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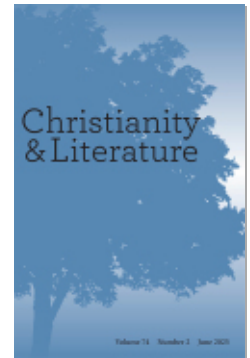
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Conversion in the Stubborn Season: T. S. Eliot's "A Song for Simeon"

Gerald P. Boersma

Abstract. T. S. Eliot's conversion was especially a conversion to the truth of dogma. And, for Eliot, no dogma proved more decisive at the time of his conversion than the dogma of the Incarnation. In a particularly heightened way, the Ariel poems express the agony of journeying towards a confession of the Incarnation—a journey that Eliot himself made under the literary and theological tutelage of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes. The speaker of "A Song for Simeon" offers a counterpoint to Eliot's conversion. The speaker is unable to accept the radical truth of the Incarnation. Instead Eliot's Simeon concludes, "I am dying in my own death."

Keywords. T. S. Eliot, Incarnation, Ariel poems, Simeon, Lancelot Andrewes

To Eric Jacques and Matt Brock with whom I spent many happy hours attempting to decipher Eliot's poetry.

On June 29, 1927 William Stead baptized T. S. Eliot. It was a private service in Holy Trinity parish church in the tiny hamlet of Finstock, Oxfordshire. Stead was in many ways like Eliot. Both were American expatriates who had completely taken to English life and religion. Both had immensely complicated and painful marriages. Eliot confided in Stead who gave him counsel and spiritual direction. The morning after baptizing Eliot, Stead ushered him into the private chapel of Thomas Banks Strong, bishop of Oxford, to receive the sacrament of confirmation. Both sacraments were received in an almost clandestine manner.

Eliot's stealthy conversion and surreptitious entry into the church are in keeping with his notoriously elusive temperament. Eliot kept his private life and religious convictions masked. A complete answer to what spurred Eliot to conversion and to request Christian baptism is bound to elude us. One important piece of the puzzle, however, is Eliot's new certainty regarding the truth of the Incarnation. This conviction reverberates in the writing Eliot produces around the time of his conversion. In many ways, Eliot's conversion is a conversion to the truth of Christmas.

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The Elizabethan scholar and bishop, Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), precipitated Eliot's acceptance of the mystery of the Incarnation. Here too William Stead was decisive, encouraging Eliot to pursue his study of the English Divine. It is almost impossible to overestimate the profound influence Lancelot Andrewes had on Eliot—an influence both on his religious sensibilities and his literary style. Regarding the former, we might ask why, after coming to an intellectual conviction about the truth of the Christian faith, did Eliot choose to become an Anglican? Here credit lies with Andrewes. In a September 23, 1926 essay for *The Times Literary Supplement* entitled, "Lancelot Andrewes," Eliot holds Andrewes up as the apotheosis of Elizabethan ecclesiology with its sublime aesthetic and theological moderation—"its persistence in finding a mean between Papacy and Presbytery." Queen Elizabeth sequestered the very best of the literary and spiritual genius of her age, explains Eliot, and poured them into the foundation of her new ecclesial creation. And, few figures were as consequential in her "masterpiece of ecclesiastical statesmanship" as Lancelot Andrewes.¹

Andrewes also deeply shaped Eliot's literary style. It was especially the crisp prose of Andrewes's sermons that Eliot found arresting. Indeed, Eliot contends that Andrewes's sermons "rank with the finest English prose of their time," to which he then adds, "of any time."² In the same essay Eliot urges his readers to exercise themselves on Andrewes's arduous, but recompensing sermons with their conspicuous literary style. What Eliot so admires in Andrewes is his ability to discover a world within a word: "Andrewes takes a word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning which we should never have supposed any word to possess."³ In his literary criticism and poetry Eliot made this proficiency his own. His writing displays copious examples of a salient word that has been squeezed and squeezed to yield its "full juice of meaning."

Should his reader balk at the enormity of the corpus of Andrewes's sermons, Eliot invites him to turn his attention first to the *Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity*:

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. And in the sermons preached before King James, himself a theologian, Andrewes was not hampered as he sometimes was in addressing more popular audiences. His erudition had full play, and his erudition is essential to his originality.⁴

In the essay, "Lancelot Andrewes," Eliot quotes large swaths of the bishop's Christmas sermons, illustrating how their theological profundity is matched to their literary grace. Andrewes's great achievement is his ability "to find the exact meaning and make that meaning live."⁵

Eliot invested considerable time with Bishop Andrewes's *Nativity Sermons* in the years around his conversion, allowing the English preacher to mold his theological and literary persona. The *Sermons on the Nativity*, contends Eliot, contain the beating heart of the bishop's theology. These sermons are confined "to the elucidation of what he [Andrewes] considered essential in dogma. . . . The Incarnation was to him an essential dogma."⁶ In a telling line, Eliot remarks that Andrewes's sermons terminate in the "ecstasy of assent." The patient and generous reader—the one who has truly given himself over to Andrewes's prose—receives the gift of participating in this terminus, the "ecstasy of assent." In a comment that seems to slip into an autobiographical register, Eliot observes of Andrewes's sermons, "It is only when we have saturated ourselves in his prose, followed the movement of his thought, that we find his examination of words terminating in the ecstasy of assent."⁷ Indeed, Eliot's own "ecstasy of assent"—formally at his baptism in the summer of 1927—is due in large measure to his "saturation" in Andrewes's *Sermons on the Nativity*.

If Eliot's religious sensibilities and literary style were distinctly shaped by Lancelot Andrewes, and, if Eliot made the bishop's conviction regarding the "essential dogma" of the Incarnation his own, nowhere is this as conspicuous as in Eliot's Christmas poetry, known as the Ariel poems. Consider that the first five lines of *The Journey of the Magi*, published in the same year as Eliot's baptism, are a quotation from one of Lancelot Andrewes's *Nativity Sermons*. The lines are a dramatic monologue from the mouth of one of the Magi detailing the austerity of their journey to Bethlehem. G. Douglas Atkins writes, "Eliot's Ariel Poems are far from simple. As a matter of fact, they are complex, complicated, sophisticated, and very tightly woven, featuring the linguistic, comparative, and meditative poetics that Eliot derived from Bishop Andrewes."⁸ In a particularly heightened way, the Ariel poems express the agony of journeying towards a confession of the Incarnation—a journey that Eliot himself made with the guidance of Bishop Andrewes.

The five Ariel poems—composed for Christmas cards each year from 1927 to 1931—articulate diverse responses to the Incarnation; varying degrees of insight and acceptance, embrace and resistance to its truth. What is clear in each of the poems is that the Incarnation utterly confounds and devastates the "old dispensation." Moral, metaphysical, and social *terra firma* is thrown up in the air; doyens of former civilizations are discombobulated. From this void the Christ child ushers in a new world order. "I take it for granted," remarked Eliot ten years after his conversion, "that Christian revelation is the only full revelation; and that the fullness of Christian revelation resides in the essential fact of the Incarnation, in relation to which all Christian revelation is to be understood."⁹ All Truth (with a capital "T"), contends Eliot, issues from this historical fact and must answer to this historical fact. The inbreaking of the everlasting into time and space recasts the meaning of existence. The consistent theme of the Ariel poems is that now there is only before (BC) and after (AD) the Incarnation.

Like St. Athanasius's little treatise, *On the Incarnation*, the Ariel poems are a commentary on the Apostle Paul's claim that through the Incarnation "God made foolish the wisdom of world." By the lights of worldly wisdom, the Incarnation is a cosmic absurdity. Yet, this "foolishness of God" has "destroyed the wisdom of the wise"; destabilizing what was heretofore simply "reality." The Incarnation reconfigures our metaphysical certainties. For this reason Eliot admired the philosophy of Blaise Pascal who he thought "got" the radical import of the Incarnation. In his introduction to Pascal's works, Eliot remarks that only because the French religious polymath was "inexorably committed to the dogma of the Incarnation" could he make sense of the world and find the intelligibility and moral order sufficient to resist chaos.¹⁰ The theme of the Ariel poems is the excruciating—and Eliot takes the term literally—implications (intellectually, morally, socially, etc.) of the Incarnation. How does one respond to the call of the cross that issues from the crèche? Critically, there is no returning to "before" the Incarnation. The "still point of the turning world" has now been revealed to be the small Jewish boy growing up in the backwaters of the Galilean desert.

One response to the Incarnation—a tragic response, I suggest—is "A Song for Simeon." The prophetic eyes of Simeon clearly see the future of the child he holds in his arms. He sees this child's rejection and tortured death. And, in that rejection and death he sees his own rejection and death and that of his people. Simeon even sees that by embracing rejection and death (the child's and his own) he can receive new life, eternal life. Ultimately, his response to the child's promise of life eternal is a dejected but firm "No." The character of Simeon is, therefore, "ontological," as Ronald Bush has it; he is intended not to "dramatize the psychological frissons of experience . . . but render a spiritual state."¹¹

"Lord"—the exclamation of direct address that sets off the poem—introduces the genre of the work. Like Eliot's other Ariel poems, it is a dramatic monologue, in this case a dramatic monologue in the form of a prayer. We are overhearing the prayer of an aged Jew. Further, to ensure there is no missing the referent of the poem's title, the opening invocation—"Lord"—serves immediately to establish for the reader a literary parallel with the prayer intoned by Luke's elderly prophet in the Temple: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." However, such obvious intertextual parallels serve principally to heighten the stark contrast between Luke's Simeon and that of Eliot. "A Song for Simeon" turns out to be a rather twisted inversion of the well-known evening prayer, the *Nunc dimittis* from Luke's Gospel.¹²

The character of Eliot's Simeon is much more like the speaker of *The Journey of the Magi* than the Simeon who appears in the Gospel. Indeed, Eliot's Simeon bears an uncanny resemblance to the Magus, the sheik on pilgrimage that Eliot crafted for the previous year's Christmas card. Again, we hear the world-weary voice of a despondent old man—a man who has seen much, but cannot see to see. Like the Magus, Eliot's Simeon stands betwixt and between two worlds. He, too, is a liminal figure, one who

beholds the Christ child at the first Christmas and sees the complete overthrow of the regnant order that this child will bring about. Further, after this vision he cannot return to things as they were. He is aware that a door has now definitively been shut on the “old dispensation.” The speaker feels trapped, consigned to be left behind, unable to walk through the door to embrace the dawn of a new dispensation. Both characters in Eliot’s first two Ariel poems are tragic Christmas figures. Both lack the spiritual fortitude to step forth and welcome this Birth, to embrace with their hearts the Infant they hold in their arms.

The life of Simeon (both the Evangelist’s and Eliot’s) is marked by waiting. Luke’s Simeon is in the temple, waiting in hope, “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” He manifestly recognizes the day of his visitation, taking the child in his arms he blesses God. He has been waiting with expectancy, with longing, and now leans over the threshold to embrace the dawn of a new era—one of peace, joy, and eternal life. Eliot’s Simeon is also waiting, but waiting in winter. His heart, cold and lifeless, is matched to the “stubborn season” in which he is living. Atkins rightly comments that “a certain aura of pre-spring . . . hangs over the first paragraphs of *A Song for Simeon*.”¹³ The speaker is immured within his own parochial vision; he has all the vitality of potted plants, “blooming in bowls.” Time moves slowly as he waits; “the winter sun creeps by the snow hills.” Eliot’s Simeon is “waiting for the death wind”; he “wait[s] for the wind the chills toward the dead land.”

Luke’s Simeon is a man of hope—hope fulfilled, hope turned to joy: “mine eyes have seen thy salvation,” he cries. By contrast, Eliot’s Simeon looks on the future with hopeless dread and terror. Dry, desiccated, and dreary, he knows all too well how inconsequential and fleeting his life is—“Like a feather on the back of my hand.” He accepts with a forlorn shrug the unbearable lightness of being, that of his own (“My life is light”) and that of his people. Elizabeth Drew remarks, “Simeon’s state of suspension between dying and birth, between birth and dying, is beautifully created in the rhythm of the first stanza. . . . He is passive, detached, waiting. . . . And the time of waiting is now haunted by the pain and disquiet of the revelation.”¹⁴ For Eliot’s Simeon, life has the cosmic significance of “a feather” or “dust in sunlight.”

The Simeon of the Gospel is described as a righteous man—“just and devout,” Luke tells us. Eliot affirms this, albeit with what seems a touch of irony:

Grant us thy peace.
I have walked many years in this city,
Kept faith and fast, provided for the poor,
Have taken and given honour and ease.
There went never any rejected from my door.

Simeon identifies with Israel, more particularly, with Jerusalem, the Holy City. More particularly yet, with the Temple. Here is where God dwells

among his people. Here God's people come to seek His presence. It is from the Temple that God's redemption will come. It is "in this city" that Eliot's Simeon has long walked in righteousness—keeping "faith and fast," fulfilling his obligations to God's *anawim*. Yet are we mistaken to detect an air of self-assured righteousness in Simeon's words? And, perhaps also a touch of caustic irony? Might Simeon feel that God has not kept up his end of the bargain?

Three times Eliot's Simeon echoes a version of the petition voiced by Luke's Simeon: "Grant us thy peace." But the peace of Jerusalem for which Simeon prays rings hollow, betraying an acerbic *mauvaise foi*. As Atkins puts it, "The prayer is not, to use the term from 'Little Gidding,' 'valid.'"¹⁵ Eliot's Simeon seems all too certain of the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the utter desolation of its Temple. Already in the first line the Roman invaders are signaled—the "foreign faces" and "foreign swords," that will devastate the City of Peace. Simeon knows that "in this city" he does not have a future. He is certain of his exile and displacement. He knows his house will be forgotten; his children's children bereft of identity. In wild terror, his progeny will "take to the goat's path," living in the refuge of foxes. The problem with Simeon's prayer—"Grant us thy peace"—is its assured hopelessness.

The theological lines of continuity with *The Journey of the Magi* are clear. Eliot's Simeon, like the Magus, knows that the infant in his arms portends death: his own, his city, and his people. This Birth-Death, that is the Christ child, "tolls the knell of parting day" for the entirety of the "old dispensation." Confronted with the truth of the Incarnation, both the Magus and Simeon are "no longer at ease." Drew comments,

To both [Simeon and the Magus], the new birth remains pure loss as far as their own lives are concerned. Both recognize it, but not with the joyful prophecy of 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.' With the Magi it is accompanied by no social change whatever: with Simeon it brings the vision of pain, death and destruction which is to be the *immediate* conclusion of the new birth of the new value. . . . What remains of his old life is now meaningless because it can have "no tomorrow." It is not peace, it is merely the heavy burden of realization that both in himself and in the majority of mankind, what he had called life, is death; and moreover that even for those who have a "tomorrow" life and death seem indistinguishable from one another.¹⁶

Like the Magus, Simeon recognizes the cross staked in the crèche. Simeon, like the Magus, knows Christmas to be a "birth season of decease." When the Magus "arrived" at the "temperate valley" of Bethlehem he is confronted, not with the scene of the nativity, but with sundry images of the Passion. So too, Simeon looking into the eyes of the Infant beholds with vivid clarity the pain, torment, and death to come. Indeed, Simeon fuses the impending violent death of this child with the inevitable calamity of his own people. The third stanza reads,

Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation
 Grant us thy peace.
 Before the stations of the mountain of desolation,
 Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow,
 Now at this birth season of decease,
 Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,
 Grant Israel's consolation
 To one who has eighty years and no to-morrow.

The fate of the speaker and his people is identified with the passion and death of Christ. In the "time of sorrow" both are driven out of Jerusalem to their death. The "cords and scourges" which befall Christ at his passion also assail the Jewish people at the destruction of city.

One sequence in the medieval "life of Christ" cycles is called the "lamentation." Here Christians contemplate the grief of Jesus's friends as they hold his dead body. "Lamentation" equally calls to mind how the Jewish prophets spoke of exile. The dual referent is here intended.

"The stations of the mountain of desolation" call to mind the Stations of the Cross that punctuate Christ's Via Dolorosa up Mount Golgotha. Equally, Eliot seems to invoke Jesus's Olivet Discourse in which the immediate referent of the impending "abomination of desolation" is the destruction of Jerusalem: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountain" (Matthew 24:15-16). And so, the path up the "mountain of desolation" is also the "goat's path" that Simeon and his people are consigned to trod.

Finally, "the certain hour of maternal sorrow" calls to mind Mary's anguish, prophesized by Luke's Simeon: "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." This comes to pass when Mary, at the foot of the cross "her station keeping," experiences the "hour" of her son's death. But such "maternal sorrow" is equally the collective anguish that Christ prophesied would befall the women of Jerusalem: "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!" (Matthew 24:19).

Three times in the third stanza Eliot's aged Simeon intones the word "before": "Before the time of cords and scourges. . . . Before the stations. . . . Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow. . . ." There is a rhythmic, liturgical cadence to his proclamation. The "before" contrasts sharply with "now"; the "now" in which he holds the Christ child: "Now at this birth season of decease." This "now" spells only impending death, decease. The prayer—hollow and hopeless—is that this "Infant" ("the still unspeaking and unspoken Word") will grant consolation, will grant peace to the speaker and to Israel. Yet the implacable certainty of the thrice intoned "before" exposes this to be the prayer of a man and a city certain there will be "no to-tomorrow." Simeon sighs his *fiat*—"According to thy word"—with a melancholic, forlorn sense of resignation. The Word to whom he resigns himself lies impotent in his arms—"still unspeaking and unspoken"—unable

to execute Israel's vindication or secure the speaker's future. Eliot's Simeon does not have hope or faith in this child; he is not God's all-powerful Word come to bring salvation, but the *still* unspeaking, *still* unspoken Word.

In an important respect Simeon is distinct from the Magus and this because he understands so much more than the Magus. He knows the full theological significance of this child: death to self, to his ambitions, to his desires; death to the future he sought to secure for himself, for his "children's children," and for his people. This child ushers in the end of the "old dispensation." At the same time, Simeon recognizes that this child heralds the dawn of new era, a Christian era, one of light, ascent, ecstasy, even the "ultimate vision." Simeon knows that in this child the two realities of death and life are inextricably united. Christmas is a Birth-Death. The crèche begins the journey to the cross. Only by accepting that journey of suffering can one enter the victory of the world to come. Simeon knows that only "they shall praise Thee" who "suffer in every generation." He knows there is no "glory" of Easter without the "derision" of the cross. What is true for the Christ child—that he must suffer to enter into his glory (Luke 24:26)—is also true for his followers: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

But to know is not to embrace. Eliot's Simeon stands on the cusp of a new dispensation, he looks ahead, sees, and then glumly shakes his head, refusing to enter: "Let thy servant depart, / Having seen thy salvation." These words uttered by Eliot's Simeon have a wholly different effect than they do in Luke's Gospel. Eliot's Simeon has "seen thy salvation" and asks to "depart,"—"it's not for me, thanks," he seems to say. The sight of salvation that he claims to behold in the last line of the poem is not the vision of union, but a vision of something far off, out of reach, emphatically not his: "Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer / Not for me the ultimate vision."

Simeon knows he will be compelled to share in Christ's suffering, to ascend Golgotha, but he will not participate in the victory of Easter. The crown of "martyrdom," the "glory" of the saints, the "ecstasy" of mystics, and the "ultimate vision" are all denied him. Daniela Cavallaro expresses Simeon's plight well, "In Eliot's poem, Simeon is characterized as one who can see but cannot live; he is aware of what will be the fulfillment of a truly Christian life (the prayer, the ecstasy, the vision, the martyrdom), but he knows that he will not share that part of the Christian experience."¹⁷ In this, Simeon is like the confused Magus who, after encountering the Christ child in Bethlehem, returns to "our places," now out of place, displaced; returns to a people who have become "alien," to gods no longer his. *The Journey of the Magi* ends with a dejected sigh: "I should be glad of another death." Likewise, the speaker in *A Song for Simeon* intones the morose awareness that this nativity spells the end for him and his people: "I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me, / I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me."

Eliot's private life of faith and the reasons surrounding his conversion are opaque. However, the poetry and prose penned at the time of his conversion shines a beam of light on at least one decisive feature of his conversion: he had come to accept the radical truth of the Incarnation. And so, the poetry he begins to write following his "ecstasy of assent" are Christmas poems—the Ariel poems that explore the crucible of confessing the Incarnation. In the *Four Quartets*, Eliot tells us that "Incarnation" is "a hint half guessed, the gift half understood"; it is a term that designates an insoluble mystery:

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

The speakers we hear in the first Ariel poems have, indeed, "half understood" the Truth of the Incarnation. Eliot's Simeon has rightly "guessed" the suffering and death that the Incarnation demands. However, the joy, peace, and eternal life it extends is not a gift he can embrace. The halting and, ultimately, stillborn conversions of the Magus and Simeon express Eliot's awareness of the immense existential demands of confessing the Incarnation.

Eliot's own conversion was not to a vague spiritual notion of divine transcendence and human benevolence—"The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men." His decisive rejection of his family's Unitarian patrimony made, at least that much, clear. Rather, in adopting (what he took to be) traditional English Christianity, Eliot converted to what Cardinal Newman called "the dogmatic principle." And, for Eliot, no dogma proved more decisive at the time of his conversion than the dogma of the Incarnation. Lancelot Andrewes's *Sermons on the Nativity* gave Eliot new vision to see how the profound, paradoxical, and perplexing truth of the Incarnation reconstitutes all of existence. The "impossible union" of the infinite breaking into the finite and eternity coming to move about in time, demands a complete metaphysical and moral recalibration. Eliot did not win this truth easily. It was "a long journey," "a hard and bitter agony," towards a truth that had long seemed "all folly." But patiently submitting to Bishop Andrewes's literary and theological tutelage finally terminated for him in the "ecstasy of assent." Eliot came to confess the difficult truth that the eternal wisdom of God is truly manifest in the "foolishness" of the Incarnation. The Ariel poems are then the counterpoint to Eliot's conversion. Here the speakers are unable to accept the radical truth of the Incarnation. Instead Simeon concludes, "I am dying in my own death," and the Magus pines for "another death."

Notes

1. T. S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes, Essays on Style and Order* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), 15. The establishment of a uniquely English church is, according to Eliot, wholly expressive—the “most complete incarnation”—of Queen Elizabeth’s “taste and sensibility.” Eliot explains, “The Church of England is the creation not of the reign of Henry VIII or of the reign of Edward VI, but of the reign of Elizabeth. The *via media* which is the spirit of Anglicanism was the spirit of Elizabeth in all things; the last of the humble Welsh family of Tudor was the first and most complete incarnation of English policy. The taste or sensibility of Elizabeth, developed by her intuitive knowledge of the right policy for the hour and her ability to choose the right men to carry out that policy, determined the future of the English Church.” Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 14.
2. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 14. He continues, “The intellectual achievement and the prose style of Hooker and Andrewes came to complete the structure of the English Church as the philosophy of the thirteenth century crowns the Catholic Church. To make this statement is not to compare the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* with the *Summa*. The seventeenth century was not an age in which the Churches occupied themselves with metaphysics, and none of the writings of the fathers of the English Church belongs to the category of speculative philosophy. But the achievement of Hooker and Andrewes was to make the English Church more worthy of intellectual assent. No religion can survive the judgment of history unless the best minds of its time have collaborated in its construction; if the Church of Elizabeth is worthy of the age of Shakespeare and Jonson, that is because of the work of Hooker and Andrewes.” Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 16–17.
3. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 24.
4. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 23.
5. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 26.
6. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 23.
7. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, 24.
8. G. Douglas Atkins, *T. S. Eliot’s Christmas Poems* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 11.
9. T. S. Eliot, “Revelation,” in *Revelation*, ed. John Baille and Hugh Martin (New York: MacMillan, 1937), 1–2.
10. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, 1960), 360.
11. Ronald Bush, *T. S. Eliot, A Study in Character and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 107.
12. Eliot’s revered grandfather, Rev. William Greenleaf Eliot, composed a poem entitled, “Nunc Dimittis.” The elder Eliot also draws on the phraseology of Simeon’s canticle and his poem traverses many of the same themes.
13. Atkins, *T. S. Eliot’s Christmas Poems*, 67.
14. Elizabeth Drew, *T. S. Eliot: The Design of his Poetry* (New York: Scribner, 1949), 122–123.
15. Atkins, *T. S. Eliot’s Christmas Poems*, 67.
16. Drew, *Eliot*, 123–124.
17. Daniela Cavallaro, “A Song for Virgil: Dantean References in Eliot’s ‘A Song for Simeon,’” *Journal of Modern Literature* 24 (2000): 352.