

The Employment of History in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

By

Wenas Sheiyal Yaber Al-Badri

University of Wasit, Collage of Agriculture, Department of Soil and Water Resources/Iraq

Najeeba Rasheed Muhammed

Northern Technical University, Technical Institute Al-Hawija, Department of Technologies of the Clothing Industry/Iraq

Email: Walbadry@uowesit.edu.iq

Abstract

One of the most trustworthy historical sources is our written history, which has been documenting the many social, religious, and political events that have occurred throughout the ages. This analysis took a look at two different aspects of Eliot's work: his choice of subject matter and the use of historical context in *Murder in the Cathedral*. The first side demonstrated T.S. Eliot's evolution from poet to playwright, most notably with the completion of his lengthy religious-themed drama. In 1929, Georg Bell, the Bishop of Chichester and the person responsible for establishing the Christian Drama Society, commissioned this performance. This research focused on Thomas a Becket, the Cathedral's most prominent representative during his seven years in exile in France. This research demonstrated how the spiritual downfall of modern man is attributable to a confluence of factors, including the Second World War, excessive industrialism, Darwinism, and Marxism.

Keywords: Eliot's Murder; History; Cathedral

Introduction

The analysis also revealed that preserving history and customs was one of T.S. Eliot's priority goals in penning *Murder in the Cathedral*.

From what it can be seen from this analysis, Eliot places equal emphasis on Becket's holiness and the difficulty he faces. In light of his background in medieval Latin poetry during his time at Harvard, where he studied Dante and where he wrote *Murder in the Cathedral*, it is probable that Eliot was inspired to write about this topic.

The second section of the analysis focused on the play's construction, explaining how the curtain was raised to introduce the events of *Murder in the Cathedral*, and what the women of Canterbury symbolized in addition to the fears and anxieties that the audience would soon experience. The second part of the study focused on detailing the most significant events that Thomas Becket endured, beginning with his seven-year exile to France following his argument with Henry II about the immunities of the English Church rights (which began on December 2, 1170). It was discussed how Eliot constructed *Murder in the Cathedral* around an in-depth examination of martyrdom to give the play its shape and significance.

1.2. Eliot's Subject–Matter Choice:

One of English dramatic history's most powerful and moving religious plays, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) by TS Eliot is the poet's greatest dramatic achievement. ⁽¹⁾ Eliot wrote

Published/ publié in *Res Militaris* (resmilitaris.net), vol.13, n°1, Winter-Spring 2023

the play for the Canterbury Festival in June 1935, and it was primarily intended for performance. His first "full-length play on a religious subject" was commissioned by George Bell, Bishop of Chichester and the founder of the Religious Drama Society, in 1929. ⁽²⁾ Because of this, "a subject generally accepted as suitable for verse" was found by Eliot. ⁽³⁾ The most prominent figure in the Cathedral's history, and who died willingly martyred, is depicted in the novel *Murder in Cathedral*. His death is depicted in the novel *Murder in Cathedral*. In his view, verse plays should either be inspired by mythology or take place in a distant historical period that is sufficiently removed from the present for the characters to be allowed to speak in verse. ⁽⁴⁾ In addition to George Bell's invitation and Eliot's desire to write a verse play, Eliot may have been influenced by one or more of the following factors while penning *Murder in the Cathedral*: When it comes to the spiritual decline of the modern man, Eliot has some interesting observations. Excessive industrialism, Darwinism, Marxism, World War I, World War II, and the spread of science devoted to the study of man and his psychic life, primarily on a material basis, all had a direct impact on modern man's way of thinking. Because of these influences, man has been reduced and degraded into a mechanical being. Thoughts after Lambeth by T.S. Eliot not only identified the problem but also offered a remedy:

The world is trying the experiment to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality, the experiment will fail, but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the world from suicide. ⁽⁵⁾

So Eliot wrote *Murder in the Cathedral* in order to "treat of the great spiritual sickness [of the] century, of the meaninglessness of man without God, and of the search for the significance." ⁽⁶⁾ Secondly, Eliot has a strong interest in preserving the past. His love of all traditions led him to trace ancient civilizations and use their customs to show how past and present are inextricably linked. Both structurally and thematically, this is evident in his drama. It was his belief that an artist in the current era had to translate "the meaning of the past into the present self" in order to be successful. ⁽⁷⁾ By definition, the past does not necessarily refer to a person's personal history, but rather the history of humanity. On the basis of this historical event, Eliot crafted his play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Thirdly, some members of Eliot's family may have had an impact on the choice of subject matter. According to Herbert Howarth, a great deal of Eliot's work is an attempt to reaffirm traditional family values. ⁽⁸⁾ Eliot saw a "commitment to the value of the Christian witness" ⁽⁹⁾ in his paternal grandfather, his uncle, and his mother, which is expressed in Thomas a Becket's sermon in *Murder in the Cathedral*. "The combination of priest and administrator that is exhibited in Eliot's Thomas" ⁽¹⁰⁾ was displayed by his grandfather, who founded a church and served as chancellor of a university. Thomas Lamb Eliot, Eliot's uncle, "thought constantly of the martyrs," following in his father's footsteps. ⁽¹¹⁾ As for Eliot's mother, she had a strong religious conviction, which served as the inspiration for her work and her poems about saints and martyrs. It's about a martyr who died for the belief that "the law of God overrides the law of man," as depicted in Mrs. Eliot's *Savonarola* (1926). ⁽¹²⁾ The words "I give my life/ To the Law of God above the Law of Man" ⁽¹³⁾ are echoed by Thomas a Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*. Inspired by these figures, Eliot sought to "show the relationship of sainthood and martyrdom to the lives of the ordinary men and women of today." ⁽¹⁴⁾ Fourth, it should be noted that Thomas a Becket's twelfth-century tale is not the sole inspiration for this play. Thomas Darly (1795-1846) and Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) had previously attempted to resurrect the event. However, Eliot's portrayal of Becket shows him as a man who has been cleansed of all worldly attachments, such as his desire to gain power. He steadfastly rejects the temptations of power offered by the three tempters in the first part of Eliot's play. Eliot had no intention of merely documenting the past

when he relayed these historical facts to his audience. His goal was to show that the conflict between God's servants and king-servants is "permanent or universal in nature." ⁽¹⁵⁾ When it comes to politics, Eliot didn't intend to write this play, but the conflict seems to be between Thomas a Becket and his own duties toward King Henry VIII. Eliot emphasized Becket's holiness as well as the internal conflict he was experiencing. It is possible that Eliot's choice of subject matter was influenced by his studies at Harvard University, where medieval Latin poetry "gave him the foundation for his readings in the Medieval Ages, for his studies of Dante, and for writing *Murder in the Cathedral*." ⁽¹⁶⁾

2. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and the Use of History

This work is divided into two sections by an interlude rather than separate acts or scenes. To begin, the play's chorus, "The Women of Canterbury," establishes the scene's era, location, and potential for the audience. Premonition prompts the chorus at St. Mary's Cathedral to begin their performance with a song. They're baffled: "Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety, that draws our feet / Towards the cathedral?" (p.11) . There is both danger and safety in the chorus. "There is no danger/For us," they say, implying that they are protected. (Ibid.) To say they're watching from the sidelines is an understatement. (Ibid.) In the face of the terror of a direct flash between good and evil, they express the mediocre human soul's fears, desires and intuition," ⁽¹⁷⁾. Peter and Christ are mentioned, as well as the death of Thomas a Becket.

Remembered the martyrs and saints who wait?
And who shall Stretch out his hand to the fire,
and deny his master? Who
Shall be warm
By the fire, and deny his master?
Seven years and the summer is over
Seven years since the Archbishop left us,
He who was always kind to his people. (p.12)

Preparing us for the main theme of the play, Eliot uses Becket's connection to martyrs and saints to connect him to Becket. Archbishop Thomas a Becket, who spent seven years in exile in France, is the subject of the chorus here. On October 13, 1164, ⁽¹⁸⁾ Becket left England. On December 2, 1170, the events of *Murder in the Cathedral* begin. Archbishop's departure was due to a dispute with Henry II over the rights and immunities of the English Church. Henry II admitted that the realm of England was too small to accommodate both of them during the conflict. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Finally, Henry's council nearly condemned Becket as a traitor, and he was saved only by the desire of some hostile bishops to have him dismissed by Pope Alexander III before he was sentenced. ⁽²⁰⁾ In light of this historical context, the Chorus's statement that "it would not be well for him to return" is logical (Ibid.). Ultimately, it becomes clear that Becket is the target of the threat. Right from the start, Eliot's play is filled with dread. 'Fear in the Way' was Eliot's original title for the play, which he later changed to '*Murder in the Cathedral*' after the suggestion of Mrs. Martin Browne ⁽²¹⁾. As long as they're left alone, the Women of Canterbury "are content," even though they've been subjected to "various oppressions" by the king or his barons ⁽²²⁾ (Ibid.). They are terrified by nature's destructive forces and the changing of the seasons, but death, they fear, will turn the world into a wasteland.

Now I fear the disturbance of the quiet seasons:
Winter shall come bringing death from the sea,
Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,

Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and ears,
Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams
And the poor shall wait for another decaying October. (Ibid)

As in Greek tragedy, Eliot's chorus "presents a commentary on the action," "predicts and prepares us for developments, arouses us, with their passionate dithyrambs, to participate wholeheartedly in the emotional cries that arise, providing the action with a background." ⁽²³⁾ A close relationship between Canterbury's women and the action is as close as it can be. This makes them "participants even more than the chorus in most Greek tragedies," as they say. ⁽²⁴⁾ Becket's death is the only thing they are spared from. As a vehicle for Eliot's message that religion is essential and that life without an eternal purpose is pointless, the women in Canterbury are a perfect fit. Seven years have passed since the Archbishop left them, and they're still terrified (p.13). As a side note, there is also the fear that the King and his barons instill in their subjects. Fear of a terrorist attack causes chaos and anarchy in Canterbury. As for the priests, they shed light on Chorus's speech and some political affairs, while also highlighting the Church's physical disorder, which adds an element of suspense.

What does the Archbishop do, and our sovereign Lord the Pope With the stubborn King and the French King
In ceaseless intrigue, combinations,
In conference, meetings accepted, meetings refused,
Meetings unended or endless
At one place or another in France? (pp.13-4)

This book, as Eliot wants it to be: "A deep-searching study of martyrdom's importance." ⁽²⁵⁾ "Severely subordinated to the pattern or design of martyrdom which gives the play its shape as well as its meaning," thus, the historical material is "severely subordinated." ⁽²⁶⁾ Because of this, the play focuses on the events leading up to Thomas a Becket's death. Every now and then, the past is brought up. An example of this can be found in the Second Priest's passage. To get an accurate account of these meetings between the English and French kings, it is best to look at historical records. Thomas a Becket's escape from England to France prompted Henry II to write to the French King Louis VII and reveal his true feelings toward the Archbishop of Canterbury and Henry's old friend. This letter deserves to be published:

To his lord and friend Louis, the illustrious king of the French, Henry king of the English and duke of the Normans and Aquitanias and count of the Angevins, greeting and affection. Know that Thomas, who was archbishop of Canterbury, has been publicly adjudged in my court, by full council of the barons of my realm to be wicked and perjured traitor to me, and under the manifest name of traitor has wickedly departed, as my messengers will morefully tell you. Wherefore I earnestly beg you not to permit a man guilty of such infamous crimes and treasons, or his men, to remain in your kingdom; and let not this great enemy of mine, so it please you, have any counsel or aid from you or yours, even as I would not give any such help to your enemies in my realm or allow it to be given. Rather, if it please you, help me to take vengeance on my great enemy for this affront, and to seek my honour, even as you would wish me to do for you if there were need of it. ⁽²⁷⁾

Between 1165 and 1170, only ten meetings were recorded in which the "reconciliation of the king and the archbishop [was] if not the only, at least a prominent subject of discussion." ⁽²⁸⁾ The Pope had already arrived in France when Becket arrived. When Emperor Barbarossa ⁽²⁹⁾ of Germany "dragged" Pope Alexander III out of Italy in 1160, he placed Victor IV as a rival for the papal throne; he later died in 1164. ⁽³⁰⁾ Barbarossa later introduced Paschl III as a rival

to Alexander III. ⁽³¹⁾ As an exiled pope in the face of an increasing number of rivals, Pope Alexander III was unable to "afford to lose so powerful an adherent as the king of England, who had supported him from the beginning, and had indeed on one occasion prevented the triumph of anti –pope Paschal [III]." ⁽³²⁾ Also, Alexander III feared that an act against Henry II might lead him to join the imperial army⁽³³⁾. After serving as Pope Alexander III's protector, Louis VII took up that mantle in order to protect Thomas a Becket and capitalize on the embarrassing situation that arose as a result of the archbishop's flight. ⁽³⁴⁾ Henry II, on the other hand, met with a powerful delegation of German magnates early in 1165. ⁽³⁵⁾ Even two of Henry's daughters were rumored to have been married to the sons of Emperor Fredrick and the Duke of Saxony. It was on his return to the assembly that the archbishop of Cologne proclaimed the support and sympathy of the King of England, and swung it decisively in favor of recognizing Paschall III as a new rival to Alexander in Paschall III. ⁽³⁶⁾ Henry II hoped to frighten Louis VII and Alexander III into action against Becket through these negotiations. ⁽³⁷⁾ As Henry II and Becket fought, the Pope worked tirelessly to ease the strain and looked for a way out through shifting circumstances or a change of heart, year after year and through envoys and letters. Henry II's rage was calmed, and he was spared the embarrassment of Becket's outbursts. ⁽³⁸⁾ In spite of this, Alexander III had not made any concessions of any kind. Henry II and Becket had two of the most significant meetings: the first in Montmirail in January 1169, which resulted in chaos, and the second in Montmartre in November 1169, where the king and archbishop were brought face-to-face. ⁽³⁹⁾ England's social fabric was affected by the king and archbishop conflict. Third priest mentions this point in his sermon King rule or barons rule: "The strong man strongly and the weak man by caprice. They have but one law, to seize the power and keep it." (p.14)

The conflict between Stephen and Henry II, which was disorder persisted in the following centuries. As a result, their supporters, dukes and barons, became involved in the conflict. Due to the rift between Henry II and the archbishop, as well as the open war with the French, this disorder grew during Henry's reign. England's society was "demoralized by disorder and a struggle to survive: crimes of violence by those who set themselves beyond the law," "mercenary troops brigandage," and "castle-tyranny," men's⁽⁴⁰⁾ or to put it another way "he who was strongest got most." ⁽⁴¹⁾ The Archbishop's arrival is announced by the Messenger, who then makes his entrance. (p.14) "The two proud men" (p.15), the king and the archbishop, are not reconciled, according to all three priests, the first, second, and third. Henry II granted Becket two things at Montmartre: a peaceful return and the restoration of the property of the See of Canterbury. On 22 July 1170, the archbishop agreed to these terms at La Ferte Bernard near Freteval. After six years of enmity, the two "obstinate men" met and reconciled without even mentioning the issues for which they had fought, namely the Clarendon Constitutions. ⁽⁴²⁾ In the debate about the validity of a reconciliation where there was no "kiss of peace," there is a palpable fear (p.16). This has always been the case. This "neither sought nor offered" kiss was what happened. ⁽⁴³⁾ Possibly, the two rivals wanted to put this issue behind them in the fall of 1169, which scuppered the prospect of peace at Montmarte. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ The messenger tells us how the people of the archdiocese greeted their new leader. Herbert Boshan is to be credited for this description of Eliot. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ On the morning of December 1, 1170, Boshan records Becket's journey from Sandwich to Canterbury as follows:

he was welcomed by the poor of the land as a victim sent from heaven...Christ's poor received him with the victor's laurels and as the Lord's anointed. So wherever the archbishop passed, a swarm of poor folk, small and great, young and old, flocked to meet him, so prostrating themselves in the way, crying aloud, again and again, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." ⁽⁴⁶⁾

"Louis VII would have liked to detain him [Becket] in his kingdom," the Messenger tells Canterbury's priests and women in his speech to the city. When Henry II offered Becket peace, Louis VII made a last-ditch effort to convince him not to accept it. It's also a piece of history. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ A number of times in his speech, he refers to Becket's pride, which can be found in both the play and scholarly works. He knew his former chancellor's flaws, according to WL Warren, when it came to vanity and pride. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Becket's arrogance, according to the First Priest, was brought on by his sudden financial success (p.17). According to Warren, Becket was a member of a "humble if not respected Norman family." ⁽⁴⁹⁾ Continuing with the First Priest, he states:

I saw him as Chancellor, flattered by the King, Liked and feared by courtiers, in their overbearing fashion, Despised and despising, (p.17)

Fitzwilliam Williams "All things were entrusted to Thomas, while the king gave himself up to youthful pursuits, "Stephen writes about Becket's efficiency and his relationship with Henry II. The only difference between him and the king was that he was named after him⁽⁵⁰⁾. There are bound to be some courtiers who despise someone with his level of power. One of Eliot's motivations for writing the play is expressed in the Second Priest:

The Archbishop shall be at our head, dispelling dismay and doubt. He will tell us what we are to do, he will give us our orders, instruct us. (Ibid)

His "primary concern" is that we understand "the ways of God to man or perhaps more truly," "the ways of man to God," more clearly. ⁽⁵¹⁾ Because of this, Eliot never fails to bring up the social conflict he previously discussed and the impact it had on those affected.

There have been oppression and luxury,
There have been poverty and license,
There has been minor injustice, (p. 19)

"King rules or baron rules," as the Women of Canterbury had previously stated, may be a metaphor for the state of affairs in England at the time (p.12). Consequently, oppression becomes the norm, with many barons eager to commit all manner of atrocities. As an example, those who are looking to improve their financial situation gain money "by raiding the countryside and pillaging helpless towns and villages". ⁽⁵²⁾ Barons, despite the fact that some of them are good, tend to be targeted by female barons who focus on torturing and killing barons for their own personal gain. ⁽⁵³⁾ The women's complaints continue:

We have had various scandals,
We have been afflicted with taxes,
We have had laughter and gossip,
Several girls have disappeared
Unaccountably, and some not able to. (p.20)

The barons imposed taxes on the people, while the knights raped young women. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ Finally, the Women of Canterbury make a request in their letter of complaint:

Thomas Archbishops, set the
white sail between the grey sky the bitter sea
leave us, leave us for France. (p.21)

As Becket was in France, the See of Canterbury remained vacant. "Your Lordship now being used to a better climate. /Your Lordship will find your rooms in order as you left them," says the Second Priest. (p.22) Becket's answer reveals some historical facts about his return to

England:

Rebellious bishops, York, London, Salisbury,
Would have intercepted our letters,
Filled the coast with spies and sent to meet me
Some who hold me in bitterest hate. (p.23)

It was Henry the Younger who was crowned by the three bishops (York, London, and Salisbury) who Becket had asked the Pope to excommunicate. King Henry II had a long-term goal of crowning his son as King of England during his lifetime. Since antiquity, the archbishops of Canterbury have been granted exclusive authority over the coronation of English monarchs. According to tradition, they were "the advisers of princes, and the guardians against their follies" by virtue of their position and office.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Since an English King was crowned by a prelate other than the Archbishop of Canterbury, this rule had been broken.⁽⁵⁶⁾ According to Pope Alexander III, Henry II relied on a letter he received in April 1161 "permitting him to have his son crowned by any bishop of his choice" when he asked York's archbishop to perform the coronation of his son Henry III.⁽⁵⁷⁾ A letter from Pope Alexander III in 1166 forbidding the archbishop of York and the bishops of England from performing the coronation was written after Becket had persuaded him to do so.⁽⁵⁸⁾ By 1170, Pope Innocent III strongly supported Becket, and warned that "any bishop who ignored it"⁽⁵⁹⁾ would face "suspension or even disposition." When it came to preventing letters of prohibition from reaching the English bishops, "the ports were closely watched."⁽⁶⁰⁾ On June 14, 1170, Archbishop Roger of York crowned Henry the Younger at Westminster Abbey.⁽⁶¹⁾ As a result, Pope Benedict XVI gave Becket the authority to excommunicate the bishops who participated in Henry II's coronation and suspend those who had sworn the oath of allegiance to the Constitutions.⁽⁶²⁾ After the reconciliation in Freteval on July 22, 1170, Becket postponed these acts. Henry granted Becket a peaceful return to Canterbury and the opportunity to re-crown Henry the Younger during this meeting.⁽⁶³⁾ Henry II was willing to accompany Becket back to England by November 1170, but "he became so distracted by the serious threat posed by King Louis VII to his interests in Berry" that Henry II "became so distracted."⁽⁶⁴⁾ Consequently, he was forced to dispatch John of Oxford, Dean of Salisbury, to accompany Becket across the English Channel.⁽⁶⁵⁾ On December 1, 1170, the archbishop of Canterbury returned to Sandwich and was greeted by a rapturous crowd. "All except those in authority" welcomed him with open arms, "holding [him] in bitterest hatred." (pp. 23-24) Becket chimes in:

By God's grace aware of their prevision
I sent my letters on another day,
Had fair crossing, found at Sandwich
Broc, Warenne, and the Sheriff of Kent,
Those who had sworn to have my head from me.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Becket sent the news of the excommunications across the English Channel as soon as he was ready to set sail.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Broc, Warenne, and the Sheriff of Kent are among those attempting to thwart the return of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Canterbury. He "met [Becket] with studied insults" for Ranulf de Broc, who had been in charge while Becket was exiled.⁽⁶⁸⁾ A relative of the Earl of Salisbury and a Kent Sheriff, Gervase of Cornhill and Reginald de Warenne, attempted to block Becket's landing as he approached. Then, as Becket explains, it all came to an end when:

Only John, the Dean of Salisbury,
Fearing for the King's name, warning against treason

Make them hold their hands. So for the time
We are unmolested. ⁽⁶⁹⁾

An act of extreme imprudence on Henry's part was to send Dean of Salisbury John of Oxford, whom the archbishop had scorned and excommunicated. ⁽⁷⁰⁾ Once again, it was the "best advertisement [Henry II] could make" when Henry II reconciled with the archbishop. ⁽⁷¹⁾ The presence of John Oxford in Sandwich to welcome Becket deterred a "hostile reception party" (Broc and the Sheriff of Kent) from "laying violent hands on Becket." ⁽⁷²⁾ Once back in England, Becket tells the First Priest, "meanwhile the substance of our first act / Will be shadows and the struggle with shadows"(p.23), referring to the imminent appearance of Tempters, that his first action will be to engage in combat with "shadows," as Becket puts it. This song tells us everything about Thomas's past and present, as well as how he has fought both the forces of evil outside and within himself. When Eliot uses "objectification" instead of "Elizabethan techniques of soliloquy," he creates a rift in his writing. ⁽⁷³⁾ In the play, Becket is confronted with four temptations, each of which represents a different time in his life." The First Tempter refers to Becket as "Old Tom, gay Tom, Becket of London" (p.24). Throughout the play, he portrays Becket as a jovial courtier, recalling the archbishop's fond memories of court life, including his friendship with the king as well as his appreciation of the period's art and music

Fluting in the meadows, viols in the hall,
Laughter an the apple – blossom floating on the water,
Singing at nightfall, whispering in chambers,
Fires devouring the winter season,
Eating up the darkness, with wit and wine and wisdom! (Ibid)

Becket himself described him as a "gay, splendidly dressed courtier"⁽⁷⁴⁾ and a "hounds' follower"⁽⁷⁵⁾ in the past. Becket rejects the tempter's offer because it's "twenty years too late," he says. It is announced that, "Leave well alone," or your goose may be boiled and eaten to the bone, is the ultimatum for those still present. "(Answered by the same author), " In The Second Tempter, he portrays Becket as a well-known state guide and protector. This Tempter makes an initial reference to Clarendon, Northampton, and Montmirail. The same thing can be found in all three of these locations.

not too pleasant memories
In balance against each other, earlier
And weightier ones: those of the Chancellorship. (p.27)

Becket's conflict with Henry II as archbishop took place in the three locations listed above. This is a deliberate allusion to demonstrate that Henry II's problems began after Becket resigned as chancellor. In the middle of January 1164, Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket met at the royal Palace of Clarendon. ⁽⁷⁶⁾ Becket, impressed by Pope Alexander III's letters, agreed to abide by the customs known as the Clarendon Constitutions, ⁽⁷⁷⁾ which define Henry II's rights in relation to the Church. Due to Becket not being able to control the bishops, the meeting between the King and the archbishop ended in a disagreement. ⁽⁷⁸⁾ When Becket realized that he had broken his oath, he went to the Pope and asked for forgiveness for his deceit. ⁽⁷⁹⁾

Archbishop of Northampton was summoned to Northampton in October 1164 to answer questions about the financial details of chancellorship in the case of John the Marshal. ⁽⁸⁰⁾ The king's plan was to humiliate Becket and force him to resign, and this was a key step in that

campaign.⁽⁸¹⁾ He was about to be sentenced, but he refused to stay any longer and walked out to the boos of the crowd, calling out "Traitor."⁽⁸²⁾ Becket fled Northampton that night and crossed the Channel to France, where he was assured of safety.⁽⁸³⁾

A meeting between Henry II and Archbishop Becket took place in Montmirail, Maine on January 6, 1169.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Peacemaking efforts were ended there. The archbishop offered to accept the king's pleasure on matters of customs, the Clarendon Constitutions, but he ruined this chance for reconciliation by adding the evasive qualification, "saving the honor of my God."⁽⁸⁵⁾ So the meeting became chaotic.

When Becket became Archbishop, the Second Tempter argues that he should have retained his secular authority.

The Chancellorship that you resigned
When you were made Archbishop – that was a mistake
On your part- still may be regained. (P.27)

Conclusion

T.S. Elliot, a poet and dramatist, drew on his inventiveness as a text selector when writing his play "Murder in the Cathedral." The play's first lines were written as part of a celebration at Canterbury in July 1935, and its texts were groundbreaking due to their focus on a particular society at that time and location.

The play's scripts stress the need of considering a person's spiritual well-being above any other considerations. Since houses of worship provide a peaceful environment in which worshippers can connect with God via liturgy and prayer, this was the inspiration for the piece's central theme. As a result, when crime happens in these areas, scholars have a vested interest in fostering personal development and resolving the social ills at their source.

Hence, wars and the intellectual and political revolutions that shaped human history have both been corrosive to the human spirit. Therefore, immediate treatment with methods that foster spiritual development is required. Therefore, by associating with the laws of heaven rather than the pathetic laws of earth, Man will be able to perform good and reject evil.

What the author intends to convey in his writings can be brought to life onstage. The years Beckett spent as an exile in France allowed him to meticulously detail the events, date them, and reference the kings and their eras, ensuring that the work may be used as a trustworthy historical reference.

Moreover, the play by T. S. Eliot is an attempt to record the struggle between those who serve God Almighty and those who serve kings. Eliot also highlights Becket's sanctity and the agony of his mental anguish.

Therefore, the playwright sets the atmosphere for the audience from the outset, and the actors experience obsession, worry, and apprehension before taking the stage. There is impending peril, alluding to horror or a battle between good and evil. By using Thomas Becket's martyrdom as an example of good triumphing over evil, we may encourage people to stand up to oppression in all its manifestations and confirm that martyrdom is an important subject that compels individuals to follow its teachings.

Notes

-
- (¹)Leonard Unger, *T.S. Eliot: A Selected Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1961), p.7.
(²)J.L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*. Vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.71.
(³)Frank Kermode, ed., *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p.138.
(⁴)Ibid., p. 139.
(⁵)T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), p. 332.
(⁶)Sean Lucy, *T.S. Eliot and the Idea of Tradition* (London: Cohen and West, 1967). p.190.
(⁷)A. D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.1.
(⁸)Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p.1.
(⁹)Clark, p.2.
(¹⁰)Ibid.
(¹¹)Howarth, p.14..
(¹²)Clark, p.3.
(¹³)T.S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974). All quotations from the play are taken from this edition, followed parenthetically by the page number, unless otherwise indicated.
(¹⁴)D. E. Jones, *The plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963), p.59.
(¹⁵)A. D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.169-70.
(¹⁶)Clark, p.4.
(¹⁷)Lucy, p.188.
(¹⁸) See W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (London: Methuen, 1977), p.488)
(¹⁹) Ibid., p. 484.
(²⁰)See *ibid.*, pp. 484-5.
(²¹)See Edward M. Browne, *The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.55.
(²²)This point will be referred to by the Third Tempter and will be discussed then.
(²³)John Peter, "Murder in the Cathedral", in *T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Hugh Kenner (N.J.: Prentice- Hall, Inc., 1962), p.160.
(²⁴)Leo Aylen, *Greek Tragedy and the Modern World* (London: Methuen, 1964), p 325.
(²⁵)Jones, p. 59.
(²⁶)Ibid.
(²⁷)Warren, p. 489.
(²⁸)Austin Lane Poole, *Form Domesday Book to Magna Carta* (Oxford University Press, 2nd edn, 1966), p. 209.
(²⁹)Warren, p. 451.
(³⁰)Ibid., p. 493.
(³¹)Ibid.
(³²)Poole, p. 204.
(³³)Ibid.
(³⁴)Ibid., p. 209.
(³⁵)Warren, p. 492.
(³⁶)Ibid., p. 493.
(³⁷)Ibid.
(³⁸)Ibid., p. 496.
(³⁹)Warren, pp. 497 and 500.
(⁴⁰)Warren, p. 57.
(⁴¹)Ibid.
(⁴²)See Poole, pp. 213-14. On the Constitutions of Clarendon see note 90 below.
(⁴³)Warren, p. 506.
(⁴⁴)See Poole, p. 212.
(⁴⁵)See J. T. Boulton, "Sources", in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Murder in the Cathedral*, edited by David R. Clark (N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p.75.
(⁴⁶)Ibid.
(⁴⁷)Warren, p.111.
(⁴⁸)Ibid., p. 98. See, For instance, Warren, pp. 71-2, to have an account of Thomas a Becket's magnificent embassy to Paris in the summer of 1158.
(⁴⁹)Ibid., p. 56.
(⁵⁰)Ibid., p. 79.
(⁵¹)Patricia M. Adair, "In the Cathedral", in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 73. Eliot's intention to instruct might stem from the fact that the play was firstly performed in Church.
(⁵²)Joseph Dahmus, "Henry II", in *Seven Medieval Kings* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967), pp.142- 3.
(⁵³)Ibid., p. 144.
(⁵⁴)Sidney Painter, *Feudalism and Liberty: Articles and Addresses*, edited by Fred A. Cazel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. 262.
(⁵⁵)Warren, pp. 504- 5.
(⁵⁶)For a helpful account on this matter, see Warren, p. 500.
(⁵⁷)Ibid.
(⁵⁸)See Warren, p. 501.
(⁵⁹)Ibid., p. 502.
(⁶⁰)Ibid., p. 111.
(⁶¹)See Poole, p. 213.
(⁶²)See Warren, p. 505.
(⁶³)Ibid., p. 111.

⁽⁶⁴⁾Ibid., p. 507.

⁽⁶⁵⁾See ibid.

⁽⁶⁶⁾See ibid.

⁽⁶⁷⁾Ibid. In fact, at Freteval, Becket received permission from Henry II to discipline the erring bishops.

⁽⁶⁸⁾Poole, p. 214.

⁽⁶⁹⁾See ibid.

⁽⁷⁰⁾See Warren, p. 507.

⁽⁷¹⁾Ibid.

⁽⁷²⁾Ibid.

⁽⁷³⁾John Peter, "*Murder in the Cathedral*", in *T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Hugh Kenner, p. 162.

⁽⁷⁴⁾Poole, p. 198.

⁽⁷⁵⁾Ibid.

⁽⁷⁶⁾Warren, p. 473.

⁽⁷⁷⁾Ibid. As for the Constitutions of Clarendon, they were issued in January 1164 by King Henry II to define the church-state relations in England. These constitutions were designed to restrict ecclesiastical privileges and curb the power of church courts. Furthermore, these constitutions purported to restore the customs of the realm observed in the reign of Henry I (1100-35), but their strict statement exceeded all precedent.

According to these constitutions, the king's consent was required for clerics to leave the realm or for judicial appeals to be made to Rome. The church was restricted in its power of excommunication and interdiction and also forbidden to act against laymen on secret information. The king was given the revenues from all vacant sees and monasteries and allowed to discretion in the filling of vacancies. Cases of advowson (church patronage), church debt, and land held in lay fee were reserved to secular courts. In addition to this, church courts were given effective control over church property, but in cases where tenure was disputed between a layman and an ecclesiastic, a secular jury had the authority to decide.

It was, however, on the famous third clause, which outlined Henry II's plan for dealing with clerks charged with criminal offenses, that Becket's greatest protest provoked. The wording of this clause as quoted in Warren's on p. 481., is: "Clerks cited and accused of any matter shall, when summoned by the king's justice, come before the king's court to answer there concerning matters which shall seem to the king's court to be answerable there, and before the ecclesiastical court for what shall seem to be answerable there, but in such a way that the justice is there tried. And if the clerk shall be convicted or shall confess, the Church ought no longer to protect him." For more information on the Constitutions of Clarendon, see Warren, pp. 474- 83.

⁽⁷⁸⁾For more information, see Warren, pp. 474-7.

⁽⁷⁹⁾Poole, p. 207.

⁽⁸⁰⁾For more details about this case, see Poole, pp. 207-8.

⁽⁸¹⁾See Warren, p. 488.

⁽⁸²⁾See Poole, p. 208.

⁽⁸³⁾See ibid., p. 209.

⁽⁸⁴⁾See ibid., p. 212.

⁽⁸⁵⁾Warren, p. 479.