The Christian tradition, which Eliot supports, is very similar to the existential tradition of Christianity which begins with St. Augustine and to which tradition belongs to Pascal and Kierkegaard. These are the two major streams of religion in western Christianity, the Augustine and the Thomist. In his speech “Catholicism and the international order” he speaks of his commitments to the desperate belief that the Christian world order is the only one which from any point of view will work”. Eliot always worked on existentialism where existential Christianity is essentially the continuation of the Old Testament. Writing in 1926 Eliot stated his principle aim as a literary figure: …we must find our own faith, and having found it, fight for it against all others. This is taught in the Holy Bible also. The congregation is taught to believe in God the only one almighty and condemning idolatry. Hence, everywhere he opens up the Holy Bible for his readers. He also tries to preach the diverted sheep of the Christ to work towards their reconciliation with God. He tries to make everyone have faith in religion and follow religious philosophies. T.S. Eliot was one of the most prolific and wide-ranging prose masters. His collections of essays published during his lifetime have had an immeasurable impact on literature, culture, religion. The most influential and, arguably, the most important poet writing in English in the 20th century, T. S. Eliot was a master essayist. Highly significant, for contemporary readers, writers, scholars, and teachers of literature in English. His thematic and stylistic innovations in Modernist poetry were his critical analyses and pronouncements in numerous essays, several of which have become classics of the genre: Tradition and the Individual Talent 1919, Hamlet 1919, The Metaphysical Poets 1921, The Function of Criticism 1923, Dante
1929, *Milton* 1936, *What Is a Classic?* 1945, *To Criticize the Critic* 1961, and many more. Eliot's essays on sociological, educational, and theological subjects are significant. Some of them are "*Thoughts After Lambeth*" 1931 and *Modern Education and the Classics* 1932, *The Idea of a Christian Society* 1939 and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* 1948. Furthermore, in the way of articles and reviews, in the 60 years from 1905 to his death, Eliot contributed around 600 pieces to periodicals such as the *Little Review* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. As editor of the *Criterion*, Eliot was able to foster the careers of other essayists. Eliot wanted to revitalize not only the admiration of the creativity of the 17th-century poets, dramatists, and prose writers, but something, too, of the spirit of their cohesive civilization as always. A preacher of religion in him is reflected in his prose too. So when Eliot defined "the general point of view" of his "*Essays on Style and Order,*" *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928), as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion," his inspiration for these convictions came from Jacobean and Caroline England, in the lives and works of authors such as Andrewes himself, a translator of the authorized version of the Bible (1611), and Bishop of Winchester, whose sermons Eliot celebrates for their harmony of "intellect and sensibility".¹ Once again, we could locate the Biblical allusion in his work. Later in the 17th century, however, in the discord of the Civil War, Eliot identified "a dissociation of sensibility . . . from which we have never recovered".² This was not merely literary, but cultural and spiritual as well. The association of "ordinance, or arrangement and structure, precision in the use of words, and relevant intensity" that T.S. Eliot admired in Andrews' sermons is seen in his own essays. They exhibit the combination of
carefully evolved frameworks of argument on philosophy, intellectual intensity, and ardent assessment. His intended readership was of those with a measure of his own literary culture. As Eliot emerged as the premier poet of the modern age, his prose writings were also spread to a large audience. The brilliant insights and sweeping generalizations achieved the status of canon law, and towards the end of his life Eliot confessed to having been gritty by his quotable pronouncements long after they had ceased to be adequate statements of his convictions.³

The confrontation of the classical ideal and Romantic experience that Eliot constructs in his essays, and the refinement of the latter by the former, is the leitmotif of his theory: "Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility". [MP] Leavis took a phrase from Eliot - his definition of the collaborative process of literary criticism as "the common pursuit of true judgment".⁴ For the title of his critical collection, The Common Pursuit 1952, which was one of the several studies by scholars and, perhaps more importantly, teachers of international stature who propagated Eliot's precepts in the universities in the mid-20th century.

Their graduates took these ideas into the secondary schools to the point where, for two or three generations, Eliot's literary-critical essays were formative and formidable across the gamut of English studies. The origin of “New Criticism” of the 1940s, may be traced to the Cambridge of Leavis, I. A. Richards, and William Empson of the 1920s, and they had taken their cue from Eliot. The breadth of Eliot's subject matter in his
essays, beyond literary criticism, ought to be emphasized. In Second Thoughts About Humanism 1929, the philosopher is to the fore; in "The Aims of Education" 1950, the cultural critic and theologian; while in "Marie Lloyd" 1923, an essay on "the greatest music-hall artist of her time," Eliot’s mapping of humanity is marvelous. He had always been working on humanity, religion and virtues. He can be called as a teacher and preacher of moral values as his entire literature is swamped into it. His two long essays on religious values remain to be mentioned to draw the impact of religion on his prose. They are The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Towards the Definition of Culture. The Idea of a Christian Society began as a series of lectures at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in March 1939, which was published later that year. Eliot reflects, in the months leading up to World War II, on the future of Western civilization’s bereft of Christian spirituality. The Idea of a Christian Society is a valuable aid to the understanding of some of the themes in Eliot's last important poetic work, Four Quartets 1936-42 also. Eliot introduced Notes Towards the Definition of Culture 1948 as an "essay" which he began in the closing stages of the war, after completing the Quartets. It is a piece of societal disparagement. Again, it is the religion that plays role in the development and sustenance of culture, Eliot once more maintaining the theme of religion and spirituality: He says, "no culture has appeared or developed except together with a religion." Although by this period in his life, Eliot had attained the status of a sage. Eliot's essays will remain ideal for their style - erudite, stimulating, and, above all, decipherable. To paraphrase the closing observation of his essay on "John Dryden" 1921, Eliot is one of those who have set standards for English prose, which it is
desperate to ignore with his same old religious aptitude.

Literary criticism is a distinctive activity of the civilized mind.' With Eliot's dictum in mind. There are essays of generalization, appreciations and a section of his social and religious criticism. All the famous and most influential essays drawn upon, with extracts from scriptures of the east as well as the west. The Idea of a Christian Society is on the direction of religious thought toward criticism of political and economic systems; and “Notes towards the Definition of Culture” is on culture, its meaning, and the dangers threatening the legacy of the western world are significant creations showing Eliot’s restlessness on the degrading spirituality and culture. Barry Spur’s definitive study of T.S. Eliot’s Anglo-Catholic belief and practice shows how the poet’s religion shaped his life and work for almost forty years, until his demise in 1965. It has significant new material from correspondence and diaries which sheds light on Eliot’s thought. Spurr examines the poet's formal adoption of Anglo-Catholicism, in 1927, as the culmination of his intellectual, cultural, artistic, spiritual and personal development to that point. Through an informed presentation and discussion of Anglo-Catholicism at the time of Eliot’s conversion and through subsequent decades, Spurr presents the detailed analysis of the unique influence that Anglo-Catholicism’s principles and social teaching had on Eliot’s poetry, plays, prose and personal life. In these essays, Eliot worked in the fields of Modernism and its principles and belief systems- the religion, especially Western Christianity and Anglicanism. In a series of lectures delivered at the University of Virginia in 1933, later published under the title After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy
(1934), Eliot again emphasized on religion. He said, "What is still more important in society is unity of religious background, and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable". Once again, religion, philosophy and preaching for virtues became dominant in his writing. In Traditional and Individual Talent also Eliot’s discussion of the literary tradition as the "mind of Europe" seeks of Euro-centrism. Eliot supported many Eastern and thus non-European works of literature such as the Mahabharata. Eliot was arguing the importance of a complete sensibility, he did not particularly care what it was at the time of tradition and the individual talent. He does not account for a non-white and non-masculine tradition. As such, his notion of tradition stands at odds with feminist, post-colonial and minority theories but still it is significant and holds firm position.

6.1

*The Idea of a Christian Society and bereft of Christian spirituality*

The Idea of a Christian Society was written in 1939. In 1940, the great modernist poet T.S. Eliot engaged with a tradition of conservative thought with the idea of a Christian Society, an essay asking for a revival of Christian culture to protect ideals such as “liberty” and “democracy” from fascism and communism. His idea of a Christian Society begins with an outline of the three possible organizing principles of society economic, political, and spiritual. Eliot could never separate his pen from spiritualism perhaps because of his own hurt conscience. According to T.S. Eliot, all societies have historically incorporated all three elements, but each society always
tends to emphasize one of them over the others. Eliot says that only a society founded on a spiritual order can avoid a descent into the twin manifestations of “paganism”—fascism and communism. T.S. Eliot relies on one critical insight into the insidious nature of liberalism “That Liberalism may be a tendency toward something very different from itself, is a possibility in its nature.” Liberalism degenerates into its opposite because it negates social custom, morality, institutions, tradition, and authority – it stripes the individual of the “moral drapery of life” and unleashes him into a soulless society of atomized individuals, the waste landers. Such is the tendency of liberalism because, in T.S. Eliot’s phrase, “it is a movement not so much defined by its end, as by its starting point-away from rather than toward something definite.” This starting point is the formulation of a set of rights, which outline a sphere of person’s independence which is not to be eclipsed by the government. Liberalism negates the government and “liberates” the individual, but in the words of W. H. Auden, liberalism is “at a loss to know how to handle him, for the only thing liberalism knows to offer is more freedom.” Emancipating individuals from institutional restraint only incarcerates them in the moral wasteland that was dreadful for Eliot. In the end, it is this occurrence of moral pandemonium and cultural disorder that propelled liberalism toward its opposite by creating the need for an “artificial, mechanized control which is a desperate remedy for its chaos”.

According to Plato “In fact, excessive action in one direction usually sets up a reaction in the opposite direction. This happens in seasons, in plants, in bodies, and last, but not least, in constitutions.” Liberalism qualifies as an excessive movement in
one direction—freedom—without a counterbalancing force such as the family or church—and such is the evil of human nature that the individual is incapable of unilaterally producing these constraints himself so that his spirit and conscience be uplifted. Confirming that democracy, like liberalism, is an empty ideal that also needs to be armored with positive content, Eliot identifies Christianity as the source of this “positive content”. He presents this “idea of a Christian society” as the alternative to an ephemeral “neutral” society based on hollow political idealism and anemic economic reductionism. Eliot’s Christian society consists of three parts. The first constituent is the “Christian community,” which refers to the broadest possible segment of society, which adheres to the essentials of Christian morality and holds some Christian theological beliefs.

The second element constitutes the “Christian state,” which Eliot defines not as the union of church and state, but instead as the type of government that is most well-suited with a Christian culture—in other words a government in which political decisions are informed by the morality extracted from Christianity—Again same as that of his Christian political drama Murder in the Cathedral.

The third element is the “Christian community” which contains the small subset of believers who actually profess faith in God. Finally, T.S. Eliot focuses on the Church as the institution, which provides the theological infrastructure for ethics. Once again, we find Eliot colored in Christianity and preaching as he always did with his poetry and drama. The result is a society in which a positive set of values are introduced as the companion of an enlightened liberty, endowing society with a
purpose and positive direction. “It would be a society in which the natural end of man-virtue and well-being in community-is acknowledged for all, and the supernatural end-beautitude-for those who have the eyes to see it.”

He concludes his essay with a dramatic assertion on call for the incorporation of Christianity into society with immaculate perspicuity. As political philosophy derives its permit from ethics, and ethics from religion it is only by returning to the eternal source of truth that we can anticipate for any social organization, which will not ignore some essential aspect of reality. The term “democracy,” as he has said repeatedly, does not contain enough positive content to stand alone against the forces that one dislike – they can easily transform it. He also said, “If you will not have God you should pay your respects to Hitler or Stalin”.

These lines demonstrate the comprehensiveness of Eliot’s thinking. Christianity is more than just a law book, which makes life fit for human habitation, it is that which also gives purpose and meaning to life. For “people without religion will in the end find that it has nothing to live for.” It was this conviction that society required a vision that ultimately inspired The Idea of a Christian Society. For Eliot confessed that he was acting out of his concern that in the beginnings of the second world war, the British has not been able to “match conviction with conviction” against their enemies. T.S. Eliot uttered these concerns in an era in which the great contest was against despotism. In this new century, the ideological polarization that characterized the 20th century has yielded to older cultural animosities, which have produced the “clash of civilizations,” yet Eliot’s connection
of religion to the survival of society is even more relevant as we find ourselves in a life or death struggle with radical Islam. 7

For this reason Eliot was constantly emphasizing on the importance of Christian virtues, the dogmas which make life live able and death leading to salvation of the soul. He was worried with the contemporary modern generation that lacked in spiritualism. He said, “The more highly industrialized the country, the more easily a materialistic philosophy will flourish in it, and the more deadly that philosophy will be. Britain has been highly industrialized longer than any other country. And the tendency of unlimited industrialism is to create bodies of men and women — of all classes — 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.[ICS 17] We again see Eliot worried about the degrading society, lack of faith and loss to religion. He says- The problem of leading a Christian life in a non-Christian society is now very present to us, and it is a very different problem from that of the accommodation between an Established Church and dissenters. It is not merely the problem of a minority in a society of individuals holding an alien belief. It is the problem constituted by our implication in a network of institutions from which we cannot disassociate ourselves: institutions the operation of which appears no longer neutral, but non-Christian. And as for the Christian who is not conscious of his dilemma — and he is in the majority — he is becoming more and more de-Christianized by all sorts of unconscious pressure: paganism holds all the most valuable advertising space. [ICS 17-18]
In his essay he further says, “The Christian and the unbeliever do not, and cannot, behave very differently in the exercise of office; for it is the general ethos of the people they have to govern, not their own piety, that determines the behavior of politicians”. [ICS 21] Eliot has always been preaching to work for reconciliation with God through following religion. **This shows how intensely his work was influenced by religion and religious philosophy.**

He further says, “The Spirit descends in different ways, and I cannot foresee any future society in which we could classify Christians and non-Christians simply by their professions of belief, or even, by any rigid code, by their behavior. In the present ubiquity of ignorance, one cannot but suspect that many who call themselves Christians do not understand what the word means, and that some who would vigorously repudiate Christianity are more Christian than many who maintain it. And perhaps there will always be individuals who, with great creative gifts of value to mankind, and the sensibility which such gifts imply, will yet remain blind, indifferent, or even hostile. That must not disqualify them from exercising the talents they have been given. [ICS 35] He is **emphasizing that Christians must not lose their religion and attain a code of conduct that the holy Bible lays down so that he can be identified with dignity.**

It is very easy for speculation on a possible Christian order in the future to tend to come to rest in a kind of apocalyptic vision of a golden age of virtue. But we have to remember that the Kingdom of Christ on earth will never be realized, and also that it
is always being realized; we must remember that whatever reform or revolution we carry out, the result will always be a sordid travesty of what human society should be — though the world is never left wholly without glory. In such a society as I imagine, as in any that is not petrified, there will be innumerable seeds of decay. Any human scheme for society is realized only when the great mass of humanity has become adapted to it; but this adaptation becomes also, insensibly, an adaptation of the scheme itself to the mass on which it operates: the overwhelming pressure of mediocrity, sluggish and indomitable as a glacier, will mitigate the most violent, and depress the most exalted revolution, and what is realized is so unlike the end that enthusiasm conceived, that foresight would weaken the effort. A wholly Christian society might be a society for the most part on a low level; it would engage the cooperation of many whose Christianity was spectral or superstitious or feigned, and of many whose motives were primarily worldly and selfish. It would require constant reform.[ICS 47] This quote too shows his concern for his religion and his worry for the bereft in the community.

To Eliot, in 1939, the alternatives facing England were dire—totalitarianism; or a pitiful, apathetic decline. In addition, to those repelled by such a prospect he said: One can only assert that the only possibility of control and balance is a religious control and balance; that the only hopeful course for a society which could thrive and continue its creative activity in the arts of civilization, is to become Christian. That prospect involves, at least, discipline, inconvenience and discomfort: but here as hereafter the alternative to hell is purgatory.8 Hence, we have no indecision in saying
that Eliot remained a preacher, rather a priest like giving sermon to his readers to lift
up their souls to the lord. He did preach for the tendency to adhere to the virtues
incorporating the eastern philosophy in his thoughts and belief.

6.2

Notes towards the Definition of Culture and Religious Concern

Today the anthropological conception of culture reigns supreme. For more than a
hundred years, anthropology has been spreading charm and radiance. However, as the
results are in and that even the strangest ethnicity from the remotest places are
familiar as truly human and entirely natural—it is plain that the popular verdict has
been an enthusiastic acquiesce. Its principled understanding is widely regarded as
benevolent. Its politics are as pleasant to the liberal imagination as they are to the
fundamental intellect. People who have gladly melded its doctrines with their own
have sympathetically received its broader implications. In addition, if there is any one
thing, which explains this congeniality and appeal it is the persuasive conception of
‘culture’ which anthropology, has bestowed upon the world.

Thomas Stearns Eliot is primarily known for his poetry but he devoted some
significant amount of his attention to the matters of civilization and culture. He was
born in St. Louis, Missouri but immigrated to Britain and became, to all intents and
purposes, an Englishman, which he professed he was from his very beginnings. He
published a book, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture which contains some
valuable insights on culture. No other notion has proved so irresistible. It beguiled T.
S. Eliot thirty years ago, while the controversial advantages it offered soon drew the attention of Raymond Williams. It made its most explosive literary impact in Sir Charles Snow’s declaration that -

The scientific culture really is a culture, not only in an intellectual but also in an anthropological sense”, and it received its most subtle literary interpretation in Lionel Trilling’s essay warning against the excesses of “the cultural mode of thought”. It provided a rationale for some of the arguments of Frantz Fanon, while the same cultural relativism, which fortified Fanon, encouraged Paul Feyerabend to claim that science and witchcraft are more similar than university men had previously dared suppose.[ICS 23-30] T.S. Eliot’s work was ‘not to outline a social or political philosophy but define the word ‘culture’. He insists that culture and religion are, in some deep sense, two sides of the same coin. Rightly says David Garrard, ‘the culture being, essentially, the incarnation...of the religion of a people’. Frustratingly, the precise workings of this ‘incarnation’ are never directly addressed, but treated rather as an ineffable mystery to be approached only reverently and at an oblique angle – though there are some nice epigrams along the way: ‘the universality of irritation is the best assurance for peace’; ‘a higher religion is one which is more difficult to believe’. Eliot’s disavowal of any polemical intention is thoroughly disingenuous. Notes towards the definition of a culture is a book with a pronounced agenda, as unfashionable in the labour landslide year of 1948 as it is today: elitist, socially conservative, illiberal going on authoritarian. Eliot’s defense of aristocracy has little resonance now, and his arguments – that social equality entails cultural
impoverishment, that mere meritocratic ‘elites’ lack the savoir-faire of the old-fashioned governing class – are not especially novel or persuasive. On the other hand, his conviction that cultures and religions admit of ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ forms, that genuine development and retrogression are not only possible but a constant fact of our social existence, stands as a useful corrective to our own unthinking relativism. What ultimately makes Notes an unrewarding read, however, is a matter not of politics but of personality. A spirit of bitter primness hangs over the whole argument of the book like a sour fog, giving even its best passages a subtly life-denying quality. As in Eliot’s less successful poems, a self-congratulatory bleakness of outlook is offered as ascetic spiritual insight; the result is an assemblage of dry bones that will not quite live. He says- we see that a people does not need merely enough to eat but a proper and particular cuisine...Culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living. Eliot asserts that the development of culture must be organic and cannot be deliberately guided. Eliot opposes the limitation of culture to erudition and formal education. He says, the unity with which I am concerned must be largely unconscious, and therefore can perhaps be best approached through a consideration of the useful diversities. A culture, according to Eliot, requires a unity and diversity with respect to regions, religious sects, and social classes: By this he means there should be a assemblage of cultures sharing a common core as in Britain or Western Europe but with enough diversity to provide stimulation for each other. Eliot quotes Whitehead on this point; Men require of their neighbors something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to
provoke attention, and something great enough to command admiration. Thus, a national culture, if it is to flourish, should be a assemblage of cultures, the constituents of which, benefiting each other, benefit the whole. He states this point in another way as the man who, at the right moment, meets the right friend; fortunate also the man who at the right moment meets the right enemy.

This means that people should be neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to flourish. Eliot, along with Toynbee identifies or equates a culture or civilization with its religion. Says Eliot, No culture can appear or develop except in relation to a religion. We see Eliot’s religion taking shape in his essays also. But he notes that way of looking at culture and religion which I have been trying to adumbrate is so difficult that I am not sure I grasp it myself except in flashes, or that I comprehend all its implications. According to Eliot the inherent unity or linkage of religion and culture means, that one cannot be preserved without the other. Secularism, cosmopolitanism and ascetic retreats are doomed. Eliot notes, the schisms of the 16th century and the multiplication of sects can be studied either as the history of division of religious thought, or as a struggle between opposing social groups--as a variation of doctrine or the disintegration of European culture. On the matter of religion, Eliot makes these observations: A religion requires not only a body of priests who know what they are doing, but a body of worshippers who know what is being done. In the most primitive societies no clear distinction is visible between religious and non-religious activities; and as we proceed. to examine the more developed societies, we perceive a greater distinction, and finally contrast and opposition, between these activities. A
higher religion is one, which is much more difficult to believe. **He seems to be very ardent in the terms of his religious dogmas.** For the more conscious becomes the belief, so the more conscious becomes the unbelief; indifference, doubt and skepticism appear. A higher religion imposes a conflict, a division, torment and struggle within the individual.

Eliot makes the culture more important than the individuals. Individuals are mere leaves on the cultural tree. The transmission of culture requires the persistence of social classes. Social classes and elites are for Eliot more important than egalitarian goals. In his view, they should not be as rigid as castes but social continuity may be more important than trying to achieve equality of opportunity. The culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class and that dependent upon the culture of the society. He again emphasizes on the need of the worshippers. That is he wants people to realize the importance of their reconciliation with god.

Eliot feels that, Neither a classless society, nor a society of strict and impenetrable social barriers is good; each class should have constant additions and defections; the classes, while remaining distinct, should be able to mix freely; and they should have a community of culture with each other which will give them something in common, more fundamental than the community which each class has with its counterpart in another society. Finally, a people is judged by history according to its contribution to the culture of other peoples flourishing at the same time and according to its contribution to the cultures which arise afterwards. Eliot's perception of culture is
related to Alfred Kroeber's notion of culture as a super organic entity. The proof is everywhere—as any regular reader of bump into knows. Quite aside from the argument presented by C. P. Snow, the distinctively anthropological plural form in the very title of that celebrated piece twenty years ago, The Two Cultures, in itself announced a change, and since then both plurals and compounds have multiplied apace. Not long ago in these pages we saw what was once simply described as despotism appearing in a political discussion of despotic cultures, a phrasing, which more adequately conveyed the enduring incorrigibility the author, had in mind. From a different quarter, blindness and inertia have been proposed as ‘cultural’ features of our political life by Alasdair MacIntyre: he said recently that there are some things, which “our political culture cannot allow us to admit.” Again, what we had become inured to as a treacherous waywardness endemic in intellectual life, “the alienation of the intelligentsia”, now receives, as adversary culture, a formulation more menacing and more fixed.

In principle, he is concerned with culture in the broad or anthropological sense, rather than the narrow or Arnoldian sense: that is to say, the whole way of life of a society, all its inherited manners, customs, and styles of living; as opposed to ‘the best that has been thought and said’ and the cultivation of the fine arts. Close inspection of the Notes suggests that more than mere involvement, a sliding from sense to sense is certainly part of the problem, and in the very passage where T. S. Eliot’s commitment to anthropology is most explicit. The second half of the paragraph below is a perfect example of what Bergonzi has in mind.
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. But these things added together do not constitute the culture, though we often speak for convenience as if they did. These things are simply the parts into which a culture can be anatomized, as a human body can. But just as a man is something more than the assemblage of the various constituent parts of his body, so a culture is more than the assemblage of its arts, customs, and religious beliefs. We see the impact of Indian philosophy in this concept that human body is made of pancha-tatava and dissolves into it but what is above this body is the belief the body lived with. The culture that one followed and the belief one had during life will lead to the eternal life of the soul. This may be the final reason for giving importance of following high culture. In eastern philosophy also we learn that those who follow good culture are dignified and attain salvation after death as every religion believes that the way you live on earth will decide the suffering or salvation of the departed soul. There are of course higher cultures and lower cultures as explained by Eliot, and the higher cultures in general are distinguished by differentiation of function, so that one can speak of the less cultured and the more cultured strata of society, and finally, one can speak of individuals as being exceptionally cultured. The culture of an artist or a philosopher is distinct from that of a mine worker or field labourer . . . but in a healthy society these are all parts of this same culture; and the artist, the poet, the philosopher, the politician and the labourer will have a culture in common, which they do not share
with other people of the same occupations in other countries.” Eliot emphasizes on higher and decent culture by differentiating it from the lower culture but it is not that agreed upon by all as they do not understand that Eliot had a sole role to motivate the low cultured waste landers towards seeking higher culture. He also says: There is unfortunately only a tenuous connection between what the old-time social evolutionists meant by their descriptive higher cultures and what the Arnoldians mean by various degrees of personal cultivation. The first is a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient condition, of the second. In fact the very suggestion that it could be anything more might have provoked from Ortega Gasset a rather sinister laugh, for the differentiation which Eliot finds in the ‘higher cultures’ is only specialization under another name; and such specialization, Ortega argued long ago, was precisely what made impossible the “exceptional cultivation” of individuals which Eliot rightly admired.[NTDC 36] There have been criticisms too that were against Eliot’s notion of culture.

In Eliot’s anatomical passages about the social body, leading to an endorsement of organic social wholes, Bergonzi tells us that Eliot is “attempting to move toward a third sense of culture which will go beyond the other two.” Yet because it is “the other two” which are used to explain this mysterious third sense, and because this is something they plainly cannot do, it is Eliot who is said to be confused. He is, we are told, “aware of the ambiguity”—i.e., between description and prescription—“though the subtleties and circumlocutions of his prose do little to resolve it.” Bergonzi adds that these ambiguities then reach some sort of climax in “an extraordinarily tortured
paragraph” on the subject of the unity of culture and religion, “a passage which illustrates the frequent tendency in Eliot’s prose for meanings to collapse and merge into each other as a result of excessive qualification . . .” and which helps to demonstrate, at least for Bergonzi, that “Eliot’s notion of culture as the incarnation of religion is not wholly intelligible.”[BB 157-159] **Once again, we see that Eliot reaches religion and philosophy through various paths of cultures he undertakes.** We must agree that it is not intelligible—or not in the terms supplied. But if we firmly set aside the either/or of the more neutral usages of science on the one hand, and the evaluative usage of Matthew Arnold on the other; if we concentrate instead upon the conception of culture which has come down so little changed from Johann Gottfried von Herder and was lucidly expounded by Isaiah Berlin13; and if we bear in mind Herder’s highly evaluative notion that each distinctive culture is to be prized as a self-sufficient totality, a totality embodied in its language, its arts, and its religion, so that “in order to understand one you have to understand all”—then what Eliot is saying presents no difficulty. It may also help to listen to the voices of the mullahs in the Holy City of Qom, whose arguments on behalf of Islamic culture serve now to justify theocratic rule, not to mention examples from even further a field. Eliot writes, “There is an aspect in which we can see a religion as the whole way of life of a people, from birth to grave, from morning to night and even in sleep, and that way of life is also its culture”, his sentiments would be warmly applauded. **Eliot had always been working to uplift spirituality, inculcate religious philosophies in his readers but there was a fatal outcome too of the variables that**
he inculcated in his essay. As Raymond said, “the difficulty about the idea of culture is that we are continually forced to extend it, until it becomes almost identical with our whole common life.” Moreover, here we see the fatal outcome of Eliot’s initiative. Williams too got attracted to the anthropological conception for its sheer political scope. What could possibly be larger than a whole way of life? That is what the anthropologists said the term ‘culture’ really meant, according to Williams. And if this strategic terminological weapon in the class war were to be wrested from those at Cambridge who had misappropriated it for their own effete and exclusive uses, then the extension proposed by social science should be pushed to the limit. If T. S. Eliot was going to define culture as eating Wensleydale cheese at Henley to the sound of Elgar, then Raymond Williams was free to add a few amendments of his own: why not “mixed farming, the Stock Exchange, coal-mining, the London Transport”?[RW 230] In retrospect, what is affecting about this growth is that when T. S. Eliot despondently foresaw an era so sullied that it would be “possible to say that it will have no culture”, Williams accused him of sliding away from the anthropological conception. After all, “no culture”, anthropologically speaking, would mean no life, no social forms, nothing at all. And this was evidently illogical and extraordinary. However, what was yesterday treated as an absurdity in Eliot’s social thought is perilously close to what Raymond Williams today proposes as a likely outcome along the way ahead. Now that in Marxism and Literature he is far advanced into what his admirers call his “ultra-left radical” phase, even his interviewers can be seen drawing back in anxiety and alarm.
For it William writes, “What I would hope will happen is that after the ground has been cleared of the received idea of literature, it will be possible to find certain new concepts which would call for special emphasis.” 17 Eliot rightly mentions his notion emphasizing religion and culture. He says, “So, while we believe that the same religion may inform a variety of cultures, we may ask whether any culture could come into being, or maintain itself, without a religious basis. We may go further and ask whether what we call the culture, and what we call the religion, of a people are not different aspects of the same thing: the culture being, essentially, the incarnation of the religion of a people”. [NTDC 101] The universality of irritation is the best assurance of peace. A country within which the divisions have gone too far is a danger to itself: a country which is too well united — whether by nature or by device, by honest purpose or by fraud and oppression — is a menace to others. In Italy and in Germany, we have seen that a unity with politico-economic aims imposed violently and too rapidly, had unfortunate effects upon both nations. Their cultures have developed in the course of a history of extreme, and extremely sub-divided regionalism: the attempt to teach Germans to think of themselves as Germans first, and the attempt to teach Italians to think of themselves as Italians first, rather than as natives of a particular small principality or city, was to disturb the traditional culture from which alone any future culture could grow. [NTDC 133] It is human, when we do not understand another human being, and cannot ignore him, to exert an unconscious pressure on that person to turn him into something that we can understand: many husbands and wives exert this pressure on each other. The effect on
the person so influenced is liable to be the repression and distortion, rather than the improvement, of the personality; and no man is good enough to have the right to make another over in his own image. [NTDC 138]  **In all of these Eliot is trying to emphasize on the enlistment of virtues, moral values and religion that makes a person highly cultured.**

6.3

**Religion and Literature and emphasis on Theological Standards**

Essay *Religion and Literature* was originally from a lecture organized by the Reverend V. A. Demant and published in the volume *Faith That Illuminates* in 1934. Subsequently, in 1936, Eliot himself collected the essay in his *Essays Ancient and Modern*, a somewhat revised version of his own earlier collection, *For Lancelot Andrews: Essays on Style and Order*, from 1928. As our study is all about the Biblical and Philosophical influences let us see how this essay of Eliot’s promotes religion. Eliot’s apparent aim for the essay is not to prove who is and who is not failing to meet the bar that he sets for dealing with spiritual matters or matters of belief in literature to establish which “explicit ethical and theological standards” can be properly brought to abide in the realm of modern writing. He feels that literary censure requires “a definite ethical and theological standpoint”. His additional and more imperative point is that in our own time, there is no agreement on what that standpoint should be, making it all that much more vital that individuals inspect their reading accordingly, particularly since the “greatness” of literature “cannot be
determined solely by literary standards.” In the immediate context of his remarks, Eliot particularly identifies these persons as Christians, given the further fact that, in his view, he was as much fighting a holding action for asserting the Christian basis to European culture.

Eliot is correct in pointing out the palpable: “moral judgments of literary works are made only according to the moral code accepted by each generation, whether it lives according to that code or not.” This point is indubitable: Whatever its source, however it may categorize itself or be categorized, a moral code directs our judgments of human behavior, including behavior that is manifested or explicated in works of literature. The operating principle that he establishes as he commences his actual process of analysis is that his concern will be not religious literature, “but with the application of our religion to the criticism of any literature.” He establishes the three senses in which one might refer to religious literature in the first place. One is in the same way as “we speak of ‘historical literature’ or of ‘scientific literature,’ and that would constitute works that are well written and delightful to read, but whose primary claim to any reader’s attention is their significance in regard to the field of endeavor or study or interest that is being addressed.

Another sense is as what is called “devotional poetry.” This often suggests the limitation; however, that sort of poetry is minor poetry. At the very least, Christian poetry in English, Eliot believes, “has been limited . . . almost exclusively to minor poetry.” The third sense in which one refers to “religious literature”. It is about works that advance some specific religious viewpoint. These types of works do not interest
Eliot in his present critical effort because he wants, he says, a “literature which should be unconsciously, rather than deliberately and insolently, Christian.” Eliot is prepared to see critical issues raised by the dual topics of religion and literature. The primary one is that “we fail to realize how completely, and yet how irrationally, we separate our literary from our religious judgments.” Using the 19th-century English novel for his case in point, he divides the development of this separation between religion and literature into three phases. In the first, faith was omitted entirely from “the picture of life” that these novels portrayed. In the second, faith was “doubted, worried about, or contested.” It is the third phase, the one “in which we are living,” that causes Eliot the most concern. It is that by now “the Christian Faith is not spoken of as anything but a continued existence. The absence of the notion of a feasible and living religion from contemporary literature is a serious problem because, in Eliot’s view, “what we read does not concern merely something called our literary taste, but . . . affects directly, though only amongst many other influences, the whole of what we are.” Omitting religion from literature as anything other than as an anachronism clearly also omits it, for the contemporary reader who has no way of knowing any better, from that very “whole of what we are.” The entire matter of literature’s more unconscious and unintended effects upon a reader’s total sensibilities, including the continuing formation of his or her **moral and theological standards**, is at the heart of **Eliot’s message**. Eliot announces, “The relation of what I have been saying to the subject announced should now be a little more apparent”. He continues: “Though we may read literature merely for pleasure, of ‘entertainment’ or of ‘aesthetic enjoyment,’ this
reading never affects simply a sort of special sense: it affects us as entire human beings; it affects our moral and religious existence.”

Eliot does not charge or denounce the individual writer and his or her values and beliefs either, such as they are. For them he says, “What a writer does to people is not necessarily what he intends to do.” Indeed, Eliot can confess, quite honestly, one must imagine, that “I am not even sure that I have not had some pernicious influence myself.” So, it is not so important to describe and define the relationship between religion and literature as to admit, and accept, that there always is one. While it is “our business, as readers of literature, to know what we like,” for Christian readers, it is “our business . . . to know what we ought to like. For “Modern literature, Eliot concludes, is neither a moral nor immoral, although the implication is that it would be more suitable if it were because then those attitudes would be out in the open. Rather, the problem is that it either “repudiates, or is wholly ignorant of, our most fundamental and important beliefs,” thereby “encouraging its readers to get what they can out of life while it lasts”. Once again, we see the reflection of life after death i.e. the eternal life in these lines. That sort of a hedonistic approach toward human existence, without any reference to the soul or eternity, is well within the realm of possible reasons given for living at any time, but Eliot’s complain is with the apparently acceptable reality that, in our time, such a outlook is so prevalent a one as to seem to the typically innocent consumer of contemporary literature to be the only reasonable view. **Eliot in his whole of the essay is trying to centralize on Christian reader and Christian dogmas.**
For the decade or more preceding “Religion and Literature,” Eliot’s prose writing was in two separate but complementary directions. In the first case, he was investigating the constituents of what he regarded as effective poetry and dramatic verse in essays on such subjects as Elizabethan drama and dramatists and English metaphysical poetry, as well as on major literary figures such as William Shakespeare and Dante Alighieri. On the other hand, he was engaging in a quasi-literary debate dealing with the limits of secular humanism as an evolving, atheistic intellectual posture and contemporary ameliorative for social ills. The modern waste landers were there on his mind always. These two areas of inquiry and critical opinion often merged in the matter of the spiritual or religious nature of human experience as an aspect of literary endeavor. Thus, Eliot was often raising and addressing questions related to the effective communication of thought and of feeling, the connections between poetry and belief and between poetry and philosophy, and the proper intellectual and historical foundations for assessing and maintaining moral and spiritual order and action. In “Religion and Literature,” Eliot was less controversial and more systematic towards the topic at hand, but he was remained a Christian apologist as always with his mind with the philosophical impact.

As Eliot sees it, there is only one solution to the culture and society’s increasing secularization of matters formerly left to religion, and it is a practical and practicable solution: Those with a view toward obtaining a religious view of life from contemporary works of literature must work “tirelessly to 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.” There is always present in the culture a relation between religion and literature because they are two critical components of any human culture of any time. In our own time, Eliot believes, that necessary relation must be safeguarded, even if only for themselves, by individuals who care not what the moment may bring, but what eternity may. ⁰¹

This essay can be viewed as a reaction against the tradition of viewing a literary work from purely aesthetic point of view. Many critics, especially the New Critics, believed that literature is not to be valued for its ethical and theological significance. But T.S. Eliot held the opinion that only literary criticism was not sufficient. After a literary work has been viewed as a work of imagination, it should also be considered from ethical and theological point of view. It is all the more important in our age when there is no agreement on ethical and theological values. For ascertaining the greatness of a literary work, that work of imagination should be appreciated from ethical and theological angles. As usual emphasizes on spiritualism like a deacon. Although literature has been judged from moral standards, it has been believed for a long time that there is no relationship between religion and literature. T.S. Eliot believed that there is and should be a relationship between the two. In his essay Religion and Literature he discussed the application of religion to literary criticism.

According to Eliot, the essay is not about religious literature, but he as a digression, mentions three types of religious literature. First, is the religious literature, which has literary qualities in it. For instance, the authorized version of the Bible or
the works of Jeremy Taylor. Those persons, who describe Bible only as a literary work and talk of its influence on English literature, have been referred to as ‘parasites’. According to Eliot, Bible is to be considered as ‘word of God’. Secondly, he mentions devotional poetry. A devotional poet he says is not the one who treats the subject matter in the religious spirit, but the one who treats a part of the subject matter. Eliot considers poets like Spencer, Hopkins, Vaughan and Southwell as minor poets while Dante, Corneille and Racine as major poets. Thirdly, he states, are the works of authors who want to forward the cause of religion. These types of works come under propaganda, for instance, Chesterton’s ‘Man who was Thursday’ and ‘Father Brown’. Eliot laments over the irrationality behind the separation of our literary and religious judgment. Exemplifying literature by the way of novel that influenced a big number of readers, he says this secularization has been a gradual process for the last three hundred years. Since Defoe, the process has been continuous.

The process can be divided into three phases. In the first phase fall the novels in which Faith is taken for granted and omitted from its picture of life. The authors belonging to this phase are Fielding and Thackeray. In the second phase novels, Faith is doubted, worried about and contested. It includes authors like George Eliot, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy. The third phase is the age in which we are living and authors included are all contemporary novelists except James Joyce. This secularization is obvious in the way a reader reads a novel – without caring for the consequence it has upon one’s behavior. The general factor between religion and
literature is behavior. Our religion imposes upon us ethics, judgment and criticism of ourselves, and our behavior with our fellow men. Literature too has an effect on our behavior. Whatever the intentions of the author, his works affect us wholly as human beings. Even if we read a literary work purely for aesthetic purposes keeping our ethics and morality in a separate compartment, it affects us as human beings, whether we intend it or not. Modern readers have lost their religious values. They do not have the wisdom to be able to obtain knowledge of life, comparing one view against the other. Moreover, the knowledge of life that we obtain from fiction is not of life itself but is knowledge of other people’s knowledge of life. What adds to the problem is that there are too many books and the reader is confused. Only modern writers of distinction have an improving effect, otherwise the contemporary writers have an effect that is degrading. The reader must keep in mind two things – ‘what we like’, that is, what we really feel; and ‘what we ought to like’, that is, understanding our shortcomings. As honest men, we must not assume that what we like is what we ought to like; and as honest Christians we should assume that we do like what we ought to like.

Once again, impact of Bible and Christianity is reflected in his words but Eliot is also concerned with secularization of literature. It has dual role to play now. He also adds that it is the duty of the Christians to use certain standards in addition to those used by the rest of the world. If a Christian is conscious of the gulf between him and contemporary literature, he will not be harmed by it. Majority of the people consider economic ills as cause of all the problems and call for drastic economic changes,
while others want more or less drastic social changes. Both types of changes are opposed to each other but a common point is that they hold the assumption of secularization. Some want the individual to subordinate his interests to those of the state. However, Eliot does not agree with these people. Eliot does not complain about modern literature because it is depraved or even unethical but because it instigates people to try out every kind of experience and not to stay back or miss any. A Christian reader should add to the literary criticism followed by the rest of the world. He should, in addition, apply ethical and theological standards to it. 19 What more can be quoted now to prove how deeply Eliot’s writings were influenced by religion and spiritualism. Eliot wrote of tradition in conjunction with ideas of religion and literature being indivisible. It suggests that he sees a link between the two, and this link is perhaps found in "After Strange Gods", in which Eliot addresses not only the need for tradition but also the danger that one might "associate tradition with the immovable" or "think of it as something hostile to all change."[ASG 18] Eliot not only promoted his religion and ethics through his pen rather he had possessed an open mindedness for the change for the betterment of humanity but also religion should not be excluded. This is clear from the following quotation:

Since the fabric of history changes subtly every time a new event or creative act is added to it, tradition itself must be continually shifting and changing; yet it must also remain constant. As Eliot speaks of establishing tradition among a population he asserts that in so doing, "What is still more important is unity of religious background.[ASG 20]
His view of the link between religion and tradition is later stated unequivocally: "I believe that a right tradition for us must be also a Christian tradition". [ASG 21] This may seem, to the non-Christian, a preposterous statement to make; but Christianity and tradition are well suited to one another. The changing yet constant tradition which encompasses individuals without subsuming their individuality immediately recalls, for the Biblically aware, the reconciliation of stillness and movement, universality and individuality, which is found in the Christian God: this God can say "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". [ASG 20] But it can also be said that it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. 20 The pure Biblical impact is seen here. The entity is "not consumed" because of God's unchanging changefulness: God's mercies are new every morning, yet He does not change. Likewise, tradition is constantly being renewed, rewritten by additions to it, yet remains a solid and unmoving benchmark against which the individual can be measured. Eliot weaves literature, tradition and religion into one thread; and, as Ecclesiastes tells us, "a three-fold cord is not quickly broken". 21

However, if Eliot's critical discourse concerning religion, literature and tradition is taken to its logical conclusion, then all literature fits this category; the distinction is no longer meaningful. Indeed, "religious" themes can be found throughout Eliot's works. The influence of ethics is reflected everywhere. Preaching for religion and good conduct is done through his pen. He does this taking indirect references from
the scriptures of the east and the west, as he was an erudite personality possessing information of all the spiritual beliefs and philosophies.
Chapter VI

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