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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

T. S. ELIOT ON TIME AND COMMUNICATION

by

GEORGINA D. MICHAEL

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled T. S. ELIOT ON TIME AND COMMUNICATION submitted by GEORGINA D. MICHAEL in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in History of Education.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with Thomas Stearns Eliot's perception of time and its importance for communication. A constant theme in his poetry, prose and lectures was the need to consider the eternality of time and the need to reflect on the past and future in the present.

Chapter I provides an overview of Eliot's view of time and communication as they are presented in his verse and prose writing. Together with this are biographical details relevant to the nature of the writing he produced from his early solipsist mode to that of a concerned social critic.

Chapter II examines various theories of liberalism and Eliot's critique of it, with particular reference to the mindset "presentism," which he believed was spawned by this ideology.

The third chapter examines Eliot's views on the medieval cyclical construct of time primarily with reference to his verse drama, Murder in the Cathedral. Again the effects of time perception on communication are detailed.

In Chapter IV is presented an overview of Eliot's suggestions for an alternate society, views which he was careful to indicate were an attempt to stimulate debate on the direction in which philosophical, political and social thought was heading.

The conclusion is presented in Chapter V. It indicates the sense of urgency which Eliot conveyed through most of his work that time must be viewed more seriously, and its effect on our communicative modes reconsidered.

Eliot, although appearing pessimistic about the development of society, showed hope and the courage to make a consistent, almost life long, effort to

generate thought about man's purpose in relation to his existence, relationships to others and to a transcendent reality, the acceptance of which could alter time perception and elevate intellectual, emotional and spiritual development.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"His mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation
Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought."
(T.S. Eliot, "The Naming of Cats" in Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, 1939)

Permeating his writing in various genres are Eliot's allusions to the problem of time perception. It is evident that the contemplation of how time is perceived and its effect on communication is a paramount, underlying concern in each of his numerous pronouncements on philosophical, literary, and societal problems.

Eliot could not accept society's preoccupation with the present moment, which he believed - in the contemporary mindset - to be totally unconnected to time past or future. Throughout this thesis is presented evidence of Eliot's opinion that man has chosen on the whole to neglect the concept of the eternality of time, and in so doing has risked losing an essential part of his humanity. Eliot's concern is that there was and is an urgent need always to consider the three aspects of time to attain to any worthwhile present or future. He regards as essential a focus on the effect of time on communicative modes whether with self, or others or a transcendent reality. Eliot perceived a problem in the neglect of a consideration of the past and future in the present.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the manner in which Eliot conveys his thoughts in verse and prose with regard to the time perspective, and the need to be constantly reflective about the meaning of our existence and its assimilation in society in terms of communication.

The following study is needed not only to draw attention to the educational importance of Eliot's concerns, but also to fill a gap in the literature about the significance of his writing. It is Eliot's contention that education, whether institutionalized or in the more general sense of the experiences and knowledge individuals gain for themselves, could change the mindset of generations to come. In his Page-Barbour lectures at Harvard in 1933, Eliot

notes that it is necessary to maintain in education a continuity of past and present to have any worthwhile future.[1]

Eliot's concern with time and its effect on the mindset of individuals has scarcely been addressed in literature on Eliot to date. Russell Kirk's examination of Eliot makes reference to his concern with time perception, but he focuses primarily on the importance of Eliot's work on the "moral imagination."[2] In a biography of 1984, Peter Ackroyd notes on occasions Eliot's need to inspire greater societal involvement by the individual; however, in neither works is there expressed Eliot's central concern for the eternal view of time, and the manner in which it shapes communication in all its forms. G. H. Bantock[3] observes of Eliot's social theorizing that "cultural health was central to his view of a good society,"[4] and goes on "the value of Eliot's conception of education lies in the shock it administers to received opinion and current assumptions."[5] Each of the above writers address thoughts about Eliot's desire to regenerate society through literature whether morally, culturally, or by educative means.

The following examination of Eliot's thought reflects on the manner in which his perception of time is evident throughout his writing in verse or prose. He made a variety of pronouncements on the nature of time, past, present and future, each of which he regarded as essential elements to be considered at all times for the progress of humanity with all its potential to occur.

The significance of the study is that it draws attention to an understanding of a consistent theme in Eliot's writing which is of vital concern to the development of society. Whether in poetry or verse drama, Eliot reinforces the thoughts he expressed in prose concerning the importance of the time element in interaction at various levels. The centrality of this issue is evident in The Waste Land, "The Hollow Men," Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion and Four Quartets. He addresses the concern more clearly in prose such as in

his Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, The Idea of a Christian Society, "Aims of Education," and in various essays and commentaries on literature and socio-political issues of his day.

From the age of twenty-two, Eliot became intrigued by perceptions of time and their effects. Prior to writing an early 1910 poem, "Silence," in which he alludes to the first awakening of his interest in time, Eliot experienced a heightening of consciousness in a moment on a Boston street when his past, present and future seemed to fade into a void of utter quiet and peace. He observed that others have such experiences and commented, "You may call it communion with the Divine . . . you may call it a momentary crystallization of the mind."[6] Such a moment out of time is referred to by him again in "Little Gidding," part of Four Quartets (1944), a moment:

> Not known because not looked for
> But heard, half heard in the stillness
> Between two waves of the sea.[7]

Such an experience was to tantalize him, and was referred to obliquely, or directly, on numerous occasions. From such a moment, he, as others like him, gained a sense of the interconnectedness of time past, present and future. If such experiences are attended to, horizons, according to Eliot, widen beyond the present. There is an ability to become future-oriented, but connected with past and present. Such a perception results from awareness of an eternal time continuum in which each particular time, as an artificial construct, becomes eternally present. Of the process, or development of such an awareness, little is known. However, Eliot believed that by encouraging the growth of a liberal knowledge base to education, and with a spiritual awareness, people's perception of time and how they viewed others with whom they interacted might be changed. To this end, Eliot wrote as he did. Eliot thus moved beyond the

solipsism of his day, and found within himself the mature writing of one who is fervent in his desire to affect the mindset of others.

In Eliot's earlier published writing such as The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (1911),[8] one observes the evidence of the solipsism he felt not only in himself, but noted in society. Also in "Portrait of a Lady" (1911), there is evidence of a frustration with the "sin" of self-absorption. "Preludes" of 1911 is a litany of the elements of a dilapidated, squalid, urban setting in which he observes:

> The burnt-out ends of smoky days
> And now a gusty shower wraps
> The grimy scraps
> Of withered leaves about your feet
> And newspapers from vacant lots.[9]

Concern with self casts one adrift in the present, and neglects the perception of concern about others. A different view of time and the necessity for more authentic communication would, in Eliot's view, improve society, and avoid the solipsism and decay he perceived. At this stage, Eliot was viewing urban life objectively, as he was his childhood Unitarianism, with its practical, community-serving philosophy. He was turning against both with evident feelings of unease; he nurtured thoughts that other perceptions should and could exist.

From 1910-1914, Eliot travelled in Europe, and eventually turned his back on America to settle in England, the country of his ancestors. In September 1914, he made the acquaintance of Ezra Pound who eventually was to be so vital an influence on the publication of The Waste Land in 1922. Once published, this poem was to bring Eliot the attention that would cause others to take notice of aspects of his work. Of Prufrock, Pound was to comment that Eliot "has sent in the best poem I have seen from an American."[10]

From the concern with solipsism which characterized his early works, Eliot moved to poems which reflected his feelings concerning the mindlessness, and helplessness he perceived in society. Evidence of his concern about fragmentation and despair become evident as he moves into The Waste Land. In "Gerontion," he takes upon himself the character of an old man, and throughout there is a sense of decay and decline.

At the time he settled in England in 1914, Eliot was experiencing a sense of disillusionment. His mood was exacerbated by his marriage in 1915 to Vivien Haigh-Wood. It was to be the beginning of a pattern of living that brought Eliot great unhappiness, personal self-doubts and illness. Vivien appears to have had symptoms of manic depression; Eliot had not been told prior to his marriage of her long history of illness, and the morphine depressants used to control her condition. Seemingly vivacious and appealing to the shy Eliot, she was emotionally unstable and there is little evidence that they ever understood each other. Eliot could not be entirely blamed for their sexual failings since Bertram Russell, who later indulged in a brief association with Vivien, indicated that "she possessed mental, but not physical passion."[11]

Although continuing with study towards a Ph.D. in philosophy, Eliot did not wish - as his parents had anticipated - to enter academia. For a short time he taught, but had considerable dislike for the profession which he found too exhausting to allow him time to indulge his need for creative expression. From the first years of their marriage, Vivien experienced constant breakdowns. Her illnesses put greater strain on him to do more teaching when they were obliged to take a cottage in Bosham so she could recuperate. After resigning from his short experience of the rigors of teaching, which became an anathema to him, Eliot entered the foreign department of Lloyd's Bank in March 1917, a post

which made him feel "useful" in the sense that his family desired, but which also gave him new energy to pursue his writing.

Prufrock's publication coincided with his initiation into the Bloomsbury group which contained among others, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Leonard and Virginia Woolf. They appealed to him because of their interest in literature and their non-conformity. Eliot ended the year ill; the following year his father died, disappointed with his son's lack of desire to pursue an academic life. At the same time, Eliot's collection of poems was rejected by Knopf. However, he continued to produce quatrain poems. It was during these years that he wrote parts of The Waste Land, about which his second wife, Valerie, was later to comment that it was the best thing to come out of his first marriage.[12]

Ezra Pound edited The Waste Land making it saleable. Eliot wrote it at a time of personal exhaustion, and at the same time was deeply affected by the evident economic and political problems of the time following the first World War. Since Eliot tended to be timorous about his work, Pound was able to radically change it to a critique of society. From such a perspective the poem suggests a social apathy.

> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many
> I had not thought death had undone so many
> . . . And each man fixed his eyes
> before his feet.[13]

The second section, "A Game of Chess" suggests the general inability to communicate authentically:

> What are you thinking of? What thinking?
> What?
> . . .
> I think we are in rat alley
> Where the dead men lost their bones.[14]

This perception is reinforced by a section detailing the superficiality of communication as two women gossip. And in "The Fire Sermon," lovers are depicted as mechanical in expression, separated in their feelings. In the last section, there appear references to the arrest of Christ, and to His resurrection: "Who is the third who walks always beside you?"[15] Also there is further indication of people's lack of concern for each other in society: "We think of thinking each in his prison,/thinking of the key, each confirms an opinion."[16] But in the end he is pleading for "Shantih,"[17] the peace which passeth understanding.

Three years later the publication of "The Hollow Men" in 1925, depicts more clearly the type of men coming from The Waste Land: "We are the hollow men/Headpiece filled with straw . . . We whisper together/Are quiet and meaningless/As wind in dry grass."[18] The fear is projected that the world will end "not with a bang, but with a whimper."[19] Eliot indicated that society will inherit the fruits of apathy, and lack the integrity and conviction which were not earlier seeded.

As he observed the world with a degree of detachment, Eliot began to withdraw from Vivien since it appears to have been the only way he could live with her. At the same time, he began to develop in spiritual directions other than those of his Unitarian background. At this stage he turned his attention to readings such as St. John of the Cross, commenting, "The soul cannot be possessed by divine union until it has divested itself of all love of created beings."[20] By 1926, he was attending Church of England services. Eliot sought the Anglo-Catholic tradition which he found fitted more his need to synthesize and order his faith. Later it is to the idea of a national, ecumenical church that he turned in making suggestions for an alternate society. One may understand the reason for Eliot quoting in The Dial in 1927 that man's chief aim is to glorify

God. The need to recognize spiritual thought with more serious application to every day life became more evident in his writing from this stage on.

After the depiction of desolation in The Waste Land and the critique of superficiality in "The Hollow Men," his works became invested with a particular spiritual awareness. This is evident in Ash Wednesday in 1930. Again he refers to the eternal aspect of time which had so tantalized him before. He notes:

> Because I know that time is always time
> And place is always and only place
> And what is actual is actual only for one time
> And only one place.[21]

Paradoxically, he asks to be taught "to care and not to care,"[22] since Eliot found people turning away from spirituality and in fact from each other, to the fragmentation and lack of connectedness. For Eliot there should exist a commonality in knowledge and in faith to allow for growth in society. He seeks, "our peace in His will"[23] and speaks of life as "a time of tension between dying and birth."[24]

His theme of the need to honour the new dispensation of the gospel is evident in "The Journey of the Magi" (1927). In it he notes again the need for a form of the death of certain perceptions, and a reorientation which includes aspects of time and interaction with others, worldly, or otherwise, who should be our concern: ". . . were we led all this way for Birth or Death?"[25] He is alluding to spiritual rebirth which he hopes will make people consider individual spiritual journeys. In "A Song of Simeon" (1927), he comments on the contentment of the old priest as he states: "Let thy servant depart/Having seen thy salvation."[26] The distinctly spiritual appeal evident here continues through much of his verse drama, poetry and prose in the years that followed. Eliot sought to ally spirituality and cohesion in society as the only means of salvation for man - but

a spirituality with integrity and conviction. Throughout, he concerned himself with time and communication, and how within the eternal framework, communication patterns may be divested of the fragmentation he noted and ascribed to liberalism. Despite his critique of the latter, he believed that there should still exist the tension with which liberalism imbues society,although he did not seem to favour any particular existing political party.

Eliot's constant desire was to provoke thought and involvement in society at whatever level individuals feel or find themselves able. For the remainder of his writing, this theme is paramount culminating in The Idea of a Christian Society in 1938. Again he pleads for people to reflect on their present and future, and enter a debate meant to encourage a different orientation in society.

Prior to the work about an alternate society, Eliot sought to appeal to people's consciousness in verse dramas. The first of them is part of The Rock (1934), a combined work for a pageant. In the chorus, he notes the passing of time, and how man is not progressing despite seeming evidence to the contrary:

> O World of Spring and awakening, birth and dying!
> The endless cycle of idea and action
> Endless invention, endless experiment
> Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness,
> Knowledge of speech, but not of silence
> Knowledge of words and ignorance of the Word
> . . . the cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
> Brings us farther from God and nearer the Dust.[27]

He also indicates the need for greater unity and commonality in communication:

> What life have you if you have not life together
> There is no life that is not community.[28]

With reference to spiritual enlightenment and reflection, he makes the comment ". . . in the rhythm of earthly light, we turn from the light."[29]

From such appeals and promptings, Eliot moved back to verse form in Four Quartets (1944). Again his preoccupation with time and communication is evident from the first lines, and in the second section of "Burnt Norton" he notes "the enchantment of past and future/woven in the weakness of the changing body/Protects mankind,"[30] and the necessity of being involved with past and future since "only through time is time conquered."[31] He is critical of the fear people have "of belonging to another, or to others, or to God,"[32] yet within this connectedness, there is a need for the inward searching journey, the need to "have trodden the wine press alone."[33] Eliot holds to a critique of the corruption of presentism, a lack of connectedness with past or future, which he found a deficiency in contemporary society.

When Eliot turned to verse drama again, it was to Murder in the Cathedral (1935) which not only made clear the cyclical mindset of medieval times, but again makes a plea for man to look beyond such a time construct. He continues this reasoning in other verse dramas such as The Family Reunion (1939) and The Cocktail Party (1948). He notes most people's unwillingness to be disturbed in the societal patterns and philosophies of which they avail themselves.

As will have been noted, Eliot became more and more concerned with what he perceived to be problems in the society that surrounded him. It was a society which he felt would not do anything radical enough to remedy the decline, but he remained always hopeful and provocative, even though not necessarily clearly practical in his thoughts.

The Idea of a Christian Society had been formulated after the Oxford Conference in 1937 at which Eliot read his paper on "The Ecumenical Nature of the Church and its Responsibility Towards the World."[34] Other meetings followed and gradually a group of Christian intellectuals formed with the

express purpose of debating issues with regard to political and social problems as viewed from a Christian perspective. [Perhaps it was because of his banking background that he was asked to consider economic issues.] The group which came to be termed the Moot met until 1943, and included Karl Mannheim. It was hoped that there could be a conversion on a large scale in Britain; as will have been noted, Eliot fervently sought to bring people to greater consciousness of their purpose, and their responsibilities. To follow his views, expressed imaginatively rather than concretely in his Ideas, came his broadcast in Spring 1941, "Towards a Christian Britain."[35] At this stage, too, Eliot became interested in The Christian Newsletter as a means of encouraging spiritual regeneration in a manner similar to his concern about literature when he edited Criterion. Concerning the latter and other journals more provocative of serious thought, Eliot was disappointed by the general lack of public interest.

To Eliot, the people of his time seemed doomed to a fragmented existence and were averse to becoming more involved in their present. At this time he was suggesting greater awareness of time present, past and future and the manner in which people project their thoughts and emotions. Although his ideas lacked practicality, Eliot had become concerned about the urgent need for reform. His aim in the Idea of A Christian Society (1938) and in Towards a Definition of Culture (1948), was not merely to provoke thought, but to encourage integrity in thought and action, desiring people to seriously attempt to understand the purpose of existence. He was critical of modern political theory, and its tendency to dilute culture and diversity. To him complexity and development beneficial to all came from having many levels of culture: a decentralized society in which people of all groupings interacted.

In other observations which are critical of his society, Eliot spoke against "secular dominance"[36] in "Modern Education and the Classics" (1938). Like St.

Augustine, he contemplated the possibility of barbarism entering the gates of society. He deplored the passing of a liberal education and felt that there was an unnecessary emphasis on specialization, and separation of the disciplines. There is no doubt he believed that advancement of technology, and a lack of development at a similar rate in the world of arts and literature would be deleterious to humanity.

In his later verse drama such as The Family Reunion, first produced in 1939 (and The Cocktail Party in 1948), he manipulates or seeks the manipulation of other characters by the few seemingly enlightened ones, rather after the manner of expectation of his Community of Christians which he later suggested as forming the conscience of the nation in a Christian society.

Eliot's personal life suffered for years the consequences of an ill-considered marriage, and thus it was against the background of this that he worked creatively and otherwise. As earlier noted, he attained a degree of detachment and probably sublimated his energies into spiritual and creative development. Eventually he was to leave Vivien in 1933, but in the years that followed, he suffered feelings of guilt, and described his first marriage as like a "Dostoyevsky novel written by Middleton Murray"[37] (with whom he was usually in disagreement). His wife's instability emotionally and physically seem to have been a source of much mental and emotional anguish. Certainly communication was extremely difficult. However, having left her, his conscience troubled him. He seemed to feel that there was more he could have done. Following their separation, which Vivien at first refused to accept, she was to be admitted to a private mental institution where she died in 1947 after nearly eleven years of committal by her physician. Mystery still surrounds the two required signatures on the document which confined her to Northumberland House.

Virginia Woolf had sensed in Eliot a man full of "self-torture, doubt, conceit, desire for warmth and intimacy"[38] and his sensitivity and shyness were long evident. Eliot, alone, continued to produce such papers as "Religion and Literature,"[39] "The Pensees of Pascal," and "In Memoriam," all concerned with the decline of society. During this time, he wrote essays about various poets and his Collected Poems 1909-1935 was published in 1938. George Orwell noted the critical attitude of Eliot and his acquaintances, Ezra Pound and James Joyce, to contemporary society. He, himself, of course, was to be equally critical if in different fashion in his works of fiction and other writings. Eliot continued into his fifties and sixties fully involved in society as he believed a writer should be to have any perceptions worth considering. Still involved in Criterion, he was also on countless committees, and participated constantly in publications. During these years, he travelled rather in the manner of Dickens, lecturing, and reading his work. His commitment to the Anglican Church increased, yet there is evidence that it was not for him everything he might have hoped for with his ecumenical bias. He attended Tory clubs, but was also critical of the party's ideology and actions. So he continued the philosopher, deeply concerned about the society which he had for many years felt to be in a state of steady decline.

For several years Eliot remained alone in private life, and his faith as it evolved was not conventional as noted above. However, he evidently developed to a considerable degree in his spiritual awareness, giving maturity to his earlier concepts with regard to time and communication as noted in his Four Quartets of October 1944. On occasion, he still expressed a lack of confidence in his work, and his second wife was to note that he would like to have rewritten his social critiques.

In 1948, Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and with characteristic cynicism, he noted that: "The Nobel is a ticket to one's funeral. No one has ever done anything after he got it."[40] However, he did produce Notes Towards a Definition of Culture in 1948. In it, he insisted on the need to recognize the importance of family, tradition and an acceptance of "class" and regional variations. He also showed, as in other writings, a desire that words like "culture" and "democracy" should be carefully considered when used to communicate concepts, or there could be a danger of losing the essence of humanity.

The Cocktail Party as noted followed in 1948. From this time he was still lecturing on a variety of topics such as "The Aims of Education" (1950), and continued reading his work in public. From time to time, he fell prey to illnesses that had plagued him in the past primarily resulting from exhaustion and bronchial problems. Eventually, long after Vivien's death, Eliot married again in 1957. His marriage to Valerie, his former secretary, provided him great happiness until his death in 1965. Evidently she filled a void that had long existed in his life; and this time there existed no problems of communication. Valerie, thirty-eight years his junior, was to comment "He couldn't die until he had had (a happy marriage)."[41] In outliving him by many years, she has been able to edit and reproduce his work and letters; those from 1923 are still to be released in 1992. His most private thoughts considered in these were committed by him for publication only by her. By happy consequence of his second marriage Eliot was kept forever present and with future possibilities, and not cast into the shadows of the past.

He evidently arrived eventually "where we started/And [knew] the place for the first time/Through the unknown, remembered gate"[42] into the enchanted garden that seemed to have called him years before with the sounds of children

"in the apple tree."[43] Eliot experienced in the end the happiness that may have been as great as the suffering he had endured.

Eliot's contribution to our understanding of the need for a different attitude towards time and communication is a vitally important one, and not to be ignored. His past must be part of our present, and his view of the need to reshape society should guide our future. For him time was eternal, and it affected interaction with self, with others and with God in a way that could lead to a more dynamic, vibrant and enlightened society.

The following chapters provide supporting evidence for Eliot's central concern for time and its effect on communication. In Chapter II, his despair with the liberal mindset is revealed. In Chapter III there is an examination of his concern in relation to the stasis evident in medieval thought, and in Chapter IV is given an overview of his suggestions for a possible future society, one which he believed should be guided by a perception of time as an eternal continuum, and communication likewise to acquire an awareness of such a pattern. The last chapter concludes with a summary of the thesis presented, and its meaning in the realm of education.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

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[7]T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding" in Four Quartets in Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950. (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1971), p. 145..

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[10]Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 30 Sept. 1940, Letters of Ezra Pound, ed. D. D. Paige, London, 1951. Quoted in Peter Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1984), p. 58.

[11]Bertram Russell, Autobiography quoted in Peter Ackroyd T.S. Eliot (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1984), p. 66.

[12]Valerie Eliot, Ed., Letters of T.S. Eliot (Faber and Faber, London, 1991), preface.

[13]T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land from Selected Poems (Faber and Faber, London, 1982), p. 53.

[14]Ibid., p. 55.

[15]Ibid., p. 65.

[16]Ibid., p. 67.

[17]Ibid., p. 67.

[18]T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men" from Selected Poems (Faber and Faber,London, 1982), p. 77.

[19]Ibid., p. 80.

[20]St. John of the Cross quoted in Epigraphs to Sweeney Agonistes in Peter Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1984), p. 159.

[21]Eliot, Ash Wednesday from Selected Poems (Faber and Faber, London, 1982), p. 83.

[22]Ibid., pp. 84, 93.

[23]Ibid., p. 93.

[24]Ibid., p. 92.

[25]Eliot, "Journey of the Magi" from Selected Poems (Faber and Faber, London, 1982), p. 98.

[26]Eliot, "A Song of Simeon," from Selected Poems (Faber and Faber, London, 1982), p. 100.

[27]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock from Selected Poems, p. 107.

[28]Ibid., p. 114.

[29]Ibid., p. 126.

[30]Ibid., p. 119.

[31]Ibid., p. 120.

[32]Eliot, "East Coker" in Four Quartets, p. 126.

[33]Eliot, Ash Wednesday from Selected Poems, p. 108.

[34]T. S. Eliot, "The Ecumenical Nature of the Church and its Responsibility Towards the World." Oxford Conference 1937.

[35]T. S. Eliot, "Towards a Christian Britain", 1941, Referred to by P. Ackroyd in T.S. Eliot.

[36]T. S. Eliot, "Modern Education and the Classics" from Essays Ancient and Modern (Faber and Faber, London, 1938).

[37]T. S. Eliot quoted by Valerie Eliot referred to in P. Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot, p. 204.

[38]Virginia Woolf, Diaries of Virginia Woolf referred to in P. Ackroyd, T.S.Eliot, p. 236.

[39]T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," Essays Ancient and Modern (Faber and Faber, London, 1938).

[40]T. S. Eliot quoted by P. Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot, p. 290.

[41]Valerie Eliot referred to by P. Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot, p. 320.

[42]T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding" in Four Quartets from The Complete Poems and Plays 1939-1950 (Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1971), p. 745.

[43]Ibid., p. 145.

CHAPTER II

ELIOT'S CRITIQUE OF LIBERAL IDEOLOGY

> I am concerned . . . not with spiritual institutions in their separated aspect, but the organization of values . . . which must inevitably proceed to a criticism of political and economic systems.
>
> (T.S. Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society)

As a poet, dramatist and social critic, Eliot provoked the reader to consider the purpose of man. In his capacity as editor of the Criterion, he was consumed with prompting concern for literary, philosophical and ethical issues "by bringing together the best in new thinking and new writing in its time."[1] From the biographical detail of Eliot's life, it is clear that he intended to provoke the reader to reflect on man's experience of time and communication. The focus of this chapter is Eliot's views on the influence of liberal ideology on man's conscience in relation to these two dimensions.

I. Liberal Ideology

A conventional view of liberalism which was current when Eliot wrote his criticisms is evidenced in a statement by Ramsey Muir. Recorded in a source easily accessible to the public in the 1940's, it outlines various tenets of liberal ideology. Muir's twentieth century definition addresses the key elements of liberal philosophy with regard to individual and group rights, and the role of government to safeguard them, and includes the following three-fold observation:

> (i) Liberalism is a belief in the value of human personality, and a conviction that the source of all progress lies in the free exercise of all individual energy.
>
> (ii) It produces an eagerness to emancipate all individuals or groups so that they may freely exercise this power, as far as can be done without injury to others, and also therefore involves a readiness to use the power of the state for the purpose of erecting the conditions within which individual energy can thrive.
>
> (iii) [It] intends prevention of all abuses . .. of power - by affording every citizen the means of acquiring mastery of his own capacities and of establishing a real equality of opportunity for all.[2]

To understand Eliot's unconventional concerns about the ambiguities, and the problems of social communication existing in liberal thought, it is necessary to review the origins of this ideology. To justify the revolution of 1688-9, John Locke wrote Two Treatises,[3] which he hoped would prove that "the people of England whose love of their just and natural rights, with their revolution to preserve them, saved the nation when it was on the very brink of slavery and ruin."[4] Later in the treatise, Locke indicates his belief in the theory that all men are "naturally in a state of perfect freedom to create their actions and to dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit within the bounds of the law of nature."[5] He notes Hooker's acknowledgement that the equality of all is "beyond question".[6] However, he also observes that this is so only if "the foundation of that society is of obligation to mutual love amongst men on which he [Hooker] builds the duties they owe one another, and from whence derives the great maxims of justice and charity."[7] The fact that these circumstances did not, and have not, existed to any consistent degree, prompted Eliot's critiques concerning the assumptions underlying liberal social and political philosophy.

It is in the twentieth century writings of Maynard Keynes that one may detect the kind of rationale that influenced Eliot's thought. As a Liberal, Keynes perceived the difficulty inherent in attempting to combine, "Economic Efficiency, Social Justice, and Individual Liberty."[8] He observes:

> The first needs criticism, precaution, and technical knowledge; the second an unselfish and enthusiastic spirit which loves the ordinary man; the third, tolerance, breadth, appreciation of the excellencies of variety and independence, which prefers, above everything, to give unhindered opportunity to the exceptional and to the aspiring. The second ingredient is the best possession of the great party of the Proletariat.

> But the first and third require the qualities of the party which, by its traditions and ancient sympathies, has been the home of Economic Individualism and Social Liberty.[9]

Keynes views the various dimensions of liberal ideology as analogous to an "orchestra of divine sounds."[10] He identifies the evolution of this theory from the 'Individualism' of Locke and Hume, the 'General Will' of Rousseau, and the 'utilitarian hedonism' of Paley and Bentham.[11] Of these various aspects of the ideology, he comments:

> Rousseau derived equality from the State of Nature, Paley from the Will of God, Bentham from the mathematical law of Indifference. Equality and Altruism had thus entered political philosophy, and from Paley and Bentham sprang both Democracy and Utilitarian Socialism.[12]

In the nineteenth century development of liberalism, he detects a "miraculous union"[13] in which the theory "harnessed the conservative individualism of Locke, Hume, Johnson and Burke with the Socialism and Democratic egalitarianism of Rousseau, Paley and Bentham."[14] He adds that "harmony of opposites" would not have been achieved had it not been for the economists providing "the idea of a divine harmony between private advantage and public good."[15] Ultimately, he concludes that the "great Captain of Industry, the Master Individualist, serves in serving himself, . . . yet in his time is becoming a tarnished idol." And with this realization, "we grow more doubtful whether it is he who will lead us into Paradise."[16] As will be noted later, Eliot was particularly uneasy with the utilitarianism and egocentricism he perceived to be accompanying freedom of expression.

Despite his pessimism, Keynes, however, was convinced that man could achieve harmonious development in society by appeal to reason and democracy, and he cautiously supported capitalism.[17] That Eliot failed to share

the optimism of the range of liberal theorists noted above will become evident in his critique of the ideology they variously espoused.

II. Eliot's Critique of Liberalism

Eliot was of the opinion that liberal ideology had determined the mindset of the early twentieth century and concluded,

> In a society like ours, worm-eaten with Liberalism, the only thing possible for a person with strong convictions to do is to state a point of view and leave it at that.[18]

In his critiques of the varying effects of liberalism, Eliot's intent was not to provide a clear alternative, but to encourage his readers to reconsider the assumptions of the various nuances of this ideology which shaped their world view.

In his critique, Eliot noted the vagaries of liberal theories and ascribed to them the problems related to uncertainty of purpose, detachment, and a sense of rootlessness. His unconventional attack on liberal theory was to expose him to criticisms which in some instances termed him a fascist in inclinations.[19] However, a study of his writings indicates the inaccuracy of this view. His concern was simply that liberal theory failed to provide a safeguard for the liberty which it intended to foster.

As a literary man, rather than a politician, academic philosopher or sociologist, Eliot's voice was unique. His perspective was that of one who had the insight and the intellect to analyse and reflect upon problems only vaguely detected by most. Peter Ackroyd observes that "one of the reasons for his dismissal of humanitarianism and conventional liberalism was that he (Eliot) genuinely felt the presence of evil and darkness with which they could not adequately deal, just as he had a clairvoyant sense of chaos and disorder."[20]

Eliot not only expressed his feelings with the heightened sensitivity of a poet, but sought in his verse and prose to identify the reasons for the disorder he perceived. He hoped that his writings would evoke a regeneration of thought about political ideologies which existed, and to that end sought editorial work and influence in publications like the Criterion. He was critical of all existing political theories, but primarily attacked liberal ideology for its lack of clearly defined means of preserving the freedom and development of the individual that it expressed as paramount in its considerations.

Although at times hopeful of a possible synthesis of philosophies and beliefs which might lead to a society in which man might more effectively realize his potential, Eliot conveys a sense of desperation. He was a poet, dramatist and prose writer of protest, constantly critical of the political-social-religious dynamics of his day. He was particularly conscious of the danger in allowing intellect and spirituality to fragment. Proof that he viewed liberalism as a divisive force may be found in his statement in After Strange Gods.

> . . . the struggle of our time [is] to concentrate not to dissipate, to renew our association with traditional wisdom, to reestablish a vital connection between the individual and the race, the struggle in a word against Liberalism.[21]

He wanted everyone, not just the intellectual, philosopher, politician, or theologian, to consider the ideologies to which they espoused loyalty. His use of varied channels by which to communicate his thoughts supports the view that he desired to stimulate all whom he could reach to reflect on the philosophical and ethical foundations of their social interaction. With this in mind, he notes:

> . .. there is one question that we need to ask ourselves everyday and about whatever business . .. to what purpose were we born? What is the end of Man.[22]

Eliot was sceptical of liberalism's claim that it was a guardian of individual rights. He notes,

> Out of Liberalism itself come philosophies which deny it. We do not proceed from liberalism to its apparent end in authoritarian democracy at any uniform pace in any respect.[23]

Moreover liberal theory presupposed an inherent sense of responsibility and accountability within the individual, and a political system which was able to motivate and ensure this. This was a view which Eliot did not share. Writing in 1945, William Orton in The Liberal Tradition, notes, "The tacit assumption that the emancipation of all individuals and groups will lead to social harmony . . . was never more hazardous than now."[24] Like Eliot, he observes the growth in egocentricism and asks, "What if the groups represented economic vested interest?"[25] Eliot too saw the utilitarian-liberal ideals of materialism and reliance on reason as potential sources of man's abandonment of shared values and his intellectual and spiritual decline. As he questions in The Rock, part of a play intended for mass audiences,

> Do you huddle close together because you
> love each other?
> What will you answer? We dwell together
> To make money from each other? or
> This is a community?[26]

and observes also,

> We wait on corners, with nothing to bring but
> the songs we can sing which nobody wants to
> hear sung.[27]

The absence of a developed social consciousness which could provide the necessary cohesion for a true community to exist could not be addressed by liberalism, which in Eliot's words,

> . . . tends to release energy rather than accumulate it, to relax rather than fortify by destroying traditional social habits of the people, by dissolving their collective consciousness into individual constituents, by licensing the opinion of the most foolish, by substituting instruction for education, by encouraging cleverness rather than wisdom, the upstart rather than the qualified, by fostering the notion of getting on to which the alternative is hopeless apathy, liberalism can prepare the way for that which is its own negation, the mechanized brutalized control which is the desperate remedy for chaos.[28]

Eliot believed in a social system which allowed each individual to develop his unique potential in the manner that any liberal theorist would acknowledge as ideal. However, he believed that liberal ideology failed to take into account the inherent weaknesses of man and he was especially fearful of the rise of totalitarian ideologies, an outcome of the general apathy of a populus having no common spiritual ethic, nor any desire for political structure and direction. With regard to the democratic governments of his day, Eliot warned against complacency. He suggested,

> Instead of condemning Fascism and Communism . . . we might do well to consider we also live in a mass civilisation following many wrong ambitions and wrong desires . . .[29]

On another occasion in the Criterion of October 1938, Eliot warned of the danger of assuming that political repression could only occur elsewhere than in the so-called liberal democracies. He indicated,

> The heirs of liberalism found an outlet in denouncing the iniquity of something called 'fascism', . . . the irresponsible 'anti-fascist', the patron of mass meetings and manifestoes, is a danger in several ways. His activities when exploited by the foreign press are capable of nourishing abroad the very idea which he so vehemently repudiates; they confuse the issue of real politics with misplaced religious fanaticism and they distract attention from the true evils of our own society.[30]

Chief among the evils of the liberal democracies was their inability or unwillingness to take action to support their stated ideals unless it was expedient to do so. Eliot noted with dismay the evident lack of moral fibre in his government's inability to support certain stances in international politics. He was dismayed by the desertion of Czechoslavakia and expressed his sense of shame at some length,

> Our whole national life seems fraudulent. If our culture led to an act of betrayal of that kind, then such a culture was worthless because it was bankrupt. It had no morality because it did not finally believe in anything. We were concerned with safety, with our possessions, with money, not with right and wrong, we had forgotten Goethe's advice, "The dangers of life are infinite and safety is one of them."[31]

Partly as a result of this weakness there arose in Europe ideologies which Eliot feared, fascism, communism and certain forms of conservatism. In the uncertainty and confusion, the electorate relinquished control of their individual lives and ideals to a strong man, who sought to control, usually without regard for the people. It is interesting to note that with respect to the cult of personality, Eliot appeared to dislike Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill and Roosevelt.[32]

Eliot abhorred the detachment of most people from philosophical concerns about the ideological frameworks for society. It was a consideration that he also raised in respect to the formation of educational philosophy. He considered a country's system of education as more important than the political system.[33] To understand his critique of the educational theorists contemporary to him, it is, of course, necessary to understand his concerns about the effects of liberal ideology on politics which shaped the goals of education. He was to treat the pedagogical theory in a similar way to that in which he criticized the lack of direction in politics.

In one of his conclusions regarding politics, he cautions,

> A nation must have a political philosophy. A vestigal Christianity still provides a tattered rag of political principles for Western democracies, but expediency counts for more nowadays.[34]

He also notes

> A society is in danger of disintegration when there is a lack of contact between people of different areas of activity - between the political, the scientific, the artistic, the philosophical and religious minds.[35]

The current emphasis on expediency was indicative of what may be termed the "presentist" mindset spawned by liberalism.

III. Presentism and its Consequences

The poet had a peculiar responsibility to bring to the attention of his fellow men the importance of a sense of time which was beyond mere presentism. He notes the need for a poet to take into account the past in the present. Throughout his prose and poetry, Eliot refers frequently to the construct of time. In his Page-Barbour Lectures of 1933, he indicates a need for a consciousness of the past within the present to create a worthwhile future; his observation was made with particular reference to formal education. Unfortunately, it seemed to him that, "We are living at present in a kind of doldrums."[36] In this becalmed state, liberalism had prepared the way for man to be cut adrift in a state of presentism with no sense of the continuity of time.

> Where is there an end of the drifting wreckage,
> . . . There is no end, but addition: the trailing
> consequence of further days and hours,
> While emotion takes to itself the emotionless
> Years of living among the breakage
> Of what was believed in as the most reliable
> . . . We cannot think of a time that is oceanless

Or of an ocean not littered with wastage
Or of a future that is not liable
Like the past, to have no destination.[37]
(Dry Salvages)

We must, he insists, consider both the future and the past with the same degree of seriousness. He believes "the defenders of the present order fail to perceive either how far it is vestigal of a positive Christianity, or how far it has already advanced towards something else."[38] He criticises the neglect of tradition and the accumulated wisdom of the past, noting, "In a negative liberal society in which (there) is no agreement as to there being any body of knowledge which an educated person should have acquired, the idea of wisdom disappears . . . ."[39] In his critique of man's lack of consciousness with regard to his future direction, he draws attention to the indifference which prevails: "O weariness of men who turn . . . To the grandeur of your mind and the glory of your action."[40] Eliot observes the "endless cycle of idea and action, / endless invention, endless experiment"[41] and questions further: "Where is the Life we have lost in living? / Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?"[42]

Throughout his writing, Eliot displays a concern for cultural continuity. He notes the poet: ". . . is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in . . . not merely the present, but the present moment of the past."[43] As noted above he considered society "worm-eaten by Liberalism", and criticized its tendency to segregate any consideration of the present from past and future. On other occasions, he was critical of the indifference to the accumulated wisdom of the past, and lack of apparent concern for the future. He observes in The Rock:

". . . it seems that something has happened that
has never happened before: though we know not just
when, or why, or where.
. . . men both deny gods and worship gods, professing
first Reason,
And then Money, and Power and what they call Life, or
Race, or Dialectic."
. . . what have we to do
But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards
In an age which advances progressively backwards?[44]

His poem, "The Hollow Men", reflects this nightmarish image of society. With its imagery of 'dryness', 'hollowness' and 'death', it is permeated by a sense of alienation, misperception and loss as in the lines:

This is the dead land,
This is the cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.[45]

Commenting on this presentist mindset, Eliot observes:

> We are living . . . between opposing winds of doctrine, in a period in which our political philosophy has lost its urgency for behaviour, though it is still the only one in which public speech can be framed . . . it is a disorder (for which we are all to blame) ... which is responsible for the hollowness of many political and ecclesiastical utterances.[46]

Eliot was to note this "hollowness" in other spheres of communication - of individual to individual and in the dynamics of the group. It was the lack of authentic communication that prompted his observations in "The Hollow Men", and The Waste Land, concerning the superficiality of human interaction, and its adverse effects on man's potential.

Another characteristic of the presentist mentality was that of detachment from tradition. Eliot observed that man in his worship of the "strange gods" of Reason, Money and Power had detached himself, not only from the past, but

from a common present knowledge base. As Eliot notes, "In a negative liberal society, you have no agreement as to there being any body of knowledge which any educated persons should have acquired at any particular stage. The idea of wisdom disappears and you get sporadic and unrelated experimentation."[47]

Eliot blamed the detachment from tradition on the lack of continuity in human thought, the fragmentation of knowledge within and between the various disciplines and a lack of any past or future considerations on man's perception of time. As he observed in the preface of After Strange Gods,

> I would wish that I might be able to encourage such institutions [educational] to maintain their communication with the past because only by doing so, will they be maintaining their connection with any future worth communicating with.[48]

Eliot was insistent about the necessity for taking note of past wisdom. Recognizing and addressing the challenges of future development, he notes,

> For a long enough we have believed in nothing but the values arising in a mechanised, commercialised, urbanised way of life: it would be as well for us to face the permanent condition upon which God allows us to live upon this planet.[49]

He reflects that the absence of communication with the past, and the tendency to expediency has resulted in a failure to build any foundation for a healthy future whether educational, political, social or individual.

> We build in vain unless the Lord builds with us[50]

IV. Presentism and Self Knowledge

The reference to Tiresias in The Waste Land cannot be overstated since through him, Eliot draws attention to man's lack of authentic intellectual and emotional communication with his own being. In his personal notes, Eliot states,

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not yet
> indeed a character, is yet the most important
> personage in the poem uniting all the rest . . .
> What Tiresias "sees" in fact is the substance
> of the poem.[51]

Tiresias reflects on the evident emotional detachment of the other characters. They seem disconnected from thought of past or future relationships except in a mechanical or utilitarian mode, which limits them to present concerns of a superficial nature. Presumably Eliot alludes to Tiresias because of his ability, according to Greek myth, to possess wisdom when among the dead. The latter was granted to him by the gods, implying by association that Eliot himself did not claim responsibility for any wisdom which his writing might possess. Without wisdom or the search for it, life was essentially meaningless as is expressed in the section of The Waste Land entitled "The Burial of the Dead":

> . . . Son of man
> You cannot say or guess for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket
> no relief
> And the dry stone no sound of water.[52]

His personal notes draw attention to this allusion to Ecclesiastes XII-v without explanation; it is clearly, however, a scriptural text which focuses on the meaninglessness of man's attempt to find something "new under the sun."

It is interesting to note that Eliot originally placed "The Hollow Men" and "Gerontion" together with The Waste Land. Ezra Pound when editing Eliot's work advised against their inclusion. It is Pound's editing which made it publicly acceptable and which later gained for Eliot the Nobel Prize for Literature. The latter gave credibility to his work which it may never otherwise have had. And so in the age which Eliot criticised, some noted his genius, but not necessarily the warning he was attempting to convey.

Parts of Eliot's verse are reminiscent of this particular book with regard to man's activity and the problem of presentism.

> What does man gain from all his labour
> at which he toils under the sun?
> ...
> What has been will be again,
> what has been done will be done again
> ...
> It was here already, long ago,
> it was here before our time.
> There is no remembrance of men of old,
> and even those who are yet to come
> Will not be remembered
> by those who follow.[53]
> (Ecclesiastes 1-3, 9, 10, 11)

Only, Eliot argued, when placed in perspective in the dimension of time does man's understanding of his place in history become relevant, for "Eternity is set in the heart of man" (Eccles. 3-11). Man is under a requirement to consider and to be linked to all time. Here one is reminded of Tiresias, whom Odysseus in his wanderings contrasted with the gods. Eliot writes of a world in which people subscribe to Christianity. Such a world, to develop its awareness of the potential of man, needs greater consciousness of its origin, its intellect, and its revealed wisdom.

Unfortunately Eliot believed that most lived intellectually or religously below the level of faith and were unable to construct criticism of their societal millieu. Eliot reflects that man's knowledge of self consists largely of scepticism and uncynical disillusion. Generally man lacks the wisdom which can keep man aware of the need to question - his purpose and his end. It is this capacity for reflection that a presentist perspective negates. To maintain a sense of continuity, Eliot thought universities "should not be institutions for the training of an efficient bureaucracy . . .."[54] Rather he believed, "they should stand . . . so far as men are capable of it, for the attainment of wisdom."[55]

Tiresias is among the dead[56], but his perception is similar to that of Eliot. The paradoxical nature of Tiresias' life is an important consideration. The symbolism of the shadow is used by Eliot in "The Hollow Men"[57] and may be interpreted as an incapacity for authentic action, or the attempt of any rigorous challenges.[58] In ignorance - which Eliot alluded to in The Rock, - anyone may be victim of the 'shadow', the clouding of conscience, a state of mind which Eliot implies is the human condition in presentism.

Eliot calls repeatedly for his readers to attend to the aspect of time, and the need for its "redemption". Why? In order that the existence, purpose and potential of man might be better understood in order that man might know himself. In a liberal presentist world,

> Here is a place of disaffection
> Time before and time after
> In a dim light: neither daylight
> Investing form with lucid stillness
> Turning shadow into transcient beauty
> With slow rotation suggesting permanence
> Nor darkness to purify the soul.[59]

What man must recognize about himself is that

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future
> And time future contained in time past
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable
> What might have been is an abstraction
> Remaining a perpetual possibility
> Only in the world of speculation.[60]

The world acknowledges time past and future only in its science, and its materialism:

> .....while the world moves
> In appetancy, on its metalled ways
> Of time past and time future,[61]
>
> I have heard the key
> Turn in the door once and turn once only

We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.[62]

In reference to the above in his personal notes, Eliot quotes Bradley: "The whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul."[63] The very individuality regarded as "sacred" by liberalism loses its essence when it is always supposedly fighting for independence and 'freedom' for itself. Moreover this process further fragments the structure in which individuality could flourish for the common good. Without a secure base, despite lip service to the ideals of equity, men are more likely to follow the individuality of material self-interest. To develop the ability to interact authentically with the self, to develop intellectually and spiritually, communication in a non-defensive mode is required. As long as people set aside the elements which are indicated by Eliot as in need of consideration, the meaning of culture, the importance of art, of reflective critical thinking, and of religion, will not occur. To insulate himself against any attack on his mental well-being man will aim for security. Thus the communication with self becomes limited to the pragmatic concerns which materialism and its accompanying competitiveness engender. Little time is available for philosophical, literary, political, or theological concerns. Man remains victim of survival skills having little time or inclination to consider his more vibrant potential. As Eliot noted, he becomes victim of the "Hollow Men" syndrome existing in an external world, believing it less and less important to engage in "meaningful" dialogue with self except in the utilitarian mode. In this he functions, trapped by the "strange" false gods of "Money, Power, Status and Life."[64]

V. Presentism and Social Communication

Eliot wrote concerning communication that, within liberal ideology,

> There are three conditions which often look alike
> Yet differ completely, flourish in the same
> hedge row:
> Attachment to self and to things and from persons
> and growing between them, indifference.[65]
> (Little Gidding)

The attachment to self and to material objects, so characteristic of a presentist mindset, inhibited any genuine communication. In its indifference to others presentism is equally destructive of social communication.

> ... when an underground train in the tube stops
> between stations
> And the conversation rises and slowly fades into
> silence,
> And you see behind every face the mental
> emptiness deepen
> Leaving only the growing terror about
> Or when under ether, the individual is conscious
> but conscious of nothing.[66]
> (East Coker)

The solipsism which he identifies in the communication mode engendered by presentism, and the area of communication between self and others and is evident in one of his earlier poems. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock begins:

> Let us go then you and I
> When the evening is spread out against the sky
> Like a patient etherized upon a table.[67]

In the opening lines of this 1911 poem, he conveys the sense of a deadening of the intellect, a sense of helplessness, of disease. The impression he leaves in his reflections on an occasion of afternoon tea with a varied middle class group is of forces acting upon the individual who is not conscious of them, forces symbolized by the opening references quoted above, and his later

reference to "the yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,"[68] suggestive of sordidness and evil scarcely noted. He portrays a society bored or satiated, content with superficial talk and thought, communicating trivia. It is to him a reflection of a society as he experienced it. Whether the poor, "lonely men in shirt sleeves,"[69] or the matrons among the tea cups, he suggests all are permeated with a feeling of isolation in which authentic communication is not encouraged. Man questions constantly what he said during conversation, "That is not what I meant at all,"[70] should he give voice to his frustration of being socially analyzed, "pinned and wriggling on the wall"[71] by eyes that seem to determine one's character and essence in a "formulated phrase."[72] Beyond the superficiality, he has "heard the mermaids singing, each to each,"[73] and he reflects sadly:

> We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
> Till human voices wake us, and we drown.[74]

There is a contrast between the vitality of nature, and the stifling formalities of a materialistic, presentist society.

Eliot's concern about the declining sense of community and lack of consideration for others is also evident in his reflections in The Rock:

> And no man knows or cares who his neighbour is
> Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance.[75]

In this presentation, he implies that men live close together not for convenience of community interaction, but to exploit each other, "To make money from each other."[76]

Although the choruses in The Rock focus primarily on the fact that man is turning from acknowledgement of spirituality, they also allude to the neglect of others, and the decline in social communication. Eliot observes that families were drifting apart:

Nor does the family move about together
But every son would have his motor cycle
And daughters ride away on a casual pillions.[77]

He extends this awareness as he notes:

What life have you if you have no life together?
There is no life that is not in community
...
And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads
And no man knows or cares about his neighbours.[78]

Further reflection on the limited communication of self with others is evidenced in the lines:

. . . you neglect and belittle the desert
The desert is not remote in southern tropics
The desert is not only around the corner
The desert is squeezed in the tube train next to you
The desert is in the heart of your brother.[79]

The depression that Eliot experienced with regard to the disorder created by the wars and the failure of liberalism is noted by Russell Kirk. His sense of sterility and barrenness, of increased isolation from others, and an inability to communicate is evident in The Waste Land, in "A Game of Chess":

Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
What are you thinking of? What thinking? What
I never know what you are thinking. Think.[80]

The sense of separation is overwhelming.

In The Waste Land Eliot draws attention through a variety of characters to the lack of meaningful communication and relationships. For example, a wife who is being warned not to look "antique"[81] when her husband returns from war, is advised to concentrate solely on her appearance while the interaction between a typist and her "young man"[82] is wholly exploitive, unfeeling and superficial. None of the individuals in the poem are capable of any real communicative interaction. In this poem, Eliot reflects the shallowness, the

isolation, the lack of authenticity that is engendered when people are locked into the present, unable to know themselves, incapable of responding to others.

VI. Communication between Self and God

> All our knowledge brings us nearer to our
> ignorance
> All our ignorance brings us nearer to death
> But nearness to death no nearer to God . . .
> ...
> There is no life that is not in community,
> And no community not lived in praise of God
> Even the anchotite who meditates alone
> For whom the days and nights repeat the praise
> of God
> Prays for the church, the Body of Christ
> incarnate
> O weariness of men who turn from God
> ...
> We build in vain unless the Lord build with us.[83]

Eliot identifies the prime reason for the disorder of the world as man's alienation from and lack of authentic communication with God. The other inadequacies of superficial interaction which he identifies between man and himself, or between self and others are at root but a symptom of man's lack of spirituality. Eliot believed liberal thought, with its excessive emphasis on reason, had "privatised" each person's relationship with God, and, in doing so, weakened it. Yet man retained the ability to experience the transcendent within "the unattended moment in and out of time."[84]

> Here the impossible union
> Of spheres of existence is actual
> Here the past and future
> Are conquered and reconciled[85]
> (Dry Salvages)

To understand intellectually such moments, "the point of intersection of the timeless/with time,"[86] to Eliot "is an occupation for the saint/No occupation either, but something given . . . ."[87] For most of us such times of transcendence

occur only in the "unattended moments" as in the "half-heard, in the stillness/Between two waves in the sea."[88] Thus, all can enjoy this "condition of complete simplicity/Costing not less than everything."[89]

Eliot came in his later poetry, after "The Hollow Men", to an awareness of the importance of the spiritual, although not of the type experienced in his Unitarian upbringing. Without acknowledgement of God, and the search to communicate with Him, man is turned in upon himself, or upon the reason and philosophies of others. The result is disaster.

> The Word of the Lord came unto me saying
> O miserable cities of designing men,
> O wretched generation of enlightened men,
> Betrayed in the maze of your ingenuities,
> Sold by the proceeds of your proper inventions.
> I have given you hands which you turn from worship
> I have given you speech for endless palaver,
> I have given you my law, and you set up commissions
> I have given you my lips, to express friendly sentiments,
> I have given you hearts, for reciprocal distrust
> I have given you the power of choice and you only alternate
> Between futile speculation and inconsidered action.[90]

Why has man turned from God? For the same reason he has turned from others and from himself - the pursuit of self-aggrandizement and individuality, both a product of liberalism's preoccupation with the present. Yet communication with God can only occur when the present is seen as both past and future.

> ..... Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness
> To be conscious is not to be in time
> But only in time can the moment in the rose garden
> The moment in the arbour . . .
> Be remembered involved with past and future
> Only through time time is conquered.[91]
> (Burnt Norton)

Conclusion

In all forms of communication in a liberal society, Eliot identifies the processes of self interest and self-absorption, a state which may be termed egocentric, as opposed to the altercentric mode of the past or the deocentric, or God-centered mode which Eliot believed could be arrived at from a system of synthesis of human wisdom past and present.

An egocentric orientation limits the development of intellect and spirit, producing loneliness, numbness, purposelessness, and meaninglessness.

Eliot hoped for a movement away from self-interest to a consideration of the wisdom of the past, and a more realistic view of the future - two factors which he felt liberal ideology had diminished.

In man's awareness of the dimension of time, Eliot identifies the problems of what has been termed "presentism", and criticises liberal theory for its development. He perceived that there had been other views of communication and time, views which were no more acceptable than presentism, as will be examined in the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]T.S. Eliot quoted by Peter Ackroyd in T.S. Eliot (Hamish Hamilton ,London, 1984), p. 248.

[2]Ramsey Muir, "Liberal Party," Encyclopaedia Britannica XIII (1940), p. 1,000.

[3]John Locke, "Two Treatises of Government 1690," ed. W. Ebenstein, (Dryden Press, Illinois, 1969), p. 401.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Maynard Keynes quoted in Great Political Thinkers, ed. W. Ebenstein (Dryden Press, Illinois, 1969), p. 646.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 671.

[11]Keynes, "The End of Laissez Faire," ed. W. Ebenstein, p. 671.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., p. 647.

[17]Ibid., p. 246.

[18]T.S. Eliot, After Strange Gods: A Primer in Modern Heresy, (Faber and Faber, London, 1934) p. 13.

[19]Peter Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot (Harcourt Brace and World Inc., London, 1967), p. 297.

[20]Ibid., p. 182.

[21]T.S. Eliot, After Strange Gods, p. 48.

[22]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1949), p. 77.

[23]Ibid., p. 14.

[24]William Orton, The Liberal Tradition (New Haven, Yale University Press, London, 1945), p. 15.

[25]Ibid., p. 15.

[26]T.S. Eliot, "The Choruses" from The Rock, Selected Poems (Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1954) p. 117.

[27]Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 100.

[28]T.S. Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1949), p. 12.

[29]Eliot, "The Church's Message to the World," February 1937, partially quoted in P. Ackroyd T.S.Eliot, p. 242.

[30]Eliot, Criterion, October 1938, Vol. XVIII, No. 70 quoted by Kirk, T.S. Eliot, p. 255.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid., p. 315.

[33]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 33.

[34]Eliot quoted by Russell Kirk in Eliot and His Age (Sherwood Sugden and Company, Illinois,1984), p. 276.

[35]T.S. Eliot, Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, (Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1949), p. 160.

[36]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 15.

[37]Eliot, "Dry Salvages," The Four Quartets, p. 132.

[38]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 10.

[39]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 33.

[40]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, Selected Poems (Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 117.

[41]Ibid., p. 117.

[42]Ibid., p. 107.

[43]Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" quoted by Kermode, p. 42.

[44]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, p. 120.

[45]Eliot, "The Hollow Men" in Selected Poems, p. 78.

[46]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 15.

[47]Ibid., p. 33.

[48]Eliot, After Strange Gods, preface, p. 14.

[49]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 49.

[50]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, p. 116.

[51]Eliot, Notes on The Waste Land, Selected Poems, p. 70.

[52]Eliot, "The Burial of the Dead," The Waste Land, Selected Poems, p. 51.

[53]Ecclesiastes I: 3, 9, 10, 11.

[54]Eliot, Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, p. 201.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Homer, The Odyssey, translated by E. V. Rieu, Penquin Books, England, 1967.

[57]Eliot, "The Hollow Men," Selected Poems, p. 80.

[58]Ibid., p. 80.

[59]Eliot, "Burnt Norton" in Four Quartets, Complete Poems.1909-50, p. 120.

[60]Ibid., p. 117.

[61]Ibid., p. 121.

[62]Eliot, "What the Thunder Said," The Waste Land, p. 67.

[63]Eliot, Notes from The Waste Land, p. 74.

[64]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, vii, p. 120.

[65]Eliot, "Little Gidding," Four Quartets, Selected Poems, p. 142.

[66]Eliot, "East Coker," Four Quartets, p. 126.

[67]Eliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Selected Poems, p. 11.

[68]Ibid., p. 11.

[69]Ibid., p. 13.

[70]Ibid., p. 14.

[71]Ibid., p. 13

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., p. 16.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, p. 114.

[76]Ibid., p. 117.

[77]Ibid., p. 114.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid., p. 109.

[80]Eliot, "The Game of Chess" from The Waste Land, Selected Poems, p. 55.

[81]Ibid., p. 56.

[82]Eliot, "The Fire Sermon," from The Waste Land, p. 60.

[83]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, Selected Poems, pp. 107, 114, 116.

[84]Eliot, "Dry Salvages" from Four Quartets, Collected Poems 1909-50, p. 136.

[85]Ibid.

[86] Eliot, "Dry Salvages," p. 136.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Eliot, "Little Gidding" from Four Quartets, Collected Poems 1909-50, p. 145.

[89]Ibid.

[90]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, Selected Poems, p. 115.

[91]Eliot, "Burnt Norton," from Four Quartets, Collected Poems 1909-50, p. 119.

CHAPTER III

ELIOT AND MEDIEVALISM

". . . for the pattern is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel turn and still
Be forever still."
(T.S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral)

In his verse drama, Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot portrays and preserves for his audience a moment in time when there occurred in the Middle Ages a conscious stand of a spiritual authority against secular authority. He presents the action of the drama in its medieval context, one which has relevance for the present. He alludes to the traditions of the feudal age. Its cyclical view of time is evidenced throughout the play, and the effect of this concept is observable in the forms of communication that characterised the age. He also addresses in the course of what is in effect another piece of criticism what he would term a "good tradition." In the character of Becket, he displays the importance of a man's acknowledgement of a spiritual reality transcending him. This should be a valued tradition because there is a need for man to elevate his thoughts beyond himself so that he can avoid a modern presentist society. As he stated with reference to the play, which so clearly illustrates the mindset of medieval times, "We cannot undo the past, or forsee the future, yet our past has determined our present and our decisions will endure for good or ill."[1] At the close of the play, the audience is provoked to consider their acquiescence to the fate of Becket and others like him. Thus he brings his play, set in the late twelfth century, into his present.

I. In Defence of Tradition

Before analysing the medieval mindset on time and its effect on communication, as evidenced in the play, it is necessary to examine Eliot's defence of tradition, and his view of the medieval State-Church authoritarian structure's influence on society. As noted in Chapter II, Eliot decried the presentist mindset created by varying interpretations of liberal ideology. He believed that there was a need to be aware of the heritage of the past, those

"edifices" of our civilization that were in danger of being "pulled down to make way for the barbarian nomads in their mechanized caravans."[2]

A constant theme of Eliot's writing is the need to acknowledge that a consciousness of the knowledge of our past could prevent what he perceived to be an onset of "barbarism" and a lessening of wisdom. As earlier noted he was particularly concerned that poetry aid in achieving this transcendence of the dimension of time.

Eliot demonstrates his respect for past wisdom in his many references to writers of previous ages. "While composing The Waste Land, he turned for authoritative guidance to past traditional sources such as Augustine of Hippo, the Buddha, and the Upanishads."[3] This particular composition has been referred to as the "endeavour of a philosophical poet to examine the human condition by relating the timeless to the temporal."[4] Eliot refers to the thoughts of Augustine in his Four Quartets of later years. In "East Coker," he writes of a sense of "dark, cold and empty desolation,"[5] which for him pervaded the years of the second world war. In his De Civitate Dei, Augustine pondered similar feelings with respect to the barbarian invasions with their destructive disregard for the intellect, art and spirituality. Eliot, however, tempered his pessimism with a personal belief in the "long hoped for calm/the autumnal serenity/the wisdom of age/the only wisdom we can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility."[6] These expressions are indicative, like those of Augustine, of his fears concerning the effects on individual conscience of the destruction by war of social values. He feared, too, the effects of their destruction on intellectual and spiritual life, and suggested the need to consider an alternative to prevalling ideologies, which seemed unable to provide the needed safeguards.

It would seem that in his consideration of the human condition, Eliot acknowledged the cumulative effect of intellectual and literary life. However, he

questions: "Where is the Knowledge we have lost in information?/Where is the wisdom we have lost in Knowledge?"[7] As a philosopher, he valued wisdom, which could be gained only by awareness and integration of past knowledge. There was, he observed, no quick and easy route to it. He viewed the sense of tradition, the assimilation of past perceptions and discoveries as something which involved a considerable effort of intellect. He noted "we must start painfully again."[8]

In the year prior to the publication of Murder in the Cathedral in 1935, Eliot conveyed in the Choruses from The Rock the view that man had acquired over the past few centuries considerable arrogance with respect to his work, his ability to control nature and himself, and the presumption that he will ultimately understand fully all things. He notes man in the pride of his accomplishment,

> Exploiting the seas and developing the mountains,
> Dividing the stars into common and preferred,
> Engaged in devising the perfect refrigerator,
> Engaged in working out a rational morality,
> Engaged in printing as many books as possible,
> Plotting of happiness and flinging empty bottles,
> Turning from your vacancy to fevered enthusiasm
> For nation or race or what you call humanity.[9]

Eliot acknowledged that the need for knowledge of the past was conceded in the educational system, but for its utility, not for its intrinsic worth. He observed that there was more to education than for it to be considered merely useful; rather there was a need to gather wisdom but he felt that "at present we cannot hold much communication with each other."[10]

Eliot expressed his belief in the need to cultivate a historical sense in his comments in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in 1919.

> . . . [such a sense] involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels man to write not merely with his own generation in mind . . . but with the feeling that the whole of the literature of his own century has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.[11]

Eliot's acknowledgement of historical continuity thus carried with it the implication that anything newly discovered in terms of research affected everything past, although it had itself been affected by historical circumstances and past achievements. He noted that

> . .. what happens when a work of art is created is something which happens simultaneously to all works of art that preceded it. The existing movements form an ideal order among themselves which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them.[12]

The reference here is to the arts, but the same is true with respect to science. Few have difficulty accepting the fact that new discoveries change our view of the past inventions, and modify our perspective on the present. The subtle, positive influence of certain aspects of philosophy, literature and theology is more easily disregarded. In Eliot's view, the rapid unfolding of our knowledge in science and technology has led us away from an equal focus on other areas. In the desire to "progress", attention has not been given to the balanced development of man's complex, many-faceted potential.

In his critique of liberalism, Eliot commented: ". . . for a long enough time, we have believed in nothing, but the values arising in a mechanized, commercialised, urbanized way of life."[13] There was, he felt, a need to view the "world as the Christian Fathers saw it, and the purpose of reascending to its origins is we should be able to return with greater spiritual knowledge to our own situation."[14] He noted the need for an increased conformity with nature

such as existed to a greater degree in the past. He did not suggest a return to any past age, but he was advocating a change in outlook toward people and the environment since

> . . . we are being made aware that the organization of society on the principle of private profit, as well as public destruction, is leading both to the deformation of humanity by unregulated industrialism and exhaustion of natural resources, and that a good deal of our material progress is a progress for which succeeding generations may have to pay dearly.[15]

Conscious of the neglect of a philosophy of preservation and nurture in favour of one of exploitation, Eliot particularly addressed the problems created by a neglect of literary tradition. He noted ". . . he (the writer) will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past . . . It is a judgement, a comparison in which two things are measured by each other."[16] He perceived the danger in a lack of tradition in the arts that would cause it to fragment in the same way as intellectual disciplines. Without a shared community and communication from age to age or within an age, man would suffer a decline in potential in all areas that affected the development of society. For the healthy organic growth of society, there must be continuity and renewal of, and from the past. Without this there are merely continual new beginnings which neglect past acquisitions in man's intellectual and spiritual growth. The result is not wisdom, but the mere accumulation of knowledge.

As noted in Chapter II, Eliot addressed in his verse and prose critiques the problems created by interpretations of liberal philosophy. In his verse drama Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot indicated the limitations of ideologies of

pre-liberal societies which adhered to more centralized authoritarian governing structures both secular and spiritual. He connects his consideration of past problems to his present emphasising the need to be aware of past tradition to understand our present, and to consider our future.

II. Medieval Authority Structures

Throughout his writing, whether verse, drama, social, educational or literary critique, Eliot emphasises the need for man to be spiritually conscious. Always he touches at some stage in his compositions on the problems which will result from denial or neglect of the spiritual dimension of man. In Murder in the Cathedral, a study of martyrdom, he examines the circumstances which evolve when Church and State possess different value structures, yet each expects adherence to both. Such a situation brings about a fragmentation of individual conscience and of societal structure, albeit in a different manner than that caused by liberalism.

In his verse drama about Thomas à Becket's martyrdom, Eliot examines the origins of the conflict between the two modes of authority which sought to impose order in feudal society. His intent was to encourage thought about martyrdom. However, he also shows why the secular and spiritual did not develop an interlocking pattern of authority which could maintain a commonality of values.

An examination of Murder in the Cathedral is significant if one is to understand the development of Eliot's thought with respect to the relationship of Church and State. The play was written before some of his more obvious critiques of liberalism. It provides an understanding of the medieval political and social mindset, which tended to be other-centered in its attitudes to authority and community, rather than egocentric as in liberalism. Eliot enables

the reader to gain an understanding of the development of his own thought, either through his personal comments or through those of the characters he devised. He did not, however, suggest a return to the conditions of the past with regard to authority. In medieval times the cyclical concept of time was non-progressive; there is, it is true, in the common metaphor of the wheel employed throughout the play, movement, but it is always movement in the same pattern.

The attempt practically to organize a society with a dualistic authority as in feudalism proved to be immensely difficult. The blurring of lines of allegiance to temporal and spiritual representatives gradually became a source of increasing discord within what had previously been the united Holy Roman Empire. By the tenth century secular rulers began to exercise more authority over matters spiritual. Not only was such dualism responsible for problems in matters of conscience, but feudalism created further separation within society as a whole, although not in the same way as the separate grouping which evolved within liberal societies.

Feudalism evolved from the changes in society which accompanied the breaking of the urbanized order of the Roman Empire. In place of the centralized authority of Rome, countries became conglomerates of more independent estates which began to look inward for their survival, rather than having allegiance to some recognizable central authority in the western world. Land ownership decided a person's position and rights. The Church experienced a certain degree of central control from Rome, and gradually became more secular. It retained large landholdings which gave it temporal authority. Fortunately, it also retained repositories of learning that had survived the barbarian invasions. Through the clerics, some continuity in intellectual activity and tradition was preserved. They provided guidance to medieval bureaucracy since they retained for several centuries a monopoly on the

transfer of accumulated learning and literacy. A static agrarian economy began to be gradually overshadowed by a rising bourgeoisie, and new demands for an urban pattern was eventually to bring about a different social order which ended feudalism.

Each person in the feudal system obeyed some form of authority and it was the obedience which determined interactions. The king was recognized as the principal source of control, and was considered to have the sanction of God, although this did not exclude attempts to dethrone him on occasions. To him allegiance was given by secular authorities, among whom the land was divided. It was the king who decided the appointments of leaders of spiritual authority. Such a prerogative always had the potential for Church-State conflict since it was to the Pope that the clerics looked as a final authority.

King Henry II's promotion of Becket to Archbishop of Canterbury on the death of Becket's mentor, Theobald, in 1161 was not initially welcomed by Becket. He realised that it placed him in obedience to dual authority, that of the king, and that of God. Although the king was recognized as divinely sanctioned, the Church maintained the right of conscience in any appeal to spiritual authority. This was to sometimes take the form of appeal to the Pope.

Henry attempted to restore order after the anarchy of Stephen's reign. He had evidently hoped by the appointment of Becket for the submission of the Church to secular authority. However, the courts of the Church and the privileges held by the clergy were maintained. Henry's hope that the appointment of one who had been supportive of him while Chancellor would make the existing dualism less problematic failed to materialize. Once in office, Becket became guardian of Church privilege, often opposing the king. Such opposition is evident in the play and its culmination. In October 1164, Becket was condemned by the king for his alleged contempt of the secular court and

use of revenues contrary to the king's expectations. Becket went into exile on the continent in November. The nature of his exile and his earlier problems are evident in the play, and reflect the Church-State conflict of the twelfth century.

The tension between church and state steadily increased throughout this period. Confidence in the spiritual authority of the Church declined, and, as it became increasingly secular, a merging of values became less viable. The responsibility for maintaining spiritual adherence to the Church had been left for the most part to the clerics, who generally failed to reach the spiritual understanding portrayed by Eliot's Becket. Through this character, Eliot illustrates his view of the inability of "Human kind [to] bear too much reality."[17] He is suggesting a need to elevate the mind and he reflects in the play that apart from Becket, there is little evidence that a willingness to do God's will was any more in evidence in feudal society than in later liberal societies.

The major characters in the play, like later generations, preferred to "confine the inconvenient saints" to a kind of "Whipsnade,"[18] and then to pursue the values they found more comfortable to adhere to. Throughout the play is the wish of the majority, expressed by the Chorus, the knights, representative of secular authority, and the clerics symbolic of spiritual authority, that nothing upset the regular routine, the "normal" cycle.

At the end of the play, the knights remind the audience of the need to approve their action in removing Becket. They indicate that he was really of "unsound mind"[19] and the murder had really been suicide. Through them, Eliot cynically reminds the audience that they will understand the sense of the knights' action now that a state has been arrived at of "a just subordination of the pretensions of the Church to the welfare of the State."[20]

Through an examination of the characters, the concept of time and its effect on communication in feudal society becomes evident. It is also evident

that Eliot, while disapproving of the cyclical notion of time which implies stasis, is approving of the need to recognize the importance of spirituality, which elevates man from the egocentric dependence on his personally created values.

III. The People

Within Murder in the Cathedral, the Chorus of the poor women of Canterbury is representative of the views of the majority in feudal society. In 1936, Eliot indicated in The Listener that the chorus

> . . . mediates between the action and the audience, it intensifies the action by projecting its emotional consequences, so that we the audience see it doubling, by seeing its effect on other people.[21]

The chorus in fact states, "We acknowledge ourselves a type of common man;"[22] their views are reflective of the individual view and the community. They express a communal feeling with regard to their society and events. Later the knights and the clerics complete this reflection of the mindset of feudal society and enable the audience to see its relevance to our contemporary world. By his use of the characters, Eliot thus adheres to his belief that it is essential that drama express the human condition. He desires always to "bring home to the audience the contemporary relevance of the situation."[23]

The Chorus, the common man and woman, prefer not to have their routine upset, and have no desire to think beyond the immediate expected cycle. Viewing all matters at the secular level, they cannot appreciate the implications of a developed spiritual conscience. The struggle of conscience is entirely perceived within Becket, who had been one of the common folk in origin, but who had moved through the pleasures of the world to greater spiritual understanding. The latter ultimately causes him to follow fully his

perception of the will of God. The Chorus constantly express the discomfort of the majority toward so enthusiastic an attitude.

From the beginning of the play, the Chorus express their discomfort with being drawn into events that are clearly out of the ordinary. They do not wish to become emotionally or otherwise involved, but Eliot through Becket places them in a position where they cannot avoid responsibility. At the end, he casts a similar responsibility on the audience, asking them to make a choice as the Chorus did.

Throughout the play the Chorus express their unease with the situation they are obliged to think about. Initially they display unwillingness even to witness what seems inevitable. They wish Becket, who has returned because of a need to indicate the importance of the Church, to leave them alone, to return to a continuation of his seven years exile in France. The feudal state, it is true, had caused them hardships. Nevertheless they are content:

> We have suffered various oppression,
> But mostly we are left to our own devices

and

> Further we are content if we are left alone.[24]

As if speaking for each, they continue:

> Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons.[25]

They represent the majority's acceptance of the system, of the cycle they are used to, even if it is at times harsh and unpalatable. They are comfortable with the feudal secular authority which gives them a sense of security after the

anarchy that had earlier existed.* They beg the Archbishop to

> Leave us to perish in quiet
> You come with applause, you come with rejoicing,
> but you come bringing death into Canterbury.[26]

They are unwilling to ponder the religious implications of the uncommon spirituality portrayed by Becket. Even the priests echo the Chorus using the same phrase concerning the secular representatives:

> "Kings rule or barons rule"[27]

but continue

> They have but one law, to seize power and keep it
> And the steadfast can manipulate the greed and lust of others.[28]

The majority's expectation and acceptance of what seems to them inevitable is constantly reiterated. They prefer the cycle to be maintained unbroken. The wheel metaphor reinforces the belief that the regular round of life of the seasons, of justice or injustice, is unavoidable. They state:

> We are not ignorant women, we know
> What we must expect and not expect.[29]

From their reflection on life, it is possible to see how clearly Eliot conveyed the reality of feudal society's state as it pertained to the majority. As the women comment,

> We know oppression and torture
> We know of extortion and violence
> Destitution, disease, . . . [30]

---

*Prior to 1154, there had existed nineteen years of anarchy under Stephen (1135-1154). Henry II had restored order by extending royal authority. The Church remained as the "ruler of souls", and perceived a strengthening of secular authority as a weakening of its own control. The Chorus reflects the acceptance of status as preferable to previous secular conflict, and are not ready for further State-Church discord.

and yet they are more afraid of

> . . . a fear which we cannot know, which we cannot face, which none understands.[31]

They would prefer to continue "living and partly living."[32] They are content "to build a partial shelter/For sleeping, and eating and drinking and laughter."[33] Their enjoyment of the conviviality offered by the feudal order is evident and will be later examined in a consideration of the attitude of the communication in the community of feudal society as affected by their concept of time. The chorus reflects an acceptance of the existing order, yet an awareness beyond this world that

> Destiny waits in the hands of God, shaping the still unshapen:
> I have seen these things in a shaft of sunlight.
> Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in
> the hands of statesmen
> Who do, some well, some ill, planning and guessing,
> Having their aims which turn in their
> hands in the pattern of time.[34]

Ultimately, having witnessed the martyrdom of Becket, they express the same need to cling to security provided by the secular aspects of life. Their inability or lack of desire to elevate their thoughts is reflected in their final comments:

> Forgive us, O Lord, we acknowledge ourselves as type of the common man,
> Of the men and women who shut the door, and sit by the fire;
> Who fear the blessing of God, the loneliness of the night of God, the surrender required, the deprivation inflicted;
> Who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God.[35]

IV. The Knights

The majority attitude towards life in feudal times is evidenced by the women who form the chorus as they describe not only their view of the world,

but what actually happened in their lives. For an understanding of those in secular authority over the majority, Eliot utilized the characters of the knights who murdered Becket. The tempters also reflect thoughts common to those with secular ambition, or flawed spiritual perception. The knights represent those who owned the land as vassals to the king, those who pledged allegiance to both temporal and spiritual authorities though primarily to the former.

Eliot portrays the secular authorities as ambitious and continually mindful of any advantage to be gained, however small. The fact that Becket is accused of being entrenched in intrigue as any courtier,[36] suggests that self-advancement at any cost was considered the norm. Eliot does not portray the feudal organization as pervaded with any loyalty whether temporal or spiritual. Becket, of course, was familiar with both authority sources. Clearly Eliot in no way desired a return to feudal authority structures, even though they seemed to acknowledge a spiritual reality more than his contemporary society. He perceived the same lack of authenticity and the same vested interest in feudal society that he condemned in modern democracies.

There are many indications of the hypocrisy and self-serving actions of the barons, not only against each other but against the crown itself. They perceived "Church favour" as advantageous and the "Blessing of Pope powerful protection/in the fight of liberty."[37]

> Kings have public policy, barons private profit
> Jealousy raging possession of the fiend
> Barons are employable against each other;
> Greater enemies must kings destroy.[38]

The barons were desirous of curtailing the king's jurisdiction in the baron's court, and would support the bishop's court to gain their advantage. As one of the priests observes:

I see nothing quite conclusive in the
art of temporal government
But violence, duplicity, and frequent
malversation.[39]

Neither did the barons display reverence for the spiritual authorities; indeed, for them the church was servant to the state:

You are Archbishop who was made by
the king's whim
He set in your place to convey his command.[40]

According to Eliot, the secular authorities possessed a mindset inhabited by thoughts of ambition, pride, control and self interest. In the mind of a cleric like Becket, the barons were traitors to him from whom they held land, and to those to whom in theory they should turn for spiritual guidance. As Becket observes of one of those who came to murder him:

You, Reginald, three times traitor you:
Traitor to me as my temporal vassal
Traitor to me as your spiritual lord
Traitor to God in desecrating His church.[41]

At the conclusion of the play, after the murder, Eliot allowed the knights to leave the twelfth century to address the contemporary audience. He did so to convey his concern, and to provoke thought about still existing conflict between the church and the state, or rather between God and the state. What happened in the cathedral, that is martyrdom, is part of a transcendent reality that is still with us.

The critical moment
That is always now, and here. Even now
in the sordid particulars
The eternal design may appear.[42]

Eliot notes in the Four Quartets:

We cannot revive old factions
We cannot retire old practices
Or follow an antique dream
These men, and those who opposed them

> Accept the constitution of silence
> And are folded in a single party
> Whatever we inherit from the fortunate
> We have taken from the defeated
> What they had to leave us - a symbol
> A symbol perfected in death.[43]

By the knights' address to the audience, Eliot sought to implicate the audience in the process of denying the authority of the Church, and acquiescing though not actually participating in murder. As in all his writing, he attempts to surprise his audience or readers so that, whatever their reaction, they cannot remain indifferent.

The knights reflect the secular authority not only of feudal society but of later ages. Becket was killed by a social attitude, by an inability to recognize spiritual authority If people are unable or fail to take responsibility for the cultivation of individual spirituality within the secular state (and it is evident from the responses of the chorus and of the barons that they did not in the Middle Ages), then the secular will inevitably overwhelm the spiritual. Indeed, the third knight indicates that he has a secular "duty" to deny the spiritual, although he confesses concerning the murder, "But all the same we had to work ourselves up to it . . . and personally I had tremendous admiration for him."[44]

The second knight also portrays the ideal secular state or "a union of spiritual and temporal administration under the central government."[45] This in fact is what the murder made possible.

> If you have now arrived at a just subordination of the pretentions of the Church to the welfare of the whole, remember we took the first step. We have been instrumental in bringing about the state of affairs that you approve.[46]

In a sinister concluding comment the contemporary audience is cautioned by the first knight not to "loiter in groups . . . and to do nothing that might provoke any public controversy."[47] In other words, the audience, like the

chorus, or like the "hollow men," must not think in ways that might cause any questioning of the existing secular order. And, as one of the priests recognizes, the knights warning will not go unheeded:

> We shall still tramp and tread the
> endless round
> Of thought to justify your action to
> yourselves.[48]
>
> . . .
>
> Weaving a faction which unravels as you weave
> Pacing forever in the hell of make believe
>
> Which never is belief. This is your fate on earth
> And we must think no further of you.[49]

In Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot, as with other material, implies the existence of the past in our present, and its continual presence in our future.

V. The Medieval Church

As representative of the spiritual authority in Medieval England, Becket states: "For my Lord, I am ready now to die/That His Church may have peace and liberty."[50] But, as he implied in his last sermon, his perception of peace for the people of the Church was not of the secular kind, for "He gave his disciples peace, but not as the world gives."[51] As the "instrument of God," once He has made "perfect his will,"[52] he is prepared and expects martyrdom. Sadly, after the murder, the priests bemoan, Augustine-like, the fact that the "Church lies bereft,/Alone, desecrated, desolate and the heathen shall build on the ruins,/Their world without God."[53] The perception is that evil always intrudes in the natural world, occasionally to be questioned by people like Becket who claim to be saints who are "always made by design of God."[54] There is an evident belief in God's intervention in the world to demonstrate alternatives.

In presenting the mindset of the medieval church, Eliot shows his familiarity with medieval philosophy, in particular the Thomistic view of the Chain of Being, in which God is considered pure action, paradoxically as the centre of the wheel - at "the still point of the turning world;"[55] the angels symbolized pure intellect; man entwined with great difficulty intellect and the senses, which, although capable of reaching an elevated mode, tended to create perpetual disorder; the animals represented the senses, and the plants simply growth, having neither intellect nor sense to guide them; lastly, inanimate matter referred to underlying existence, productions of which varied according to the varied intentions of man.

People of the Middle Ages accepted Church authority and, indeed, saw in it a refuge against the temporal.

> Here let us stand by the cathedral. Here let us wait.
> Are we drawn by danger? is it the
> knowledge of safety, that
> draws our feet?[56]

Paradoxically, Eliot is implying both the safety of accepting the reality of the spiritual, and the danger involved in that recognition. The medieval church vied with the secular authorities in such matters of justice and land holdings. However, as Eliot's play implies, it was often little different in attitude to the secular authority except on occasion, through unusual people like Becket, who at some stage took a stand in terms of their spirituality.

In reality both the medieval Church and the secular state had a desire for power and control, both claiming their authority derived from God. Eliot evidently disapproved of the worldliness of the Church and was critical of its secular leanings. Even the priests who were closest to the Archbishop feared for their lives, and were prepared to compromise. They were, of course, desirous that he remain, yet they were uncomfortable with his presence, which

created uncertainty and tension about the limits of spiritual and temporal authoritiy. Eliot felt that such an attitude was still evident in his contemporary world and this would lead him later to speculate on a society in which the Church and state might be mutually supportive, although not in the medieval mode.

In the arrival of Becket from exile is glimpsed the Church-State relationship. The Archbishop is assured of "the devotion of the people"[57]/"But as for the king, that is another matter."[58] No true peace or meaningful dialogue is perceived to be possible, only a "patched up affair"[59] between secular and spiritual authorities. The second priest expresses the view of many. He wishes simply to be told what to do. In the feudal mode of acceptance of authority, he states: "We can lean on a rock, we can feel a firm foothold."[60] In the church, God was not the guide; rather it was some man placed in authority. The thought of losing this authority figure fills the priests with despair. Their faith is contained in the authority structure formed by men like themselves; it does not cause them to consider their true relationship to God and His will.

The clergy viewed the peasants as the "small people," as the chorus described themselves in an unflattering manner. The second priest castigates them for being "foolish, immodest and babbling"[61] when they express the wish that Becket leave England; yet the clergy did not welcome state-Church strife either, and were also prepared to compromise their principles. On the other hand, Becket, being more perceptive, comments that the people speak "better than they know."[62] He perceives that they understand suffering, even if they do not fully comprehend his type of suffering. He observes that in the common man "Both are found/An eternal action, an eternal patience/To which all must consent that it may be willed... for the pattern is the action/And the suffering that

the wheel may turn and still/Be forever still."[63] In the chain of being, God's will is action, the paradox of stillness at the centre of the wheel.

In the thoughts expressed by Becket through the tempters, there were evident several weaknesses in the spiritual mores of the Medieval church. The first tempter suggests that Becket, "Leave well alone/Or your goose may be cooked and eaten to the bone."[64] The advice is that it is wiser to follow secular expectations than incur the unpleasant, destructive consequences of failing to do so. The Church must submit because it is expected to do so. Becket is also plagued by the thoughts of the higher rule of spiritual pride[65] which troubles him with thoughts of "doing the right thing for the wrong reason."[66] The latter is evidently Eliot's view of the decisions or motivations of many clerics. The understanding of the necessity for sacrifice could be found only in the heart of those who know spiritual realities.

By the use of the second tempter, Eliot indicates how the medieval Church on occasion was tempted to seek greater secular power,in effect to determine state policy: "You master of policy/whom all acknowledge, should guide the state <u>again</u>."[67] Indeed, not to seize the opportunity to become one with the State would result in a spiritual leader becoming "the self-bound servant of a powerless Pope,/the old stag, circled by hounds."[68]

Through the fourth tempter, Eliot suggests that the worse problem is when men say there is "no mystery"[69] about spirituality. During his last sermon in December 1170 prior to his martyrdom, Becket mentions at least two of the mysteries of faith in a spiritual reality. He explains that the scriptures speak of a peace given to man by God, but "not as the world gives."[70] It is not meant to imply "the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the king, the householder counting over his peaceful gains."[71] He is referring, of course, to inner spiritual peace which may be experienced by man

in the midst of crises. Becket reinforces his remarks about the paradoxical nature of spiritual peace by reference to the fact that, while suffering, the disciples of Christ knew such peace, which strengthened their resolve. He addresses then the issue of martyrdom, yet another mystery to those not accepting the existence of God, and His significance. He notes: "A Christian martyrdom is never an accident, for Saints are not made by accident."[72] Also no man may by his will alone become a saint "for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God."[73] Becket also draws attention to other paradoxes that

> so thus as on earth the Church mourns and rejoices
> at once, in a fashion that the world cannot understand;
> so in Heaven the Saints are most high, having made
> themselves most low, and are seen, not as we see
> them . . . "[74]

The chorus, representing the majority of people in society, acknowledges that they too are aware at certain times of a spiritual reality stating that each had seen "these things in a shaft of sunlight."[75] Yet they would prefer not to take responsibility for the intangible mysteries of spirituality. On the other hand, Becket is used by Eliot to illustrate one who has travelled spiritually, and who has formed a different perspective on the world. Several years previously in The Waste Land of 1922, Eliot had concluded his poem with the word "Shantih," thrice repeated. The fact that in the Upanishad it means a similar concept to the idea of a peace which passes understanding (see Eliot's notes to The Waste Land) indicated that Eliot himself early noted the importance of a spiritual journey which might lead to inner spiritual development. Without an understanding of such paradoxes, spirituality becomes questionable. The barons reflect the lack of awareness by those who disavow the spiritual; the

people, as noted, are not unbelieving, but would prefer to leave such matters to people like Becket, or to God to determine.

Through expressing the thoughts of Becket, the clerics, the Chorus and the knights, Eliot provoked the audience to consider the consequences of the neglect of the spiritual dimension. He sarcastically remarks that his contemporaries are too sensible to think that the Church should have much to do with the state, and in the same vein indicates that they should not think too much about the whole issue. Similarly the Medieval church had also been discouraged from thinking too much about the spiritual authority it claimed to accept.

VI. The Medieval Concept of Time

Throughout Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot makes reference to "the wheel" and other terms which imply a consciousness of time as cyclical. He expresses through the Chorus the dependence by feudal society on the seasonal routine, and its acceptance of a regular cycle which all wished to remain undisturbed.

Early in the play as the Chorus realizes the possible consequences of Becket's return from exile, each voices the view that "Now I fear the disturbance of the quiet seasons."[76] The majority view in feudal times accepted the cyclical view of time and the stasis it implied. To them the anticipated routine brings security and they do not wish it to be upset, rather, "The poor shall wait for another decaying October,"[77] each "having their aims which turn in their hands in the patterns of time."[78]

Through another observation, this time by Becket, Eliot again uses the concept of the wheel and the medieval acceptance of a future in which no change can be expected.

> We do not know very much of the future
> Except that from generation to generation
> The same things happen again and again.
> Men learn little from other's experiences
> But in the life of one man, never
> The same time returns.[79]

There is a two fold consideration expressed by Eliot through this. He acknowledges the medieval view that God only can initiate 'action' and determine change. Man, in effect, lives in a state of choicelessness; it was nothing but arrogance in man to assume that he could control the mysteries of nature and realities beyond him.

> Only a fool, found in his folly may
> think
> He can turn the wheel on which he turns.[80]

At the same time he places at the centre of his play a searcher, Becket, who is determined to choose to do God's will.

According to the second tempter the future is nothing but "[is] fixed in an eternal action."[81] There is no hope of progress in this life which is to be lived entirely in the present. And yet, as Becket realizes "nothing lasts, but the wheel turns."[82] As one of the tempters observes:

> You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer,
> You know and do not know, that action is suffering
> And suffering action. Neither does the agent suffer
> Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
> In an eternal action, an eternal patience
> To which all must consent that it may be willed
> And which all must suffer that they may will it,
> That the pattern may subsist, that the
> wheel may turn and still
> Be forever still.[83]

There is here no suggestion of progress, only a constant predetermined round which allows no opportunity for a spiritual search which might lead us out of time, which might make possible the realization of being truly in touch with God.

Thus Becket's martyrdom was spoken of as an act out of time "to be developed and resolved in the pattern of time."[84] It did not fit the anticipated cycle; it was an anomaly undesired by both clerical and secular authorities. The medieval mindset accepted the cyclical view and preferred the security of the expected round of seasons and events, harvests and feasts, births and deaths. Throughout the play the Chorus reflects discomfort with any thought that life be considered otherwise. Becket's situation creates a conflict with the cyclical view.

As earlier noted, in each age there is generally exhibited a distinct mindset towards time, which affects the nature of communication. Interactive modes in the Middle Ages were also largely determined by the time construct.

VII. Communicative Modes

a) Communication with Self

According to Eliot, in medieval times, most thought of themselves as, in the words of the chorus, one of the "small folk drawn into the pattern of fate, the small folk among small things."[85] No one wished to experience "the doom on the world"[86] caused by a sense of loss of the security provided by a permanent underlying authority to which all yielded, both in church and state. Ignorance and misery were infinitely preferable to the perils of introspection and independent thought.

Eliot saw this lack of inclination to engage the intellect to ponder philosophical, religious or political questions as a perennial element in the common man. In relation to his inner communication and to self knowledge, such an individual is not quite like the "Hollow Men," isolated in a dominant mode of self-interest; rather, within the conviviality and community ties of feudalism, self knowledge was a function of the inter-dependence necessary for survival in the feudal system. Each seemed to keep his mind as free as

possible from purely existential concerns. Individual self and social self were one and the same, with each relying on the authorities of Church and State to take responsibility for their individual lives.

The chorus best reflects the attitude to personal identity and the inner life, both of which tend to be defined in terms of comfort with the security of routine, even if it was at times interrupted by injustice, or natural disasters.

> Destiny waits in the hands of God,
> shaping the still unshapen
> I have seen these things in a shaft
> of sunlight.[87]

It is true that each is aware of his personal spirituality, yet each expects another authority to organize it; the struggle with the mysteries of both secular and spiritual concerns poses too much of a strain. So weak is the sense of personal identity that each would prefer to "pass unobserved,"[88] to be left to his or her own devices. "We are content to be left alone"[89] they reflect. Thus, each accepted the dreadful events that impinge on the life of man. The chorus speak of the need to accept "the torn girl trembling by the mill stream,"[90] "the child without milk in summer,"[91] "the young man mutilated."[92] Each accepts what is felt to be inevitable and each must "go on living or partly living."[93] Again, there existed a reluctance to take individual personal responsibility since problems could only be addressed within the structures of authority, which existed outside of themselves. Man was helpless except to help family and neighbors bear all with an inner resignation.

Like the knights, the clerics think of themselves as "a type of common man/Of the men and women who shut the door and sit before the fire/who fear the blessing of God/who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God."[94] The clerics too prefer to avoid any form of self-communication which might prove intellectually or emotionally troublesome. Each regards it better to exist in

the natural round with which each conscience can cope, even when times prove distressing. Each was secure in obedience to the authorities. Even their spiritual life caused them no particular feelings of involvement, except in terms of the expectation of future justice, depending on how each had lived his life. Even in this, each relied on the Church to deal with sins now and in the hereafter.

The barons were totally absorbed in matters of their ambitions for their place in the secular order. Of self knowledge they were totally bereft, of self communication they were incapable.

b) Communication with Others

The sense of community was extremely strong in feudal domains and in the prevailing agrarian economy. The Chorus reflect the group thought, which indicates their acceptance of life and the interactions they have with those around them, whether joyful or problematic.

> We do not wish anything to happen
> Seven years we have bred quietly
> Succeeded in avoiding notice
> Living and partly living
> There have been oppression and luxury,
> There have been poverty and licence.[95]

They ponder the problems of the injustice they face, the balance of good and lean years, the conviviality in the round of feasts, and other social interactions, "having their aims which turn in their hands in the pattern of time."[96]

The chorus speaks, of course, always as a group and conveys the nature of interaction in feudal society. They speak as observers noting:

> We have suffered various oppression,
> But mostly we are left to our own devices,
> And we are content if we are left alone.[97]

When they speak of being "left alone", they mean by the secular and spiritual authorities noting, "King rules and barons rule."[98] They indicate their

preference that they be allowed to continue as a group interacting as they have in the diverse circumstances which afflict or encourage them.

In their communities, the people seemed closely bonded by virtue of the interdependence generated in the organization of the feudal system, within which they observe, "We try to keep our households in order."[99] It is the collective manner in which they express themselves which conveys the impression of a close communal life. For all of them, there were the experiences of the varied harvests; they all struggled together through the years of drought or rain, through abundance and lack. All participated in the conviviality of the round of feasts; all had listened to the same masses. They made similar preparations for the winter. In their communal feudal living, they can identify with each others' problems of destitution and disease. And within this system, they shared an acknowledgement of God who "gave us always some reason, some hope;"[100] yet they did not wish to consider spiritual matters much beyond the ritual they observed together.

The Chorus acknowledged that there was "uncertainty of peace in the world, unless men keep the peace of God."[101] They recognized that "war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it."[102] To them, Christmas is a time of renewal; without its rituals, there would follow "a sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest"[103] for all. And they all have a sense of the repetition of their lifestyles: "The ploughman shall go out in March and turn the same earth."[104] They each experience "the nighttime heaping of ashes/the fuel laid on the fire at daybreak/These acts . . ."[105] marked the limit of their suffering. They felt that there was never time in the society's schedule to grieve long, or to consider too much any sorrow since each had "its definition,/ . . . a kind of end."[106]

Together the people acknowledge God as the creator, that his "glory [is] displayed in all the creatures of the earth,"[107] and in the seasons. They reveal the spiritual belief of their time that all actions must be collectively and consciously undertaken in praise of God. It creates in them a stoicism, and an acceptance of what seems inevitable given the nature of feudal authority. As communities, they may encourage each other, acknowledge a common understanding of the plight of the majority. In such a manner do they experience a sense of security in community.

c) Communication with God

The type of communication with God which existed in feudal society was primarily ritualized. The people followed the dictates of the clergy, observed the masses, even when the Latin text would have been unintelligible to most.

The people perceived their communication with God was channelled through various spiritual authorities, who often were in opposition with each other. Becket reflects on the rivalry of the archbishops in England between themselves, and with him, as if they often behaved like the secular authorities.

The clerics who organize the ritual life and were meant to intercede between man and God perceive that the evils of society may overwhelm faith. They observe that the "wheel" has been stopped for seven years as if God is not active in the chain of being until an authority like Becket reappears. Their view is reminiscent of Ecclesiastes:

> For good or ill, let the wheel turn
> The wheel has been still these seven years
> and no good,
> For ill or good let the wheel turn
> For who knows the end of good and evil?
> Until the grinders cease

And the door shall be shut in the street
And all the daughters of music shall
be brought low.[108]

It is as if many among the clerical authorities choose to relinquish responsibility and give themselves up to the meaninglessness of man without God as indicated in Ecclesiastes. They too prefer the expected round and like the rest of society are "filled with fear"[109] at the thought of the loss of one like Becket through whom they may communicate with God. They do not speak of their personal search for God in the manner that Becket does. There is a sense that they like the people to adhere to ritual, but avoid a personal spiritual search.

Becket reflects the cleric's assurance that all is under the authority of God, as he notes: "The end shall be simple, sudden, God-given."[110] Thoughts of the worldliness of himself and of the medieval clergy haunt Becket, as he reflects on the lack of true spiritual commitment of that time.

Eliot conveys through Becket the highest communication with God, the forming of an individual's will to accept the will of God. Becket reaches this point and Eliot himself sought too as he states in Four Quartets:

And all shall be well
by the purification of the motive
In the ground of our beseeching.[111]

In Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot reflects clearly the medieval mindset both secular and spiritual, and its belief in a cyclical order which affected the various modes of communication. Soon after its publication he was to attempt to articulate suggestions about an alternate society in The Idea of a Christian Society which is the focus of the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]T.S. Eliot, quoted by Peter Ackroyd in T.S. Eliot.

[2]Eliot, Notes Towards a Definition of Culture (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1949), p. 185.

[3]Russell Kirk, Eliot and His Time (Sherwood, Sugden and Co., Illinois, 1984), p. 83.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Eliot, "East Coker" in Four Quartets from The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1971), p. 129.

[6]Ibid., p. 126.

[7]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock in Selected Poems (Faber and Faber, London, 1982), p. 107.

[8]Eliot, Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, p. 200.

[9]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, p. 117.

[10]Eliot, Notes Towards a Definition of Culture, p. 202.

[11]Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in Selected Prose of T.S.Eliot, p. 38.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1949), p. 49.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 48.

[16]Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in Selected Prose, p. 39.

[17]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral from The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (Harcourt, Brace andWorld Inc., New York, 1971), p. 209.

[18]Eliot, "Choruses" from The Rock, p. 113.

[19]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, p. 219.

[20]Ibid., p. 217.

[21]Eliot, The Listener, 1936.

[22]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, p. 221.

[23]Eliot, "Poetry and Drama," in Selected Prose, p. 139.

[24]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, p. 176.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 80.

[27]Ibid., p. 127.

[28]Ibid., p. 177.

[29]Ibid., p. 195.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., p. 181.

[32]Ibid., p. 180

[33]Ibid., 195.

[34]Ibid., p. 176.

[35]Ibid., p. 221.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid., p. 189.

[38]Ibid., p. 190.

[39]Ibid., p. 177.

[40]Ibid., p. 203.

[41]Ibid., p. 213.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Eliot, "Little Gidding", p. 143.

[44]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, p. 215.

[45]Ibid., p. 217.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid., p. 219.

[48]Ibid., p. 220.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., p. 213.

[51]Ibid., p. 199.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., p. 219.

[54]Ibid., p. 199.

[55]Eliot, "Burnt Norton", p. 119.

[56]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, p. 175.

[57]Ibid., p. 178.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid., p. 179.

[61]Ibid., p. 181.

[62]Ibid., p. 182.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid., p. 184.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid., p. 196.

[67]Ibid., p. 185.

[68]Ibid., p. 186.

[69]Ibid., p. 192.

[70]Ibid., p. 199.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid., p. 200.

[75]Ibid., p. 176.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid., p. 184.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., p. 193.

[82]Ibid., p. 192

[83]Ibid., p. 193.

[84]Ibid., p. 209.

[85]Ibid., p. 181.

[86]Ibid., p. 180

[illegible], p. 176.

[illegible]

[89]Ibid.

[90]Ibid., p. 195.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid.

[94]Ibid., p. 221.

[95]Ibid., p. 180.

[96]Ibid., p. 176.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Ibid.

[99]Ibid., p. 176.

[100]Ibid., p. 195.

[101]Ibid., p. 201.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Ibid., p. 202.

[105]Ibid., p. 214.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Ibid., p. 220

[108]Ibid., p. 179.

[109]Ibid., p. 178.

[110]Ibid., p. 183

[111]Eliot, "Little Gidding," p. 145.

CHAPTER IV

ELIOT AND THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

> We are living at present in a kind of doldrums between opposing winds of doctrine, in a period in which one political philosophy has lost its cogency for behavior . . . We need to consider what kind of society we have at this time, and what a Christian society would be like.
>
> (T.S. Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society)

> I have spoken of this essay as being, in one aspect, a kind of preface to the problems of Church and State.[1]

With these words Eliot began the third part of an essay, which was formed from lectures delivered in March 1939 at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. They became a book on The Idea of a Christian Society expressing Eliot's concern to generate debate about the kind of society that existed, and suggest an alternative which did not pattern itself on the Church-State relationship of any contemporary or preceding society.

Eliot believed liberalism had caused a reduction in man's ability to communicate authentically and effectively. He observed that this ideology had made man philosophically short-sighted, less cognizant of the accumulated wisdom of the past or of the urgent need to consider more carefully future directions. The ideologies of pre liberal societies had projected only stasis and were non-progressive. Eliot realized there existed no model for society to draw upon for a more ideal system, but he hoped to stimulate thoughts concerning a possible new order.

Eliot expresses his belief at the beginning of the essay that the fact that "a problem will certainly take a long time to solve, and that it will demand the attention of many minds for several generations is no justification for postponing the study."[2] He believed that the ideological base of society was in "urgent"[3] need of consideration. With this in mind, his tone is initially apologetic since he felt it was a subject he "could . . . handle much better" if he were a "profound scholar"[4] in any of several fields. It was his concern that society consider its options for the future which drove him to write and speak of the problems he perceived if the difficulties were not addressed.

Eliot did not attempt to develop, as a sociologist, politician, or theologian might, a blue print for some future society; rather he thought of himself as speaking or writing as a participator in a debate[5] that was crucial if man's potential was to be more fully developed. The basic reason for his concern, beyond the desire to involve people in discussion, was his belief that there should be an acknowledgement of the "permanent conditions upon which God allows us to live on this planet"[6] and a rejection of the values arising "from a mechanized, commercialized, urbanized way of life."[7] The Idea of a Christian Society expresses his desire to attain a more ideal socio-political-religious state for man. He believed that the culture of society should develop organically and not be planned;[8] consequently, the underlying philosophy for it should generate conditions conducive to beneficial intellectual, political, social and spiritual growth, not determine or control the growth itself.

There are four parts to Eliot's essay expressing his concerns about the future of society. Each part contains a warning about the dangers of failing to consider more seriously the ideological direction of society and the need for change. In the first section, he addresses the need for rethinking societal attitudes towards the philosophies guiding his contemporary society. Following his appeal for a reconsideration of underlying ideologies, Eliot offers a sketch of a possible alternative way of organizing society. The third section addresses the need for a structure which might be regarded as a National Church that would be in a state of both harmony and tension with the State. In the conclusion to the series, Eliot indicates that he is not suggesting radical change, but the need to consider more seriously the implication and application of ideologies by which society claims, or assumes itself, to be motivated. In all the sections of his essay, there are implications with regard to man's sense of time and his ability to communicate with himself, with others and with God.

I. Eliot's Rationale for Suggesting an Alternate Society

In the first part of his essay, Eliot confines himself to indicating why there is a need to consider alternative ideological guidelines for society, and the problems of failing to do so. Although initially apologetic in tone because of expounding on what he perceives to be "beyond his usual scope,"[9] Eliot states in his opening remarks,

> The subject with which I am concerned in the following pages is one to which I am convinced we ought to turn our attention now, if we hope ever to be relieved of the immediate perplexities that fill our minds.[10]

He admits that his only qualification for writing and lecturing on the topic is his experience of life, and states that he is not suggesting a blueprint for a Christian society, but "only that which can be found in an understanding of the end to which Christian Society, to deserve its name, must be directed."[11] His prime concern is not to criticise, but to "question what - if any - is the idea of the society in which we live? to what end is it arranged."[12]

In order to address the issues connected with the structuring of a Christian society, a more intellectual approach to Christianity is needed. Moreover one must be willing to go where the argument leads, for faith, "when thought [about], has practical results which may be inconvenient."[13] Although, he does not presume to suggest the methods of creating a Christian society, it is clear that it will be different "from the kind of society in which we are now living,"[14] which is a society best described as "neutral" or "negative". Eliot disagrees with the application of the term "Christian" to Western Democracies. Indeed by a Christian society,

> we mean only that we have a society in which no one is penalized for the 'formal' profession of Christianity; but we conceal from ourselves

> the unpleasant knowledge of the real values by which we live.[15]

Like Christian sociologists, he critically examines "our economic system in the light of Christian ethics;"[16] like them, he perceives the differences between society's stated principles and its social practices.

> They appeal to the spirit of justice and humanity with which most of us profess to be inspired, they appeal also to the practical reason, by demonstrating that much in our system is not only iniquitous, but in the long run unworkable and conducive to disaster.[17]

Eliot outlined three alternatives with respect to the organization of future society: a predominantly pagan society with the Christians as a minority; a wholly Christian orientation to society; or a situation in which practicing Christians "are in a minority in a society which has ceased to be Christian."[18] Our present society, in which self interest is the "sole conscious aim,"[19] can scarcely be termed Christian. And yet our choice must be between Christianity and paganism.

The Christian West, Eliot notes, defines itself in terms of Liberalism and Democracy, the two ideologies not being "identical or inseparable."[20] Moreover, a democracy need not be Christian. Totalitarian Germany, as it had developed in his day, used the term democracy in defining its state. Democracy in the west had become, in fact, more appropriately defined as a "financial oligarchy."[21]

Eliot reiterates his concern about the atomizing of society and the weakening of "collective consciousness,"[22] a decline which had arisen as a result of the neglect of traditional mores. He comments that the liberal mindset has spawned a tolerance which, although in man respects a positive development, has caused religion to lose its strength and direction. Liberalism

is a "necessary negative element,"[23] however, and Eliot certainly did not recommend conservatism and "petrification."[24]

Eliot's organic view of ideologies and society caused him to applaud Aristotle's political theory, which rested "on a perception of the unconscious aim implicit in Athenian democracy at its best."[25] The development of political theory to Eliot is the end result of a growth that cannot be predetermined, but rather arises from "the substratum of collective temperament, ways of behaviour and unconscious values which provide the material for its foundation."[26]

According to Eliot, society is in urgent need of a new political theory. The fact that it still defines itself in the old terms of liberalism creates a "hollowness of many political and ecclesiastical utterances."[27] The West tends to feel superior about the fact that it is Christian and totalitarian states, pagan. However, both are materialistic, and ". . . the last thing we should like to do would be to examine the 'Christianity' which . . . we say we keep."[28]

If a Christian society is to be advanced as a genuine alternative to a pagan one, then the nature of that society must be well defined, and there should exist strong convictions concerning it. Moreover, it must be cohesive. Contemporary western liberal democracies, however, lack cohesion, respect for tradition, and commitment to religion. Moreover, in a highly industrialised society, there exists a susceptibility to mass suggestion , and mob mentality. The mob that results "will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed and well disciplined."[29]

Since liberalism tends to treat religion as a private matter, a gap has developed between public and private morality, without the conscience being too troubled. He states,

> It is a problem constituted by our implication
> in a network of institutions from which we cannot

> dissociate ourselves: institutions the operation of which appears no longer neutral, but non-Christian.[30]

In such a society, Christians are easily tolerated, since then their apparent convictions trouble no one; indeed, even they seem often uncertain about the faith and its application.

In such a society, too, it will be difficult to convince others of the need for change

> No scheme for a change in society can be made to appear immediately palatable, except by falsehood, until society has become so desperate that it will accept any change. A Christian society only becomes acceptable after you have fairly examined the alternatives. We might, of course, merely sink into an apathetic decline: without faith [and] without a particular philosophy of life, either Christian or pagan."[31]

He concludes the first part of his essay as he began, with a warning that if one is not prepared to preserve a Christian society, and the creativity it is capable of engendering, the alternative is

> regimentation and conformity, without respect for the needs of the individual soul; the puritanism of hygienic morality in the interest of efficiency, uniformity of opinion through propaganda, and art only encouraged which flatters official doctrines of the time.[32]

Such a state would be "hell" on earth.

Eliot's intention in the first part of his essay was to cause people to reflect on the assumptions they made with regard to the religious and political ideologies according to which they pursued their lives. He also intended to warn of the repercussions of neglect of or indifference to certain realities, which he believed society generally was neither prepared nor willing to consider more profoundly because of the degree of discomfort generated by their discussion. Throughout his argument, he was critical of the apathy displayed in attitudes

towards current social philosophies, and was fearful of the ideologies that might prevail if the observance of Christian principles lacked conviction.

II. The Structure of a Christian Society

In the second part of his essay, Eliot tentatively outlines his ideas for an alternate ideology and structure for society. He states, with his usual hesitancy, that his draft of a Christian society which "omitted many details that will be considered essential, could not stand even as a rough sketch . . . ."[33] Instead, he prefered to proffer "a slight outline"[34] of what he thought constituted "the essential features of such a society, bearing in mind that it can be neither medieval in form, or be modelled on the seventeenth century or any previous age."[35]

He again begins with the comment:

> . . . a liberalised or negative condition of society must either proceed into a gradual decline of which we can see no end, or . . . reform itself into a positive shape which is likely to be effectively secular.[36]

Neither of these ends held any appeal to Eliot. The only alternate society possible is a "positive Christian"[37] one; indeed, even those who denied Christianity could not fail to perceive the fact that "thorough-going secularism is objectionable."[38]

In discussing the structural elements of a Christian society, he identified three concepts, which he offered for further debate, "the Christian State, the Christian Community and the Community of Christians."[39]

With regard to the Christian State, he observes that he is not suggesting church rule. His concern is only to suggest the need for the type of state which will operate along Christian lines and with which the Church could co-exist.

Neither is he advocating a ruling group elected on the basis of their perceived high profile as Christians. In this regard he notes that

> even if, in present conditions, all persons in positions of highest authority were devout and orthodox Christians, we should not see very much difference in the conduct of affairs.[40]

He based this conclusion on his belief that it is the ethos of a people which "determines the behaviour of politicians."[41] His preference was that the actions of those in authority be constrained within a "Christian framework within which to realize their ambitions, and advance the prosperity and prestige of their country."[42]

Eliot's regard for the importance of education begins to surface at this point, as he indicates that those in power or authority should at least have had a "Christian education."[43] By the latter, he did not mean one that provided a narrow sectarian focus, but one which would "primarily train people to be able to think in Christian categories, though it could not compel belief and would <u>not</u> impose the necessity of an insincere profession of belief."[44] He placed the responsibility primarily on society to regulate the actions of politicians within a generally agreed upon Christian structure.

Eliot makes a distinction between the degree of faith of each of the groups identified as essential constituents of a Christian scciety. In considering first the State, he suggests that the minimum requirement of a statesman would be "conscious conformity of behaviour."[45] Within the Christian Community, the faith would be well understood, although he expected "only a largely unconscious behaviour."[46] The Community of Christians, however, would serve a watchdog role, since he conceived they would embody "a <u>conscious</u> Christian life on its highest social level."[47] He did not wish the last adherence to be general throughout society, since he thought it would generate too great a

strain on the general population. The majority should not be confronted with too much conflict between "what is easy for them, or what their circumstances dictate and what is Christian."[48]

The Christian Community would exist in some form of governable, interactive divisions. Eliot focused on the well understood concept of the parish organization already in place. He thought it served his "purpose as an example of a community unit,"[49] but added that such divisions should be religious-social constructs only and not cause a split in loyalty. He reminds the reader that such an organization does not yet exist, except in "very primitive tribes."[50]

His view of the size and structure of a possible community is not based on any past organization, although the "parish" possessed the basic structures which could provide a vehicle by which change might occur. It is Eliot's contention that there should exist a community "small enough to consist of a nexus of direct personal relationships."[51] Hence his choice of the parish-like concept for grouping units in society. Eliot admitted that applying Christianity to an urban setting would present problems since in the beginning it had been linked to a simple agricultural or piscatorial structure. However it is hardly possible or practical to return to simpler life styles and he thus concedes that "the only alternative [may be] to accept the modern world as it is and simply try to adapt Christian social ideals to it."[52] There is, of course, much in the modern system which is "inherently bad,"[53] and it seems clear that the exploitive and profit-oriented mode is incompatible with Christian ethics. What is required is a conscious decision by all - even those only nominally espousing Christianity - that there should exist a Christian organization of society. Such a society would be dedicated to "virtue and well-being in the community . . . and the supernatural end - beatitude - for those who have eyes to see it."[54]

Since the State tended to act out of expedience, and the majority were "intellectually lethargic,"[55] Eliot suggests the need for a watchdog group. This group forms the third pillar of the structure he proposes and is identified as the Community of Christians, consisting of "consciously and thoughtfully practising Christians, especially those of intellectual and spiritual superiority."[56] He anticipated that if his idea of a Community of Christians could exist, they would be a body of indefinite outline, composed of both clergy and laity, of the more conscious, more spiritually and intellectually developed of both.[57] They would also be a monitoring group which would form "the consciousness and conscience of the nation."[58]

To attain a Christian philosophical base for society, Eliot notes the need for an educational system which provides an education "as distinct from mere instruction."[59] It becomes evident at this stage in his essay that he perceives those responsible for education to be of prime importance in helping to bring into being a Christian society. He believed that the teaching body should represent all shades of opinion in society to "benefit intellectual vitality;"[60] and should include people of "exceptional ability who may be indifferent, or disbelieving; there will be room for a participation of other persons professing other faiths than Christianity."[61] His focus on the need for teachers to be an exceptional group supports the view that, for Eliot, the educational system was more important than the political system, and far more important than the commercial section. He felt it essential that the system be directed by a Christian philosophy of life, not by clerics.

Educationalists should account for a large number of the Community of Christians. Within the group would be also clergy of different intellectual and or spiritual gifts, and it would include those who are ordinarily spoken of, "not always with flattering intention, as 'intellectuals'."[62] It is evident that Eliot

thought that educationalists should primarily be of those who were intellectually and spiritually curious and motivated, and possessing both broad and in depth knowledge with a respect for learning and religion.

Eliot disagreed with a separation of the various elements of society and of disciplines. He disliked the idea of "lay intellectuals in a world of their own,"[63] and observed,

> A good deal of waste seems to me to occur through pure ignorance, a great deal of ingenuity is expounded on half baked philosophies, in the absence of any common background of knowledge.[64]

He confessed himself at a loss to know what were the "most fruitful conditions for the production of works of the first order, philosophical, literary or in the other arts,"[65] since no particular set of circumstances from deprivation to boundless encouragement seemed to have a monopoly on causing such productions. However, he observes that "these creations are probably by products for which we cannot deliberately arrange the conditions."[66] Such thinking would account for his dislike of definite formulations with regard to societal structure which, as already noted, he believed should be allowed spontaneous growth within a certain guiding and protective ideology. He identified Christianity as the only possible source of such guidance, if individual potential and rights were to be preserved.

Correctly he notes the subtle undermining of the arts within a system which values productions according to their economic viability. In such conditions, censorship will not be the only or even the major cause of a decline in creativity. Because of confusion about aesthetic values, there remains little appreciation for learning. Where the latter does exist it tends to be fragmented into various disciplines. "Accordingly," he cynically and provokingly concludes,

"the more serious writers have limited and even provincial audiences, and the more popular write for an illiterate and uncritical mob."[67] He also comments that the decline in the arts "may always be taken as a symptom of some social ailment to be investigated."[68]

Eliot is convinced that, without a basic guiding, underlying political philosophy, it is impossible to have continuity and beneficial integrated growth in any area of society. In a society in which there is no possibility of assuming a certain commonality of knowledge base, "the idea of wisdom disappears, and you get sporadic and unrelated experimentation."[69] He decries the fact that the "secularist solution for muddle is to subordinate everything to political power."[70] This, he believes, will produce

> confinement of the clergy to a more and more restricted field of activity, the subduing of free intellectual speculation, and the debauching of the arts by political criteria.[71]

What Eliot is suggesting is a revolution in political, social and religious philosophy as it has so far existed. The educationalists are to be responsible for the formation of a society that will encourage the realization of individual potential beneficial to the whole. This must involve a shift of focus away from the exploitive, profit-oriented motivations to a fresh commitment to Christian values and loyalty to a Christian State.

III. Problems of Church-State Relations

In the third section of his essay, Eliot turns his thoughts to a consideration of the difficulties which may exist in Church-State relations. He confined himself to a consideration of the problems of Church and State in England since he felt more qualified to comment on these. However, he acknowledges that the organization of each country's religious framework is important to Christendom

as a whole. Such an organization, he envisions, could utilize existing structures. With this thought in mind, he sets his comments within the context of the Anglican Church stating that he can only address himself to a church structure which has majority support. His rationale is that a national Church should enjoy the membership of the majority. He does not, of course, suggest that the Church of England is without faults; however, he believes that

> because of its relation in the past to religious - social life of the people, [it] is the one for our purpose - and no Christianization of England can take place without it.[72]

Eliot did not favour suppression of other dissenting sects, or a "superficial union of Churches under an official exterior, a union in which theological differences would be so belittled that its Christianity might become wholly bogus."[73] As in his example of the application of the parish concept to form groups which could more easily interact, he wishes to use the structure which exists within the Church so that changes are not perceived as a form of disestablishment which could confuse attitudes towards the faith.

Turning to a consideration of organization within the Church, Eliot thought there should exist: "a hierarchical organization in direct and official relation to the state."[74] The problem of the Church becoming an extension of the State, as for example in Tudor England, would always exist. It could be addressed, however, by having the Church require the incorporation in its structure of "small units of the community and their individual members."[75] The Community of Christians would provide "the persons of its more intellectual, scholarly and devout officers, its masters of ascetic theology and its men of wider interests."[76] Such a Church would be capable of determining government policy,

> shielding the community against tyranny and asserting its neglected rights, or . . . contesting heretical opinion or immoral legislation and administration.[77]

He considered it essential that the Church be open to reform from within, and that it engage in debate not only with the State but with the Community of Christians. Eliot was of the opinion that, since the majority lived in "no man's land"[78] theologically, the danger that its members might drift anywhere required an all-encompassing organization which allowed for dissent. He believed that the

> national faith must have official recognition by the State, as well as an accepted status in the community and a basis of conviction in the individual.[79]

Eliot identified two dangers in a National Church. First, it was in danger of losing touch with the rest of Christendom, since such a church would reflect only the "religious-social habits of the nation."[80] Second, missionaries have all too often propagated "the customs and attributes of the social groups to which they have belonged instead of providing the basis of a faith which could be harmonized" with the indigenous culture.[81]

Eliot supports a Universal Church since, as he states, "truth is one and theology has no frontiers."[82] He was concerned that, without widespread recognition of the position of the National Church within the Universal Church, there would be a conflict between "public and private morality,"[83] a "craving for a simplified monistic solution of statism or racism."[84] To avoid this, an individual's allegiance should be primarily to the Universal Church, "to one's fellow Christians everywhere."[85] This would create a tension between groups which he believed to be a "distinguishing mark between a Christian and a pagan society."[86]

IV. A Future without Christianity

In the final part of his essay, Eliot again warns of the problems presented when determining the organization of a Christian State since

> the best government must be relative to the character and the stage of intelligence and education of a particular people in a particular place at a particular time.[87]

He also feared that adherence to political ideologies would supersede adherence to Christianity. It is evident that, although he wished to utilize the existing Church of England as part of the structure of a National Church, he did not perceive the secular party alternatives of his day to be capable of supplying a compatible structure for State organization.

Foremost among the ills of the age was the current apathy engendered by complacency. While the liberal democracies condemned other forms of government, they had failed to focus on their own problems. It was discouraging to him that

> only fear and jealousy of foreign success or alarm can alarm us enough about the health of our own nation . . . to see such things as depopulation, malnutrition, moral deterioration, the decay of agriculture as evils at all.[88]

In his concluding remarks, he reminds the reader that he has not attempted in his tentative sketch of a Christian society to indicate the need for a society of saints, but rather for one of "ordinary men."[89] He also reminds us that Christianity never intended that a "virtuous" society can ever become a reality: the closest we can approach will be a "sordid travesty of what human society should be."[90] With an evident sense of sadness, he reflects the reality that represents man's limited capacity

> A wholly Christian society might be a society for the most part on a low level; it would

> engage the co-operation of many for whom Christianity was spectral or superstition, or feigned, and of many whose motives were primarily worldly and selfish. It would require constant reform.[91]

Eliot envisaged a society that would have a consciousness of community, but not one radically different in structure than the one with which he was familiar. He anticipated that a change of attitude could solve many problems, and believed that one beneficial change would be, "a respect for the religious life, for the life of prayer and contemplation, and for those who attempt to practice it."[92] He points out that such an attitude already exists among such religions as Islam and Hinduism.

He reiterates his concern about certain values which support economic exploitation and which may lead to "dearth and desert."[93] For Eliot "a wrong attitude towards nature implies somewhere, a wrong attitude towards God."[94] He believed that many societies, even the primitive, demonstrate a social-religious-artistic structure which could provide a model for development on a "higher plane."[95]

Eliot concludes by returning to his rationale for initially presenting the lectures, and publishing the essay. An ideology like democracy is ill equipped to deal with the effects of convictions generated in totalitarian regimes. His fear of what could happen if the ideology of his countrymen remained neutral or negative caused him to address the need for an alternate society. His comments attempt to generate debate since he saw them as a voice in a discussion, rather than an attempt to suggest a definitive alternate structure and ideology. It is also evident that he hoped to provoke his readers or listeners, as he did by his poetry and verse dramas. His concern was whether society really had any beliefs "more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends."[96]

V. Time and Communication in a Christian Community

Eliot believed that neither existing or past ideologies had created the degree of commonality and interconnectedness necessary for meaningful communication. He argued that only a society with a Christian philosophical base could provide the sense of time which would have a beneficial effect on social communication patterns. Throughout his writing he implies that there must be an acknowledgement of past and future in any present consideration. Thus he negates the viability of the earlier medieval mindset of denial of the significance of the future, and the presentism generated by liberal ideology which is severed from both past and future.

In acknowledging the need for a consciousness of an eternal time continuum, Eliot recognizes the conditions by which we are "allow[ed] to inhabit this planet,"[97] and this would include a vision of the future as an issue of constantly present concerned speculation. As he notes in "Burnt Norton":

> . . . the enchantment of the past and future
> Woven in the weakness of a changing body
> Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
> Which flesh cannot endure.
> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness
> To be conscious is not to be in time.[98]

He is here recognizing the problem which faces man if he attempts to expand his consciousness. The need to transcend the limitations of man's ability to conceive of time only in the present is an idea which permeates his suggestions: it is the focus of his need to acknowledge a God-centered ideology. Such an ideological base would result in a more ethical interaction with one's ancestors, our present fellows and our posterity. Eliot, however, was not uncritical of conventional Christianity's values, many of which are accepted in principle, but not applied in practice.

The need to be aware of our mindset with respect to time in a Christian sense, and its consequent effect on communication, is paramount in his concerns. If the accumulated wisdom, and our obligation to those who preceded us, and a lack of concern for the future are proliferated, man is in danger of losing the potential of his humanity in the present universal community. A fragmented state of consciousness caused by conflicting value systems, and a limited sense of time precludes the holistic development of the human organism. He regards secularism as a part of the presentist mindset and notes

> . . . a thoroughgoing secularism would be
> objectionable in its consequences, even
> to those who attach no positive importance
> to the survival of Christianity for its own sake.[99]

Any synthesis of the ideological elements of the past and present involves transcending the limitations of man by reference to a higher being, reflection on which must necessarily extend man's capacity for thought and communication about time. This is at odds with the majority view expressed by the Chorus in The Family Reunion:

> There are certain inflexible laws
> Unalterable, in the nature of music.
> There is nothing at all to be done about it
> There is nothing to do about anything.
> And now it is nearly time for the news
> We must listen to the weather reports
> And the international catastrophes.[100]

In such an observation one senses the stifling results of not considering a different view of time. When such a mindset is faced with expansion of understanding, there is a desire to return to the comfort of limited horizons, as noted in the Chorus in Murder in the Cathedral:

> We are not ignorant women, we know what
> we must expect and not expect

> . . . God gave us always some reason, some hope,
> but now terror has soiled us, which none
> can avert, none can avoid, flowing under
> our feet and over the sky.[101]

The implication is Man is usually unable or unwilling to project the effects of present action into the future with any real concern, although he may comfort himself that he is attempting to do so. One alternative to this secular reasoning is to view the future in apocalyptic terms, and so ignore, or accept present problems. The latter has been true throughout time because of man's limited ability in conceptualization, and it reduces as much as the secular, exploitive mode, the intellectual and spiritual potential of which man is capable.

Finally, in prompting us to consider the nature of our relationship to time, Eliot reminds us of the dangers inherent in a conformity which does not regard the potential of the "individual soul".[102] Conformity involves each "atom" of society, placing its trust in the leading ideology, relinquishing freedom to think and to determine the complex, interdependent, societal whole which Christian ethics could generate.

Eliot thought that time past and future should be an ever present component of present philosophies, and accompanying modes of communication. An example of his mindset is apparent in Harry's observation in The Family Reunion:

> How can we be concerned with the past
> And not with the future? or with
> The future and not with the past?[103]

and later the same character comments:

> it's only when they see nothing
> That people can show the suitable emotion
> And so far as they feel at all their
> emotions are suitable.
> They don't understand what it is to be awake,
> To be living on several planes at once
> Though one cannot speak with several voices.[104]

VI. Communication with Self

Although realizing the unlikelihood of it occurring on a mass scale, Eliot wished individuals to have the courage to question themmselves "to what purpose were we born? What is the end of man?"[105] Only with a philosophical base did Eliot believe individual freedom to be beneficial to the community. If individuals follow blindly the teaching of others in various sectarian modes, they could scarcely have true religious convictions. A religious conscience ideally presupposes that each consider his purpose in relation to his unique, positive contribution as, for example, Becket is observed to have done in Murder in the Cathedral. However, on a large scale such reflection is scarcely likely since many will think like the Choruses in the two plays mentioned above, prefering not to think too deeply, "fearing man more than God,"[106]

> We do not like to look out of the
> same window and see a different landscape
> . . . The circle of the understanding
> Is a very restricted area
> . . . And even when you think of it
> We do not know much about thinking.[107]

In The Family Reunion, all the characters eventually caution: "But we must adjust ourselves to the moment; we must do the right thing."[108]

Self-communication in a Christian society is not likely to produce a majority of people who are capable of reflecting on the parallels, or anomalies between motivation and action. Those who subscribe to any religion would at least be conscious of the need for transcendence in thought, but few would exert thought beyond the human hierarchy to which they adhere.

Eliot believed that in avoiding reflection and debate, individuals failed to consider sufficiently their present responsibilities even in a Christian community. As a result the communication with self, even within such an

arrangement, may indicate a lack of questioning of the consciousness about the values to which each nominally, or even fervently, subscribed.

Although not all could engage in constant self-communication, some would have this capacity. Eliot felt the need to maintain constant reflection about society's direction. If this were impossible for all, then he proposes a group which he terms the "Community of Christians." Such individuals must necessarily be of a reflective mindset, and could form "the conscience of the nation."[109] He did not foresee that government by "a regiment of saints"[110] would be practical enough to last. The role of the monitoring minority would require the individual concerned to search for alternatives, and to be ethically and morally strong enough not only to determine them with the self, but to perpetuate them socially. Eliot believed that to maintain "creativity, tolerance and sanity"[111] in a society, such a group would be essential and would aid the development of a philosophical base which would affect both the political and social milieu. The individual, if guided by "a Christian philosophy of life,"[112] could scarcely pursue the self-interest rampant among his contemporaries. It would require development of potential for other than economic goals and he noted "the modern war is chiefly caused by some immorality of competition."[113]

Eliot was concerned that any dialogue with the self should develop consciousness of the need not only for more rigorous thought, but of the responsibility for essential Christian values. In his argument and suggestions concerning the form a Christian society in all its proposed aspects should be, he notes ". . . it is not primarily the Christianity of the statesmen that matters, but their being confined by the temper and traditions of the people."[114]

By "people" he meant those of the electorate who ideally should be involved and concerned about government's role to the extent of their varying abilities. When the people responsible for choosing their representatives are

apathetic, and continue to ignore the problems created by those they have elected, the country is misrepresented. The constant consciousness and self-analysis of the community of Christians would not be replicated to the same degree in the Christian community, or society at large. However, the need for a participating electorate should be self-evident.

To Eliot, it is essential that everyone attempt to understand his society. This he believed we needed to question in every day situations.[115] But he concedes that the majority in a Christian society scarcely believed that the situation will ever be any different from what they experience.[116] The Christian community at least might be expected to hope for change. Without the reflection of the self at varying levels in the community at large, he predicted that there would occur:

> . . . a network of institutions, from which we can't disassociate ourselves, institutions the operation of which appear to be no longer neutral but non-Christian.[117]

VII. Self and Others

Of the relationship of individuals to each other and the community, Eliot comments in The Idea of a Christian Society . . . what if any is the "idea of the society in which we live? to what end is it arranged?[118] Later he continues to point out that he primarily wanted to see a change in the attitude of those comprising society, and is only secondarily concerned about "changes in economic organizations, and only secondarily with the life of a devout Christian."[119]

Eliot desired socio-political change which would effect the patterns of communication among members of society. He did not expect there to be

> continuity and coherence in politics, . . . [or] . . . reliable behavior on fixed principles through changed situations, unless there is an underlying philosophy: not of a party, but of a nation.[120]

To organize the people to contribute as a nation required a structure which could be viable on a national basis. For lack of the existence of any other kind of smaller unit of organization, Eliot suggested that individuals participate in a system similar to one already in existence, namely, the parish. It served his purpose as "an example of community unit . . . " which was not "solely religious, and not solely social."[121] He believed that the

> unitary community should be regional-social, and must be one in which all classes, if you have classes, have their centre of interest.[122]

Eliot did not anticipate that the majority in the Christian society should interact in a manner that might create overwhelming strain by requiring them to be constantly reflective regionally or socially. This more profound level of thought he believed possible among the group that he termed a Community of Christians. As previously noted such a group could act as the conscience of the nation, and have some influence at the political level to maintain ethical standards. This group "could hardly include the whole of the teaching body."[123] It would be composed of people from various sections including the clergy, but not predominantly of this group. Ideally it would consist of people of different intellectual levels and types. He foresaw the need for some commonality of knowledge since a lack caused a waste of time on behalf of "half-baked philosophies."[124]

Ideally he would have liked to see created an organization of society which would see an accord between political and educational philosophy. He believed that people should not choose to be ignorant of areas outside their perceived specialization; otherwise, serious authors "have a limited, and even provincial audience, and the more popular write for an illiterate and uncritical mob."[125]

The Community of Christians would be indefinite in outline but

> it will be their identity of belief and aspiration, their background of a common system of education, a common culture, which will enable them to influence and be influenced by each other and collectively to form the conscience mind of the nation.[126]

Eliot perceived a mixing and development of all differing levels and types interacting in society to create a vibrant, organic whole, each potentially having the need to develop in his or her own way to the benefit of all. He saw the need for interaction across class, regional and sectarian lines, but believed in an acceptance of the obvious that people are of a variety of types and beliefs. Such a variety and tension should be perpetuated to form a more interesting, cohesive group, rather than be a source of fragmentation and disharmony which various groupings seemed to create at the time.

Eliot, however, conceded that when he expressed a union of Church and State, he anticipated in England at least that the church should be the Anglican Church believing that "such a society can only be realized when the majority of the sheep belong to one fold."[127] He believed that the thoughts and ethos of small units of society should be directly acknowledged by the State. Problems of "encroachment of the temporal power or shielding of the community against tyranny and assisting its neglected rights."[128] He thought the English organization need not be a model for the manner in which individuals should

interact in other countries; one has to remember that he was merely attempting to provoke thought about how to safeguard the sense of responsibility and integrity which the State should exhibit with regard to certain standards. He realized that sects would continue to exist but felt there should be "a national Christian society, a religious-social community, a society with a political philosophy founded upon Christian faith."[129]

Eliot observed that the greatest danger in interaction was the tendency to avarice, and noted "surely there is something wrong in an attitude towards money. The acquisitive rather than the creative and spiritual instincts are encouraged."[130] He concluded his thoughts about Church and State by indicating of our interactions that "we cannot be satisfied to be Christian at devotions and merely secular reformers the rest of the week;"[131] rather there is a constant need to question man's purpose in relation to others.

VIII. The Christian and God

Bradley, one of Eliot's mentors stated:

> . . . the chief religious truth is
> the idea of the real presence
> of God. This truth must not be
> denied or impaired: and all other
> truths must be formulated in such
> a way as to agree and support
> this primary truth.[132]

Quoting from one who had considerable influence on Eliot, Lewis Freed in T.S. Eliot Aesthetics and History notes that Eliot "tends to explain things to himself in terms of Bradley's thought . . ."[133] Eliot himself observes,

> The system which the intelligent economist
> discovers or invents must ultimately be
> related to a moral system. I hold that it is
> ultimately the moralists and philosophers who
> must supply the foundation of statesmanship
> even though they never appear in form. We are

> constantly being told that economic problems cannot wait. It is equally true that the moral and spiritual problems cannot wait. They have already waited too long.[134]

Such an observation about the need to be aware of a transcendent being is a constant theme of his request for thought and reflection on the need for an alternate mindset for society. In The Idea of a Christian Society, Eliot notes,

> . . . if our society renounces completely its obedience to God it will become no better and possibly worse than some of those abroad which are probably execrated.[135]

He also comments: ". . . if you will not have God (and he is a jealous God), you should pay your respects to Hitler or Stalin."[136] Eliot indicates that "God has laid a great task on our nation, and that he has, therefore, revealed himself . . . and will continue to do so."[137] However, he notes that this belief is also expounded by a "product of German Liberalism and Protestantism, a nationalistic Unitarianism."[138]

Eliot abhors the attitude that the earth's resources are to be irresponsibly exploited, noting that:

> . . . a wrong attitude towards nature implies somewhere, a wrong attitude towards God and that the consequence is an inevitable chaos.[139]

He is not of the opinion that a highly commercialized, competitive philosophy for society is in the best interests of social development; and that too far a development in these areas negates awareness of the rules by which "we are allowed (by God) to inhabit this planet."[140]

Eliot constantly returns the reader to the necessity of reflection on the time element. He perceives future decay to be imminent if man loses awareness of a transcendental reality or fails to take it seriously enough. There is a constant sense of urgency in Eliot's dialectic, a fervent plea to stop and

debate the issue both nationally and universally. The reality of God is to him beyond human comprehension, the mysterium magnum which may prove a strain for most to attempt to acknowledge their lack of ability to comprehend it.

Eliot implies that our vision is too limited, and narrow, and can have only disastrous results if the situation continues.

Despite the vagueness that invests his Idea of a Christian Society, one aspect is clear: that adherence to and acceptance of a reality beyond us is essential. His Community of Christians would perhaps be the only ones able to give much thought to this and to maintain the balance between God, nature and man. However, he evidently hoped that the majority in a Christian society whether Christian or not would recognize the importance of this idea.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]T. S. Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1949), p. 36.

[2]Ibid., p. 5.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 6.

[6]Ibid., p. 49.

[7]Ibid.

[8]T. S. Eliot, Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1949), p. 92.

[9]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 5.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., p. 6.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 7.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 9

[19]Ibid., p. 10.

[20]Ibid., p. 11.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., p. 12.

[23]Ibid., p. 13.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., p. 14.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 15.

[28]Ibid., p. 16.

[29]Ibid., p. 17.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., p. 18.

[32]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[33]Ibid., p. 35.

[34]Ibid., p. 20.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 21.

[41]Ibid., p. 21

[42]Ibid., p. 22.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 23.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid., p. 24.

[49]Ibid., p. 23

[50]Ibid., p. 24

[50]Ibid., p. 24

[51]Ibid., p. 25.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., p. 26.

[54]Ibid., p. 27.

[55]Ibid., p. 28.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., p. 30.

[58]Ibid., p. 34.

[59]Ibid., p. 29.

[60]Ibid., p.

[61]Ibid., p.

[62]Ibid., p. 30.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid., p. 31.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid., p. 32.

[68]Ibid.

[69]Ibid., p. 33.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid., p. 34.

[72]Ibid., p. 38.

[73]Ibid., p. 36.

[74]Ibid., p. 38.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[78]Ibid., p. 39.

[79]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[80]Ibid., p. 42.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Ibid., p. 43.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid., p. 44.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid., p. 45.

[88]Ibid., p. 46.

[89]Ibid., p. 48.

[90]Ibid., p. 47.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Ibid., p. 48.

[93]Ibid., p. 49

[94]Ibid.

[95]Ibid.

[96]Ibid., p. 51.

[97]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 49.

[98]Eliot, "Burnt Norton" in Four Quartets, p. 119.

[99]Ibid., p. 20.

[100]Eliot, The Family Reunion in The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1971), p. 271.

[101]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, p. 195.

[102]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 50.

[103]Eliot, The Family Reunion, p. 259.

[104]Ibid., p. 266.

[105]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 77.

[106]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, p. 221.

[107]Eliot, The Family Reunion, p. 290.

[108]Ibid., p. 292.

[109]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p.

[110]Ibid., p. 21.

[111]Ibid.

[112]Ibid., p. 30.

[113]Ibid., p. 77

[114]Ibid., p. 21.

[115]Ibid., p. 77.

[116]Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral (suggested several times by the Chorus).

[117]Ibid., p. 117

[118]Ibid., p. 6.

[119]Ibid., p. 8.

[120]Ibid., p. 32.

[121]Ibid., p. 24.

[122]Ibid.

[123]Ibid., p. 30.

[124]Ibid.

[125]Ibid., p. 32.

[126]Ibid., p. 34.

[127]Ibid., p. 37.

[128]Ibid., p. 38.

[129]Ibid., p. 40.

[130]Ibid., p. 76.

[131]Ibid., p. 77.

[132]Lewis Freed, T.S. Eliot: Aesthetics and History (Open Court, Illinois, 1962), p. 101.

[133]Ibid.

[134]Ibid., p. 103.

[135]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 74.

[136]Ibid., p. 50.

[137]Ibid., p. 56.

[138]Ibid.

[139]Ibid., p. 49.

[140]Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A nation's system of education is much more important than its system of government, only a proper system of education can unify the active, and the contemplative life, action and speculation, politics and the arts.

(T.S. Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society)

Eliot's belief in the eternality of time and how such a perspective could shape society in a different mold, intermingles with his views on the need for the process of education - both formal and informal - to be treated with more care and seriousness. To him concern with this process of reorienting the mindsets of individuals comprising society is of paramount importance.

The preceding chapters of this thesis have indicated how he expressed his concern and his purpose in doing so. His internal struggles are reflected in his writing, and they in turn mirror the perspective from which he viewed society. In the second chapter, his critique of liberalism has been examined, and the term "presentism" has been applied to the effect which he perceived it to have on people's attitudes in the varying intricacies of their modes of communication. Although he recognized the need for liberalism and its tendency to unravel and question, he believed that there was a need for a structure to be evident, one which might be provided by an ideology less likely to fragment towards no evident purpose. He himself was suspicious of all existing political parties. One gains the impression that he wished for an ideology that would admit the existence of a transcendent nature. Such an acknowledgement and guidance by a spiritual source was necessary for man to achieve his potential both individually and collectively while maintaining integrity with regard to the planet for which he is responsible. It is obvious that Eliot had a dread of a future which might be spawned from the ideologies existing in his day.

In Chapter III Eliot's thoughts with regard to the cyclical nature of the medieval mindset especially noticeable in his Murder in the Cathedral have been addressed. He believed in the maintenance of tradition, and encouraged people to develop an awareness of the past, but in no way did he suggest any backward movement to previous philosophies.

Eliot's concerns and reflections about the nature of an alternate society have been outlined in Chapter IV. He is careful to stress that he is merely throwing down a gauntlet in the manner of one debating; it was his hope that it would be picked up. Unfortunately it was not to any degree that has insisted upon, or given much thought to, a different perception of time and communication in the organization of society. In his Idea of a Christian Society he observes:

> You cannot expect continuity and coherence in politics, you cannot expect reliable behavior on fixed principles persisting through changed situations, unless there is an underlying political philosophy, not of a party, but of a nation.[1]

Eliot believed that if a minimum of commonality in education existed then "the idea of wisdom disappears and you get sporadic and unrelated experimentation." His skepticism about fragmenting perceptions necessary for a healthy society permeated his concerns for the education through which a nation could be influenced. He noted that totalitarian regimes do not allow education to be underrated; rather there is a greater concern that it be used as a means of control. For technological advance to outstrip that of intellectual advancement allows the evolution of a dangerous situation where man is less in control and more controlled. Eliot expressed surprise that the so-called democratic nations tended to be far more neglectful of the effects of, and the importance of, their educational philosophies and structures.

He notes

> We are being made aware that the organization of society on the principle of private profit, as well as public destruction, is leading both to the deformation of humanity or unregulated industrialism, and to the exhaustion of natural resources, and that a good deal of our material

> progress is a progress for which succeeding generations may have to pay dearly.[2]

He observes that only a proper system of education can unify, and strengthen a nation. With regard to the latter, he comments

> We have been accustomed to regard "progress" as always integral; and have yet to learn that it is only by an effort of discipline greater than society has yet seen the need for imposing on itself, that material knowledge and power is gained without loss of spiritual knowledge and power.[3]

He offered no practical design for an alternate society, but made a desperate plea for people to reflect on the direction their ideologies were taking them.

Throughout his writings there is an underlying, and at times obvious, appeal to integrate spirituality with any ideology that may be developed if our human potential is to progress to benefit the planet as a whole. Within this view, he expresses in a variety of ways the need for a recognition of the eternality of time to effect a beneficial change in communication. No doubt he would have concurred with the sentiments expressed in the following poem concerning the need to acknowledge the existence of such a continuum.

"Eternity"[4]

Capture the sound when the note has gone,
And the blossom fragrance when it blows from the tree.
See the ripples after they meet their end,
And their beginning is no more.
"For eternity is set in the heart of man."*

Note the sky patterns in a second gone
And conceal in the mind an insect wing
Against the rising sun, and at its setting
Hear the sounds that the ear knows not.
"For eternity is set in the heart of man."

> Turn the wheel again, the pots shape new
> And breath gently as the clay breaks,
> For anger weakens the senses
> And the scent of aloes is no more.
> "Yet eternity is set in the heart of man."
>
> *Ecclesiastes 3:11.

Eliot insists unless we can find a pattern into which "all problems of life can have their place, we are only likely to go on complicating chaos."[5] He notes prophetically,

> As political philosophy derives its sanctions from ethics, and ethics from the truth of religion, it is only by returning to the eternal source of truth that we can hope for any social organization which will not, to its ultimate destruction, ignore some essential aspect of reality.[6]

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1]T.S. Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, (Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., New York, 1949), p. 32.

[2]Ibid., p. 48.

[3]Ibid., p. 49.

[4]G. Michael, "Eternity" (Menonite Brethren Herald, Winnipeg, 1988), p. 15.

[5]Eliot, The Idea of a Christian Society, p. 50.

[6]Ibid.

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