CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM OF BELIEF

The central thesis of 'the problem of belief' running through the works of T.S. Eliot, be they his 'prose reflexions' or poetry, has remained untouched and, if at all there have been attempts made to look at it, these have been very unsatisfactory. The question that needs an answer at this juncture is: How does the problem arise in literary writings? Shipley (1970: 29) explains the genesis of the problem, which he calls 'the psychological form of the problem of truth' by noting that 'literary works sometimes contain implicit or explicit' doctrines that 'readers may believe or disbelieve.' One cannot afford to ignore this important statement. The extent of the connection between the aesthetic value of a literary work, and the acceptability of the doctrine(s) that any given literary work highlights, is a factor determining the treatment of this problem in a work of art. Any critical evaluation of philosophical and religious poetry or drama also presents serious challenges before the critic who has to wrestle with this problem the most.

Eliot's candid admission of the seriousness of this problem in his essay, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca", published in 1927 around the same time as his conversion into...
Anglo-Catholic faith, is of greater significance when viewed in the context of his own writings both creative and critical. He notes that 'the problem of belief is very complicated and probably insoluble.' Like many of his observations which have been taken at their face value, this admission of Eliot's is also cited as a piece of evidence to show how Eliot made statements that he never really tried to explain. What seems to have been missed is apparently what follows the statement:

Whether Truth ultimately prevails is doubtful and has never been proved; but it is certain that nothing is more effective in driving out error than a new error.

Eliot's observation here is reflective of the result of the intellect in seeking an answer to the questions about the problem of truth as noted by Shipley. Truth is almost always seen as a universal value which may prove to be self-deluding in the absence of a certain process of validation which is, in turn, possible only on the basis of a conviction. We shall come back to this point in due course.

Let us in the meanwhile turn to Eliot's other important essay "Religion and literature' published in 1935. This essay saw Eliot arguing about 'faith that illuminates'. It is indeed difficult to miss the link of this essay with his seminal work, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) and After Strange Gods, (1934) called 'A Primer of Heresy'. We had noted in the
"Introduction" to this thesis, how the charge made against these prose writings being an attempt at theological evaluation finds no substantiation whatever. It was argued that given the nature of Eliot's views about a creative piece, it may be safe to conclude that Eliot had no such intentions. It is interesting to discover gradually, as one negotiates the turns and bends in Eliot's discourse, how Eliot does not want a pre-humanistic Christianity. Nor does he plead for the revival of Christianity. He merely finds the modern humanistic civilization to be devoid of religious belief and his effort is mainly aimed at injecting an element of belief into this civilization. It would be clear to us on a closer comparison how the problem of belief runs parallel to the problem of narrowness. Eliot's 'poetics', it would be useful to note, is narrow because he accepts the general poetics before him — a poetics shaped by Coleridge and Arnold — but introduces his own poetics as the part which he finds missing in it.

Notwithstanding Eliot's assertion that in his creative writing, he is dealing with 'actuality' while in his 'prose reflexions', he may be 'legitimately occupied with ideals', he demonstrates how these ideals could be translated into 'actuality'. In "A Better Answer", Mathew Prior says:

The Diff'rence there is betwixt Nature/Art:
I court others in verse; but I love thee in Prose;
And They have my Whimsies; but Thou hast my Heart.
And Eliot reverses this straightaway. Ideals would remain meaningless until the time they are turned into actuality. As if this were not enough, there are philosophers and critics who hold that ideals are no concern of poetry. In a sharp rejoinder to this position, as it were, Smith (1974: 133) notes that if 'ideals' were not the concern of poetry, it could only mean that it is not the business of poetry to show unreal attainments as if they were true. Eliot seems to believe that the roots of the problem of belief lie in the creative writers writing as they 'want to feel' rather than as they 'do feel'. Thus the 'ideal' of their wanting to feel in a particular way and its projection into their creative enterprise appears to lie beyond the 'actuality' of their writing 'as they do feel'. This dichotomy found in the work of a writer gives birth to a moral crisis leading to the well-known thesis of Eliot's, 'le monde moderne avilit', which has been brought into sharp focus in After Strange Gods.

To return to the point about Truth being a universal value reinforced through a certain process of validation based on conviction, we need to go back to Eliot's statement about Truth in 'Shakespeare and the stoicism of Seneca.' A new error, Eliot avers, is more effective than anything else in driving out an existing error. How does one go about doing this? Of course, through the method of reasoning which the intellect makes possible. Trueblood argues that such a method is 'sterile' by itself 'because reason requires something on which to work'. 
First of the essentials is involvement. Secondly, there is the idea of Paradox (most fundamental: faith and reason). Moreover, as he points out, the religious propositions, which contain the Truths as universal values by the believers, are quite controversial in themselves and, therefore, necessitate the process of validation.

A perforated faith is born of a shaken belief and the problem of Evil raises its head under those conditions where such validation is not possible. Trueblood argues further that the problem of evil may and, in all possibilities, 'does not even exist for the unbeliever.' Elaborating on this, he states,

The problem of evil... arises in any rational mind when the widespread tendency to believe in the goodness of God is challenged by the patent fact that the world is imperfect. One needs to examine Eliot's comments in the light of this observation. Eliot talks quite often about the imperfections of the world as he has done in After Strange Gods.

However, before we go on to Eliot, it would be useful to keep in mind the warning sounded by Trueblood that 'Evil is the price we pay for moral freedom.' Is it then untrue to say that Eliot has similar ideas which prompt him to lambast D H Lawrence and Thomas Hardy as heretics? When Eliot talks of the break away from tradition, his concern is also with the
tendency on the part of the modern writers to give to their work a secular tilt by occupying themselves in dealing 'only with changes of a temporal, material and external nature' and 'with morals only of a collective nature'\(^{12}\) or by subordinating 'everything to political power.'\(^{13}\) In other words, he is wary about changes that are limited to a section of time and material and thus do not have universal acceptance. Moreover, these changes are external in nature like what has come to be called the strain of cruelty which is a novelty that has led us to the perverse. This has roots in the belief that no experience of life need be missed because only an unrestrained individualism' would allow for the emergence of truth. And it is this tendency on the part of the modern writers that Eliot feels is akin to the worship of 'strange gods', each of whom represent a break from the tradition.

The break away from tradition is evident in the movement from conservatism to liberalism; from romanticism to humanism; from agrarianism to industrialism; from Catholicism to Protestantism; from nationalism to provincialism; from community life to individualism; from orthodoxy to heresy; from classicism to secularism; from agrarianism to economic determinism; from the Word to the sciences, and from traditionalism to modernism.
Eliot draws us into the discussion about the human 'perception of Good and Evil' as being 'the first prerequisite of (a) spiritual life' reflected partly in the expression given to doubt or in blasphemy. He notes how blasphemy is 'a notion dealing with a positive power for evil working through human agency.' At the same time, he relates it to 'feelings supported by the conservatism of those who have anything to lose by social changes.' The essential point we would like to make at this stage is that if the mere perception of Good and Evil were the first prerequisite of a spiritual life, if conformity to nature were all there was to it and if it were merely a matter of what Eliot calls the 'right belief', then blasphemy would appear to be a more meaningful and logical position to maintain.

The evidence of the existence of the problem of evil is largely unconscious and indirect and, therefore, very attractive and convincing. And Trueblood finds in this phenomenon the strongest support for the belief that God exists after all. Evil is the result of our inability to understand the meaning of many experiences that seem to suggest that they would not be possible if God were a reality. This is the essence of atheism but only a believer may pass through mental conflicts that shake our faith in God. A non-believer cannot. To any ordinary follower of the faith when he finds himself
on the crossroads of belief, it is simply that 'Either God
wills to remove the evil and is not able or God does not will
to remove it' (at all). In other words, the tenability of
His existence in moral terms would be completely jeopardised
it there were no evil. But there is more to belief than
this basic truth. What is moral or otherwise is to be decided
on the basis of our attitudes towards the problems of life.

Commenting on the nature of attitudes, Rockeach (1968; 450) argues that there are two aspects to every act of reli-
gious faith: volitional and cognitive. The volitional
aspect involving a question of free choice is emphasised in
the word 'trust'. In order to believe in something as true,
as real, one must learn to trust. On the other hand, the
cognitive aspect involving recognition is emphasised in the
word 'belief'. Cognition presupposes the ability of the
believer to perceive the whole of the object even if some of
its parts fall beyond the focus of such cognition. The
essential idea embedded in this dialectical standpoint is
that a person's knowledge is subject to varying degrees of
certitude about the nature of truth, goodness and the desira-
bility or otherwise of that representation. But this must
be seen invariably in the light of its affective component
wherein the effect of varying intensity is aroused due to and
around the object of belief, or the object of belief posited
with others, requiring a judgement about its authenticity in
comparison with the belief proper.
Once this happens, it may be tempered through the behavioural component of belief because belief, being a response of a varying threshold, must lead to some reaction. The nature of such an action or a reaction must be dictated obviously by the content of the belief. In examining the central thesis of the problem of belief running through Eliot's writings, we would like to focus on likely answers to some of the pertinent questions arising out of the fact that action depends on the content of a given belief.

Some of these questions are: (1) How does Eliot define faith and belief? (2) In what way does belief find reflected in a creative work in his view? (3) How does Eliot perceive the problem of belief as it is faced by modern man? (4) What is Eliot's regimen for the resolution of this problem in literature? and (5) What are the criteria used by Eliot for the classification of any creative work as Christian and/or heretical? These are the five questions that are central to Eliot's poetics which will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 7. While Chapter 3 shows how the structure of his poetics evolves from the structure of religion as he perceives it, Chapter 7 explains the main planks of his poetics, reconstructed and reaffirmed.

We shall begin with the first question listed above. How does Eliot define faith and belief? We shall attempt an answer to this question by going back to Eliot's works. Thomas Becket, when he has heard the Tempters in Murder in the
Cathedral, moments before he is martyred, makes a very important observation by re-stating that

The last temptation is the greatest treason;
To do the right deed for the wrong reason.  

It is to be noted that the second line is an extension and exemplification of the first one. The greatest treason is to do the right deed but for the wrong reason. Implied in this observation is a misplaced belief. Even if the right deed is done for the wrong reason, the right deed becomes vitiated. This is the result of a shaken faith. A faith that is not constant is no faith at all. Both a right deed done for the wrong reason or a wrong deed done for the right reason are fine examples of lack of faith. How do we define faith?

Walhout (1963: 68) defines faith as 'the means of grasping truth through the supernatural deliverance of propositions' whose basis is 'the cognition of revelation regarded as a body of objective knowledge.' In other words, faith is the result of our grasping of the truths, both implicit and explicit, through the cognition of revelation. This cognitive ability is a part of the tradition which is inclusive of 'traditional religious beliefs' and much more, for, as Eliot notes, it involves a 'perception of Good and Evil' which is to him 'the first requisite of spiritual life.' However, we live in an age of unsettled beliefs and enfeebled tradition wherein even men of letters are not free of this weakness. The result is that a dangerous situation has been created when
Wrong beliefs are nurtured.

Walker finds the focus of faith 'in that part of our personality which concerns decision-making, attitude... character' and 'will'. Also, both emotion and intellect are present in faith which involves the attitudes of trust and loyalty. Thus, trust and loyalty, the spirit of self-abandonment and the courage to act are the elements of faith. The spirit of self-abandonment, a very loose term, suggests a person's willingness to risk something in a spirit of adventure and the readiness to submerge through surrendering of one's self into a superior existence, that of the soul with the oversoul. Having faith implies faith in moral principles and moral causes. Faith, according to Luther, 'is a living well-founded confidence in the grace of God.' All this finds its reflection in the works of Eliot's and the point of its culmination seems to be in the moral resignation of Thomas Becket to the will of God.

Turning to the nature of belief in Eliot's scheme of things, we find that, for him, it is the material of art, the poet's point of view or the reader's understanding which is important. Eliot holds that the agents do not believe but merely do what is expected of them. It is forgotten in the process that this doing involves a belief shaped by a certain conviction which forms the point of discussion in one of the following chapter. Comments Fei-Pai Lu (1966, 35) that 'True
belief is "acceptable" to the audience "livable" for the poet, and "realizable" in art.26 Hence the need for convictions. This necessarily means that the reader and the poet should have a common belief because it is a question relating to the form of perception on the part of the reader and the nature of the point of view of the poet. It is the point of view which is mistakenly called a philosophy or belief. Point of view is actually the very basis of the poet's criticism of life which is mirrored in his or her work. It is to be noted that Eliot does not think of creative and critical sides of a literary artist's work as two different attributes. There has to be, so he seems to believe, a fine amalgamation of these two aspects. A creative literary artist must not only have the ability to create on the basis of his convictions but must also draw upon his or her innate ability to criticise because the latter ability is one that he or she would be able to put to use only if the artist were steeped in a tradition.

Hoskot (1961: 170) argues differently. 'Belief', he avers, 'is intimately connected with thought and... emotions which impel one to action.'27 (added emphases). Nor can the two be separated. Thought is as much necessary or is a prerequisite for an emotion to take shape in reaction as emotion is to give rise to a successive thought and thus a chain of thoughts. It is in this cyclical nature of the relationship of thought and emotion that a critical and creative endeavour
takes its form. This may be seen as its structuring principle. One would like to sound a word of caution here. Thought is hardly used to refer to the artist's private thoughts. Rather, it is to be seen as referring to universal truths that are an inherent part of a tradition. Seen in the context of a Christian tradition, the conceptualisation of 'Christian Love in abstract impersonal terms', it gets a new meaning which draws it closer to religious beliefs. That might be a narrow view of an artist's belief because within the broad parameters of a tradition and being closely aligned to a particular faith (which might be seen as a part of it), it would tend to become individual, sectarian or, maybe, even segregated.

It is obvious that Eliot would not in any event allow to tradition this kind of a colouring. One may as well argue that this is the meaning of the striving for belief as Schneider (1975: 211) puts it. Mair (1955: 459) holds 'belief' to be 'the mental state of assurance or conviction'. The kind of assurance this is or might be would be clear if we were to think of thoughts finding endorsement as the referents to reality. Thus, it is a 'conscious orientation' towards such an endorsement of reality in its full acceptance as 'the truth' (added emphases).

This leads us on to explore for an answer to a related question: In what way does belief find reflected in a creative
work in Eliot's view of things? The manner of a creative artist's projection of his or her belief into his or her work would appear to be simple in Eliot's scheme of things. Eliot notes that if Christ is the centre of Faith in Christianity, all Christian writing must celebrate Christ's being. This is best done through symbols as in Eliot's poem, "The cultivation of the Christmas Tree":

The accumulated memories of annual emotion
May be concentrated into a great joy
which shall be also a great fear, as on the occasion when fear came upon every soul:
Because the beginning shall remind us of the end
And the first coming of the second coming -
(11. 29-34)\textsuperscript{30}

The fear that is referred to is the result of the breaking of the covenant between God and Man. If the first coming is the birth and life of Christ as well as his resurrection, the second coming is his promise to return. This is the strength of imagination which is the one power alone that makes a poet, according to Blake (1961: 821)\textsuperscript{31} Some explication of this is in order before we finally come to the point of showing how this is true in terms of the projection of a belief of an artist strengthened through a scaffolding of tradition into his or her literary work.
Smith (1961: 229-30), explaining the importance of symbol in 'religion' and 'theology,' notes the following distinctive features:

1. Its ultimate referent is "supersensible," because it refers either to God or to some other aspect of faith which falls beyond the spatial and temporal limits of our experiences.

2. It is not convention... but it is organically related to an historical situation, ... to a community.

3. It employs concrete, empirical experience without restriction... (and) can, become symbolic religiously under a certain set of conditions.

4. It "participates" in that to which it points and

5. It cannot be changed by fiat and its life is not wholly at the command of human will. (added emphases).

In short, a symbol refers to some aspect of faith free from the constraints of time and space when the referent is 'supersensible.' Secondly, its organic relationship to a historical situation (like the crucifixion of Christ) makes it non-conventional. Thirdly, in employing an 'empirical' experience, it becomes symbolic in that it becomes a metonymic whole. Fourthly, its participation in an event, it represents, makes it both the referent and the event at the same time. Lastly, being stative (in the sense that it does not and cannot be changed), it is not contingent upon the human will. It is in
this way that a symbol becomes a part of the creative endeavour.

Returning to the point of the manner in which the artist's belief finds its projection in his or her creative work, one would like to apply the analogy of what happens in religion to that happening in literature. A literary artist, who is steeped in tradition, uses his or her experience in the context of belief to give shape to a classic because only a classic is not narrow in its expression but universal. And what is universal always falls outside the bonds of a time and space continuum. The maintenance of a tradition is not a matter of following the conventions. It is indeed something that organically relates the work to a culture whose repository it is. It would be myopic to see this within the context of a historical situation that is identifiable with time but in the sense of a cyclical formulation whereby certain events recur in the course of history. For, that alone would help explain events that might be said to be true of all times.

Again, the expression of the artist's experience is both concrete and empirical thus making them the prerequisites of a living tradition. Concreteness does not, in any way, exclude a symbolic or even an imaginative recreation of this experience. The experience needs to be empirical (in the sense that it must be based on observation or experimentation and not necessarily be something that evolves out of a theoretical construct) if it is to be acceptable in its recreated form.
It is in this sense that the expression of art is always impersonal. What is personal may be true of the experience of one individual, not shared by others. For instance, *Hamlet* evokes in the readers or viewers, watching it being staged, the same kind of emotion or its equivalent that Shakespeare might have had in mind and might have gone through. As readers or viewers, when we read or watch *Murder in the Cathedral*, we can share with Archbishop Thomas Becket the experience of the glory of Christian martyrdom. More so, when we identify ourselves completely with Becket, actions become ours and so does his destiny.

A literary work participates in or celebrates the events it recreates and it is this that lends to it an aura of authenticity. A literary artist recreates an event of life or an occurrence by providing it a focus within the parameters of a tradition. Minus its traditional (not in the sense of what is recurrent but in the sense of what fits into the mould of a tradition) content, it would lack commitment and become very unconvincing. Add to this lack of belief and one would have something that tends towards the perverse. It is the belief of a writer that keeps the work away from perversion, for belief is an inseparable part of a tradition. What might seem perverse might also seem easily to fall or have a tendency to fall outside the pail of a tradition. It is such a work that Eliot warns us against. What is not true of human experience that can be tested on the criterion of the timeless may be a good work of
art insofar as its overt structure is concerned. It may be equally acceptable as a work illustrative of the perverse with reference to its overall structure. Thus newness for its own sake is suspect.

Finally, a literature that is born out of convictions takes a stand on the issues raised in it and therefore can hardly afford to remain non-committal. The modern man has lost the sheet anchor of faith. It is the absence of faith or its inadequate projection in a literary work (which needs to mirror life if it is to become acceptable), it has become secular. T S Eliot complains about this in these words: 'the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call secularism.' He goes on to explain has this needs to be seen in the inability of the literary scholarship to be simply unaware of or to lack in the understanding of the meaning of 'the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life.' What solution does the modern man propose to this problematic weakness? Explains Eliot in The Idea of a Christian Society that 'the obvious secularist solution for the muddle is to subordinate everything to political power.' This is one of those tendencies that lead to the worship of 'strange gods.' Eliot uses the word muddle for problems and this means a confusing bolus also — something very unedifying and hopeless.

Eliot turns his attention to this 'secularist solution' of the modern man, wherein everything else is subordinated to
'political power', in *Murder in the Cathedral*. Watch the movement of the discoursal patterns when three of the four knights remind Becket:

You are the Archbishop in revolt against
the king; in rebellion to the king and
the law of the land; / You are the Arch-
bishop who was made by the king;
whom he set in your place to carry out
his command. 37 (added emphasis)

Mark the word emphasised. The Archbishop is the Archbishop because he was 'made' by the king. God had not made him an Archbishop and, hence, he could not claim divinity. Thus we find the 'spiritual power' of the Church hierarchy being subor-
dinated to the 'political power' wielded by the King of England. The king, who made Becket the Archbishop, had set him there
'to carry out his' (the king's) and not His (God's) 'command'. The meaning of the rhetoric is this: the Archbishop, who is the king's appointee, is now in revolt against the king and the
laws of the land. Either he must give up his revolt or face the charges of treason because he has gone against the king.

This takes us to the third question: How does Eliot perceive the problem of belief as it is faced by modern man? The answer to this question is to be found in "The Modern Mind" where Eliot takes up a whole gamut of issues raised by I A Richards in his book, *Practical Criticism*, by what is 'a regimen of
of spiritual exercises' proposed to take care of it. Eliot finds the following points on which Richards comments as only expressing 'a modern emotional attitude' which he says 'I cannot share.'

1. Man's loneliness (the isolation of the human situation)
2. The facts of birth and death, in their inexplicable oddity
3. The inconceivable immensity of the Universe
4. Man's place in the perspective of time
5. The enormity (sc. enormousness) of man's ignorance

Man's loneliness is 'a frequent attitude in romantic poetry', notes Eliot but he is silent on the second point.

It is 'the inconceivable immensity of the Universe' which attracted comment from Eliot. To Eliot, Pascal's terrified response to the eternal silence of the immense spaces seems to be the result of Pascal's 'religious background' and can be 'intelligible' to only those 'with a definite religious background'. The stress on the words definite and religious would not be lost upon the readers. Such is the insistence on these as a precondition to connect the intelligibility of responses of the kind given by Pascal and the need for a religious background, not generally so but definite, for one to be able to understand it!

Eliot does not find Richards's reference to 'man's place in the perspective of time' as 'especially edifying' or
'stimulating to the imagination' in the absence of belief. The belief he refers to is in the fact that human history has 'a sense and a meaning' in the history of the world. This is central to the understanding of Eliot's poetics which views human history, the tradition, within the broader framework, even perspective of the history of the world which began with the creation of time and the world. In other words, this is the perspective gained from the intersection of time with both the created and the real telescoping into each other. Eliot's insistence on the classic as representing the whole of the Greek to extend it to the best in the whole of the European literatures is something that lends this view considerable, maybe even complete, credence.

What is more important is the tie up between this perspective and 'the enormity of man's ignorance' (meaning: the ignorance of Man) which is the result of a clouded perception of a part taken to be a whole. Eliot argues that the term 'ignorance' is relative to the sense in which we take the term 'knowledge.' It may not be too off-the-point if one were to see the telescoping of an acute perception, born out of ignorance, leading to what is considered as the emergence of a 'complete' knowledge of incomplete dimensions (the analogy used here being that of the telescoping of the temporal and the timeless). It is not surprising then that perversion sets in as the unedifying result of an equally unedifying exercise. And when this is given the halo of
a newness (Eliot rejects the idea of newness for its own sake), it tends to become something that is seen as a sign of an acute as well as a superior, sense of perception. We shall attempt to keep this in sharp focus. More on this strain will follow in the following chapters. But an important observation must be made at this point. We shall consider this as a part of the criteria set up by Eliot which we shall discuss toward the end of this chapter.

Having identified the problems faced by modern man, we move on now to consider the next question. What is Eliot's regimen for the resolution of this problem in literature? An answer to this can be given only in stages: first, the resolution of this problem in real life and then the same in literature because life and literature are interrelated. A couple of lines in Section III of "East Coker" (1940) in the Four Quartets compel attention:

In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.
There is the need to tread with caution because Eliot is his very best here using the kind of dialectics which became the hallmark of his creative output in his latter years. The dialectics, however, is gripping insofar as its tone and tenor is concerned. Structurally, the text is very complex.

The argument hinges on the verb 'to arrive' in the first five lines of the quotation. A close look at the structure of the verb and its analysis yields the following manner of its usage: (1) 'to arrive there' means (a) 'to get from' somewhere, and 'to reach' there from somewhere, (b) to get to the place (the destination); (2) 'to go by' a select path in order to reach the destination; and (3) 'to go through' a path (or a process?) to reach a point—the point of culmination (or even convergence?). Having said that, it would be more meaningful to look at the direction pointed by adverbial 'there' which can be tied up with the adverbial phrase 'where you are' and the locational focus afforded by the verb 'are' leads to the following adverbial phrase 'where you are not'. Similarly the adverbial 'there' suggests the use of a path, or maybe even process, to point to the noun phrases, 'what you do not know', 'what you do not possess', and 'what you are not' in order to reach or get to what you know, what you possess and what you are. The juxtaposition of the opposites here in (i) 'the only thing you know' and 'what you do not know', (ii) 'the way in which you are not' and the way in which you are, (iii) 'where you are'
and 'where you are not', (iv) 'what you are not' and what you are, and finally (v) the synonyms for phrases in the negative, 'not know', 'not possess', and 'are not' for 'ignorance', 'dispossession' and 'are' respectively are very educative.

What this juxtaposition means in practical terms is precisely the message of the Bhagavad Gita wherein partial knowledge, being considered as proper, is taken to be a part of the 'Make Believe'. And Eliot cautions us about this in "The Modern Mind" noting how 'now there is nothing in which to believe' for 'that Belief... is dead' and further that his poem, "The Waste Land," is therefore 'the first to respond properly to the modern situation and not call upon Make-Believe.' Eliot was defending his line of thought against the charge laid at his doorstep by I A Richards about his 'persistent concern with sex... as religion' in the poem. These are 'problems' for Richards which Eliot finds difficult 'to grasp' because 'sex' and 'religion' seem to him to be what Richards appears to treat as 'problems' like those of 'Free Trade' and 'Imperial Preference'.

Returning to the problems faced by modern man and the regimen Eliot proposes for their resolution in his writings, we might need to look at each of these separately. The first of these is 'the isolation of the human situation.' The genesis of this problem lies in the failure of communication.
"The waste land" provides us with a very fine example of how there is no communication when the lady in 'A Game of chess' demand hysterically to know what the other people are thinking of ('what are you thinking of?... I never know what you are thinking'). The hopelessness of the situation lies in the inability of human beings to share with others their deepest feelings. Moreover, our private worlds are those of 'make-believe and fear' and are indeed quite impenetrable. Eliot is right in defending "The waste land" from what might be considered very easily as Richards' one-sided evaluation of it. What Eliot seems to be doing in taking recourse to 'sex' or the depiction of the prostitution of sex in discussing Sweeney's escapades in a number of poems is to highlight the failure of communication even in the complete union of two human-beings in a sex act. Love-making, at its very best, is the result of the purest of affections wherein the sex partners share. Given the nature of the act, which involves feelings of attachment and a desire to let someone else into one's life and share with him or her the ecstasy of 'a moment's surrender' in gay abandon, also involves at the same time a communion of the souls through body communication. Our inability to reach this state results in perversions like rape, artificial abortion, homosexuality, impotence (both at the mental and physical levels) and also frigidity. Sterile love-making (mechanical?) has no meaning. This is the message that Eliot wants to give us even
if it may not be in so many words. Hence, his plea for the development of a theatre wherein 'larger groups of people' may have the taste of a poem 'collectively' which he considers 'the most direct means of social usefulness for poetry'. Such a taste is the result of 'the communication of some new experience... which enlarges our consciousness or refines our sensibility' by helping arrest 'social disintegration'.

Eliot's regimen for the resolution of this problem is to experience a sense of communion which the life of the church offers. A living tradition, which can make such a desirable communion possible, is one that belongs rightfully to the Church which is a social institution before anything else. The state of isolation can be changed only through what Smidt (1961: 209) calls the annihilation of the self. In other words, it is a strong plea for a return from 'individualism', identified as a 'strange god' by Eliot, to the community which the second chorus from "The Rock" emphasises:

What life have you if you have not life together?
There is no life that is not in community...

because, as it is right now,

... no man knows or cares who is his neighbour.

(added emphases). The verbs, 'to know' and 'to care', involve a perception that brings individuals together. 'To know' means, among other things, (i) to be aware of, (ii) to be acquainted or be familiar with, and (iii) to recognize. Similarly, 'to
care means (a) to pay close attention or careful heed to, (b) to have a liking or a regard for someone and (c) to attend to. All this needs to be made an integral part of life in a community without any invasion on the privacy of its members. That is vital for ensuring a healthy growth.

To know and to care for one's neighbour subsumes our recognition of and familiarity with the person concerned and this is possible only if we have a certain degree of healthy attachment and regard for him or her. No society that ignores this basic prerequisite can claim to be a healthy one. Eliot makes a forceful plea for the establishment of such a well-formed and closely knit society in *The Idea of a Christian Society*. Only such an organization can form the basis of a strong social unity. Any indifference to our social obligations would continue to pose before us questions threatening the very survival of the human race. This problem connects easily with the last on the list of five, viz 'the enormity of man's ignorance' and we shall change their order to facilitate in a more meaningful discussion.

The isolation of the human situation is dependent largely upon the enormity of man's ignorance. Eliot holds the 'ignorance' of Man to be 'relative to the sense in which we take the term knowledge.' The following piece of discourse from the first Chorus of "The Rock" is quite illuminating:
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death...

And two lines after that, we have a very heart-searching inquiry:

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

The juxtaposition of the opposites, 'knowledge' and 'ignorance', when posited with a certain synonymous value, 'ignorance' and 'near death', yields an analogous relationship, knowledge : life :: ignorance : death. One of the meanings of the word, 'knowledge' is learning or scholarship especially when it refers to the breadth of the process of learning. It is communication or information when the reference is to news and to our awareness of or familiarity with something when the reference is to what might have happened in the past. Learning makes us aware of the enormousness of our ignorance which has been bringing us nearer to death of our spirituality. We know a part and believe it to be the whole. Moreover, in gaining knowledge if Man lost the Paradise through a fall from grace, Man lost wisdom and has fallen a second time and only the knowledge of Evil is left to him. But this knowledge of Evil is what he considers to be knowledge proper and celebrates the birth of this 'strange god' through worship. If information were all that Man needs as a part of his quest for knowledge
and if he holds the two to be synonymous, then such a knowledge is a vitiated one and leads to the growth of the perverse which is not what the saner elements among us want.

Commenting upon the leaps of knowledge, Trueblood (1957: 49) notes that the first leap of knowledge is 'epistemological faith' born out of 'sheer animal faith'. The second leap allows the 'physical stimuli' to pass over into conscious experience. The third leap 'makes possible public or communicable knowledge'. This gradual transition from 'sheer animal faith' to 'conscious experience' and thence to 'communicable knowledge' is the process of man's discovery of the perverse. The reason is simple. The 'problem of evil' seems to arise in 'any rational mind' due to 'the patent fact that the world is imperfect'. Although this is not a happy development, it cannot be wholly rejected. Imperfection is the result of moral freedom which makes transgressions possible and Evil is its price. Trueblood views 'evil' as 'a necessity in high moral endeavour' as the means for the development of 'moral strength'. Moral strength may be said to be contingent upon the maintenance of order in creation. In the Thomistic view of the Universe, only God represents pure act and Man shares with angels and animals intellect and sense respectively. Man's intellect and his senses rob him of a rise to the state of pure act and hence the problem of evil.
If we accept the argument that moral strength is contingent upon the maintenance of order in creation, D.E. Jones finds the latter to be dependent upon the subordination in Man of the sensual to the spiritual. It is this point which is the most vulnerable to attack by Evil. Matrimony is a sacrament in the New Law in the dogmatic theology and Tranquerey and Bord (1959: 195) hold that 'All sacraments produce grace.' Matrimony has religious sanction which a man-woman relationship outside matrimony does not. Such a relationship has no social sanction either. It can be considered as a moral evil and is an act of heresy. A heresy is 'the wilful denial of a dogma...' Dogmatic theology is called 'the rule of what must be believed.' Bradley (1914: 19) sees faith as being 'in some way opposed to knowledge proper...'. He goes on to say that 'it is obvious also that faith implies some kind of believing and knowing.'

What does it mean to believe in something? 'To believe' is 'to put faith in', 'to be certain of', 'to accept as true' or 'to be sure of' certain statements which are a part of a creed. To believe is to be sure of the creed through a process of reasoning. To believe is to make sure the truths of the creed through experimentation and demonstration. To believe is to be certain of the acceptance of authority. To believe is to accept as true the evidence of people we trust. Lastly, to believe is to ascertain on the basis of their observation of the effects of something we do not know or understand to begin with. As the Rock in the first chorus from "The Rock" warns us about
how the perpetual struggle of Good and Evil does not change at all though change be the law of Nature.

Unhappy about the neglect of our shrines and churches which seems to be a way of deriding 'what has been done of good' with Man, the Rock bemoans the fact that 'you find explanations to satisfy the rational and enlightened mind.' The truth of the dogmas can be questioned only at the cost of heresies or blasphemy. It would be obvious to anyone making a close study of the first chorus from "The Rock" that the key words and phrases in the speech of the Rock are 'the work of the humble', 'things that were long ago done', 'no thought of harvest', and 'of proper sowing.' The phrases have been listed in a reverse order. 'The work of the humble', it seems to argue, consisted of 'things that were long ago done.' (added emphasis). Now they are not made as humble as they used to be when faith was a living force. The humble do not think of the harvest, for they know that proper sowing would lead to a good harvest if God wills it to be so. Only the proud are those who are 'ready to invest their money' expecting rich 'dividends'. That is a sign of an imperfect will, a broken covenant. The Rock admits that (i) it is hard to be really useful, because this would mean (ii) to be productive, it is, therefore, difficult for Man to give up false means of happiness; to do deeds that lead to prominence and recognition; and to crave for popular applause and love of all without giving anything in return. Only a vain man would go chasing after
such mirages like the yearning for material wealth, and worldly popularity and recognition. The humble, who have made perfect their wills, will, like the workmen in the first chorus from "The Rock", build anew the dilapidating structure. They will also 'build with new speech' the collapsing structure of the unspoken word in order to build the meaning out of this meaningless ruins of life. Meaning would be possible when 'A Church for all' is built and church we recognize as the symbol of God's covenant with Man and unity of people living together as a single community. 65

In other words, Eliot pins down the real cause of the enormity of man's ignorance to a partial knowledge that learning brings in its wake. Knowledge is not information but belief. And belief comes not through the seeking after and handling down of rational explanations to occurrences that might seem to be irrational or a part of miracles. Meaning is knowledge and to build out of this rubble, we need to shed pride, self-centredness and blatant individualism. A life out of community is no life at all much in the same way as individual talent has no meaning outside the bonds of a strong tradition. Eliot's regimen for this ill is to help 'build the meaning', the basis of life, by building anew 'a church for all' and in extension, as it were, by building or even helping re-discover 'a literary tradition' that is vibrant enough to connect the glory of the past with and to bring it to bear upon the present.
The remaining three problems, viz (1) The inconceivable immensity of the universe, (2) Man's place in the perspective of time, and (3) The facts of birth and death in their inexplicable oddity (in that order), are similarly interrelated. The inconceivable immensity of the universe, not in terms of spaces, but in their eternal silence (Eliot's emphasis), is what Man finds quite terrifying. Eliot holds that intelligibility of this immensity is possible only in the context of 'a definite religious background.' So too the following two by implication, if not in the actual words used by Eliot. The genesis of creation is an act of Grace on the part of God. J Hillis Miller (1963: 6) notes that

... though the central tradition of western civilization... defines God as transcending his creation, the miracle of Incarnation brought back God to earth, so that once more he walked among us...

And Hillis Miller goes a step further to argue that it was this belief in Incarnation which died out of the European consciousness and the subsequent Reformation weakened the 'belief in the sacrament of communion.' This is something that leads us to historicism, an attitude born out of failure of tradition, symbolic language and 'all the intermediaries between man and God.' The void created in the wake of this attitude leads to questions like

... were we led all that way for Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt...

and statements like

... ... ... ... this Birth was

Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death

in "Journey of the Mag?"71 Or statements in Section V of

"Ash-Wednesday"

... And the light shone in darkness

Against the word the unstilled world still whirled

About the centre of the silent Word.72

But there are also statements affirming the truths as in the

seventh Chorus from "The Rock".

In the beginning GOD created the world. Waste

and void. Waste and void. And the darkness

was upon the face of the deep...

and quite a few lines later, we have

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a

moment in time and out of time, / A moment

not out of time, but in time, in what we call

history... / A moment in time but time was

made through that moment; for without

the meaning there is no time, and that

moment of time gave the meaning, / Then

it seemed as if men must proceed from

light to light, in the light of the Word, /

Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved
in spite of their negative being; / Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always before, selfish and purblind as ever before, / yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their march on the way that was lit by the light; /

... yet following no other way. (added emphases)

Eliot's discourse does not stop there. We find more of this in the following lines:

Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no god; and this has never happened before / That men both deny gods, professing first Reason, / And then Money, and Power, and what they call life, or Race, or Dialectic. (added emphases)

The positive being is one seen in men moving from light to light saved through the Passion and Sacrifice of Christ.

This was a predetermined moment in time, in history, for time was made through that moment (of time) which gave the meaning to it by restoring 'the experience / In a different form...' and 'the past experience revived in the meaning / Is not the experience of one life only / But of many generations...'. Man was saved in spite of his negative being giving rise to 'waste and void'. The negative qualities of Man make
his all the more individualistic and, bereft of all his moorings, he seeks pleasure in looking after his own needs. Moreover, that is how he and others like him have left GOD in order to become a godless people, something happening for the first time. These people would profess Reason as their God and Money, Power, good things of life etc as the other strange gods in whose worship they have broken links with the community.

Thus, in response to the Voice of the Unemployed, which complains bitterly of how these are men who have never been hired by any man in 'this' land, the chorus reacts, observing how there is 'waste and void', and there are moments of intense soul-searching in the form of questions like:

Has the Church failed mankind, or has mankind failed the church? When the church is no longer regarded, not even opposed, and men have forgotten / All gods except Usury, Lust and Power. (added emphases)

These gods are 'strange gods' too identified by Eliot in After Strange Gods which may be said to be the result of perfidy and profanity in the lives and dealings of men.

When we try to take a close look at what Eliot has to offer to arrest this downward slide, anyone, not very familiar with the writings of Eliot, would conclude naturally that these are pleadings for a theological evaluation of literature. Such
a view is myopic and may be the result of a partial perception of Eliot's critical and creative concerns. Nothing is to be found which might help one to pin down this charge on Eliot. A sociological evaluation is similarly not the objective he has in mind. It is safe to conclude then that Eliot actually wanted writers to refrain from their worship of the 'strange gods' and return to celebrate those attributes of life which are a part of a healthy and meaningful tradition that reaffirms its faith in God and His creation. This will be our stand throughout the rest of the chapters. If any proof were required to substantiate this point, it might be useful to turn once more to the seventh Chorus from "The Rock" which laments the waste and void seen in the form of those who live not to follow the light (of the glory of God) but its shadow. These are the people who end up worshipping 'snakes or trees' or even devils, crying 'for life beyond life.' This is one extreme: ignorance. There is another extreme which may be taken to be partial knowledge, about what life really is, gained through unbridled materialism brought about in the wake of industrialisation and the subsequent exodus (a second one, only this time not as a result of persecution but for the lure of wealth) to the city.

The exodus of the rural migrants from the countryside to the city attracts strictures from Eliot. He notes that

In the city, we need no bells:
Let them waken the suburbs.
The peals of the bells are those from the church summoning the faithful for prayers on Sabbath and Eliot deprecates vain man's indifference to this call and subsequently to the renewal of the covenant between God and man through the Holy Communion. To Pitirim Sorokin (1957: 494-5), the process of wasting appears to be evident in 'the territorial migration of population from the country to the city' and 'the permanent sifting of rural migrants by the city machinery of social selection and distribution of individuals.'

Eliot saw in this migration within the highly industrialised countries, the volatile potential for the raising of a mob 'detached from tradition, alienated from religion and susceptible to mass suggestion.'

Eliot's solution to these problems involves a return to the fold in order to make perfect their wills. The peals of the church bells in the countryside would help usher in a new dawn — the only way to yield darkness (of ignorance and lack of faith) to light (of knowledge and of belief) so that the 'desert in the heart' of our brethren could be transformed into a lush green field. The move in this direction would help ensure that people do not 'die in a shortened bed / And a narrow sheet.' and this would happen when 'the field' is tilled (meaning, when enough food is grown to feed the hungry mouths and when the countryside is resurrected from the limbo) in the renewal of the covenant and the communion. In other
words, a movement back to tradition, even the strong literary
tradition of Europe, by removing what might seem or is heretical. And this brings us to the last section of this chapter
where we must consider the criteria set up by Eliot to classify
creative writing as Christian or heretical.

A brief comment each on what is Christian and what
heretical might be in order before we take a look at the cri-
teria itself. The word, heretical, is derived from the word,
'heresy' which is, as Eliot notes, another word or a synonym
for 'heterodoxy' and is the antonym for 'orthodoxy'. Orthodoxy
is what a Christian writing (within the context of the discu-
ssion on the adj ectival, Christian, in the "Introduction")
must represent. To Eliot, orthodoxy is 'a consensus between
the living and the dead' aimed at giving us 'a reconciliation
of thought and feeling.' Heresy, on the other hand, is 'an
insistence upon half of the truth' or its simplification.

The following criteria appears to have been used by
Eliot in forming opinions about the nature of work involved
in terms of the ideas of orthodoxy and heresy. A close study
of Eliot's prose works, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
and After Strange Gods yields the genesis and the use of the
criteria. Any work that is found wanting on the application
of these criteria is heretical. A Christian work must
therefore fulfil the following conditions in reflecting:
1. **Impress of a central tradition.** Originality is permitted only within the parameters of an established tradition. Use of 'conscious intelligence' (not dogmatic beliefs or merely traditional religious beliefs) needs to be stressed shows positive signs of the conservation and maintenance of tradition, for this makes the work acceptable on a wider scale.

2. Concern with the orthodoxy of sensibility and the sense of tradition.

3. **Authenticity and wholeness both in terms of experience and its expression.** Actuality of these social attributes negate individuality. Authentic experience and its expression makes for positive attitudes of fairplay, honesty and sincerity. Its relation to the times is a prerequisite of university. Also helps control extreme individuality, intellectual and moral aberrations (No. 1 above ensures this). No accumulation of experiences for their own sake.

4. Acute perception of truth as a whole. Knowledge, by its very nature, is not fragmentary and truth is a universal value.

5. **Wholesome perception of Good and Evil.** A first prerequisite of spiritual life. Lack of such perception in a literary genius is a sign of a peculiar sickness. Also, profound moral insights are clouded by 'dreary' rationalism.
Evidence of vitality lies in resistance to excitements, abject surrender to or the admiration of passion.

6. Interest in men's minds rather than their emotions. These criteria will be used in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively on the works of those important writers discussed by Eliot to ascertain whether or not Eliot applied these criteria justly. The writers are Thomas Hardy and D H Lawrence (the heretics), on the one hand, G M Hopkins and James Joyce (the upholders of faith), on the other. This takes us to the identification of and discussion on what are to Eliot 'Strange gods', the creation of the perfidious and the profane. A discussion on this will form the bases of Chapter 2.
References and Notes


4. For details, please see para 1 on page 11 of the "Introduction" to this thesis. The conclusion has been reached on the basis of the arguments given on pages 9-11. Lachlan Mackinnon (1983: 1) clubs Eliot with Auden and Lowell as a group and notes that these writers 'are of interest as a group because they see the problem of belief in post-institutional Christian terms' (added emphasis). Bibliographical details are given in 'Select Bibliography.'


9. Ibid., p. 231.

10. Ibid., p. 232.

11. Ibid., p. 251.


24. It would not be beside the point if one were to see in the submergence of the soul into the Oversoul, the fusion of the individual talent into the tradition of a society leading to the birth of a classic (cf. Eliot's "Tradition and the individual Talent", *ASG* and *ICS*).

25. Luther quoted in Donald Walhout, *Interpreting Religion*, p. 73.


33. T S Eliot, "Hamlet" in *SE*, Of special interest is the second paragraph on p. 145 where Eliot explains the whole process as he sees it.


35. Ibid.


40. Please see p. 181 of *CPP* for those lines.


43. Ibid. p. 154.


47. Please see T S Eliot, *CPP*, p. 152.

48. Ibid.

50. T S Eliot, CPP, p. 147.

51. Ibid.

52. D E Trueblood, POR.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid. p. 232.

57. Ibid. p. 238.


60. Tanquerey and Bord, Op cit. p. 2.


62. Ibid.

63. Please refer to T S Eliot, CPP, p. 149.


65. Eliot, Loc cit. p. 149. We would like to draw attention to section II of "The Dry Salvages" in Four Quartets, where we find the following:
We had experience but missed the meaning and approach to the meaning restores the experience. In a different form, beyond any meaning we can assign to happiness. I have said before that the past experience revived in the meaning is not the experience of one life only. But of many generations... (added emphases) (T S Eliot, CPP, pp. 186-7).

And this allows a useful comparison.


67. Ibid.

68. J Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth Century Writers (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1963). What is true of the Western civilization is equally true of the Eastern civilization. While there is no overt promise other than that of the Second Coming in The Bible, there is the promise of eternal return in The Bhagavad-Gita in Sri Krishna's assertion of this in his discourse with Arjuna:

Yadā-yadā hi dharmaśya
   glānir bhāvati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmaśya
   tadā'tmānām sva jāmyaham
paritṛṇāya sādhūnām
   vināśayacha duṣkṛtām
dharma Saṁśṭhāpānātthāya
   sambhavāmi yuge yuge
Translation:
"Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bhārata (Arjuna), then I send forth (create, incarnate) Myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age." (added emphases)


And with this promise in explicit terms, Incarnation and the humanisation of God became a reality.

69. Miller, Ibid.
70. Ibid., p. 10.

