon writes, "T.S. Eliot invoked classicism to uphold a Christian education." 79 Eliot wrote:

If Christianity is not to survive, I shall not mind if the texts of the Latin and Greek languages become more obscure and forgotten than those of the languages of the Etruscans. And the only hope that I can see for the study of Latin and Greek, in their proper place and for the right reasons, lies in the revival and expansion of the monastic teaching orders. 80

In the early Church history, monastic schools were the centers for classical studies and scholarship. More depth and apologetical understanding of Christianity were the direct outcomes of the monastic schools.
Eliot's attachment to Anglicanism had this dual aspect. He saw "means of support and self-correction within the English traditions; at the same time he brought something of himself to the Anglican Church, a spirit more vehement, more dogmatic and zealous." Eliot's temperament craved an exacting moral code. "Chastity, austerity, humility, and sanctity," he said, "he must have—or perish!" To express this ideal of virtue Eliot fastened on an English institution. Eliot joined a church which, for him retained the face of the Elizabethan Establishment, a national church reinforced by secular power. Beside support for his private life, he found strength also in a sense of community and tradition. Eliot's attachment to Anglicanism may be justified from an ideological as well as a personal angle. "He discarded popular ideologies of social change—extremist politics and liberal optimism—as solution to cultural despair, and offered as an alternative the idea of a community knit together by religious discipline." Eliot saw in the English Church "decency, common sense, and capacity for compromise that, he felt, might provide a proper corrective to the faddist modern mind... Eliot thought he found a responsible and rational answer in the via media of Elizabethan Anglicanism and prized its talent for compromise, its moderation and flexibility." In Christianity he found an appropriate solution for his personal and theological problem. Alluding to his conversion he said:

In my own case, I believe that one of the reasons was that the Christian scheme seemed to me the only one that would work. I hasten to
add that this is not a reason for believing; it is a tenable hypothesis to maintain that there is no scheme which will work. That was simply the removal of any reason for believing in anything else, the erasure of a prejudice, the arrival at the scepticism which is the preface of conversion. Among other things, the Christian scheme seemed the only possible scheme which found a place for the values which I must maintain or perish...the belief, for instance, a holy living and holy dying, in sanctity, chastity, humility, austerity.

In 1931, Eliot wrote, "I am sure in my own mind that I have not adopted my faith in order to defend my views on conduct, but have modified my views of conduct to conform with what seems to me the implications of my beliefs." As a converted Christian he wrote to More on June 2, 1930:

To me, religion has brought at least the perception of something above morals, and therefore extremely terrifying; it has brought me not happiness, but the sense of something above happiness and therefore more terrifying than ordinary pain and misery; the very dark night and the desert. To me, the phrase "to be damned for the glory of God" is sense and not paradox; I had far rather walk as I do, in daily terror of eternity, than feel that this was only a children's game in which all the contestants would get equally worthless prizes in the end...And I do not know whether this is to be labelled 'Classicism' or 'Romanticism'; I only think that I have hold of the tip of the tail of something quite real, more real than morals, or than sweetness and light and culture.

For T.S. Eliot faith hold out not only the comforting promise of salvation but also the terrible possibility of damnation. About the
general misunderstanding of the nature of his conversion he wrote on August 3, 1929:

Most critics appear to think that my Catholicism is merely an escape or an evasion, certainly a defeat. I acknowledge the difficulty of a positive Christianity nowadays and I can only say that the dangers pointed out, and my own weaknesses have been apparent to me long before my critics noticed them. But it is rather trying to be supposed to have settled oneself in any easy chair, when one has just begun a long journey afoot.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY BIBLE

Modern civilization is greatly indebted to The Holy Bible. The foundation of modern Western culture evolved primarily from two sources - Athens and Jerusalem. Western culture particularly the English speaking world is more indebted to the Hebrew influence than to the Greek. Such Greeks as Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle molded the intellectual and moral attitude of the English speaking world and their influence is generally acknowledged and highly estimated. But a more powerful influence has been exerted by the Hebrews such as Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Paul and Jesus Christ. This influence pervades every level of life. What one readily sees in the religious and moral attitude of the Western World does bear witness for it. But it does not stop there. It can be safely said that no facet of the English speaking Western-lives remains untouched by the Hebraic vision, but its influence is most
clearly seen in the great volumes of Western Literature. For over one thousand years, the Holy Bible, the book of the books, has influenced the greatest writers. Like fragrance of roses its influence is present in the most of the great literary masterpieces of English Literature. It was not merely the phrases of The Holy Bible became a part of the language of the common men but that the very thoughts of the Holy Bible became the 'thought of the ordinary Englishman' to the extent that the cultural heritage of a whole nation was affected. In England the first Anglo-Saxon singer-writer, Caedmon sang the stories of The Bible in his verses. The total effect of The Holy Bible, the divinely inspired Scripture, upon the thousands of writers to follow Caedmon is simply incalculable.

The influence of the Book of the books upon the American Literature, although not as pervasive, is equally important. From the beginning of the national literature writers such as Michael Wigglesworth, Edward Taylor, and Jonathan Edward drew upon the Holy Bible not only for subject matter but for style as well. When one reads the giants of American Literature, if he wishes to understand them, he must bring with him a deep fund of Biblical knowledge. There is undeniable truth in the statement that:

The authorised version of the Bible possesses a numinous quality impossible to reproduce by means of modern prose, and has remained, age after age, a foundation stone of English Literature.
For a literary personalities The Bible may be a foundation stone of English Literature as a literary book, but for a literary man like T.S. Eliot the Holy Bible means more than an ordinary literary collection. For him the Holy Bible has influenced the literature of English language through out the centuries not as a literary book but as the word of God. He wrote with a sense of strong conviction in his essay on Religion and Literature that "...I could fulminate against the men of letters who have gone into ecstasies over the Bible as literature the Bible as the noblest monument of English prose'. Those who talk of the Bible as a 'monument of English prose' are merely admiring it as a monument over the grave of Christianity," say T.S. Eliot emphatically; and he adds that "the Bible has had a literary influence upon English literature not because it has been considered as literature, but because it has been considered as the report of the Word of God. And the fact that men of letters now discuss it as 'Literature' probably indicates the end of its literary influence."  

Taking into consideration the above cited statements of T.S. Eliot it can be stated that T.S. Eliot's person and work have been influenced by the Holy Bible not as a literary work of language of Baudelaire, Bradley's philosophy or Symon's *The Symbolist movement in Literature* did. Him and his work The Bible has influenced as the report of the Word of God. He has saturated himself and his work with the essence and the odour of the Bible. Flavour of the Bible is very dominant in
his thought and work. His theological and social as well as the poetical ideology is based on the Bible. His belief in hell, Original Sin is Biblically very sound. His religious attitude is Biblical. He looked at the dramatic speech of the prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel. In his own Bible he marked God's call to Isaiah, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." On first December, 1932, in Kings Chapel, Boston he quoted from Psalm 130:

I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.
My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning
I say more than they that watch for the morning.

Eliot was vividly interested in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. He found that in Pauline Epistle the book most quoted is Isaiah. The reproach which the sins of the Jewish people in Paul's own time brought on God is described in words from the second part of Isaiah. Paul sets himself to prove from the Old Testament the universality of sin, the necessity of faith, the sovereignty of God, the belief and rejection of the Jews, the call and faith of the Gentiles.

For T.S. Eliot, this Pauline sensibility became the fountainhead of revelation. For him Original Sin was real and tremendous thing. In After Strange Gods (1934) Eliot wrote, "I doubt whether what I am saying can convey very much to any one for whom the doctrine of Original Sin is not a very real and tremendous thing."
He believed in hell and heaven. Lyndall Gordon gives account of a
telling controversy between Eliot and P.E. More on the cruelties of
hell, in which More, in friendly way, accused Eliot of Calvanism, and
Eliot, equally friendly, accused More of heresy. More had declared
that God did not make hell. This shocked Eliot; "to him hell was
giustizia, sapienza, amore, the words over the entrance to Dante's
inferno. More thought eternal damnation too cruel to be a divine
plan. "Is your God Santa Claus?" 95 Eliot demanded. He perceived
something above morals and human happiness and worse than ordinary
pain; it was the very dark night or desert. He spoke in June, 1930 as
though he had been or still was there." 96 Eliot's understanding of
hellish horror is basically biblical in spirit. He wrote that people
only stay in hell because they cannot change." 97 Change of heart is
the only way to escape from hellish terror and horror. Condemnation
is for the sinners who have not been forgiven and whose transgressions
are not washed away. As Saint Paul says of sinfulness of whole world
so does T.S. Eliot. St. Paul rightly writes in Romans:

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better?
Not at all; We have already made the charge
that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.
As it is written: 'There is no one righteous,
not even one; there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God. All have turned away,
they have together become worthless; there is
no one who does good; not even one. There
throats open graves; there tongues practice
deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips.
Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.
Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and
misery mark their ways, and the way of peace
they do not know. There is no fear of God
before their eyes. (Romans 3:9-18)
Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and this way death came to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

I know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I have to do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—these I keep on doing. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members what a wretched man I am! (Romans 7:14-24)

It seems Eliot's inner experience was very identical with that of Saint Paul. Eliot was brought up in a strict Unitarian home. He was craving for chastity, austerity, humility and sanctity, but he was, like Paul, a slave to sin. Hulme wrote:

In the light of these absolute values, man himself is judged to be essentially limited and imperfect. He is endowed with Original Sin. While he can occasionally accomplish acts which partake of perfection, he can never himself be perfect. Certain secondary results in regards to ordinary human action in society follow from this. A man is essentially bad, he can only accomplish anything by discipline—ethical and political...
Hulme has left remarkable influence on T.S. Eliot in forming his theological idea of sin which is biblically sound. Ernst Nolte wrote:

"If man were by nature good, he would in fact need neither authority, not punishment." 99 John Xiros Cooper comments:

The notion of Original Sin opposed in all its irreducibility, the meliorist optimism of liberal, utilitarian ethics which had displaced in the popular mind older Christian doctrines. The ethical meliorism had become the conventional account of the moral and spiritual life in the bourgeois era, even though it had been fiercely opposed by the tractarians in the nineteenth century. Original Sin became, then, the conservative vandal's handful of dust tossed in the gearbox of liberal theology. It is clear that Eliot came to accept this ancient Christian doctrine very early in his life. Eliot certainly believed but he lived in a time when hardly any one did. 100

As a sensitive Christian he saw not only the sin of men in general but of his own, too. The wages of sin is death and condemnation which frightened him most. He was agonized by the fear of Judgement. in 1919 Eliot said to Ezra Pound, "I am afraid of the life after death." 101(a) Confession and repentence of sin he needed to be saved. "Recognition of the reality of Sin is a New life," 101(b) said T.S. Eliot in his essay on Baudelaire.

He understood God's love as a believer, and took up a position opposite to the humanitarian attitude of his mother and father that "it is through love of one's kind that we approaches love of God." 102 He was convinced that 'God is love' but to say 'love is God'
he was reluctant. He said, "I don't think that ordinary human affections are capable of leading us to the love of God, but rather that the love of God is capable of informing, intensifying, and elevating our human affections, which otherwise have little to distinguish them from the 'natural' affection of animals." He looked and craved not for human love or affection but for divine love Agape. Religious themes in his poetry and dramas are biblical. It will not be an exaggeration if T.S. Eliot be praised as a biblical poet rather than a religious poet.

T.S. ELIOT AS A RELIGIOUS POET: CRITIC AND DRAMATIST:

No age can continue to live fruitfully without a sustaining sense of faith that it believes to be true, and universal in its implications. But if there are no collectively sanctioned religious values to which the writer can confidently refer and to which he can give his assent, then he is bound to feel lost. Says Charles I. Glicksberg:

for him (Writer's) very means of communication seem to be cut off. If his creative work is to be more than ephemeral, he must know inwardly the purpose of his life, and of all life, past, present, and future. Those writers who take their calling seriously must face the ultimate issues of existence; their spiritual; their spiritual dilemma is sharpened at present by the realisation that they must face these issues alone. 104

In the life of every thinking man comes a time when he must confront the ultimate meaning of his existence. This is what happened to
T.S. Eliot as a poet. He took his calling very seriously as a poet of his age. He faced his spiritual crisis and came victoriously. The first reaction of the prophet caught in the grip of this spiritual crisis is one of the dismay. He is overcome by the deep sense of unendurable anxiety. So "he set himself to rediscover modes of experience absent from the world into which he was born—the saintly life, the Christian community, religious fear and hope. If he could not quietly live the saintly life himself, if he could not speak directly to his contemporaries, he still hoped his study would benefit generations to come."105 in 'a world of time beyond me'.106 He wrote that God commanded him "to prophesy to the wind, to the wind only for only the wind will listen."107 Eliot wilfully adopted roles unlikely to charm the audience of his day, of pilgrim and preacher. "The models of manhood by which he measured himself—Augustine, Lazarus, Ezekiel, Elizah, Parzival—were heroes of other more religious age."108

The conversion of T.S. Eliot wrought changes in the manner and matter of his poetic practice undoubtedly very profoundly. None of his poetical works before 1928 were religious in tone and spirit. Prior to his religious experience he thought to keep his poetry separate from any form of belief. But as his religious attitudes developed, he related his belief to his own poetry. He denies any separation of poetry and belief can be made. In this regard he wrote:

I cannot see that poetry can ever be separated from something which I should call belief, and
to which I cannot see any reason for refusing to the name of belief, unless we are to reshuffle names together. It should hardly be needful to say that it will not inevitably be orthodox Christian belief, although that possibility can be entertained, since Christianity will probably continue to modify itself, as in the past into something that can be believed in (I do not mean conscious modifications like modernism, etc., which always have the opposite effect). 109

When I.A. Richards commented on T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* of its religious tone, he said:

As for the poem of my own in question, I cannot for the life of me see the "complete separation" from all belief-- or it is something no more complete than the separation of Christina Rossetti from Dante. A "Sense of desolation," etc., (if it is there) is not a separation from belief; it is nothing so pleasant. In fact, doubt, uncertainty, futility, etc., would seem to me to prove anything except this agreeable partition; for doubt and uncertainty are merely a variety of belief. 110

After his conversion, in 1928, he confessed that "his critical interests began to shift from close analysis of poetry as an autonomous object to a consideration of the relation of poetry to the soul and spiritual life." 111 It is clear that his conversion marks a turning point in his poetic creation and criticism.

As an influential critic T. S. Eliot makes the religious emphasis primary in his interpretation of poetry. Protesting against the tendency to make poetry a substitute for religion, he urges that
T.S. Eliot's writings after his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism is religious in spirit. As a true religious poet of his age he shares the doubts of his age and affirms his faith despite of them. His religious experience has been creatively assimilated and then imaginatively embodied. There is no substitute for the primary vision—rather inner vision. The only truth he can shadow forth is one that he has felt and lived. It is notably true with the religious poet T.S. Eliot. It was not enough for him to formally acknowledge or intellectually accept the tenets of Catholicism. He did not take his theology or his philosophy from some authoritarian sources, but he judged for himself in a spirit of creative freedom. He did not explicitly design his poetic work for the purpose of indoctrination because if that were the case it would have ceased to be poetry and become "virtual dogma." His poetry is fundamentally religious because it communicates the depth and difficulty of the poet's struggle to achieve unity of faith in a universe that persistently prevents such an effort. "Out of the dialectics of doubt, out of the crisis of negation in the dark night of the soul, rises the despairing or triumphant cry to faith." Dogma never makes its appearance in genuine poetry or if it does it ceases to be dogma and becomes pure vision. So T.S. Eliot recaptures the original vision by employing various symbols in his poetry.

He found that the spiritual dereliction of modern men and the distress he suffers are because he is alienated from God and from his
fellowmen. "Night has fallen over the world and there is no possibility of Second Coming." The traditional Christian teachings no longer provide a solid foundation for meaning and are no longer containers of collective faith. "The serpent of doubt has driven the children of Adam out of the Garden of Eden, symbol of the old instinctive and universal innocence of faith. Stripped off its efficacy, the Christian myth has lost its power of binding people together in the sacrament of faith." Unlike many writers who have become divorced not only from the church but from the Christian tradition as well, T.S. Eliot made the attempt to revive the Christian myths curiously enough. His world was not like the Victorians'. The Victorian poets confronted a world thrown into confusion, a world acutely, at times obsessively aware of and dissatisfied with that confusion. Eliot, however, faced a society that had settled rather comfortably into the resignation of unbelief.

Much of his poetry concerns itself with "the awful, doubt-ridden struggle towards a faith that cannot be grasped." T.S. Eliot did share the doubt of his age. He insisted in his criticism that doubt was a part of the religious experience and it must return to again and again. Belief was by no means a final rest on the plateau to serene conviction, but rather a series of bouts with the demons which are always assaulting it. Eliot wrote in 1927:

To believe any thing (I do not mean merely to believe in some religion) will probably become more and more difficult as time goes on. For
those of us who are higher than the mob, and lower than the man of inspiration, there is always doubt... and doubt and uncertainty were merely a variety of belief. 118

Several years later in 1931 soon after completing *Ash Wednesday* which is his most intense exploration of religious doubt and uncertainty, Eliot was more specific in *The Pensess of Paascal*: He more specifically wrote:

For every man who thinks and lives by thought must have his own skepticism, that which stops at the question, that which ends with denial, or that which leads to faith and which is somehow integrated in the faith which transcends it. And Pascal as the type of one kind of religious believer, which is highly passionate and ardent, but passionate only through a powerful and regulated intellect, is in the first sections of his unfinished apology for Christianity facing unflinchingly the demon of doubt which is unseparable from the spirit of belief. 119

It can be rightly said that Pascal is no one else but the religious poet T.S. Eliot himself who shares the element of doubt in his religious experience. T.S. Eliot's early works culminating in *The Waste Land* bring before our sight his struggle towards religious faith.

As Lyndall Gordon has shown, Eliot was struggling through an intense religious crisis years before the publications of *The Waste Land*. His early fragments of the poetry are purely personal record of a man who saw himself as a potential candidate for religious life. "Although
the ground of Eliot's ordeal shifts sometimes the domestic sense, sometimes the divine visitation, sometimes the imaginary trial by fire or water—he is always present blighted and sceptical, hovering between the remote role of a religious candidate and a more immediate despair. 120

In this sense he is a religious poet and his work religious poetry. He could not hope to escape the psychological climate and cultural stimulus of his age because every writer is an integral part of his world, participating in its crimes and crisis and sharing inevitably its burden of collective guilt. The horror of our time, the horror of unconscionable mass violence and cruelty piled upon the horror induced by the empty spaces that so affrighted the mind of Pascal—has crept into the marrow of his bones and infected the substance of his private nightmares. Though he seeks to speak out, he cannot often rise to the heights of tragedy. Because of the critical human situation in which he is involved, he has suffered a marked lowering of creative vitality. The possibilities of creation are still endless, but he does not know what to do with them. Unable to commit himself with passion or finality to any cause, he wonders about lost in his personal hell. "The world seems to have fallen a part; men have been cut off from their organic relations with society in its time-ordered continuity, from the eternal source of mystery, the numinous in nature, the symbols of the Absolute." 121 All this forms the cultural soil from which he drew his vital nourishment. It is out of this sense of spiritual lostness that he developed his religious theme. Here he
beheld the dilemma of modern man who remains alone and apart, marching without a sense of God on a journey.

His religious vision furnished the basis for a heightened poetry. He captured a moment of timeless reality. Though he is concerned with art but not at the cost of God. He, as a religious artist, maintains his faith with his vision. It is a fact that he is tainted with doubt, wounded by the knife of skepticism. As the religious poet, T.S. Eliot has communicated the whole of experience in all its baffling complexity, its irreducible contradictions, its irrationalities, its ugliness as well as its grandeur, its boredom and evil as well as its beauty and holiness. He revealed the doubt and the faith in the arena of the mind. He did not leave out those elements in life and in his own personality which war against the faith and "militate against his belief in God."122 His work projects the conflict that is at the heart of all life, the struggle between darkness and light, good and evil, purposelessness and purpose, affirmation and denial, the sacred and the profane, flesh and spirit, death and hunger for immortality. Charles I. Glicksberg rightly says, "The religious consciousness is never a settled thing, something established with finiality, never to be questioned or as--sailed. It is perpetually in a state of crisis and renewal."123 And the poetry of T.S. Eliot honestly reflects this crisis—"the anxiety, the search, the metaphysical despair, the nihilism, as well as the counter-pointing cry of affirmation and the triumphant discovery of faith."124
As a religious poet he wrestled with the demon of doubt. T.S. Eliot remarked to Hugh Sykes Davies on the difference between the Marxists and himself, "They seem so certain of what they believe. My own beliefs are held with a scepticism which I never even hope to get rid of." T.S. Eliot considered *In Memorium* to be profoundly a religious poem, "not religious because of the quality of faith, but because of the quality of its doubt:

Its faith is a very poor thing, but its doubt is a very intense experience. *In Memorium* is a poem of despair, but of despair of a religious kind. And to qualify its despair with the adjective 'religious' is to elevate it above most of its derivatives.

Since the modern religious believers suffer from the virus of doubt, they cannot simply purge themselves of the effects of skepticism and his knowledge of science. And some writers have turned to God because they cannot go on living a life that is without ultimate meaning or purpose. For them, that is the only way out of the void of indifference and despair. Some turned to God upon an awareness of sin and craving for spiritual unification. Since Eliot cannot breathe in a universe that is dedicated to Nothingness, he has come to believe in the miracle of God's grace. T.S. Eliot accepted Anglo-Catholicism not only to overcome despair but for salvation. He did not use religion as an opiate, but his vision of Original Sin compelled him to seek the grace of God-forgiving grace, saving grace and sustaining grace. He sought for spiritual unification. The French Catholic
writer, Paul Claudel, has influenced the Anglo-Catholic writer, T.S. Eliot. In his play, *Tidings Brought to Mary*, he treats with complete seriousness the miracle brought about by the power of faith. Claudel had undergone an experience of religious conversion in his youth and thus escaped from the cult of scientific materialism that dominated the nineteenth-century's mind. Throughout an active life he is said to have kept his religious faith unimpaired and consequently never ceased to oppose a naturalism concerned itself, as he felt, exclusively with the animal side of man. So Eliot undergoes an important as well as wonderful experience of religious conversion after which he deals with the spiritual problem. Most gifted poet of our age, who happens to be an extremely influential critic as well, treats the religious problem not only in his poetry but also in his poetic dramas. Few writers of our time have voiced more poignantly their awareness of the horror of a life that is without meaning or purpose, the horror that reveals itself when there is "a crack in the polished surface of life and abyss opens up beneath." 127 Eliot brilliantly analyses the condition of modern man: the specter of ghastly futility that materializes in the darkness of night, the recurrent visions of metaphysical despair, the pressure of time, the burden of "the irretrievable yet active past, the present, that so fugitive and the future that cannot be conceived and yet is already fated, and finally the persistent sense of sin and guilt, the furies that tear at the flash of mind." 128 T.S. Eliot finds the modern man is unheroic in fighting the food fight of faith, so he is incapable of relating himself to the past, present and future.
Throughout the ages, creative man has given expression to the myth that is at the heart of all tragic art: man's realisation of the emptiness of life as it is spelled out within the sphere of the finite and the mundane. That is the haunting cry one hears in tragedy, Pascal's confessions, in the writings of Kierkegaard and the latter-day Existentialists. Something happens that leads to this crucial and often traumatic experience of spiritual awakening. The hero undergoes a series of struggles that shake him to the very depths and he sets out on the journey from which he will return spiritually reborn. Following the same spirit of creative man, Eliot in his literary essays as well as his plays, deals with this experience of spiritual liberation. He is the advocate of spiritual freedom. He has high regard for Baudelaire and declares that Baudelaire was a great poet because he was fundamentally concerned with the age-old problems of good and evil, the basic issue of Sin and Redemption. Paradoxically Eliot argues that 'damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation because...it at last gives some significance to living (S.E.p427). Eliot's emphasis comes out challengingly in his statement: "So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing; at least we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for damnation." 129

T.S. Eliot was not only crying for the decline of religious belief but also for decline of religious sensibility. He wrote:
Much has been said everywhere about the decline of religious belief; not so much notice has been taken of the decline of religious sensibility. The trouble of the modern age is not merely the inability to believe certain things about God and man which our forefathers believed, but the inability to feel towards God and man as they did. A belief in which you no longer believe is something which to some extent you can still understand, but when religious feeling disappears, the words in which men have struggled to express it become meaningless. It is true that religious feeling varies naturally from country to country, and from age to age, just as poetic feeling does; the feeling varies even when the belief, the doctrine, remains the same. But this is a condition of human life, and what I am apprehensive of is death.\textsuperscript{130}

He believed in the supernatural as the greatest reality here and now in this world. Addressing a group of Unitarian clergymen in 1933 he said:

To believe in the supernatural is not simply to believe that after living a successful, material, and fairly virtuous life here one will continue to exist in the best-possible substitute for this world, or that after living a starved and stunted life here one will be compensated with all good things one has gone without: it is to believe that the super-natural is the greatest reality here and now.\textsuperscript{131}

His poetry and drama bear witness to this fact that T.S. Eliot is a religious poet. Religious themes permeate in his work for he believed and was convinced that separation of religion and literature is not and “never can be complete.”\textsuperscript{132} And an over all study of Eliot’s work shows that he was basically concerned with the
"perceptual struggle of good and evil." Eliot is the spokesman of man caught in the web of history. He spoke against the false promises of worldly gods of material pleasure and showed the real purpose and glory of life. In this *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* there is a projection of helplessness and boredom. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady* are the story of disappointed and frustrated lonely individuals hankering after the touch of friendship and love. They are unable to establish healthy love-relationship. "Conversation Glance" (1916) depicts the young man and girl's attempt to establish "emotional bond of relationship", but both failed to synthesize intellect and emotion, "mind and heart and are fated to live as aliens to each other." "La Figlia che Piange" (1916) is also an imaginative poem of the tragic plight of the girl forsaken by her lover.

Poems written after 1916 comments upon the emotional stalemate and spiritual inanition caused by man's estrangement from the basic foundation of his belief. "The Hippopotamus" (1917) deals with the True Church and the church without religious spirit, and ultimate hope of redemption through Christ by God's grace. "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" (1918) is about the "evil of purely fleshly basis of man-woman relationship which dries up the spring of emotional and spiritual currents of conjugal relationship." "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar" (1919) is also about the perversion of man-woman relationship: "the impingement of money upon human relationship." *Gerontion* (1920) explains the condition of a man
who is devoid of belief in the spiritual meaning of life. "Gerontion" sums up all the inner-natural of civilization with "no religious communion or human sense of community, a nightmare world of isolation and instability, of restless nervous and intellectual activity, emotional stagnation and spiritual drought." Gerontion dares not to seek God's forgiveness.

"The Waste Land" (1922) pictures a desolate world which as become so much "bankrupt in moral and spiritual values that it has shaken the basic fabric of our civilization." From his very earlier poems he had a vision of the contemporary world, "which had lost its moorings, being deprived of all its material and spiritual values." The "Hollow Men" (1925) presents a vision of the horror of death. "Journey of Magi" (1926) is an allegory of spiritual journey in which the flesh still craves for sensual enjoyment. "A Song for Simeon" (1928) pictures the struggles between life and death for spiritual renewal. "Animula" (1929) portrays the progress of soul from infancy to maturity. "Marina" (1930) is also an allegory of mystic vision of resurrection. "Ash Wednesday" (1930) is a confessional poem which consists of six moments or steps of the progress of the soul in its "hazardous acceptance of faith." Even his unfinished poems such as "Sweeney Agonistes (1932) is first drama of spiritual journey. "Fragment of a Prologue" and "Fragment of an Anon" also have the same theme of spiritual regeneration of soul. "Triumphal March" is spiritual in its theme and spirit, and "unveils the hollowness of the
pomposity of worldly success and presents a glimpse of the hidden mysterious light of the spiritual meaning of the universe which remains invisible to the men without belief because they are blinded by the halo of temporal power."  145

Choruses From 'The rock' (1934) is highly religious in its content as well as in its spirit. It deals with the theme of the church as a spiritual body whose builder is God. 'The Rock is the preserver of belief and the spiritual guide of mankind, who points out how the belief can be given a practical shape in life. The laying of foundation of the church, its completion and dedication to God symbolize commitment to belief....'  146 The builders of the church know that the enemies of the church have always tried to fail the efforts of the men of belief to act accordingly to their faith. Similarly Christ was not crucified once for all; nor were the lives of the saints and the blood of the martyrs shed once for us. In the succeeding generations also Incarnation and Christ's passion, Suffering and Crucifixion are possible; some of his followers may become saints and sacrifice their lives and thus continue the ideal of self sacrifice for the cause of human and for the spiritual values. All this has been developed in the Choruses while the construction of the church is in progress. The first chorus tells the readers 'man's success and failure' in the twentieth century. Second Chorus speaks of Christ as the Corner-stone of the Church. The third Chorus reflects on the "unfortunate life of the unbelieving, godless creatures, the crafty men,'the wretched generation of the enlightened
The fourth and fifth Choruses point out the difficulties of the believers who built the house in the past such as by Nehemiah. The sixth Chorus speaks of the endless persecution of the believers. The seventh Chorus "represents the conflict since the Creation between belief and disbelief and unbelief and between good and evil, the story of the birth of Christ and His Crucifixion, and man's falling a prey to usury, lust and power." The eighth Chorus stresses the need of firm conviction to serve God keeping the promises of God in mind. The ninth Chorus represents the "belief of the secular-minded people and points out the duties and obligations of the men of religious belief." Men's creation should be brought to the service of God.

The Four Quartets (1936-1942) are the "deep meditation on important Christian themes." It "endeavours to present a fleeting glimpse of his vision of eternal truth and to communicate poetically man's spiritual guest for the realization of this truth. The basic theme of The Four Quartets may be variously interpreted as the relationship between the timeless and time or the meaning of history or the redemption of time and the world of man."

Like his poetry, dramas also deal with religious themes.

In The Family Reunion, as in Murder in the Cathedral maintaining the stream of religious poets Eliot develops a religious theme. Though the tone of the dialogue in The Family Reunion is that of the
upper-middle-class life in contemporary England, the spiritual struggle the characters pass through is timeless, classless and universal. "The play elaborates the universal theme of evil, and its expiation, the evil that dwells in every human heart." T.S. Eliot presents a hero who portrays modern man's desperate struggle for salvation. The drama of redemption is worked out in the conscience of Harry. People proceed with their practical concerns, "the round of getting and spending, eating and enjoying, pursuing the pleasures of the flesh and the feverish distractions of the moment, indifferent to questions of sin or guilt, content to fritter their life away without God or a redemptive vision of eternity." In *The Family Reunion* all the characters pass through some numinous experience. There is no escape from the universal horror. The worldly are also aware of the horror, but they make every effort to hide the truth. They dare not upon the door or draw the curtain aside, for then they would become aware of their folly. But Harry is prepared for the unveiling of the curtain. He feels that he is lost, and he has reached the end of his strength. He cannot move another step. Suffering has made him aware of "deeper and higher dimensions of consciousness." His task is not to run away from the Eumenides but to follow them towards the home of spiritual fulfilment. He must take the journey toward redemption through sacrifice. Agatha in the last speech, who is the mouthpiece of the higher truths, points our the way toward salvation.

This is the Pilgrimage
Of expiation
Round and round the circle
Completing the charm  
So the knot be unknotted  
The cross be uncrossed  
The crooked be made straight  
And the curse be ended  
BY intercession  
By pilgrimage  
By those who depart  
In several directions  
For their own redemption  
And that of the departed -  
May they rest in peace. 155

Complications of the plot in The Family Reunion are unimportant. What is important is its religious meaning. In this play the spiritual quest for redemption is sought with an intense passion and desire.

Eliot strongly esteemed Christianity essential to civilization. The true nature of man emerges in his ability to recognize and accept supernatural reality. He does not invent. Either man is an animal or he is made in the image of God. Eliot declared: "There is no avoiding that dilemma: You must be either a naturalist or a supernaturalist. If you remove from the word 'human' all that the belief in the supernatural has given to man, you can view him finally so as no more than an extremely clever, adaptable, and mischievous little animal."156 T.S. Eliot grapples with the issue of good and evil. He endeavours to re-establish a sharp dichotomy between good and evil. The reality of evil must be reaffirmed. Temporal values can be judged in the light of eternal values. The higher reality is felt only when a man is faced with a profound moral or spiritual choice.
In *Murder in the Cathedral* Thomas Becket resists all the solicitations of the Tempter—the invitation to ease and plenty, the promise of power in the present and holiness in the hereafter, the glory of sainthood, martyrdom as the road to heavenly grandeur—he spurns all these temptations, conquering his own desires, his sinful pride, his soul's sickness. He subordinates his will to God. Fear of death torments the masses, but Thomas meets his end bravely—death has been defeated on the cross. Oh, Death, where are thine stings? Death has no tormenting effect on the one who is submissive to the will of God. Disciples of Jesus Christ were afraid of death. They tried to prevent Jesus from dying on the cross. So in the same manner Chorus cries out:

The agents of hell disappear, the human, they shrink and dissolve
Into dust on the wind, forgotten, unmemorable; only is here
The white flat face of death, God's silent servant,
And behind the face of Death and Judgement
And behind the Judgement the Void, more horrid than active shapes of hell;
Emptiness, absence, separation from God;
The horror of the effortless, absence, the Void, Where those who were men can no longer turn the mind.
To distraction, delusion, escape into dream, pretence,
Where the soul is no longer deceived, for there are no objects, no tones,
No colours, no forms to distract, to divert the soul
From seeing itself, fouly united forever, nothing with nothing.
Not what we call death, but what beyond death is no death,
We fear, we fear.
Here are the negative symbols that reduced the mind of the contemporary man to abject terror: Death, the judgement, the Void, emptiness, separation from God, the ultimate union of nothing with nothing. This is the fear of death that torments the degenerated man. When the priests announced that the murderers are coming, Thomas boldly says:

I am not in danger; only near to death.
To meet death is only
The only way in which I can defend
The Law of God, the holy canons.

He was ready to give his life "to the Law of God above the man." He has come to the point of realisation that triumph is neither by fighting, nor by resistance, but the "triumph of the Cross" is only by suffering. He courageously utters:

It is the just man who
Like a bond man, should be without fear.
I am here.
No traitor to the King. I am a priest,
A Christian, saved by the blood Christ,
Ready to suffer with my blood.
This is the sign of the church always,
The sign of blood, Blood for blood.
His blood given to buy my life.
My blood given to pay for His death,
My death for His death.

T.S. Eliot's last plays - The Family Reunion, The Cocktail Party, The Confidential Clerk, and The Elder Statesman - are the culmination of his three periods that can be seen, in retrospect to logically
proceed from the early poems of man alienated from God, through the explicitly religious poetry of the middle period, to the final period whose final concern is with human relations. Eliot's second and third periods is the Biblical sequence—"Love of God proceeding love of man." T.S. Eliot's early poems are marked with the mood of deep frustration and despair caused by man's failure to relate himself with other. T.S. Eliot's Prufrock is a tragic figure. He suffers in "the hell of defeated idealism." He is tortured by an unappeasable desires. He seeks to be loved by and love others but the is not courageous enough to risk. He has a tragic flaw which he discloses in the poem, through timidity he is incapable of action. Biblically human relation is vertical and then horizontal. Loving our fellow-men is only in relation to God. The great commandment given in the Bible is 'Love your God with all your soul, mind and strength and love your neighbours as yourself.' True human love springs or flows from deep down of our heart only when there is deep love for God. Our Love for God is termed as 'the vertical love' and for our neighbours or fellowmen is the 'horizontal love.' The degenerated man has been deprived of true love for his fellowmen because he has ceased to love his Creator in spirit and truth. "I-thou" relation is not possible because the very basic foundation of human-relation that is "I-Thou" relation is missing in every day life. Man is passing through the dark night of soul since they are not walking in the Eternal Light. When vertical love is not in the man's treasure, he will remain bankrupt in human or horizontal love. And what we see as love is not
love at all. Perfect love has no fear, and love in which fear prevails is not love at any cost. Actual love is impossible to be experienced among the degenerated.

T.S. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service illustrated the inerterable conflict between spiritual and fleshly man—rather carnal man. In Gerontion, an old man's lost power to love and his lost hope of spiritual rebirth create a symbol of sterility and paralysis. As from the start of his career, Eliot was concerned with the exploration of reality in all its complexity, its spiritual as well as social dimensions. The Waste Land does reflect his exploration. In The Waste Land, the hero symbolizes the alienation of modern man, perishing of thirst in the desert, and the hideously ugly, dehumanized civilization in which he is forced to live. On the other hand, he beheld those who are spiritually unawakened, people who live and lead senseless and aimless lives, the sleep walkers in a nightmare, sordid and vulgar, of material reality. These are the living dead; they live into animal sensuality but do not know the meaning of love. T.S. Eliot deals with man's spiritual problem which is manifested in relative problems. Here again his prophetic concern is reflected in his interpretation of relative problem in the context of spiritual issues the modern man is facing in this degenerated and dehumanized civilization. He proclaims the fact that God's love preceds love of man. People's notion that 'loving man is loving God' is not practically true. Lover of man is not a theophilus (a lover of -
friend of God), but the lover or friend of God is bound to love others. "I" has to be in communion with "Thou".

Love-theme is pretty well brought out and dealt with in his plays. 'I - thou' relation is the basic issue the religious as well as social poet deals with. Although the plays are implicitly—in Eliot's word, unconsciously Christian, the Christian influence is pervasive. The plays begin in crisis of identity and alienation, but as a result of lessons in both the Christian concept of time—the need to acknowledge the past and live in a present devoid of pretence—and the Christian concept of love in the family and in the community, the plays end with the characters, for the most part, no longer isolated. "Progress in experiencing Christian love is traced both within the plays and through the plays in sequence."164

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