3.1

Impact of Contemporary Religious Crisis

By the beginning of the 20th century, approximately one-sixth of the population of the United States was Catholic. Modern Catholic immigrants came to the United States from the Philippines, Poland and Latin America, especially from Mexico. This multiculturalism and diversity had greatly affected the flavor of Catholicism in the United States. Many dioceses serve in both English and Spanish. When many parishes were set up in the United States, separate churches were built for parishioners from Ireland, Germany, Italy, etc.

In Iowa, the development of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the work of Bishop Loras and the building of St. Raphael's Cathedral illustrate this point. In the later 20th century the Catholic Church in the United States became the subject of controversy due to allegations of clerical child abuse of children and adolescents, of Episcopal negligence in arresting these crimes, and of numerous civil suits that cost Catholic dioceses hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. T.S. Eliot shows this kind of abuse in the wasteland in the story of the daughters of Thames.

Contrary to what many observers predicted in the 1960s and early 1970s, religion had remained as vibrant and vital a part of American society as in generations past. New issues and interests had emerged, but religion's role in many Americans' lives remains undiminished. Perhaps the one characteristic that distinguishes late-twentieth-century religious life from the rest of America's
history, however, is diversity. To trace this development, we must look back to the 1960s. As with many aspects of American society, the 1960s proved a turning point for religious life as well. Traditional Christianity faced some challenges in the first half of the century, especially from the literary elite of the 1920s, but after the second Great War, the populace seemed eager to replenish its spiritual wells during this psychological state. Eliot wrote to motivate people to lift up their spirits to the god. For this creation, we can say that the society as well as his personal life was responsible.

Over the next decade and a half, however, this peaceful landscape was besieged from many sides. The Civil Rights movement, the "Sexual Revolution," Vietnam, Women's Liberation, and new "alternative" religions e.g., yoga, transcendental meditation, Buddhism, Hinduism all challenged the traditional church and its teachings, its leaders and their actions. The Church, along with government, big business, and the military—those composing "the Establishment"—was denounced by the young adults of the 60s for its materialism, power ploys, self-interest, and smug complacency. This disturbed T. S. Eliot. An acquaintance wrote that Eliot's study reminded him of a nineteenth-century pedagogue or parson. . . . His bedroom was lit by a bare electric light bulb, there was an ebony crucifix above his single bed, and the window looked out upon a brick wall". T. S. Eliot was so different from other Modernist writers in his determined dedication to religious observances. More explicitly, T. S. Eliot: His Religion, His Poetry, His Roles 261 what were the events in Eliot's life that
impelled him to convert to Anglo-Catholicism. Religious Beginnings During his studies at Harvard, Eliot became intensely preoccupied with the problem of religion. In 1909, he took an Irving Babbitt course in French literary criticism, but it was mainly Babbitt's views on the moral and cultural climate in the United States that attracted him. In his book Literature and the American College, Babbitt 1908 inveighed against the Romantic philosophy of J. J. Rousseau, whose espousal of emotional emancipation and individual freedom was then in vogue in American education.

The entire Romantic Movement in literature was anathema to Babbitt, and its sentimentality dismayed Eliot. In its place, Babbitt preached the virtues of Greek Classicism with its emphasis upon clear form and the discipline of feeling and behavior. No word is more important to the understanding of Eliot's character than discipline. Babbitt declaimed against the Romanticists' notion of the inevitable progress and uplifting of the human spirit, and his disparaging viewpoint appealed to Eliot. It was Babbitt's ideas that inspired Eliot to rebel against his parents' Unitarianism in the guise of an intellectual pursuit of an ideal religion. Babbitt directed Eliot to the study of Sanskrit and Oriental religion, and in his later doctoral studies Eliot gave serious study to Vedanta and Hinduism. Many years later, he confided to Stephen Spender that, at the time of his work on The Waste Land he had seriously considered becoming a Buddhist.

In 1914, Eliot traveled to London, met fellow American Ezra Pound there, and showed him his poetry. Pound immediately recognized a kindred spirit in
Modernism, helped Eliot publish his earliest poems, and persuaded him to become a poet and remain in England. Eliot soon came under the influence of T. E. Hulme, the forceful philosopher critic who, like Babbitt, scorned Romanticism and championed classicism. Hulme 1924 was convinced "that man is by nature bad or limited, and can consequently only accomplish anything of value by disciplines, ethical, heroic, or political. In other words, we believe in. . . Original Sin. We may define Romantics, then, as all who do not believe in the Fall of Man". In a lecture written in 1916, Eliot espoused "a return to the ideals of classicism. These may roughly be characterized as form and restraint in art, discipline and authority in religion, centralization in government either as socialism or monarchy". Le Bourgeois remarks, Eliot was unconsciously provoking precisely the kind of condemnation from liberal-minded people that might have been expected.

3.2
Impact of Marital Life

Most decisive to Eliot's increasing need for religion was his marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood in England, June 1915, about three months after they met. Although Vivien objected, Eliot almost immediately went by himself to visit his parents in St. Louis. His decision to become a poet dismayed his parents who had hoped he would be a professor of philosophy. From the beginning sex was a failure. His Religion, His Poetry, His Roles related perhaps to perceiving the
female as a succuba eviscerate (LG 75). Vivien "never quite accepted their incompatibility, while Eliot accepted it too quickly". Vivien developed a host of physical ailments, and Eliot suffered intense lassitude, depression, and severe anxiety. To this torturous situation, was added a complex relationship with Bertrand Russell who had been Eliot's professor at Harvard. They met again in London and became friendly; when Eliot married, the three became close friends. Later there were speculations about sexual relations of Russell and Vivienne.  

Russell’s intervention did not yield the anticipated results but instead led to increasing marital disharmony and to Eliot's enduring hostility toward him. According to Sencourt 1971, Eliot "said . . . that he was driven to belief by seeing agnosticism pushed to its limits by Bertrand Russell. . . . This situation . . . is the background of everything that Eliot wrote in verse or prose from 1915 onwards".

Eliot wrote a harsh review of Russell's ‘Why I Am Not a Christian’ in the same year he himself became a Christian, and he entitled it "Why Mr. Russell Is a Christian." As Eliot's marital plight continued, Vivien kept tormenting him with the sexual catastrophe that he had permitted between her and Russell. Eliot began to feel increasing guilt about his part in the terrible encounter. As his guilt escalated, he increasingly regarded the Russell episode from a purely moral viewpoint. That is why his characters of his plays that lack in morality are taught to uplift it. The event was seen retrospectively in an exactingly moral perspective and became a core around which his religious needs and convictions continued to grow. In his marital agony and moral dilemma, Eliot became increasingly drawn
to Anglo-Catholicism. In The Hippopotamus 1919, he writes: The hippo's feeble steps may err In compassing material ends, While the True Church need never stir To gather in its dividends. Early critics interpreted the poem as showing the hippo's (Eliot's) discomfort with Christian doctrine, but today it is felt that such an explanation "oversimplifies the relations between belief and disbelief in a mind like Eliot's. The Eliot’s had no relief from their sexual problems, financial stress, and various illnesses. In 1927, Eliot and Vivien went to a center for treating nervous disorders, where the therapy consisted of "strong gushes of hot, alternating with icy cold, water which was played on the naked body. The doctors . . . deprecated drugs and avoided psychoanalysis". 7 Sencourt, who was with them, felt that Eliot benefited more than his wife. Eliot suffered unceasing anxiety and dread. He obtained a leave of absence from Lloyds for reason of a "nervous breakdown." Eliot had been working on The Waste Land since the end of 1919, and with a great deal of editorial help and emotional support from both Pound and Vivien he was able to finish the poem during this period of recuperation. Eliot had recently become the unpaid editor of a new literary journal, the Criterion, and he included The Waste Land in its first issue of October 1922. One month later The Waste Land appeared in the American publication Dial, which chose the poem for its award of two thousand dollars. The Waste Land soon established Eliot as a foremost poet of his time. Its opening lines April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain, became imprinted upon a generation of readers. When first published,
The Waste Land was considered a highly allusive depiction of people's disillusionment following World War I. More recent critical opinion has centered upon the poem's expression of Eliot's acute torment and grief in his marriage. Vivien contributed several key lines to the poem, e.g., "What you get married for if you don't want children?" This line may well exemplify Vivien's feeling of sexual rejection. Russell's influence is shown in several of the poem's many recondite allusions, one of which clothes him in the robes of a reader of tarot cards and writer of horoscopes. [PA]

The intrinsic meaning of The Waste Land has been variously interpreted. The manifest theme of the poem centers upon a land rendered sterile due to the impotence of its king. The king's cure is sought through a search for the Holy Grail, thus bringing religion onto the scene. In Ash Wednesday 1930, Eliot proclaimed, "I do not hope to turn again" used in a religious sense, the word "turn" refers to converting from one religion to another. Here Eliot for the first time proclaimed his Anglo-Catholicism in poetic form. Like all other authors, the contemporary religious crisis and the crisis in his marital life and unethical behaviour of Russel too influenced Eliot. Therefore, he created some of his sermon based poetry and drama to educate man about the importance of worship, renunciation of worldly pleasures, abandoning adultery, sin and expiation and the need to prepare for the eternal life after the death.

Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that his personal life played a great role in shaping his works. May be his thoughts got engraved in the
happenings of his first marriage, Vivienne’s relations with Russel and the following consequences so, in his poems such as Wasteland and Ash Wednesday and his plays such as The Cocktail Party he wrote to get away from perverted human activities, stop sinning and ask for forgiveness so that human souls can be uplifted in spiritualism and get the path of religion to follow for attaining salvation or the moksha.
Chapter III
References


3. UR (p. 256). 262 M RAY H. S HERMAN


