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Murder in the Cathedral

T. S. Elliot

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The Little Theatre Society



John Carroll University

University Heights, Ohio

A WORD ABOUT THE PLAY

By THOMAS D. EWING, S.J.

The action in the play centers in the Cathedral of Canterbury in England, in the year 1170. It was during the reign of Henry II, and England was still Catholic. But already the forces were at work which were to culminate in the establishment of the Church of England. In fact, the event depicted in the play was one of the minor climaxes in the progression towards the Protestant Revolt, and portrays the essential conflict between the nationalistic aims of the English monarchy, subordinating all things to the crown, and the efforts of the Catholic Church to maintain intact its ancient jurisdiction.

The principal character in the play is Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, known to history as Thomas á Becket. In 1155 Henry made him Chancellor of the realm. Eight years later, in 1163, through the king's influence he was made Archbishop of Canterbury. Henry thought that in this way the control of the spiritual as well as the temporal elements in his realm could be brought under royal jurisdiction.

Henry, however, was to be sadly disappointed, for á Becket, refusing to concur in the schemes of his monarch, resigned the chancellorship and threw himself whole-heartedly into his ecclesiastical duties. Furthermore, the new archbishop endeared himself to the common people when he opposed a heavy tax that was occasionally levied on the kingdom. But the chief cause of controversy between them was the question of the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. The breach thus effected between them was, however, temporarily healed when á Becket agreed to abide by the ancient customs of the realm.

Later, however, when a list of these was drawn up in a council of the feudal barons meeting at Clarendon, it was found that they denied many of the ancient and clearly known rights of the Church. Thomas á Becket refused to affix his seal to this document, known in history as the Constitution of Clarendon, and the king flew into a rage. The Archbishop escaped condemnation by the king's court only by appealing his cause to the pope, and crossed over to France to make his appeal in person.

He remained in France, in virtual exile, for seven years, for though the dispute was decided in his favor, Henry was obdurate. Only the threat of an interdict won the king to a reconciliation, and the Archbishop returned to England.

Here the play opens. Thomas á Becket brings with him letters of excommunication against three of the bishops of the king's party, for having usurped his function as Archbishop of Canterbury in crowning Henry's son. He had intended suppressing the letters, but the bishops themselves forced their publication. When news of this reached Henry in Normandy, he became almost insane in his rage. "Of the cowards who eat my bread," he exclaimed, "is there not one who will free me from this turbulent priest?" Four knights immediately departed, sworn to kill the prelate. They found him in his cathedral church, to which he had retired when informed of their design, awaiting them before an altar. Here, facing his assassins and with a prayer on his lips, he sank beneath their weapons.

Through the play we see the tide of feeling rising against the Archbishop, reaching its flood in the murder of á Becket. Then the feeling ebbs, and the work ends on the note of despair which the people feel because they realize that a crime has been done not only against man, but also against God and His Church.

THE LITTLE THEATRE SOCIETY

of

John Carroll University

presents its version of

"Murder in the Cathedral"

By T. S. ELLIOT

University Auditorium

Feb. 6th and 7th, 1937

Under the direction of

Carl Freidel

CAST

Chorus of Men of Canterbury.....	Richard Leusch, Joseph Longo, James Breslin, John Smith, Francis Marquard
Priests of the Cathedral.....	Vincent Fornes, William Brennan, Jack Lancaster
Herald.....	Paul Cassidy
Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury.....	Theron Eddy
Tempters.....	James Grant, Frank Humphrey, Paul Minarik, Thomas Victory
Knights.....	Henry Erhardt, James McCrystal, Charles Cavagna, Robert Yeager
Choir.....	Members of the J. C. U. Glee Club

This play is produced by special arrangement with Harcourt, Brace and Company,
New York

Scenes

Act One.....	The Archbishop's Study.
Interlude.....	Canterbury Cathedral

INTERMISSION OF TEN MINUTES

Act Two, Scene One.....	The Archbishop's Study
Scene Two.....	Canterbury Cathedral

The scenery for the play was built by Sam Kleinman and painted by R. L. Fritzinger.

Committees:

Costumes.....	Clayton Lange
Stage.....	John English, Mgr., Charles Brennan, William Duffin, James Moraghan
Lighting	Edward McCarthy, Mgr., Gene Kirby
Publicity.....	William McMahan, Mgr., Paul Minarik
Patrons.....	William Duffin, Mgr., Charles Brennan, David Ferrie, Paul Flannery, Gene Kirby

Production Manager.....Clayton Lange

Moderator.....Rev. Wm. J. Murphy, S.J.

PATRONS

<p>Most Rev. Joseph Schrembs, S.T.D., LL.D. Most Rev. James A. McFadden, S.T.D. Rt. Rev. Msgr. John P. Treacy Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph N. Trivisono Very Rev. Vincent B. Balmat, S.T.D. Very Rev. Benedict J. Rodman, S.J. Rev. Edward J. Bracken, S.J. Rev. William P. Hagerty, S.J. Rev. John J. Fleming Rev. James M. Gallagher Rev. Francis P. Johns, S.T.D. Rev. William J. Keefe Rev. Edward A. Kickel</p>	<p>Rev. John F. Madigan Rev. Francis J. Meyer, S.J. Rev. Joseph M. Milet, S.J. Rev. Thomas P. Mulligan Rev. E. J. Murphy Rev. James O'Brien Rev. Richard J. Patterson Rev. Patrick Patton Rev. Edward A. Reilly Rev. Andrew G. Troy, S.T.D. Rev. Anthony B. Stuber Rev. Richard P. Walsh</p>
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