

## T. S. Eliot's Spiritual Quest through\* "Journey of the Magi"

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T. S. Eliot's poem "Journey of the Magi," was the first in a series Eliot later grouped together as the "Ariel Poems," and was published in August of 1927 shortly after his baptism. However, rather than a cheerful conviction expressed on such an occasion, the poem shows some uncertainties. The poem can be understood as a representation of Eliot's crisis because he seems to be caught between spiritual death and rebirth as he faces the enigma of the Incarnation. The aim of this paper is to study Eliot's own quest to actualize his *conversio cordis*, the conversion of the heart, as he was working through his total acceptance of the meaning of the Incarnation.

The poem is a dramatic monologue, spoken by one of the three wise men, the Magi who came from the East to honour the new-born Jesus. In the Bible, the story is told in Matthew ii, 1-12. Retelling the arduous journey from the East to Bethlehem to find the infant Christ, the poem is divided into three parts: the first stanza describes the difficulties and discouragement of the journey; the second the landscape in the course of their quest; the third a meditation upon the mystic paradox of death and rebirth.

We should point out that in this poem Lancelot Andrewes's influence is dominant. The very first five lines are taken from a Nativity sermon preached by Andrewes before James I on the Christmas Day in 1622:

A cold coming they had of it at this time of year, just the worst time of year to take a journey, and especially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun furthest off, *in solstitio brumali*, 'the very dead of winter.' (*Sermons* 257)

Also the lines from 32 to the end in Eliot's poem may have been hinted to the poet by the passage quoted here in Andrewes's sermon:

No sight to comfort them, nor a word for which they any whit the wiser; nothing worth their travel. . . . Well, they will take Him as they find Him, and all this notwithstanding, worship Him for all that. (*Sermons* 261)

And lines 33-4 " . . . but set down / This set down" are also seen in Andrewes's sermon (*Sermons* 259).

Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626a), was a theologian and court preacher who defended and advanced Anglican doctrine during a period of great strife in the English churches. We remember him as one of the translators of the Authorized Version of the Bible. But in his lifetime, Andrewes's fame rested especially on his preaching. He regularly preached at court on the greater Church feasts; and his "Ninety-Six Sermons," first published in a collected edition by W. Laud and J. Buckeridge in 1629, remains a classic of Anglican homiletic works. They are characterized with verbal conceits, minute and overworked analyses of the text, as well as constant Greek and Latin quotations.

As theologian, Andrewes was one of the principal influences in the formation of a distinctive Anglican theology, which in reaction to the rigidity of Puritanism, sought to be reasonable in outlook and Catholic in tone. He held high the doctrine of the Eucharist, emphasizing that in the sacrament we receive the true body and blood of Christ, and constantly used sacrificial language when he discussed the rite. He wanted the Church

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of England to express its worship in an ordered ceremonial and in his own chapel used the mixed chalice, incense and altar-light.<sup>1)</sup>

Nicholas Lossky says in *Lancelot Andrewes the Preacher (1555–1626)* that “the element of ‘incarnation’ always comes in to illuminate the reasoning and meditation of the preacher. These sermons then will be considered at once for the way they introduce and present the Incarnation and its consequences.”<sup>2)</sup> In fact Andrewes always points out whom we believe; “as first, that He is one entire person and subsists by Himself, so second, that He consists of two distinct natures, eternal and temporal. The one as perfect God, the other as Perfect Man” (*Sermons* 296). We could say his sermons are Christo-centric. He asserts that everything begins in Christ and everything ends in Him; He is truly the “Alpha and Omega” (Rev. 1. 8).

Eliot in his essay, “Lancelot Andrewes” (written in 1926), evaluates his sermons high as “the voice of a man who has a formed visible Church behind him, who speaks with the old authority and the new culture” (*SE* 344). He also sees Andrewes’s essence in the element of the Incarnation. Eliot believes:

It is an additional advantage that these sermons are all on the same subject, the Incarnation; they are the Christmas Day sermons preached before King James between 1605 and 1624 . . . Bishop Andrewes, as was hinted above, tried to confine himself in his sermons to the elucidation of what he considered essential in dogma; he said himself that in sixteen years he had never alluded to the question of predestination, to which the Puritans, following their continental brethren, attached so much importance. The Incarnation was to him an essential dogma. . . . (*SE* 346–7)

It should be made clear that Eliot, like Andrewes, finds the Incarnation the essential dogma of Christianity. In fact, in Eliot’s essay in *Revelation* he calls the Christian revelation the only full one—because of the Incarnation.<sup>3)</sup>

However, even though Andrewes and Eliot find the Incarnation to be the essential dogma, in their treatment of the Journey motif of the Magi’s we find some difference.

Andrewes discussed the journey of the Magi in both the 1620 and 1622 Nativity sermons. The former sermon illuminates the persons, the Magi. For Andrewes the Magi are the representatives of the gentiles coming from the “far corners” of the earth to seek the Christ:

These here that “came from the East,” first they were Gentiles. Gentiles—that concerns us, for so are we. We may then look out, if we can see a star. It is ours, it is the Gentiles’ star. We may set our course by it, to seek and find, and worship Him as well as they. (*Sermons* 234–5)

As for the course of their journey Andrewes renders it an uneasy one:

They came a long journey, no less than twelve days together. They came an uneasy journey, for their way lay through Arabia Petraea, and the craggy rocks of it. And they came a dangerous journey, through Arabia deserts too, and the black “tents of Kedar” there, then famous for their robberies, and even to this day. And they came now, at the worst season of the year. And all, but to do worship at Christ’s birth. (*Sermons* 246)

Thus throughout the sermon to the end Andrewes traced the way that leads us by the star to what one could call its transfiguration by Him who bears the names of Star, the East, and the Sun of Righteousness. In this way we the hearers are brought in front of the Person of the Incarnate Christ Himself who brings salvation to all men:

1) See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone (London : Oxford Up., 1983), p. 52.

2) Nicholas Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes The Preacher (1555–1626) : The Origins of the Mystical Theology of the Church of England* (London : Oxford, 1991), p. 52.

3) *Revelation*, ed., John Baillie & Hugh Martin (New York: Macmillan, 1937), p. 2.

And herein “appeared the grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men,” and to all sinners, as fair and clear as the star itself; that thence out of the mountains of the East God calleth these to seek, and guided them to find Christ . . . (*Sermons 243*)

And he concludes his sermon by glorifying Christ, the “Bread of life” :

And what shall I say now, but according as St. John saith, and the star, and the wise men say, “Come.” And He, Whose the star is, and to Whom the wise men came, saith “Come.” And let them that are disposed, “Come.” And let whosoever will, take of the “Bread of Life, which came down from Heaven” [Jn. 6. 35, 41] this day into Bethlehem, the house of bread. Of which Bread the Church is this day the house, the true Bethlehem, and all the Bethlehem we have now left to come to for the Bread of life, —of that life which we hope for in Heaven. And this our nearest coming that here we can come, till we shall by another *venite* come, unto Him in His Heavenly Kingdom. To which He grant we may come, That this day came to us in earth that we thereby might come to Him and remain with Him for ever, “Jesus Christ the Righteous.” [1 Jn. 2. 1] (*Sermons 247–8*)

While in his 1620 Nativity sermon Andrewes points out the persons, the Magi: in his 1622 Nativity sermon Andrewes emphasizes their errand or purpose for their journey (*Sermons 249*). In his considering their errand, firstly Andrewes pays attention to their faith and the service of their faith:

Their faith first: faith—in that they never ask, ‘Whether He be,’ but “Where He is born;” for that borne He is, that they steadfastly believe.

Then “the work or service” of this faith, as St. Paul calleth it; “the touch or trial” *δοκιμιον* [I Pet. 1. 7], as St. Peter; the *ostende mihi* [=show me] [Jas. 2. 18], as St. James; of this their faith in these five. 1. Their confessing of it in *venerunt dicentes* [=they came saying]. *Venerunt*, they were no sooner come, but *dicentes*, they tell it out; confess Him and His birth to be the cause of their coming. 2. Secondly, as confess their faith, so the ground of their faith; *vidimus enim* [=we see indeed], for they had “seen” His star; and His star being risen, by it they knew He must be risen too. 3. Thirdly, as St. Paul calls them in Abraham’s, *vestigia fidei*, “the steps of their faith,” in *venimus*, “their coming” — coming such a journey, at such a time, with such speed. 4. Fourthly, when they were come, their diligent enquiring Him out by *ubi est* [=where is he]? for here is the place of it, asking after Him to find where He was. 5. And last, when they had found Him, the end of their seeing, coming, seeking; and all for no other end but to worship Him. (*Sermons 250*)

So, the ground of their faith is merely on the fact that they have seen his star. They came just because they have seen the star in the East. The star in the East then leads Andrewes to consider Christ as “root of David, the bright morning Star” :

We have now got us a star on earth for that in Heaven, and these both lead us to a third. So as upon the matter three stars we have, and each his proper manifestation. 1. The first in the firmament; that appeared unto them, and in them to us—a figure of St. Paul’s *Επεφάνη χάρις* [Tit. 2. 11], “the grace of God appearing, and bringing salvation to all men,” Jews and Gentiles and all. 2. The second here on earth is St. Peter’s *Lucifer in cordibus* [=bright star in heart] [2 Pet. 1. 19]; and this appeared in them, and so must in us. . . . 3. The third is Christ Himself, St. John’s star. “The generation and root of David, the bright morning Star, Christ” [Rev. 22. 16]. And He, His double appearing. I. One at this time now, when He appeared in great humility; and we see and come to Him by faith. 2. The other, which we wait for, even, “the blessed hope, and appearing of the great God and our Saviour” [Tit. 2. 13] in the majesty of His glory.

These three: I. The first that manifested Christ to them; 2. The second that manifested them to

Christ; 3. The third Christ Himself, in Whom both these were as it were in conjunction. Christ “the bright morning Star” of that day which shall have no night; the *beatifica visio*, ‘the blessed sight’ of which day is the *consummatum est* [=is consummated] of our hope and happiness for ever. (*Sermons* 251)

The appearance of the “morning star” causes the star of faith to rise, “the day star [which] arises in your hearts” [2 Pet. I. 19]. It is in this way that Andrewes introduces the human response to the divine manifestation. This star of faith is a gift, but it demands a free response in the form of the journey of the Magi. Andrewes describes that their journey was a cheerful one in spite of many hardships:

In this their coming, we consider, 1. First, the distance of the place they came from. It was not hard by as the shepherds—but a step to Bethlehem over the fields; this was riding many a hundred miles, and cost them many a day’s journey. 2. Secondly, we consider the way, that they came, if it be pleasant, or plain and easy; for, if it be, it is so much the better. 1. This was nothing pleasant, for through deserts, all the way waste and desolate. 2. Nor secondly, easy neither; for over the rocks and crags of both Arabias, specially Petraea, their journey lay. 3. Yet if safe, but it was not, but exceeding dangerous, as lying through the midst of the “black tents of Kedar,” a nation of thieves and cut-throats; to pass over the hills of robbers, infamous then, infamous to this day. No passing without great troop of convoy. 4. Last we consider the time of their coming, the season of the year. It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, *in solstitio brumali*, ‘the very dead of winter.’ . . .

And these difficulties they overcame, of a wearisome, irksome, troublesome, dangerous, unseasonable journey; and for all this they came. And came it cheerfully and quickly, as appeareth by the speed they came. (*Sermons* 257)

In the end they accomplished their goal to worship Him, which was all that they wanted:

And now we have found “where,” what then? it is neither in seeking nor finding, *venimus* nor *invenimus* [=we go to]; the end of all, the cause of all is in the last words, *adorare Eum*, “to worship Him.” That is all in all, and without it all our seeing, coming, seeking, and finding is to no purpose. The Scribes they could tell, and did tell where He was, but were never the nearer for it, for they worshipped Him not. For this end to seek Him. (*Sermons* 260)

And again Andrewes pays attention to Christ himself:

And, what is it to worship? Some great matter sure it is, that Heaven and earth, the stars and Prophets, thus do but serve to lead them and conduct us to. For all we see ends in *adorare*. *Scriptura et mundus ad hoc sunt, ut colatur Qui creavit, et adoretur Qui inspiravit*; ‘the Scripture and world are but to this end, that He that created the one and inspired the other might be but worshipped.’ Such reckoning did these seem to make of it here. And such the great treasurer of the Queen Candace. These came from the mountains in the East; he from the uttermost part of Æthiopia came, and came for no other end but only this—to worship; and when they had done that, home again. *Tanti est adorare* [=insomuch is to adore]. Worth the while, worth our coming, if coming we do but that, but worship and nothing else. And so I would have men account of it. (*Sermons* 261)

Thus the Magi in Andrewes’s sermon carried out their journey thoroughly on their faith in Christ. In spite of many hardships, their journey was a joyous one.

Such a joyous element in Christian faith is not unknown to Eliot since in his essay he referred to Andrewes

Nativity sermon which manifests the joy of a man saved:

'Who is it? Three things are said of this Child by the Angel. (1) He is "a Saviour" . (2) "Which is Christ" . (3) "Christ the Lord." Three of his titles, well and orderly inferred one of another by good consequence. We cannot miss one of them; they be necessary all. . . .

'First, then, "a Saviour" ; this is His name, Jesus, *Soter*; and in that Name His benefit, *Salus*, "saving health or salvation". Such a name as the great Orator himself saith of it, *Soter, hoc quantum est? Ita magnum est ut latino uno verbo exprimi non possit*. "This name Saviour is so great as no one word [in latin] can express the force of it."

'But we are not so much to regard the *ecce* [= *behold!*] how great it is, as *gaudium* what joy is in it; that is the point we are to speak to. And for that, men may talk what they will, but sure there is no joy in the world to the joy of a man saved; no joy so great, no news so welcome, as to one ready to perish, in case of a lost man, to hear of one that will save him. . . . But that which He came for, that saving we need all; and none but He can help us to it. We have therefore all cause to be glad for the Birth of this Saviour.' (*SE* 348–9 quoted from *Sermons* 73)

It is certain that Eliot was much influenced by Andrewes. However we find no such joy of *gaudium* in Eliot's "Journey of the Magi." The same paradox that Andrewes celebrates as the miracle of the Nativity so troubles Eliot's Magus, making him ill at ease in the old dispensation. Evidently Eliot's Magus is very different from the Magi of Andrewes's sermon. For Andrewes the Magi represent all Gentiles led by the Star to the certainty of Christian knowledge. For Eliot, however, the Magus seems more of a skeptic lingering in spiritual uncertainties in the face of the mystery of the Incarnation and the perplexities of faith. Andrewes's Magi eagerly trace the sign of the star, with faith quickening at every step of the arduous journey. The only "End" for which Andrewes's Magi come is nothing but to worship. Whereas for Eliot's Magus the famous star is unnoticed, only a journey.

Eliot has explained in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* that certain images are changed for him with a personal yet inexplicable meaning, representing "the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer,"<sup>4)</sup> so that "Journey of the Magi" can be understood as a personal testament of Eliot's own spiritual state of mind. In the poem there are some connotations of Biblical references to Jesus's passion and resurrection. In line 24 "three trees" might connote the three crosses on Calvary [Lk. 23. 32–3]. In line 25 "white horse" might connote the white horse in Revelation 6. 2 and 19. 11–14, on which Christ the conqueror rides. However, there is nothing in the poem to indicate that the horse is being ridden. On the contrary, we cannot but suspect of the absence of the rider. And the line 27 "Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver" is an allusion of the betrayal of Christ for 30 pieces of silver and the soldiers dicing for the robes of Christ at the crucifixion [Mt. 26. 14–15; 27. 35]. After he faithfully records the landscape of the journey, the Magus states the word "satisfactory," which means "expiratory, payment for a debt or sin." Andrewes himself does clearly see the meaning of expiration in Christ's death in the midst of His Birth even though he stresses the cheerfulness of faith:

So to-day, but after much worse. To-day, in the flesh of a poor babe crying in the cratch, *in media animalium* [=in the midst of animals]; after, in the rent and torn flesh of a condemned person hanging on the Cross, *in media latronum*, in the midst of other manner persons than Moses and Elias; that men even hid their faces at Him, not for the brightness of His glory, but for sorrow and shame. Call you this manifesting? Nay, well doth the Apostle call it the "veil of His flesh" [Heb. 10. 20], as whereby He was rather obscured than any way set forth; yea eclipsed in all the darkest points of it. Verily the condition of the flesh was more than the flesh itself, and the manner of the manifestation far more than the manifestation itself was. Both still make the mystery greater and greater. (*Sermons* 38)

4) T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1935), p.148.

As Andrewes makes clear Christ's birth anticipates his death on the Cross. Furthermore we have to notice that the essential thing of the Incarnation is Christ's Birth in the flesh means death of his Godhood. In contrast to Andrewes, Eliot's Magus was at a loss in the face of birth and death. Surely, Eliot's Magi too arrive at their destination. But not all questions are solved for them, as they are for Andrewes's Magi. The repetition of "Set down this" may be hesitation as well as affirmation as he returns to his kingdom with the enigma of the meaning of Birth (l.38) and Death (l.39). What does not remain in the poem is the cheerful confidence, the certainty with which to live in faith.

What prevented Eliot from expressing cheerful conviction? It is doubtless that his search for the Absolute can be seen from the earliest writings. Among his very gloomy quatrains written in his early youth, we find this search for the Absolute:

...  
 And life, a little bald and gray,  
 Languid, fastidious, and bland,  
 Waits, hat and gloves in hand,  
 Punctilious of tie and suit  
 (Somewhat impatient of delay)  
 On the doorstep of the Absolute. ("Spleen" CPP 603)

In the Preface of *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (written in 1916), Eliot writes, "... it is suitable that a dissertation on the work of Francis Herbert Bradley should end with the words 'the Absolute'" (KE 11). "It is certain that Bradley's central idea is that the Absolute means the whole in which all are the phenomena that we see and experience. Bradley writes, "in the Absolute no appearance can be lost. Each one contributes and is essential to the unity of the whole" (AR 456). Thus, "such a whole state would possess in a superior form that immediacy which we find (more or less) in feeling; and in this whole all divisions would be healed up. It would be experience entire, containing all elements in harmony" (AR 172). In searching for such an all-embracing unity, "the Absolute," Eliot began exploring Bradley's thought while he was a student in Harvard and completed the analysis after he had married and settled in London. However, after his long exercise in philosophy, Eliot writes:

Bradley's universe . . . is only by an act of faith unified . . . The Absolute responds only to an imaginary demand of thought, and satisfies only an imaginary demand of feeling. Pretending to be something which makes finite centres cohere, it turns out to be merely the assertion that they do. And this assertion is only true so far as we here and now find it to be so.<sup>5)</sup>

What Eliot needed was the active agent that would relieve him from his "languid" and "fastidious" life, God of religion. Since he believes that man is not self-supporting, he needs a relationship to something outside himself to support his being,<sup>6)</sup> whereas Bradley writes that his Absolute is "independent of all relation from

5) T. S. Eliot, "Leibniz's Monads and Bradley's Finite Centres," in *KE*, p. 202.

6) Based on physiological or logical activity as his doctrine, Eliot thinks of a self as a subject, calling it to be "the form of a subject of experience, impervious and isolated," but at the same time he thinks of a self as an object, "an ideal and largely a practical construction," "a construction in space and time," and "an object among others, a self among others, and could not exist save in a common world" (KE 204). Because Eliot thinks man is an object as well as a subject, man cannot be man as an object unless something completely outside himself exists to objectify man. He writes:

. . . the object as object cannot be self-supporting. The objectivity is merely externality, and nothing in reality can be merely external, but must possess being 'for' itself. Yet to mean it as an object means to mean it as more than an object, as something ultimately real. And in this way every object leads us far beyond itself to an ultimate reality. (KE 140)

man, and is something independent of all relation.” And his non-relational Absolute cannot be the God of religion:

God again is a finite object, standing above and apart from man, and is something independent of all relation to his will and intelligence. Hence God, if taken as a thinking and feeling being, has a private personality. But, sundered from those relations which qualify him, God is inconsistent emptiness; and, qualified by his relation to an Other, he is distracted finitude. God is therefore taken, again, as transcending this external relation. He wills and knows himself, and he finds his reality and self-consciousness, in union with man. Religion is therefore a process with inseparable factors, each appearing on either side. It is the unity of man and God, which, in various stages and forms, wills and knows itself throughout. . . . The unity implies a complete suppression of the relation, as such; but, with that suppression, religion and the good have altogether, as such disappeared. If you identify the Absolute with God, that is not the God of religion. If again you separate them, God becomes a finite factor in the Whole. And the effort of religion is to put an end to, and break down, this relation—a relation which, none the less, it essentially presupposes. Hence, short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and, having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him. It is this difficulty which appears in the problem of religious self-consciousness. God must certainly be conscious of himself in religion, but such self-consciousness is most imperfect. (AR 445–447)

Thus Bradley’s non-relational Absolute as “an object of contemplation” (AR 408) cannot be the Absolute Eliot needed for the support of his being.

Consequently Eliot has to continue his search for the Absolute elsewhere. And after his conscious and conscientious search, Eliot finds that it is the dogma of the Incarnation that explains the Absolute which has relation with man as God of religion. He explains such God in his argument of Pascal:

The Christian thinker—and I mean the man who is trying consciously and conscientiously to explain to himself the sequence which culminates in faith, rather than the public apologist—proceeds by rejection and elimination. He finds the world to be so and so; he finds its character inexplicable by any non-religious theory: among religions he finds Christianity, and Catholic Christianity, to account most satisfactory for the world and especially for the moral world within; and thus, by what Newman calls ‘powerful and concurrent’ reasons, he finds himself inexorably committed to the dogma of the Incarnation. (“The ‘Pensées’ of Pascal,” 1931, SE 408)

The Incarnation is that the God the Absolute was incarnated in the man Christ Jesus. Eliot wrote in 1917, “Philosophy may show, if it can, the meaning of the statement that Jesus was the son of God. But Christianity—orthodox Christianity—must base itself upon a unique fact: that Jesus was born of a virgin: a proposition which is either true or false, its terms having a fixed meaning.”<sup>7)</sup> According to Eliot God is the Lord over time and history, but not in a philosophical sense which would mean that He negates time. God’s sovereignty over time does not lie in a metaphysical timelessness but His ability to influence and bring the whole process to His own saving ends. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains that the Incarnation revealed the divine concern with time-space history and provided a redemption acted out in flesh and bone.<sup>8)</sup> Here I can conclude that Eliot’s Absolute is the God incarnated in Christ. And it is in the Church of England that he found the essential dogma of the Incarnation. Traditionally the Church of England puts characteristic emphases on the recognition of the relation of liturgy and theology, and the importance of the doctrine of the Incarnation.<sup>9)</sup>

7) Book Review, *International Journal of Ethics*, 27 (July 1917), p. 543.

8) See *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: William B. Eerdmans Publishers Co., 1988), pp. 852–3.

9) See *Christian Theology: An Introduction* ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 493

Davies, H., *Worship and Theology in England, 2. From Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603–1690*, Princeton, NJ, 1975.

Eliot makes an explicit statement of his faith in a letter to a Sister Mary James Power dated December, 1932:

Dear Sister,

In reply to your letter of December 1st, perhaps the simplest account that I can give is to say that I was brought up as a Unitarian of the New England variety; that for many years I was without any definite religious faith, or without any at all; that in 1927 I was baptized and confirmed into the Church of England; and that I am associated with what is called the Catholic movement in that Church, as represented by Viscount Halifax and the English Church Union. I accordingly believe in the Creeds, the invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, the Sacrament of Penance, etc.

Yours faithfully,

[Signed] T. S. Eliot<sup>10)</sup>

Unitarianism does not accept the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, since it rejects the doctrines of the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ in favour of the unipersonality of God.<sup>11)</sup> Leaving Unitarianism, Eliot accepted the notion of Incarnation, and joined the Church of England. In the end, theoretically as the Magi in the poem Eliot moved to the center of Christian faith. However the problem remains. The trouble is his feelings of remorse that has not released him free, as Ronald Bush correctly observes: "Eliot's symbolic configuration conflates three realms of reference—the fictional frame, the correspondences of Christian typology, and his own deepest and most troublesome feelings."<sup>12)</sup>

From a search of biographical sources, we understand that when Eliot married Vivien, he was ashamed of his marriage.<sup>13)</sup> Eliot knew that he could not love his wife. Herbert Read commented on Eliot as a "remorseful man . . . who had some secret sorrow or guilt."<sup>14)</sup> And when S. S. Koteliansky accused him of seeking comfort in Christianity, Eliot replied that it had, in fact, "forced him to face the full dangers of the human predicament, not just in this life but for eternity; and it had burdened his soul with a terrible and hitherto unrealized weight of moral responsibility."<sup>15)</sup> It is testified that even many years after his divorce, he could not bring himself to mention Vivien by name and, at the end of his life, he confessed that there were certain things in his past which he could not endure contemplating for long.<sup>16)</sup> The sense of guilt that Vivien evoked was crucial to Eliot's long journey that continued even after his formal conversion. We could say that Eliot is in crucial need of actualization of the release from the sense of guilt in his conversion.

On the contrary Andrewes believes such emotional turn from the sense of guilt to the sense of return to God is crucial for conversion. He explains that true conversion needs turn of the heart more than anything else. Andrewes explains in his Ash Wednesday sermon of 1619, "Repentance is to return to Him whom by sin, we have turned away with our whole heart":

Repentance itself is nothing else, but *redire ad principia*, 'a kind of circling,' to return to Him by repentance from Whom, by sin, we have turned away. And much after a circle is this text; begins with the word "turn," and returns about to the same word again. Which circle consists, to use the

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Arnott, F. R., 'Anglicanism in the Seventeenth Century,' in *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, comp. and ed. Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross, 1935; repr. London, 1962.

10) Quoted by Nathan A. Scott, Jr., *Rehearsals of Discomposure*, (London: John Lehmann, 1952), p. 201.

11) See *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, pp. 1408–9.

12) Roland Bush, *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style* (New York: Oxford Up, 1984), p. 128.

13) Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell: 1914–1944* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), pp. 55–56.

14) Herbert Read, in *T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work*, ed. by Allen Tate (New York: Dell, 1966), p. 31.

15) Lord David Cecil, *Lady Ottoline's Album*, ed. by Carolyn G. Heilbrun (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 13.

16) Eliot to Ezra Pound, 29 January 1960. Beinecke, quoted in Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1984), p. 208.



Prophet's own word, of two turnings; for twice he repeats this word, which two must needs be two different motions. 1. One, is to be done with the "whole heart." 2. The other with it "broken and rent." So as one and the same it cannot be.

First, a "turn," wherein we look forward to God, and with our "whole heart" resolve to "turn" to Him. Then a turn again, wherein we look backward to our sins wherein we have turned from God, and with beholding them our very heart breaketh. These two are two distinct, both in nature and names; one, conversion from sin; the other contrition for sin. One resolving to amend that which is to come, the other reflecting and sorrowing for that which is past. One declining from evil to be done hereafter, the other sentencing itself for evil done heretofore. These two between them make up a complete repentance, or, to keep the word of the text, a perfect revolution. (*Sermons* 358–9)

Further Andrewes says that man's repentance implies a transformation of the will (*Sermons* 363): If the man is responsible for sin, his repentance, his turning round, his conversion, implies a transformation, "not only . . . of the mind but of the will." It is not a matter simply of changing "certain notions only in the head," but of "the affections of the heart" as well:

"To Me," then, and "with the heart." And this also is needful. For, I know not how, but by some our conversion is conceived to be a turning of the brain only, by doting too much on the word *resipiscere* [=to revive], as a matter merely mental. Where before thus and thus we thought, such and such positions we held, now we are of another mind than before, and there is our turning. This of Joel's is a matter of the heart sure. This? Nay, to say truth, where is conversion mentioned but it is in a matter attended with *in corde* [=in heart]? And so requireth not only an alteration of the mind but of the will, a change not of certain notions only in the head, but of the affections of the heart too. Else it is *vertigo capitis* [=the revolution of the head], but not *conversio cordis* [=the conversion of heart]. (*Sermons* 363–4)

What Andrewes makes clear is that the heart is the true centre:

Neither doth this *in corde* stand only against the brain, but is commonly in opposition to the whole outward man. Else the heart may be fixed like a pole, and the body like a sphere turn round about it. Nay, heart and all must turn. Not the face for shame, or the feet for fear, but the heart for very hatred of sin also. Hypocrisy is a sin; being to turn from sin we are to turn from it also, and not have our body in the right way, and our heart still wandering in the by-paths of sin. But if we forbear the act which the eye of man beholdeth, to make a conscience of the thoughts too, for unto them also the eye of God pierceth. Thus it should be; else conversion it may be, but heart it hath none. (*Sermons* 364)

Also Andrewes emphasizes that *conversio cordis* must be made in a way that is "voluntary, without compulsion:"

And so may we turn, and such may all our conversion be: 1. voluntary, without compulsion; 2. to God, without declining; 3. with the heart, not in speculation; with the whole heart entire, no purpose of recidivation! (*Sermons* 365)

It is needless to say that it is not the free will of man that effects his salvation; but as Andrewes explains it clearly plays a crucial role in the first aspect of repentance which is the turning of man back to God. Divine grace immediately supports this will and is united to it in a close collaboration to bring about conversion. In that sense we could say man, by his free will, can desire to turn away from sin and, immediately helped by the divine grace, enters on the way of repentance, of conversion of heart. Truly repentance is the free response of

man to the divine appeal. (*Sermons* 357) In Andrewes's language:

A great blessing of God it is, for without it thousands would perish in the error of their life, and never return to their right way again. *Redite praevaricatores ad cor* [Is. 46. 8], "that sinners would turn to their own hearts." And this is the first degree to help us a little forward to this turning. (*Sermons* 361)

Lossky in *Lancelot Andrewes the Preacher* says that "by his theology of grace linked with his conception of synergism, Andrewes really rehabilitates man in his free co-operation with God and his historical destiny." (p. 350) So does Eliot, when he writes, "It is recognized in Christian theology . . . that free-will of the natural effort and ability of the individual man and also super-natural *grace*, a gift accorded we know not quite how, are both required, in co-operation, for salvation" ("The 'Pensé e' of Pascal," 1931, *SE* 413).<sup>17)</sup>

These quotations emphasize both man's moral responsibility and his experience as he realized the intersection of eternity with time which, Eliot says, takes place at every moment of life. The possibility of salvation depends on whether our direction of will goes in parallel with God's will or not. In other words repentance presupposes a free choice on the part of man. Andrewes asserts that without this choice, no salvation will be:

But for this, "of no other way," Christ Himself is more peremptory than St. John. See you any, hear you of any that perish? *Nisi, &c.* "Unless you repent" [Lk. 13. 3, 5] and scape that way, so shall you too, that is flat. There is no iron, no adamant binds so hard, as Christ's *nisi*. If any but Christ had said it, we might have sought some evasion; now when it is He that tells us, there are but two ways, 1. Repent, or 2. Perish, choose you whether; repent here for a time, or perish there under God's wrath for ever; not to repent and not to perish, is not possible. (*Sermons* 429)

Explaining the same conversion, Eliot asserts that we should choose either the flame of purgatory or that of hell:

In this canto [=Canto XXVI] the Lustful are purged in flame, yet we see clearly how the flame of purgatory differs from that of hell. In hell, the torment issues from the very nature of the damned themselves, expresses their essence; they writhe in the torment of their own perpetually perverted nature. In purgatory the torment of flame is deliberately and consciously accepted by the penitent. . . . The souls in purgatory suffer because they *wish to suffer*, for purgation. And observe that they suffer more actively and keenly, being souls preparing for blessedness, than Virgil suffers in eternal limbo. In their suffering is hope, in the anaesthesia of Virgil is hopelessness; that is the

17) This statement also clearly shows an influence of Thomism on Eliot. In fact by October 1927 at least he had read two accounts of Aquinas by Gilson and de Wulf; two volumes of extracts from Aquinas, one prepared by Professor Gilson and the other by M. Truc; two or three books by M. Martain and modern Dominicans; and he had read here and there in nine volumes of the new edition of *Summa*, published by Desclée. See T. S. Eliot, "Mr. Middleton Murry's Synthesis," *Criterion*, VI (1927), p. 340.

Thomism asserts that faith, a willing intellectual acceptance of God's Word, is presupposed to be received into love of God:

Grace is primarily a matter of the nature we have; not an alternative to but a deepening of our political nature by which we participate in the divine nature. Just as the acquired moral and other virtues correspond to the social nature of man, so there are virtues, not acquired by education but simply given by God (infused), to correspond to our graced-nature. These are primarily faith, hope and charity. Faith, a willing intellectual acceptance of God's Word, is presupposed to hope and charity a sharing into the love which is the Holy Spirit. (*The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, pp. 570-571)

difference. ("Dante," 1929, *SE* 255–256)

In "Journey of the Magi," as Elizabeth Schneider points out, Eliot found symbols and dramatic persona through which to embody more particular things he had to say about his inner change.<sup>18)</sup> Eliot chose the Magus as a persona because he speaks for himself in need of purgatorial fire, having had an intimation of faith but now being left "No longer at ease here, in the old dispensation." Thus "Journey of the Magi" presents a constant human dilemma—the discovery that one is between birth and death and that rebirth requires death to this life. In other words it could be said that "Journey of the Magi" is the monologue of a man who has made his own choice, who has achieved belief in the Incarnation, but who still clings to the old life which the Savior came to redeem. He cannot liberate himself from the past. Oppressed by a sense of death-in-life, he is resigned rather than joyous, absorbed in the negation of his former existence. It is the experience of conversation without the full benefit of assured faith. In Andrewes's words, it is *vertigo capitis*, but not *conversio cordis*. He well knows that he has to choose his purgatorial fire, which means to face the reality in order to be saved. He has to convince himself that he has done Vivien irreparable harm in marrying her, and if he is to save both of them, he has to separate from her. However his pain was so intense that he couldn't face the scenes. In spite of having the notion of the Absolute, the only thing that he could do in his despair was to cling to his helpless self-consciousness.

However, Eliot writes, "There is almost a definite moment of acceptance at which the New Life begins" ("Dante," 1929, *SE* 277). The last line of "Journey of the Magi," "I *should* be glad of another death" [emphasis added] shows that he anticipates the final surrender. We well know it is quite dangerous for a critical reader to go deep into poet's life by conjecture, however from some testimonies we can verify the journey of the soul of the poet in his acceptance of his purgatorial fire. According to Thomas Matthew, Eliot sailed on the *Tuscania* from Boston to Greenock on June 24, 1933 and "instead of returning home, he went to stay at Frank Morley's farm in Surrey . . . Eliot's lawyer had drawn up a deed of Separation, and the papers had been served on Vivienne [= Vivien], together with a letter from Eliot explaining—or trying to explain—what he was doing."<sup>19)</sup> Admitting that his marriage was a complete failure, Eliot parted from his wife, who eventually died in her nursery home later. His heart was dissected to accept the sacrifice. He had to give up all the pride in his torment. And for the rest of his life he kept praying in his church.<sup>20)</sup> Certainly he submitted himself to the diagnosis of "frigid purgatorial fire" by Christ, the "wounded surgeon" who died on behalf of sinners:

The wounded surgeon plies the steel  
That questions the distempered part;  
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel  
The sharp compassion of the healer's art  
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

The chill ascends from feet to knees,  
The fever sings in mental wires.  
If to be warmed, then I must freeze  
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires  
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.

18) Elizabeth Schneider, *T. S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 131.

19) T. S. Matthew, *Great Tom: Notes Towards the Definition of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 116–117.

20) *ibid.*, p. 120.

The dripping blood our only drink,  
 The bloody flesh our only food:  
 In spite of which we like to think  
 That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood—  
 Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.  
 ("East Coker," ll. 147–171, *CPP* 181–182)

In order to understand Eliot's meaning of Christ's redemption, it seems useful to quote Andrewes's amazing reflection on the day—"Good Friday" and a Nativity sermon of 1612:

Consider then the inestimable benefit that groweth unto you from this incomparable love. It is not impertinent this, even this, that to us hereby all is turned about clean contrary; that "by His stripes we are healed" [1 Pet. 2. 24], by His sweat we refreshed, by His forsaking we received to grace. That this day, to Him the day of the fierceness of God's wrath, is to us the day of the fulness of God's favour, as the Apostle calleth it, "a day of salvation" [2 Cor. 6. 2]. In respect of that He suffered, I deny not, an evil day, a day of heaviness; but in respect of that which He by it hath obtained for us, it is as we truly call it a good day, a day of joy and jubilee. For it doth not only rid us of that wrath which pertaineth to us for our sins; but farther, it maketh that pertain to us whereto we had no manner of right at all.

For not only by His death as by the death of our sacrifice, by the blood of His cross as by the blood of the paschal lamb, the destroyer passeth over us [Ex. 12. 13], and we shall not perish; but also by His death, as by the death of our High Priest [Num. 35. 25]—for He is Priest and Sacrifice both—we are restored from our exile, even to our former forfeited estate in the land of Promise. Or rather, as the Apostle saith, *non sicut delictum sic donum* [Rom. 5. 15]; not to the same estate, but to one nothing like it, that is, one far better than the estate our sins bereft us. For they deprived us of Paradise, a place on earth; but by the purchase of His blood we are entitled to a far higher, even the Kingdom of Heaven; and His blood, not only the blood of "remission," to acquit us of our sins, but "the blood of the Testament too" [Mt. 26. 28], to bequeath us and give us estate in that Heavenly inheritance. (*Sermons* vol. 2, 153)

By Himself, His Ownself, and by himself slain; by His death, and by His Blood-shedding, and by no other means; *quis audivit talia* [= who have heard such things]? The Physician slain, and of His Flesh and Blood an receipt made, that the patient might recover!" (*Sermons* 113)

The crucial thing that Eliot's Magus couldn't get was this whole paradox of Christ's redemption. Though hidden it is the essential meaning of the Incarnation. Eliot in "East Coker" understands that the Incarnation connotes Christ's sacrificial death for the redemption in dual senses, his death of Godhead in heaven and the anticipatory death on the Cross. Accepting the Incarnation means to accept Christ's sacrificial death and think that the sense of guilt is already done away with. Being free from the sense of guilt, he is now able to turn his will to the will of God. Thus as Christ completely emptied himself in his Incarnation, so did Eliot in choosing his purgatorial experience. In his utmost agony he turned Vivien into a symbol of Christ's redemption. Accordingly we could say that the notion of the Incarnation is finally actualized in his purgatorial experience, as the Bible testifies "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom. 6. 5). Here we could say Eliot has attained *conversio cordis*. Now the remorseful past years when Eliot and Vivien were continuously quarreling are entirely transformed because of Christ's redemption.

Thus Eliot in "Dry Salvage" at last understands the Incarnation as "The point of intersection of the timeless / With time," "Here the past and future / Are conquered, and reconciled:"

... But to apprehend  
 The point of intersection of the timeless  
 With time, is an occupation for the saint—  
 No occupation either, but something given  
 And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
 Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.

...  
 The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.  
 Here the impossible union  
 Of spheres of existence is actual,  
 Here the past and future  
 Are conquered, and reconciled,  
 Where action were otherwise movement  
 Of that which is only moved  
 And has in it no source of movement—  
 Driven by dæmonic, chthonic  
 Powers. ("Dry Salvages," ll. 200–224, *CPP* 189–190)

Having understood the meaning of the Incarnation as inciting within us what Andrewes called "turning of the will," Eliot images it to be "the still point of the turning world:"

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
 Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
 But neither arrest nor movement.

...  
 The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
 The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
 And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded  
 By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,  
*Erhebung* without motion, concentration  
 Without elimination, both a new world  
 And the old made explicit, understood  
 In the completion of its partial ecstasy,  
 The resolution of its partial horror.  
 Yet the enchainment of past and future  
 Woven in the weakness of the changing body,  
 Protects mankind from heaven and damnation  
 Which flesh cannot endure. ("Burnt Norton" ll. 61–82, *CPP* 173)

If we follow Oscar Cullman's concept of time, we might say that this notion of Eliot's is Platonic rather than Christian.<sup>21)</sup> However if we remember Andrewes's pattern of repentance where "the heart may be fixed like a pole, and the body like a sphere turn round about it" (*Sermons* 364), we might easily find the parallel between the pattern of repentance and Eliot's understanding of the Incarnation. Eliot writes in the first part of "East

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21) O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Eng. tr., rev. ed. 1964).

According to Cullman the dichotomy between time and eternity in ancient philosophy is not to be found in the Bible. Plato conceived of history as moving round in a circle. History repeats itself while God remains above both time and history. The Christians on the other hand, conceive time and history as an infinite progression of successive events following the Creation, conceiving of God as inherent in time.

Coker," "In my beginning is my end," and concludes with, "In my end is my beginning." In his repentance Eliot has turned in the center of his whole heart. As we have seen, Eliot understands that the Incarnation is the still point where all opposites are reconciled and the divine will is obeyed. When one is united to that point, one is relieved from "heaven and damnation / Which flesh cannot endure." Going through the experience of "Journey of the Magi," Eliot has turned his will from his sense of guilt to the will of God which is incarnated in Christ. Thus finally he has attained *conversio cordis* in the reality of the Incarnation.

#### Notes

N. B. — The following abbreviations are used:

AR for Bradley, Francis Herbert. *Appearance and Reality*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893.

CPP for Eliot, T. S. *The Complete Poems and Plays*. London: Faber & Faber, 1985.

SE for Eliot, T. S. *Selected Essays*. London: Faber & Faber, 1986.

KE for Eliot, T. S. *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*. London: Faber & Faber, 1964.

Sermons for *Ninety-Six Sermons by the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes, Sometime Lord Bishop of Winchester*. Published by his Majesty's Special Command Vol. I. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841.

#### ABSTRACT

T. S. Eliot seems to suffer from a sense of guilt even long after his formal conversion. His poem "Journey of the Magi," published shortly after his baptism, can be understood as symbolizing the crisis of being caught between spiritual death and rebirth. The aim of this paper is to study Eliot's own quest to actualize his *conversio cordis*, the conversion of the heart, as he was working through his total acceptance of the meaning of the Incarnation by referring to the work of Lancelot Andrewes.