The earliest examples of the Christian theme based plays were the Mystery plays. These plays were based on the Biblical stories. Initially they were performed in the Churches but later masses adopted them and even the non-clergy sects started participating in it. The secular element in Christian drama increased and the groups began performing these plays in lingua franca. By late 13th and early 14th century, these plays were taken out of the churches entirely. These religious parlance dramatic representations went into the supervision of the guilds. Each guild held the responsibility of a specific part of scriptural history. It was from the guilds that the name Mystery play was originated. The source of the word lies in Latin *mysterium*. These mystery plays metamorphosed in to a kind of plays regarding the vital incidents in Christian Calendar, beginning from the time of creation to the Judgment day. The tradition of acting these plays in succession in festive days was conventional in Europe by the later 15th century. By that time, another form of Christian drama came into existence. It was called the Morality play. They were like allegories in which the characters had to face personifications of several moral attributes. The purpose of these Morality plays was to give confidence to people to remain with the virtues and abstain from committing vices. *Again, preaching the audience about God sin and suffering.*

With the Puritan revival of the 17th century, drama took a backseat among all the literary genres and Church made efforts to suppress its practice and production. In twentieth century, the evangelical churches played a great role in revitalizing the style of creating and producing Christian drama. In early 20th
century England, it was considered illegitimate for a person to play a divine character on stage. This largely restrained the scope of Christian theme based drama. A revolutionary Christian theme based drama that is considered, as an asset of English literature is T.S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*. It explored the aspects like sacrifice and martyrdom. Infact all the dramas that Eliot wrote are full of deep seriousness for religion and spiritualism. All of them teach to adhere to virtues and work upon how to avoid vices. Eliot understood that being a Christian he could work on the themes of martyrdom for sainthood and sacrifice and penance to attain salvation. As we find that salvation is not only the Christian concept but we can observe it in the eastern religions too and since Eliot himself was having keen interest and knowledge about it his work can be understood in the beam of Indian philosophy too. *Murder in the Cathedral* got published in 1935. In 1939, came his next play *The Family Reunion*. In 1949, he did *The cocktail party*, in 1953, came his *The Confidential clerk* and In 1958, he wrote *The Elder Statesman*.

All of his plays were richly colored in the Biblical shade and he seemed to be always appealing the human kind to realize the death and life after death, the eternal abode to heaven. Once again propagating the Christian teaching. In Murder in the Cathedral, he chose to retell the inner conflict of Becket to win over temptations and be a martyr by losing "his will in the will of God". The Family Reunion, on the other hand, deals with the guilt complex of the protagonist, while The Cocktail Party examines personal
inadequacies of married life in the modern context. These plays demonstrate religion as the ultimate meaning of human existence, leading people "to think in Christian categories with Hindu influences.

5.1

*Murder in the Cathedral* and the Biblical Martyrdom and Sainthood

Eliot tried too much with Thomas especially under the Biblical influence of temptation, overcoming of temptation and the martyrdom. The two aspects of the *Murder in the Cathedral* are highly Biblical and Liturgical. One is the sermon delivered by the archbishop, which is the same as that of the sermon delivered in the liturgical service of Christmas in the midnight mass of the 24 and 25 of December, and the other is the theme of the martyrdom, which is the message of the Good Friday. Hence, we can find both the seasons of the advent and the lent here. Thomas Beckett is in the same glory as that of the Christ in his glory of the resurrection and the Second Coming; hence, he is the martyr in glory after his death. Hoping for the holy week, the week of the passion like that of Easter.

Eliot once again giving the reference to martyrdom and emphasizing that glory comes within the suffering and from the suffering, as says the Holy Bible too. The following quotations very clearly show the Biblical impact in the *Murder in the Cathedral* ....a Christian martyrdom is no accident......still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of a man’s will to become a saint....a martyr. a saint, is always made by the design of God...” ¹ “Just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the birth
and in passion of our lord; so also, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of the martyrs.’

This quotation too defines the mystery of faith - the birth and the death and the rebirth - the incarnation of the lord on earth for the well-being of the humanity. This is seen in Hinduism also when we talk of lord Krishna, lord Rama.

On the first level, Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral is all about the dangers of temptations faced by Becket on the path to attain sainthood. Thomas Becket resisted several temptations together with cajolery and threat. He got offer to return to political power alongside King Henry, at the same time he had been accused of treachery to the state and his priestly youth with his friend king Henry, is at simultaneous risk of being over and done. Throughout Murder in the Cathedral, Thomas is warned about the danger of his remaining in Canterbury and the threat of danger from his enemies, who look forward to please King Henry by murdering him. Before he enters, the Chorus begs, "0 Thomas return, Archbishop; return, return to France," for he comes "bringing death into Canterbury"; when he does arrive, Thomas tells them and the three Priests that none should fear his possible death, for "the hungry hawk Will only soar and hover" until there is an "End" that will be "simple, sudden, God-given." The very fact of his return suggests Thomas's refusal to fear death and belief that God will decide whether he will live or die: as he tells the Priests, "All things prepare the event." This is the Biblical belief of a true follower of Christianity. Though tempted by sainthood and lured by clout, Thomas sees martyrdom and pleasure as human weaknesses. He compares his martyrdom with that
of the great martyr whose rule is still there as they are worshipped and praised. Here it can be said that he was lured by the martyrdom of Jesus too. To the tempters he responds with those famous words:

Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain;
Temptation shall not come in this kind again.
The last temptation is the greatest treason:
To do the right deed for the wrong reason. [MC 44]

The primary theme shows that it is a sin to seek Martyrdom. A martyr is born, per the will of God. A true martyr never wishes to be a martyr or acts to become one, but gives up his life to God with total surrender of his will. Thomas Becket becomes conscious that the solitary reason of his life is to be a martyr as per God’s will and the secondary theme is that life is full of temptations: the temptation of the luxurious life, the temptation of power etc. The disposition of the play is completely somber and sad, with a constant trace of impending tragedy throughout. The Bible says that martyrdom is the suffering and even death of the one who spreads the word of the lord. The dictionary defines “martyrdom” as “the death or suffering of a martyr.” In addition, the definition of a martyr is “a person who is killed because of their religious or other beliefs.” The English word “martyr” is originally a word transliterated from the Greek martur, which simply means “witness.” This became synonymous with dying for one’s religious beliefs because the early Christian witnesses were persecuted and killed for their witness. All those who had spread the word of the lord suffered through the hands of the atheists.
The first Christian martyr, Stephen is mentioned in the book of Acts chapter 7.\(^2\) Stephen’s story begins in Acts 6:8. After being anointed as one of the first deacons in the church, Stephen immediately begins doing mighty works among the people. As is usually the case when the Holy Spirit is mightily at work and the gospel is going forth, the forces of darkness arise to hinder the work of the kingdom. In this case, several men came in to dispute what Stephen was saying, but Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, was able to refute their disputations. Rather than accept what Stephen was teaching, these men bring false charges against Stephen to the Jewish leaders Acts 6:11-14.\(^3\) When questioned about these charges, Stephen begins to ‘witness’ to the assembled Jewish leaders. Most of Acts 7 consists of a speech which Stephen gives to the Jewish leaders in which he essentially summarizes the history of Israel up until the point where they rejected the Messiah. Here we can compare the character of Thomas Becket with Stephen in religious creed. At the end of the speech, Stephen utters these words, which seal his fate.

Clearly the Biblical evidence points to the fact that those who are persecuted and suffer for their witness to Christ up to death are pleasing in the sight of God. This is described as one of the temptations of Thomas Becket in Murder in the Cathedral. Becket believed that God does not call everyone to make the ultimate sacrifice. That privilege is given to those whom God chooses to give that privilege. This was the satisfaction in the heart and soul of Thomas Becket. The bible calls all Christians to be prepared to give a defense of the hope that lies within us.\(^4\) This concept holds a major part of Becket’s psychology to be a martyr. Thus, holds a Christian material as
the major theme of the drama. We are in a state of ‘warfare’ and our Lord may call upon anyone of us to witness and even be martyred for our faith. Thus, we must be prepared similar to a defence personnel who can be called at any time into the battle as a part of their job. Martyrdom is a special status in the eyes of the God. We must have faith in the biblical teachings to avoid martyrdom. Martyrdom is a great privilege if it cannot be avoided, but it is not to be sought. Jesus said in that same passage in Matthew 10, “When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next” But should try to avoid it. The book of Acts shows that the early church continually fled from intense persecution (e.g., Acts 8:1; 9:25, 30; 14:6; 17:10, 14). In each of these biblical examples, we see the early Christians fleeing persecution and taking all necessary precautions for survival. When Jesus says, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” [MATHEW 10:3] he is not calling for people to actively lose their lives. Instead, it is a call to be willing to lose one’s life for his sake. Although those who actively seek the path of martyrdom are not seeking it for the glory of God, but for their own glory. As the old saying goes, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. God’s purpose in martyrdom is the glorification of his name and the building up of his church. Becket was well aware of this and he fled for survival and later surrendered himself to death trying to prove that he has a call from the lord. Thus making the play purely Biblical. Eliot’s drama is colored in Christianity, the Gospel and the Bible. For Eliot’s tragedies, it can be rightly said as Reinhold Neibuhr: Christianity is a religion that transcends tragedy…The holy cross is not tragic but the resolution of tragedy. Christians believe
in the efficiency of the **incarnation and resurrection and the redemption**; that the hegemony of the devil was destroyed finally. The Gordian knot has been cut. Tragic sense has been associated with Christianity martyrdom of Jesus and tragic vision belongs to different schools of philosophies. The martyrdom of Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral* is similar to the martyrdom of Jesus it is also influenced by the Bible. It has liturgical material employed in it: - the introits and versicles for the three days after the Christmas. It includes the concept of incarnation and advent too. The Dies Irae; The Deum; and most of all in the contrast between the ideals of sanctity, which is at the centre, and the reality of the expression of common unsanctified humanity out of which both poems and the plays arise.

In Christianity, Jesus Christ did not literally kill Satan. Following the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, Jesus let himself was crucified for the sake of humanity. This was the "gift of God" as ransom for our sins, a chance offered to us to be set free from the power of Satan and sin. According to the Bible, the final destruction of demons' power will only occur at the judgment day. That was what Becket intended to do, giving away his life for the good of man and church. In the Christian liturgy, also there is a prayer that states that lord let me receive this sacrifice for the good of all his church. *Murder in the Cathedral* is essentially an extended lyrical consideration of the proper residence of temporal and religious power, of the obligation of religious believers to the commands of the State, and of the possibility that faithfulness can be selfish unto offense. Beckett is one of the most interesting characters from history. Rising from a lowly birth in the cheap side section of
London, largely thanks to the patronage of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1154 he became both archdeacon of Canterbury and Henry's chancellor. Theobald expected him to defend the prerogative of the Church, but instead he became friends with Henry, and unlimited the power of the State at the cost of the values of the Church. So when Theobald was succeeded by Beckett, Henry expected to have a submissively administering the Church, but in its place Beckett chose an austere lifestyle and became a fearsome defender of the rights of the Church. After dividing on many minor issues, matters came to a head when Henry tried to exert the power of Crown courts to penalize clerics who had been convicted by church. Henry was gritty to reign him in, put Beckett on trial for misappropriating funds while serving as Chancellor, and Beckett was required to flee to France.

Henry’s aim was the overthrow of the feudal system, unknowingly paving the way for the role of the bourgeoisie and free enterprise and making him an active link in Marx’s historical dialectic. To achieve that he had to control the Church by combining under the crown of England both State and Church. Neither Becket nor the faith could stand in his way. He did not eliminate the Church; he absorbed it and used it. For the similar reasons modern political leaders of West and East use it, wrapping themselves in religious language and religious issues—our Christian values, our Christian heritage and God is on our side. Seven years later, after an apparent reconciliation with his old friend Henry, he returned to England only to be murdered in his Canterbury cathedral by four of Henry’s knights. The entire story contains Biblical allusions regarding martyrdom and sainthood.
In the opening scene, the women allude to the passage of time-"Since golden October declined into somber November."-but state also, "The New Year waits, breathes, waits."[MC 11] Dramatically speaking, time seems to have stopped; the "wheel" to use one of the play's dominant images has ceased turning. This impression of time having stopped probably serves to dramatize the nature of the events about to transpire as a turning point: as the women say, "destiny waits for the coming". [MC 12] As they put it, the women have been "living and partly living". [MC 19] In Becket's absence, they have endured seven years of "oppression and luxury. Poverty and license." and a host of other dichotomies; but now that seemingly endless, cyclical repetition of life's extremities, as well as the mundane existence in between them, is about to end. It is about to be interrupted. In a sense, it has finished; readers may note the ancient, symbolic connotations of the number seven as a number of completion, even of divine wholeness e.g., the completion of creation in seven days according to Genesis 1; the ancient and medieval designation of the "sevenfold" gifts of the Holy Spirit from\(^8\) The old way of "living and partly living," then, has ended-a conclusion the women are neither entirely comfortable nor overly happy about: as they lament, "We do not wish anything to happen. A great fear is upon us. A fear like birth and death".[MC 19-20] Because the women do not "wish anything to happen," they are loathing leaving behind their half-existence in which nothing, in fact, actually happened-in which they were simply turned upon the wheel they describe. Becket's return threatens to upset the status quo-a common motif in the Christian tradition, out of which Eliot wrote, following his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in
1927. For example, consider the apostle Paul's apocalyptic conviction that, because of the Resurrection of Jesus, "the present form of this world is passing away".

The imminent end of their world's present form creates a crisis of anxiety for the Canterbury women. "We are content," they say, "if we are left alone". They go so far, in their second major speech, to plead with Becket: "O Thomas, return, Archbishop; return, return"-but not the expected plea of returning to Canterbury-"return to France".[MC 18] The chorus thus expresses a common psychological reality: it is often easier to suffer under a known but unsatisfactory set of circumstances than to risk venturing into a new and potentially more satisfactory but unknown set. It is often easier to remain in the past than to move forward into the future. "Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons."

In another sense, it may be accurate to say that the play's first act is set, not in ordinary time, but in liturgical time. Indeed, the text very quickly foregrounds the Christian calendar in the audience's mind, with a reference to All Hallows, the feast day on which all saints and martyrs, known or unknown, are celebrated. Becket's impending arrival represents a break in time, a rupture in history and, significantly, this first act is set during early December, what is in the Christian liturgical calendar the season of Advent from the Latin adventus, "coming" or "arrival", during which waiting for the second coming of Christ is a dominant focus. Traditionally, then, Advent is a season for waiting: "Concerned with the Four Last Things i.e., Christ's second coming, the Day of Judgment, heaven, and hell], Advent prepares for the
Parousia i.e., the Second Coming, as well as for Christmas. And while Christians are enjoined to observe Advent with both penitence and expectancy, the Canterbury women observe Becket's "advent" with only dread. In either case, however-whether set in ecclesiastical-theological time or outside of time altogether-the play begins with an undeniable establishment of temporal stillness: "The New Year waits, destiny waits for the coming." Further potential allusions to Advent occur in the Messenger's first speech, as he urges the three priests to "prepare to meet" the returning archbishop. [MC 15] Given that the word "angel" derives from the Greek word for "messenger," one might even view the Messenger's speech as an "annunciation" of sorts, preparing the world to meet a coming savior.

The conversation among the three priests prior to Becket's return introduces a contrast between the temporal realm and the spiritual realm. For example, the third priest criticizes temporal authorities noticing the chorus' words, "Kings Rule or baron’s rule" for governing by "violence, duplicity and frequent malversation". [MC 14] They obey only the law of brute force; in contrast, the first priest speculates that Becket returns with the confidence of "the power of Rome[i.e., the Roman Catholic Church], the spiritual rule, the assurance of right, and the love of the people". In short, the temporal realm is equated with force; the spiritual, with love. The priests' conversation also raises the question of whether true peace can ever be found between these two realms: "What peace can be found to grow between the hammer and the anvil?" Such "patched up" reconciliation as does exist between the archbishop and the king is "peace, but not the kiss of peace". [MC 16] In other words, it is more of an
uneasy, mutual co-existence or toleration than an actual cessation of hostilities and restoration of relationship. Becket's own life, of course, ended because of the conflicting, competing interests of the temporal and spiritual realms; thus, Eliot's play sounds this theme early on, alerting the audience of the central conflict to come.

The conversation among the priests also raises a second central question: Is Thomas Becket a proud man. In addition, if so, in what sense? The first priest claims that Becket was proud as secular chancellor, and is still proud as spiritual archbishop. Pride has, the priest says, been a constant in Becket's character, whether he held temporal or spiritual office, for it was "pride always feeding upon [Becket's] own virtues, / Pride drawing sustenance from impartiality, / Pride drawing sustenance from generosity".[MC 17] The priest ties together the themes of temporal versus spiritual power and pride when he states that Becket has always wanted to be in "subjection to God alone." Is such dedication a form of pride in itself? Should one aspire to be completely free of the temporal realm in order to live entirely in the spiritual? Of course, such questions' validity depends upon the validity of the priest's assessment of Becket's character, issue readers can only decide for themselves as the play unfolds. The Chorus' second major speech is an ironic plea for Thomas' return: they wish him to return to France instead of Canterbury, for they fear turmoil in the world they have known, even though it is but a world of "living and partly living".[MC 19] They state they have existed in this limbo for seven years-more than a straightforward temporal reference, the number seven, which commonly signifies completeness and wholeness in religion and mysticism, the number seven may here
mean that the time allotted for this quasi-life has reached its end; Becket's return will, as the Third Priest says, "for good or ill, let the wheel turn". For an audience versed in the Bible, the women's speech at this point may evoke the book of Ecclesiastes, with its famous passage on the cyclical nature of time: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven". The writer of Ecclesiastes traditionally identified as King Solomon, but in the text identified only as Qohelet, "the Teacher," 1:1 and passim. points to a series of antitheses to support his thesis that "there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9): he recites a litany of "a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted," and so forth (see 3:2-8). The Teacher wishes to be freed from this "wheel" of time (not his phrase, but Eliot's), because he sees it as, in effect, a curse upon humanity: God, Qohelet declares, "has put a sense of past and future into [human beings'] minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end" (3:11). In other words, God implants a sense of temporality in humanity, and then frustrates human desires to make sense of temporality. The Canterbury women, however, in contrast, long for no such resolution. As does Qohelet, the women intone a litany of antitheses—e.g., "Sometimes the corn has failed us, / Sometimes the harvest is good, / One year is a year of rain, / Another a year of dryness" (p. 19)—thus demonstrating that they share the common human experience of sensing temporality. When an event looms, however, that could potentially serve as a moment that reveals the "pattern of time"[MC 13], they reject it. They do not wish to know, as Qohelet says, "what God has done." Instead, they implore Thomas to go away, for he brings a "doom on the
In this speech, the word "doom" may carry overtones not only of a disastrous end but also of the word's medieval definition of "fate," good or ill. Becket's arrival in Canterbury is, as the women rightly perceive, the arrival of nothing less than fate itself; yet it is an arrival they reject, preferring instead to go on "living and partly living."

From Becket's first entrance, Eliot begins developing him as not only a Christ-figure in general but also as an analogy of Jesus Christ himself. Priests do, of course, physically represent or "stand in for" Jesus in many Christian traditions; so Becket is a Christ-figure in that sense already. But Eliot wishes to draw tighter parallels. Becket's first spoken word, for instance, is "Peace" (p. 21)—a greeting Jesus commonly uses in the gospel narratives, especially after his Resurrection. 

Ironically, however, Jesus used this greeting to allay his followers' fears, but Becket can be seen as confirming the fears of those who follow him: like the women, he realizes that his return will initiate suffering. This suffering, however, is necessary—even as Jesus' suffering was "necessary". Becket's suffering, like Jesus', will have a salvific dimension: it will allow "the wheel"—the order, the pattern of life—to "turn and still / Be forever still".[MC 22] This difficult, statement may mean that, whereas Canterbury, as symbolized in its women, has been stagnant for the past seven years, stuck in a "peace" that really is no peace, Becket's impending suffering and death will move Canterbury and its inhabitants to a new state of being—i.e., Becket's death will cause the wheel to turn—and yet this new state of being truly will be peace. The mere fact that Becket enters Eliot's drama as one who returns further develops the characters as
a Christ-figure; cf. this commentary's previous discussion of Advent as a time of preparation for Jesus' Parousia, or "second coming." Note also the Second Priest's protestation, "Forgive us, my Lord, you would have had a better welcome / If we had been sooner prepared for the event." Becket's rooms have not been made ready, even though the priest promises he will make them so. This exchange may bring to mind Jesus' parables of his own return: for example, "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour".13 Notably, the phrase "Son of Man" has already surfaced in Eliot's text, when the Chorus asks, "Shall the Son of Man be born again in the litter of scorn?"[MC13] Thus, Eliot has already explicitly invited his audience to view Becket's return as an eschatological event—that is, an event which inaugurates the eschaton, the "end times," the "last things." Eschatological events mark the end of an old world and the birth of a new. By foregrounding biblical material surrounding the Parousia, Eliot creates the expectation that Becket's impending suffering and death will be just such an epochal event. The archbishop himself calls it an "end": "End will be simple, sudden, and God-given" (p. 23). Becket advises the priests to "watch" for the "consummation" of his story[MC 23] an echo not only of Jesus' admonitions to his disciples to watch for the last day but also of his request that the disciples watch with him in Gethsemane prior to his arrest [MC 23], a time during which Jesus was tempted to abandon his saving mission. Similarly and appropriately, then, Becket is tempted at this point to abandon his mission. The Four Tempters who present themselves were intended, Eliot revealed in a prefatory note to the third edition (1937), to be "doubled" with the roles of the Four Knights; i.e., the
same actors were to play the parts. The First Tempter calls Becket back to the
edonistic life he lived while he was King Henry's chancellor: "[S]hall we say that
summer's over / or that the good time cannot last?"
MC 24) Attentive readers and
audience members know that, of course, the summer has long been over (see the
Chorus' words on p. 13, "What shall we do in the heat of summer / But wait in barren
orchards for another October?,” words that describe the women's present situation).
Becket cannot retreat into the past, as the Tempter advises him to do. The Tempter
presents a symbolic vision of the passing seasons that is at odds with the scheme
established earlier in the drama: where the Tempter declares that, in the reconciliation
with the king, "Spring has come in winter," bringing rebirth with it. [MC 24] Becket
knows that the vision is but a "springtime fancy" [MC 26] -that is, a fantasy, a fiction,
an illusion-and adheres to the already-established motif of the seasons as markers of a
seemingly endless cycle of barren waiting - a cycle that his impending death will,
however, break. Notably, the First Tempter, like the First Priest [MC 17], accuses
Becket of pride - specifically, self-righteousness: "You were not used to be so hard
upon sinners / When they were your friends". [MC 25] He brands Becket's principles
as "higher vices / which will have to be paid for at higher prices". In keeping with his
frivolity (his "humble levity"), he departs Becket with an ironic and sarcastic
anticipation of Becket's canonization to come: "If you will remember me, my Lord, at
your prayers, / I'll remember you at kissing-time below the stairs". [MC 24] It is a
mocking allusion to the plea of people who pray for the saints' intercession; Ora pro
nobis - Pray for us. This first temptation has no unambiguous parallel in those faced
by Jesus, although Jesus was tempted to focus on physical needs when tempted to turn stones into bread.  

The Second Tempter would have Becket shift from pursuing and using spiritual to temporal power: "You, master of policy / Whom all acknowledged, should guide the state again"[MC 27] He thus reintroduces the conflict between temporal and spiritual power into the play. He argues that only power matters, not "holiness," because power can shape the world today, not in some "hereafter".[MC 27] This argument has some appeal to Becket because he has been established as the champion of the lowly; the Tempter tells Becket that he could again use the power of the chancellorship to "set down the great, protect the poor, / Beneath the throne of God can man do more?".[MC 28] The Tempter thus invokes the old, morally fallacious argument that ends justify means. As Becket moves closer to falling into the Tempter's trap, the Tempter tells him that the price of such power is the "pretence of priestly power"-he would have to give up his claims as archbishop to spiritual authority. Only in so doing will Becket receive "the power and the glory"[MC 29] -a phrase from the traditional, doxological conclusion of the Lord's Prayer: "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." These words have the effect of jolting Becket out of his near-submission to the Tempter. They serve to remind him of where his true loyalties lie. They may also be Eliot's echo of such biblical commentary on the nature of power as  "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." Such "weak" power is the only power Becket has been called to wield, and he will do so in facing his martyrdom. All worldly power is as nothing compared to the power of
God, as Becket knows: "Shall I, who keep the keys / Of heaven and hell" a reference to the power of pardon Jesus grants to the Church.\textsuperscript{16} Descend to desire a punier power?\textsuperscript{[MC 30]} Becket makes clear the distinction between temporal and spiritual power: it can only guarantee order "as the world knows order"\textsuperscript{[MC 30]} -the unavoidable implication being that "order" as the world defines it is not true order at all, just as "peace" as the world defines it is not true peace (see Becket's earlier greeting of "Peace" as well as Jesus' words in \textsuperscript{17} Becket's second temptation has a clear analogue in Scripture, when the devil tempts Jesus to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth, in return for worshiping him.\textsuperscript{18}

The Third Tempter styles himself "an unexpected visitor," but Becket claims he has, in fact, been expected \textsuperscript{[MC 31]}\textsuperscript{[MC 31]} This Tempter tells Becket to betray the king with whom he has so recently been reconciled: "Other friends / May be found"\textsuperscript{[MC 33]} But Becket also resists this temptation to expedient friendships on the basis of his faith: "If the Archbishop cannot trust the Throne"\textsuperscript{-i.e. if he has cause for fear from the king which, in fact, he does-" He has good cause to trust none but God alone\textsuperscript{[MC 34]} This third temptation perhaps parallels the temptation Jesus faced to ally himself with the common people against the religious leadership by throwing himself from the Temple \textsuperscript{19} but at any event, Becket's repudiation of the temptation echoes Jesus' repudiation of any help but God in the face of temptation (Matt. 4:10; Luke 5:8). As have the other tempters, the Third Tempter leaves Becket to his fate, declaring, "I shall not wait at your door"\textsuperscript{[MC 34]} -an allusion to the depiction of sin in \textsuperscript{20}. "Sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." At this point, it
would appear that Becket has done so. The Fourth Tempter comes closest to luring Becket away from the mission he knows he must fulfill. No doubt his unexpected arrival accounts for some of his power over Becket-as the Archbishop says, "I expected / Three visitors, not four"[MC 35], perhaps because Jesus only wrestled with three temptations in the Gospel narratives of Matthew and Luke (cited numerous times above)-but much of this Tempter's near-success must also be attributed to the fact that he seems closest to being Becket himself. When Becket asks the Tempter's identity, he does so in a way that indicates this truth: "Who are you, tempting me with my own desires?"[MC 39] or again, when Becket accuses this last Tempter, "You only offer / Dreams to damnation," the Tempter responds, "You have often dreamt them" (p. 40). He even uses Becket's earlier words against him ("You know and do not know, what is to act or suffer," etc.,[MC 40-41] Thus, the Fourth Tempter would seem to be Eliot's way of externally dramatizing Becket's inner struggles. The Tempter strives to persuade Becket to pursue the path of martyrdom, but for ultimately selfish reasons: for instance, "think of glory after death. Think of pilgrims, standing in line / Before the glittering jeweled shrine."[MC 37-38] -the last perhaps a sly reference to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales as well as the historical fact of the multitude of pilgrims who traveled to Canterbury to do homage at Becket's shrine. "King is forgotten, when another shall come," the Tempter tells Becket; but "Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb". It is an appeal to a desire to break free of the "wheel"[MC 37-38] of time itself. This alternative is imagined as Becket, in effect, canonizing himself: the Tempter asks him the rhetorical question, "What can compare
The Tempter, in other words, tempts Becket to seize the honor of sainthood for himself. He wants the archbishop to be proud-to embrace a martyr's fate for an ulterior motive. Interestingly, to do so would be for Becket to be an anti-Christ figure, as Jesus "did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited" or "grasped," in other translations.

**The liturgical and Biblical impact**

Eliot has included advent liturgy in his play. Becket's sermon reflects a well-known tradition: "On Christmas day Saint Thomas made a sermon at Canterbury in his own church, and weeping, prayed the people to pray for him, for he knew well his time was nigh." In connection with this legend about Becket's foreknowledge of his death, recall the Messenger's comment in Part I: "no one considers it a happy prognostic". As archbishop, it is no doubt certain that Becket preached on Christmas Day, 1170, and it is even highly probable that Becket did indeed took and the surrounding verses as his text; it has been, for centuries, the traditionally assigned reading for the celebration of Christmas. The themes of his sermon in the interlude of the play serve Eliot's dramatic aims. He was fond of employing readings and prayers from the catholic liturgy. First, Becket makes much of the fact that Christmas is a celebration not only of Jesus' birth, but also his death: because of the theology underlying the Roman Catholic Mass in which there is celebration of eucharist, the priest offers a "bloodless sacrifice" to God, literally re-presenting the body and blood of Christ to God under the incidents of the consecrated bread and wine-Becket can
conclude that "we celebrate at once the Birth of Our Lord and His Passion and Death upon the Cross"[MC 47] **This is purely liturgical derivation.** Birth and death coexist quite closely in the Mass. Becket states that, although "the World" cannot comprehend such behavior, the Christian community "can rejoice and mourn at once for the same reason".[MC 48] This emphasis on the proximity of birth and death serves to help interpret for the play's audience the fact of Becket's death during Christmastide: Again, that interrupting, apocalyptic event will "for good or ill" set the "wheel" of history turning once more. It is Becket's death that will, paradoxically, give birth to a new existence for Canterbury and its people-and, by extension, for the world itself. Becket's death will enable the world to be born out of the barren limbo of "living and partly living". Second, Eliot uses Becket's sermon to return to an examination of the relationship usually, one of conflict-between the temporal and the spiritual. He asks his people attending worship to think about how Jesus spoke of peace; this portion of the sermon from 26 shows Becket's own initial greeting of peace upon his return to Canterbury in Part I. Becket denies that Jesus was giving temporal peace: "the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the King.".[MC 48] Rather, Jesus meant a spiritual peace. It is that non-temporal kind of peace, which Becket's death will bring. His death, a consequence of his not being at temporal peace with King Henry, will nonetheless result in peace for the community and the world by fulfilling God's "pattern," by allowing the wheel of fate to once again turn. **Here in God’s will and wheel of time a good blend of Hindu and Christian philosophy is seen here.** Finally, Becket's sermon offers explicit
definitions of martyrdom. Eliot has the archbishop comment on the fact that the two days after Christmas Day are, on the Western Christian liturgical calendar, the feast of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr that Becket reminds his listeners-and, thus, Eliot informs his audience-that "A Christian martyrdom is never an accident, for Saints are not made by accident"[MC 49] they are rather by the will of God. Becket thus implicitly reiterates his rejection of the Fourth Tempter's enticements in Part I, and reinforces the stubborn division between temporal and spiritual power. He affirms that the true martyr "has lost his will in the will of God, and. no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of becoming a martyr". He then discusses the educative purposes of martyrdom: "to warn men and to lead them, to bring them back to God's ways"[MC 49] Eliot again sounding too Biblical. For these three reasons, Becket's sermon offers several interpretive keys to the whole of Eliot's drama. In keeping with Eliot's presentation of Becket as a Christ-figure, it is notable that Becket asks his congregation to keep his words "in your hearts" and "think of them at another time"[MC 50] for it was not until after Jesus' Resurrection that his disciples remembered and understood his words about his own identity and role in God's pattern as given in the New Testament.27 Near the close of his sermon, Becket makes reference to "the blessed Archbishop Elpege".[MC 50] Elphege also spelled Alphege, and also known as Godwine assumed the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1006. "At this period England was harassed by the Danes, towards the end of September, 1011, they sacked and burned Canterbury, made Elphege a prisoner. On 19 April, 1012, at Greenwich, his captors, drunk with wine, and enraged at ransom being refused, pelted
Elphege with bones of oxen and stones, till one Thrum dispatched him with an axe. He is sometimes represented with an axe cleaving his skull." 28

Part II begins with the Chorus' comment upon the progression of time. Even though the winter solstice has passed, the Chorus feels compelled to ask, "Do the days begin to lengthen?"[MC 53] If so, they see no evidence of the natural rebirth to come; as they ask, "What sign of the spring of the year?" If there is to be a spring, it will be only "a bitter spring", a phrase that may be designed to call to mind, in an ironic fashion, the General Prologue to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, for Chaucer writes that pilgrims travel to Becket's shrine at Canterbury "Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote / The droghte of March hath perced to the roote."-in other words, when spring is bringing new life to the earth. The Chorus' speech also invokes Eliot's own work in his modernist epic poem The Waste Land (1922), which similarly mocks Chaucer with Eliot's famous declaration, "April is the cruellest month." What makes this winter so cruel for the Chorus seems to be the realization that another Christmastide has arrived, and yet there is no "peace upon earth, goodwill among men". Instead, hostility prevails, and it "defiles the world, but death in the Lord renews it"[MC 53] -perhaps the women's unconscious acknowledgment of the way in which Becket's impending martyrdom will effect "salvation" for the world. Their talk of defiling and renewal may also anticipate their cries for the world's cleansing while the four knights kill the archbishop. As it is believed that Jesus shed his blood for the good will of men on earth. Hence the chorus tries to compare Becket with Jesus in the sense of martyrdom. Part II alike Part I it gives basis to the audience in liturgy. The
priests' procession across the stage mirrors the progression of the days after Christmas Day that lead to Becket's death. Eliot skillfully draws from the appointed liturgical readings to highlight his themes of martyrdom and faithful witness to God. The First Priest sings verses from Psalm 119 on the feast of St. Stephen. Is, in its biblical context, a believer's declaration of intent to rely solely on God's statutes in the face of persecution? The text thus gives voice to a faithful one who is suffering, and proves applicable not only to Stephen, the first Christian martyr, but also to Becket. The First Priest also quotes which is the narration of the moment of Stephen's death in the New Testament. On the next day, the feast of St. John, the Second Priest quotes from Psalm 22. is, in its original setting, an expression of faith for the future, a hope that God will deliver the psalmist from trouble, thus enabling him or her to proclaim God's greatness in the future among God's people. Thus, this verse serves to point to Becket's fate after death, as a continuing witness to God. The priest also reads from the first Epistle of another text about testimony and witness. On the following day, the Third Priest mingles several different biblical texts: "Out of the mouths of babes" from -an affirmation that God causes praise to come forth from the mouths of the vulnerable and innocent, thus "silencing the enemy and the avenger"; "The blood of thy saints."; John the Seer's vision of the chorus of the faithful martyrs in heaven in Revelation "the voice of many waters" and "a new song." Matthew's account of the slaughter of the innocents which itself cites. This constellation of texts serves to highlight the identity of Becket as a martyr. Further commentary on the nature of Becket's death emerges by the conflated quotation of Hebrews 5 and John 10 by the
First Priest. Becket has not presumed to become a martyr, just as Jesus did not presume to become a high priest but, like a faithful high priest, Becket, as did Jesus, will be the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. He relegates it to second importance. The Third Priest asks, "What day is the day that we know that we hope or fear for?" He then answers his own question: "Every day is the day we should fear from or hope from. One moment / Weighs like another. Only in retrospection, selection, / We say, that was the day. The critical moment / That is always now, and here. Even now, in sordid particulars / The eternal design may appear"[MC 57] These critical lines speak directly to the play's theme that time must and can be redeemed, that a kind of life beyond that of "living and partly living" is possible and necessary. By making his decision to adhere to God's order, Becket will bring something of that order into the world of the "now and here," enabling the "wheel" of time to turn, allowing true "peace" to manifest itself in Canterbury, however brokenly and imperfectly, in "sordid particulars." The speech helps the play's audience interpret Becket's death as more than an "accident" it is a truly transcendent act mentioned above. Audiences should note the irony in Eliot's use of the term "King" when the four knights enter the action, they introduce themselves as "Servants of the King". Becket himself would claim the same identity, in reference to God, the King of kings. Eliot thus employs the language of kingship to further develop his treatment of temporal versus spiritual power, and what quality of allegiance is owed to each. It can be compared to Jesus' discussion of the same issue in the New Testament. As Becket's death draws ever closer, Eliot draws on the
Biblical tradition of picturing true spiritual leaders as shepherds and the depiction of God as a shepherd and Jesus' self-identification as "the good shepherd" who "lays down his life for the sheep". Becket states that distance shall never again separate him from those for whose souls he has charge: "Never again. / Shall the sea run between the shepherd and his fold".[MC 65] Similarly, as he resists his fellow priests' efforts to hurry him off to vespers, he declares, "They shall find the shepherd here; the flock shall be spared".[MC 70] Obviously, such language strongly suggests a parallel between Becket and Jesus; moreover, it emphasizes that what Becket does, he does for his people. In terms of the existential crisis that Eliot's play presents, Becket's transcendence of "living and partly living" will benefit the rest of humanity by allowing "the wheel" to again turn, by delivering the world from its constant "waiting". To the death of Becket, the Chorus delivers a lengthy, sensory reflection filled with images of death and decay: e.g., "I have smelt / Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock, sweet pea, hyacinth, primrose and cowslip."[MC 67] In response to the Chorus' song of corruption, which culminates in the women's request that Becket pray for them (again, an explicit anticipation of his canonization as a saint), the archbishop echoes the first word we heard him speak: "Peace". It is as though Becket knows that peace is at hand because his death is at hand—because, as he states, "This is one moment"[MC 69] in which he is "not in danger: only near to death"[MC 70] As does Jesus in the New Testament, Becket now knows that his "hour" is near.

He is able to face his destiny because he has received "a tremour of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper / And I would no longer be denied."[MC 70] Here we see how
God's pattern—that "eternal design" of which the Third Priest spoke—is working itself out in the present, "critical moment, in sordid particulars." Audiences might also infer from Becket's comment that all we ever receive in this life are glimpses and "rumours" of heaven, of transcendence; it is up to us to be loyal to them, to follow and pursue them, in order that the "wheel" might turn—in order that, as Becket earlier told the Chorus, "the figure of God's purpose may be made complete." Such transcendence may not last in the world—as Becket told the Chorus, "You shall forget these things, toiling in the household." but forgetting does not change the fact that they happened, that the wheel turned, that transcendence was, for one "critical moment," achieved. No one can live entirely under the crushing awareness of God's purpose—as Becket states, in one of the drama's mostquoted lines, "Human kind cannot bear very much reality" but the saints and martyrs, as they arise, must inject transcendence into mundane "reality"—in the play's terms, "order" as the world understands it—for life to be truly lived.

When the priests urge Becket to bar the doors of the cathedral, Becket again reminds them, and the audience, of the difference between temporal and spiritual power: "The Church shall protect her own, in her own way, not / As oak and stone; stone and oak decay, / Give no stay, but the Church shall endure." Temporal power and order are fleeting; spiritual power and order are not. The words are, perhaps, another reminder of the inversion, what theologians sometimes call the "great reversal," of values in the kingdom of heaven. Becket reminds the priests that spiritual order and power are not utilitarian: "You argue by results, as this world
does, / To settle if an act be good or bad".[MC 73] His words here echo his earlier assertion that the worst possible temptation is to "do the right deed for the wrong reason".[MC 44] Becket is doing more than repudiating the idea that ends justify means; he is repudiating the very idea that ends can offer any firm moral guidance at all, for in "every life and every act / Consequence of good and evil can be shown" alike.[MC 73] More important than result is moral orientation: "I give my life / To the Law of God above the Law of Man". [MC 74] For Becket, the spiritual trumps the temporal. This allegiance to the spiritual also serves Eliot's purpose of portraying Becket as a transcendent individual whose death achieves a transcendent purpose: "It is not in time that my death shall be known; / It is out of time that my decision is taken / If you call that decision / To which my whole being gives entire consent".[MC 74] Those latter lines are important because they prevent Becket from becoming the very kind of utilitarian, pragmatic individual he is condemning—the kind of individual that the Fourth Tempter in Part I enticed him to become. Becket does not, out of pride or shrewd calculation, set out to die a martyr's death in order to achieve something. Martyrdom is no crass means to an end, which may or may not be good or evil—after all, as Becket states, "good and evil in the end become confounded".[MC 74] Rather, Becket dies a martyr's death because it is the only possible consequence, the only logical outcome, of his "whole being's consent" to witness to the spiritual in the midst of the temporal.

Audiences may well think again of the Third Priest's earlier speech: "Even now, in sordid particulars / The eternal design may appear"[MC 57] The particulars of
Becket's death possess just that revelatory quality. Becket's warnings about the confusion of temporal and spiritual means, however, are lost on the priests: "Force him," they say [MC 74], to seek his own safety. Becket, however, stands steadfast in his resolve to have the doors unbarred, and so the four knights, his executioners, enter, drunk but prepared to do their bloody deed. As the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus before his death, so now do the knights mock Becket. Eliot has Becket speak the last words that history actually does attribute to him. The "blessed martyr Denys" to whom Becket commends himself [MC 78] is Denis, bishop of Paris, killed by non- Christian natives killed in the late third century, along with two of his companions. "He is usually represented with his head in his hands because, according to the legend, after his execution the corpse rose again and carried the head for some distance"45 He is thus an appropriate symbol for the truth of Becket's words, "If you kill me, I shall rise from my tomb".[MC 66] **This resembles Jesus also because Jesus too arose from his tomb on the Easter night.**

The knights kill Becket, the Chorus realizes the transcendent effect his death is having: "But this," the women cry, "this is out of life, this is out of time".[MC 77] Becket's death has freed them from the "living and partly living" they have known for the past seven years—that is, for the wholeness, the totality, of their previous experience. Ironically and tragically, however, even as Becket is dying they are rejecting the freedom his martyrdom makes available: "We did not wish anything to happen. / We understood the private catastrophe, / The personal loss, the general misery,/ Living and partly living"[MC 77]that key refrain is repeated yet once again,
as if Eliot wishes no one to miss the point. Rather than being at peace, the Chorus can only lament how the world has become stained. That Becket's death is a grievous wrong. The Chorus is unable to see how its "sordid particulars" work out the will of the spiritual. Eliot views Becket's death, perhaps, through the lens of widespread, public horror that the early twentieth century brought in the semblance of World War I and would bring even more horrifically, of course, with World War II. How could the world ever dare hope to "return, to the soft quiet seasons"[MC 77] after such experiences? That the disasters and terrors of the new century were grievous wrongs was not to be disputed; Eliot may, however, be pointing at a way in which these wrongs can be received and seized as redemptive possibilities. Such moments are "apocalyptic"-again, meaning quite revelatory in that they lay bare the conflict between the temporal and the spiritual, and can become crises in which people such as Becket pledge their loyalty to the spiritual in a transcendent act. The women of Canterbury like many of us, do not react in that way. They see that "the world is wholly foul"[MC 78] -which, as the evils of the twentieth century proved for so many, it of course is-but they do not see how to move beyond that foulness-how, as did Becket, to transcend it.

The apologia of the four knights for their act demonstrates the very moral failure of the temporal order that Becket warned against: using the end-namely, the death of this "meddlesome priest". When in fact he is a baron-one of those who rule unjustly over the oppressed, according to the Chorus' speeches in Part I. He represents the end of maintaining the status quo. Hugh de Morville represents the end of absolute
temporal order: "Our King saw that the one thing needful"—note the allusion to Jesus' language in Luke 10:42 was to restore order". [MC 81]

He explains to the audience that King Henry had made Becket the chancellor for this very reason: to create "a union of spiritual and temporal administration, under the central government". [MC 81] Becket invited his own demise. It is perhaps to signify that lack of depth of religion in modern life that Eliot had switched from poetic form to prose for the knights' speeches; when the knights leave the stage, however, so does the prose, and Eliot reverts to poetry for the final moments of his drama. The Three Priests recognize Becket's status as a saint long before the ecclesiastical hierarchy ever will. While the First Priest interprets Becket's absence from them as reason for despair—as evidence of "the heathen" now building on "the ruins" of the Church "their world without God" the Third Priests insists that the Church shall persevere, for it "is fortified / By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die for it". [MC 84] His comment recalls the oft-quoted maxim of the third century theologian Tertullian, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." **Verse becoming highly Biblical here.** The Priest also rejects a world without God— in terms of Eliot's play, a purely temporal world, with only temporal "peace" and temporal "order"—as "the hell of make-believe" in which the condemned "justify their action to themselves". [MC 85] In its final speech, the Chorus offers praises to God, a new "Te Deum" to complement the traditional one that Eliot's stage directions indicate should be playing in the background: a hymn of praise that declares all things proclaim God in simply, but truly, living. "They affirm Thee in living; all things affirm Thee in living".
86]-even if they would consciously deny God. But this life must be true living, transcendent living in the manner of Becket, not the half-life of "living and partly living" from which his death offers deliverance. It must be a complete embrace of God's turning wheel, of the divine pattern of destiny; it must be marked, as Becket was, with total devotion to manifesting the eternal and the spiritual in the transitory, mundane and "sordid particulars" of the temporal: "The back bent under toil, the knee bent under sin, the hands to the face under fear, the head bent under grief.".[MC 87] Eliot returns to the symbolic motif of the passage of the seasons, the same motif with which the play began, to underscore the change that has taken place. The passing seasons are no longer simply a time of waiting, a perpetual Advent: far from it, "Even in us the voices of seasons, the snuffle of winter, the song of spring, the drone of summer. Praise Thee".[MC 87] Giving the message of the holy Bible to praise thee in all times.

The play does not, however, end on an entirely transcendent note. The Chorus confesses, just before the curtain falls, that they are but "common men. who shut the door and sit by the fire; / Who fear the blessing of God.".[MC 87] Eliot's drama closes with a somber reminder that the temporal world resists the infusion of the spiritual, and humanity often rejects the "Saints" sent to it who would blaze a trail of transcendence. For transcendence, as the Chorus well knows, requires "loneliness. surrender. deprivation" Thus they, and we, are all complicit in the deaths of martyrs like Becket, for we "fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God".[MC 88] The play concludes, appropriately, with the Kyrie Eleison-"Lord, have mercy upon
us. / Christ, have mercy upon us. / Lord, have mercy upon us"-and with a plea for Becket's intercession on our behalf to God. This is derived from the daily catholic liturgy. **So it cannot be denied that Eliot’s work was highly influenced by the liturgy he must be enchanting in the church during the mass.** The wheel was a symbol, in medieval times, of the "wheel of life" or the "wheel of fortune," "which never stands still, being constantly subject to the turns of fate". 46 No doubt Eliot draws on these ancient associations in his text's multiple references to the wheel, but he also subverts them by stating that, in fact, the wheel of fate—or, in Eliot's Anglo-Catholic worldview, of God's providence and plan for history—has in fact been standing still during Becket's seven-year absence from Canterbury. Becket's task is to set the wheel turning again: to take his part, willingly and completely, in God's "pattern" so that the wheel can resume turning and that "peace" can replace the mere existence of "living and partly living."

The **seasons** also carry symbolic contents in Eliot's play. Chorus' invocations of the passage of the seasons at the beginning of Part I and then at the end of Part II is the best example.. At the beginning of the play, the passing seasons are in actuality one long season of waiting, one endless Advent. But by the play's end, after Becket's martyrdom, the seasons in their cycle have become part of human beings: "Even in us the voices of seasons , praise Thee." Eliot's use of seasonal imagery will no doubt remind readers of his work in The Waste Land. That epic poem's first line, "April is the cruelest month," reinforces the poem's dominant mood of pessimism in the face of what Eliot sees as the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the then still-young twentieth
century. As in Murder in the Cathedral, the passage of the seasons in The Waste Land is not a healthy cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Life has become stuck in "living and partly living." Still, even The Waste Land was "not merely a poem of despair of the present but of hope and promise for the future, since at the close the thunder speaks, foretelling the coming of the life-giving rain". In a similar way, Murder in the Cathedral ends in hope—although more tempered by a realization of humanity's reluctance and inability to, in Becket's words, "bear too much reality". Thomas Becket represents an “archetypal figure” struggling with the “temptations of his religious conscience when it has set itself up against the state.” This struggle represents Eliot’s societal criticism on uprising fascism in Europe to the time when he wrote his drama. Still, the "redemption" of the seasons is an important symbolic motif in the play, as it was in Eliot's earlier work.

“Redeem yourself” had always been Eliot’s motive for his readers.

5.2

The Family Reunion and the Idea of Sin and Expiation

The Family Reunion is a play by T. S. Eliot. Written mostly in blank verse, it incorporates elements from Greek drama and mid-twentieth-century detective plays to portray the hero's journey from guilt to redemption.

Harry, the hero has a note of anxiety and despair when he comes to attend his mother, Amy’s birthday party. The frequent references to sin, guilt, atonement and expiation and the search for salvation are the principle elements in the existential
religious attitude towards life given in the play. Here we have echoes of Elektra. It has expiation, gospels of puritans.

**The reunion is expiation for the sin of the family and the ancestors.**

Eliot shows that the sins of the fore fathers are on the heads of the children and needs to get expiated. This theme is wholly derived from the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. Most of the critics believe that the ‘sin and expiation’ is the cause of the play, the trio of Harry, Amy and Agatha did nothing beyond it. The entire drama revolves around the three fold themes, which has allusions from Christianity as well as from Indian philosophy which strictly believes on rotation of time.

1. **The theme of sin and expiation.**

2. **The theme of time.**

3. **The theme of chaos, futility and spiritual disintegration**

4. **Surpassing the demon with faith in God and Righteousness.**

Therefore, the four ideational constituents of the thematic structure of the play are: (i) sin and expiation, (ii) the notion of time and (iii) the notion of futility (iv) surpassing the demon. The major influences on the play are the influence of Greek mythology, the influence of the trilogy known as Oresteia written by Aeschylus and the influence of the First World War and the resulting circumstances.

The main dramatic action deals with the gradual and progressive liberation of Harry Monchensey from his sense of guilt and defilement in a private, curse-haunted universe. He is haunted by the belief that he pushed his wife off the ship. In fact Harry has an alibi for the time, but whether he killed her or not he wished her dead
and his feelings of guilt are the driving forces in the rest of the play. This liberation is brought about by the presence of certain mysterious forces represented by the Eumenides. They appear to Harry on three separate occasions; each time Harry perceives them with increasing clarity, and as he does, he is led coincidentally to a deepened discovery of himself and of the knowledge, he needs to recover his identity. In other words, the appearances of the Eumenides coincide with the successive steps in Harry's liberation, marking out as it were the stages of his progress. Harry sees the Eumenides as concrete entities for the first time when he returns to Wishwood. Whatever hope he had of finding release from his sense of guilt is reduced to despair under the gaze of his pursuers. In their presence, Harry realizes that one does not escape the burning wheel by flight or by violence; the former is merely a change of position on the wheel, the latter a momentary reversal of its direction. This realization puts Harry in a state of isolation which makes the entire universe seem corrupt and corrupting. This deranging isolation breaks his contact with reality and projects him into a private world without direction, purpose, or principle of conduct.

Haunted by hallucinations, Harry has no one to cheer him up. His family expects him to take up routine as head of the household as though nothing had happened. Annoyed by their pretense, Harry accuses his family of insensibility and tries to awaken them to his suffering, without success. Thus, his first encounter with the Eumenides finds Harry holding the hope that he can forget at Wishwood, and leaves him with the despairing realization that he cannot. During the next stage of his liberation, Harry gropes his way up from despair towards freedom and illumination.
He starts by fastening upon a question he had asked himself earlier: why should the Eumenides wait until his return to Wishwood to show themselves? His aunt Agatha, who does not believe his condition of mind can be explained by his professed crime, encourages him to explore the past as the path to freedom like other Eliot's heroes who are prophets of the past. From this point on, Harry becomes the hunter as well as hunted -like Oedipus, hunting himself down, pursuer and pursued. Where his cousin Mary removes the illusion that he had once been happy at Wishwood, she confirms his stirring suspicion that his present misery is somehow linked to the house. The possibility of a romantic relationship glimmers for a moment in his mind as a means of escape from his guilt and loneliness. At this moment, the Eumenides appear to him again, this time to warn him away from his contemplated evasion. But with the faith of God he had overcome the haunt. Eliot again promotes the faith in religion and god as usual. As in Christianity the idea of God becoming incarnate to save himself is absurd. God is not affected at all by anything demons could do. The only purpose of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ is the salvation of humans from the effect of sin. The problem in Christianity is not that demons are a threat to God, but that humans have chosen to disobey God as they find doing evil is easier and the way towards god is tough and full of hurdles. But through penance humans have a chance to return to personal communion with their creator as the god is ever-ready to forgive the sinners who repent.

When discussing the concept of sin and expiation it has been pointed out that although sin is considered an old-fashioned and out-moded concept, particularly by
the younger generation today, Eliot has in this play presented this concept with a freshness of modernity. Harry, the central character of this play, is suffering from a sense of profound guilt for having pushed his wife down into the Atlantic. From the story of the play, it is not very clear whether he really killed her or whether he only imagines to have killed her. The sense of guilt makes him spiritually restless just as Macbeth’s sense of guilt made him undergo an almost unbearable spiritual agony. Just as Macbeth murdered King Duncan, Harry killed or imagines to have killed his wife and just as Macbeth's sense of guilt appears to him in the form of Banquo’s ghost, Harry feels tormented by the appearance of the furies. When Agatha tells him that his father also wanted to kill his wife, his mother, Amy, he feels that others in his generation have also done what he has accused himself to have done. Strangely, this gives him a sense of expiation, a sense of psychic relief. The furies are known to be terrible entities known for tormenting their victims. Towards the end of the play when he feels expiated, the angry furies, he feels, have metamorphosed themselves into the kindly spirits known as Eumenides of the ancient Greek mythology.

The concept of time is another ideational constituent of the thematic structure of this play. A special feature of this play is that almost all the characters in it talk about time. Harry, the central character of the play, and the chorus has made a number of epigrammatically and intellectually stimulating statements about time. In some of Shakespeare’s tragedies. Shakespeare’s heroes also make memorable statements about time. A remarkable feature of The Family Reunion is that almost all the characters in this play have to say something about time. The view taken in this thesis
is that the great importance given to time in this play as in his famous poems, *The Waste Land* and *The Four Quartets* was in all probability triggered by what Einstein and others had to say about time. In Newtonian physics time was thought to be like a river flowing from the past to the present and then onwards toward the future. Einstein's theory of relativity revolutionized the traditional concept of time and emphasized that time was a relative and not an absolute concept. Einstein generated a great deal of re-thinking about time. The view taken here in this thesis is that although the views that different characters in this play express about time are not exactly what Einstein has to say about time, the speculations about time in *The Family Reunion* are likely to have been caused by Einstein’s concept of relativity, particularly by its relevance to the concept of time. The third ideational constituent is the idea of futility, meaninglessness and nothingness expressed so frequently and forcefully in this play as in Eliot's *Waste Land* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The Second World War created a kind of chaotic social and economic order. Thousands of people were killed in the war. Thousands of wives lost their husbands and thousands of mothers lost their sons. The economy of the countries involved in the war was completely ruined. There was frustration, dissatisfaction and restlessness everywhere. This idea of futility, restlessness and meaninglessness in life has in this play been very skillfully harmonized with the idea of sin and with the idea of time. The view taken in this thesis is that Harry's story is a distant echo of the story of Orestes in the trilogy called *Oresteia* written by Aeschylus. Just as Orestes killed Clytemnestra, his mother, and was pursued, therefore, by the angry furies, Harry thinks he killed his wife and is
pursued by the furies. Just as the crime committed by Orestes was ultimately forgiven and expiation took place, Harry also feels expiated towards the end of the play. The three furies that Harry sees in this play show the influence of Greek mythology in this play. The furies are part of the Greek mythology and are believed to have poisoned snakes in their hair and hot red eyes dropping blood all around. Eliot introduced chorale to philosophize the atmosphere of the play.

When Mary pretends? that there is nothing to see, Harry withdraws his confidence. Now he is convinced that Wishwood holds part of the secret he seeks, and he decides to stay. This decision to face the Furies and not to run from them is the second stage of his liberation, part of the progressive ascent towards the experience of truth Eliot feels. The third and final stage begins during his conversation with Warburton and ends during his final duet with Agatha. Warburton provides fragments of the puzzle, and Agatha fills in the missing links. She recalls her affair with his father and his plans to murder the wife he hated. Harry asks, "In what way did he wish to murder her?" This is apparently the overwhelming question. Up to this point, whether or not Harry actually pushed his wife overboard is left vague; in light of Harry's condition, Uncle Charles has viewed the confession with skepticism, perhaps even suspecting that Harry cannot disassociate the pollution of his wife's existence from that of her death. Now when Agatha forces Harry to focus upon the event, to strip himself of his compulsive habit of self-immolation, he begins to understand that he has imagined the murder: somehow, he has objectified a fantasy, and then accepted the objectification as true. Here is the situation we can piece together from Eliot's
unpublished letters to Martin Browne and from hints scattered throughout the play:

Harry is standing on the deck of the liner, a few feet from his wife, who is leaning against the rail. She has sometimes talked of suicide, and now, is drunkenly taunting him with this threat. She overdoes it and accidentally falls overboard. Because the whole scene of shoving her overboard has passed through his mind before, Harry believes he has pushed her. He does not call for help, or attempt to rescue her in any way. His recollection of this extraordinary behavior—the event itself he has buried deeply in his unconsciousness—convinces him that he is guilty. The wish has become the overwhelming reality.

Agatha helps him to understand this through her patience and love, and the load of guilt drops from Harry. He perceives that his remark to Warburton, "The things that are going to happen/Have already happened" is "true in another sense." His father's desire to kill his wife has repeated itself in him as a kind of mysterious family curse. The inheritance for which he has returned turns out to be the knowledge of the past, and the knowledge that the past may be redeemable. The truth frees him from his guilt.

Harry's perspective is re-ordered by his release, and he is attracted to the agent of his release, half as a son, half as a lover. Agatha, who has also known "that circular desert", responds with the opposite but complementary love and they join in spiritual meeting, the only true reunion in the play. As Agatha responds, Harry is carried away by his mounting excitement, expressed in images of encounter. But the encounter is
brief. Agatha's answer is enigmatic certainly, but seems to say this: one does not pass twice through the same door (to the desert) or return to the door through which one never passed (fulfillment in love). A bond such as theirs, instead of being a refuge from responsibility, must be a release for a new beginning, a key to other doors that remain to be opened, for new experiences beyond life itself.

Harry does not comprehend her meaning until the Eumenides appear for the third time. Now Harry does not deny them. His rose-garden experience raises him to a state of spirit, which is described more explicitly in Part II of Burnt Norton. Surrounded by a sense of grace, Harry senses the higher function of the Eumenides by connecting their appearance with what Agatha has been trying to tell him: "relief from what happened" comes not through evasion, but through quest; not through rejection, but through the "awful daring of a moment's surrender."

Illumined by this insight, Harry is released for action and suffering on a higher plane; he accepts without fully understanding Agatha's paradox, "To rest in our own suffering/Is evasion of suffering. We must learn to suffer more." When Harry announces his decision to depart from Wishwood on the trail of the Eumenides, his mother concludes that Agatha has persuaded him to become a missionary and asks him to change his mind. Harry refuses the request, and departs with Downing in pursuit of the "hint half guessed, the gift half understood" Dry Salvages, V. Soon after his departure, his mother collapses, and the play ends as Agatha and Mary, in circular procession around the cake intended for her, gradually extinguish the candles.
in a tenement service for both of the departed. They reverse their circular movement to indicate that the wheel has also changed direction. As Harry is freed to follow the promptings of his spirit, we see how intricately the sin-salvation symbol has been woven into the horizontal structure of the play.

To his valet, Harry is a hero. Having been most low, he becomes most high by accepting the election of the Eumenides to explore the meaning of the rose-garden experience. When first confronted by these powers, he sees them as evil eyes, but during the moment of illumination, he perceives them as the "final eye," judicial and benevolent, the shift from the plural to the singular is significant and parallels the play's ascent from pagan to Christian meaning. Having tracked himself down, Harry leaves his homeland with his will made ready for the thousand natural shocks that an heir is heir to.

Let us consider the play in this light. Eliot's interest in present time is reflected in the play's examination of the nature of psychological guilt, its effect upon people in general and an individual in particular living in the modern world. The concrete embodiments of the guilt-sense, the Eumenides, reveal themselves for the first time at Wishwood because it is the locus of the guilt. "The origin of wretchedness" lies in the unhappy bondage of Harry's parents. Harry is pursued by the Eumenides – the avenging Furies who pursue Orestes in the Oresteia; they are seen not only by Harry but also by his servant and the most perceptive member of his family, Agatha. Guilt about his homicidal wish drives Harry's father into exile, while her feelings of guilt
separate Agatha from the family. Harry is left to the care of a mother who clutches and dominates him. Out of his position as the possessed, he develops a strange morality being well is pleasing mother, being bad is hurting her.

He feels guilt for resisting her and out of his guilt, feels a desire to be punished; therefore, he misbehaves in order to be chastised and therefore purged of his guilt. The chastisement in turn intensifies his hostility, which culminates in an act of open defiance: he marries a "non-U" instead of the woman whom his mother intends for him. The mother feels strong homicidal impulses towards the intruder To punish herself for these impulses, the mother devotes her life to the "purposes of Wishwood" and eventually becomes, like the manor-house, a shell of stone. These tragedies influence Harry. Never having known love, he expresses the opposite impulse towards his wife, who has become a surrogate for his hostility towards all women. He quite readily holds himself guilty in the accident, for he has come to regard himself as an outcast predestined to crime. Later, he reaches a high pitch of tenderness with Agatha, but at this time his super-ego in the form of the Eumenides, remind him that this is not the way to divine union. However, this exploration of the past cures Harry of his near schizophrenia.  

Eliot is slave to neither his source nor his psychology. He develops the dimension of the play by infusing it with the truth of his religion. Without recourse to specific Christian terminology, he brings to fruition his aim of supplementing the cathedral play with the kind of drama, which deals with situations of modern life in an implicitly Christian way. Hence, the action acquires a third dimension, which may satisfy what the author has called "the essentially religious
craving ... latent in all serious lovers of the drama." Harry learns that his sense of guilt and isolation are part of a condition that goes deeper than either- the condition of sin. The author has expressed himself directly on this subject: "People often talk as if the sense of sin were something invented by a group of gloomy fanatics ... it is absolutely essential to Christianity." Sin, to Eliot, is the universal sickness responsible for man's nature. He makes Warburton say: "We're all of us ill in one way or another". Of course, sin may grow out of thought as well as deed-as Christ's own words testify.

Hence, what began as a primitive flight from fear is changed into a Christian pilgrimage of penance, with pagan furies at the entrance and bright angels at the exit. As a dramatically perceptible parallel to the interior transvaluation, there is the exaltation of Agatha's pagan exorcisms into Christian rituals of hope. While the stage at the end is symbolically darkened, Harry descends into the Night of the Soul. For the faithful, the Aeschylean concept is elevated to one of nobler meaning: as Agatha says, perhaps for the author, "What we have written is not a story of detection,/Of crime and punishment, but of sin and expiation."

These ritualistic utterances of Agatha are fitted into the design of the play to coincide, like the appearances of the Eumenides (which touch them off), with the stages of Harry's liberation. Harry, with Agatha's encouragement, announces his intention to go away from Wishwood, leaving his steady younger brother John to take over. Amy, despairing at Harry's renunciation of Wishwood, dies (offstage), "An old woman alone in a damned house", and Harry and his faithful servant, Downing,
leave.[ SS 198-200] The first is said just after Harry arrives; the second, spoken shortly after the second appearance of the Eumenides, is an exorcism of evil. This pattern of development is recapitulated in the concluding ritual between Mary and Agatha, wherein the primitive birthday observance and curse-cure, with its "follow, follow" procession, becomes a Christian communion and prayer. Thus, the main religious theme of Transvaluation of curse into blessing is worked out like in the pattern of the runic passages. Despite these Greek themes, Stephen Spender commented that the whole play was "about the hero's discovery of his religious vocation as a result of his sense of guilt."[SS 198]

It is worth comparing *The Family Reunion* with Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*. Both plays depict the miseries and crimes within the family house, both preach that life in the world is inextricably involved in sin, guilt and unhappiness, both preach renunciation and the sense of contact with another dimension of reality, Christian-Buddhist in Strindberg, Christian in Eliot". 51

5.3

*The Cocktail Party* and the Christian, Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy

This play came in 1950. It again deals with the theme of martyrdom of Celia because of sin and expiation for her illegitimate relation with Edward and her effort and persuasion on Edward to leave his wife Lavinia for the sake of their relationship. Eliot once again tried to portray the society that lacked in virtue. He as a preacher
again gives the massage that one has to pass through purgation for the forgiveness of the sins. Through the conversation in the end of the drama, Sir Harcourt Reilly acts as an spiritual advisor to all and comforts all the characters who were shocked on Celia’s death. He ultimately conveyed the message that it is the fate that every one who sins will meet in the end. That is the only way to salvation. The play is again more or less a moral teaching. The concept of sin and the need for redemption was always present in Eliot’s mind. His ardent faith in Christianity is seen everywhere in his poetry, drama as well as the prose. The last solution for attaining salvation is martyrdom as did Becket Celia and Harry. He always wanted to raise the spirits of the sinners by haunting spirits who make them realize that they have done wrong. Eliot’s heroes symbolize Christ. There is something Christ like in Becket Harry and Celia. Again, in The Cocktail Party, we notice the echo of Patanjali in the following lines: ‘I see that my life was determined long ago; And that the struggle to escape from it Is only make-believe, a pretence That what is, is not, or could be changed.’ But ‘The Waste Land’ is a criticism of life from the Christian, Hindu and Buddhist point of view’ says F.L. Mayo. In Buddhist Philosophy, we are told three stages to achieve: Nirvana—Attachment—Detachment—Indifference.

American born English poet Eliot has made great achievements in owning the literature that holds impact on both the eastern and the western readers of English Literature. The reason can be that he himself was a strong Christian with a huge knowledge of Hindu Philosophy. It was this inclination of his towards eastern philosophy that made him study philosophy at Harvard from 1906 to 1909, earning
his bachelor's degree after three years, instead of the usual four. \(^5^2\) Frank Kermode writes that the most important moment of Eliot's undergraduate career was in 1908, when he discovered Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* 1899. This introduced him to Jules Laforgue, Arthur Rimbaud, and Paul Verlaine. Without Verlaine, Eliot wrote, he might never have heard of Tristan Corbière and his book *Les amours jaunes*, a work that affected the course of Eliot's life.\(^5^3\) The *Harvard Advocate* published some of his poems, and he became lifelong friends with Conrad Aiken, the American novelist. After working as a philosophy assistant at Harvard from 1909–1910, Eliot moved to Paris, where from 1910–1911, he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne. He attended lectures by Henri Bergson and read poetry with Alain-Fournier.\(^5^4\) From 1911–1914, he was back at Harvard studying Indian philosophy and Sanskrit.

Stephen Spender, in the standard literary biography of T.S. Eliot, says that after visiting Paris in 1911, Eliot joined Charles Lanman’s Philology Course, at Harvard. Lanman was a distinguished Sanskrit Scholar and Orientalist. Eliot was with him for two whole years and then went on to study the metaphysics of Patanjali for another two years. Eliot summed up this whole experience rather cleverly by saying it left him in a state of ‘enlightened mystification’, he gained a thorough intellectual grasp of Advaita Vedanta and all it entailed. He was also very much moved by early Buddhist Scriptures, which he said ‘affected him as much as many of the parts of the Old Testament’. He was later to describe the *Bhagavad Gita* as ‘the next greatest philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy* within his experiences’. However, Eliot
never left his vital essential Christian faith while applying and enjoying these Eastern influences.

**The Allusions in the Play**

T. S. Eliot was at Princeton in 1948, while he was working on the play *One-Eye Riley*, which would eventually develop into *The Cocktail Party*, when he received the letter of winning that year's Nobel Prize for literature. His literary reputation was built mainly on his proficiency as a poet and a critical theorist, but in the later years of his life most of Eliot's work was concentrated on writing drama that would display his Christian sensibilities combined with Eastern philosophy like that of a much mature and secular literary icon who evolved out of a strong Anglican man.

Play *The Cocktail Party* is analyzed in the light of the Christian, the Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy, which he studied and whose influence is seen in most of his poems and plays in his latter years’ works.

This play has the following allusions:

1. The Christian martyrdom of the mistress character Celia is seen as a sacrifice that permits the predominantly secular life of the community to continue. In his 1949 Spencer Lecture, T. S. Eliot admitted to trying to conceal the source of the main theme of *The Cocktail Party* (*TCP*). He confessed that he took his theme of a wife who chooses to die for her husband from the *Alcestis* of Euripides. ‘I was still inclined to go a Greek dramatist for my theme, but I was determined to do so merely
as a point of departure, and to conceal the origins so well that nobody would identify them until I pointed them out myself. In this at least I have been successful; for no one of my acquaintance recognized the source of my story in the *Alcestis* of Euripides.\(^{55}\)

2. The impermanence and sufferings in the lives of all the leading characters and Celia working for her own Nirvana reflect the Buddhist philosophy that says “life is suffering”. According to other interpretations by Buddhist teachers and scholars, lately recognized by some Western non-Buddhist scholars, the "truths" do not represent mere statements, but are categories or aspects that most worldly phenomena fall into, grouped in two: Suffering and causes of suffering and Cessation and the paths towards liberation from suffering.\(^{56}\)

3. The attaining of still point “the bindu” where nothing can be altered and everything seems to be out of human reach. Henry Harcourt Reilly explains this to the chamberlaynes when they were worried on getting the news of Celia’s killing, thus reflecting the Hindu philosophy. It also contains the message of Shree Gita that u will get the fruit of your actions. Patanjali is seen in the following lines: ‘I see that my life was determined long ago; And that the struggle to escape from it is only make-believe, a pretence that what is, is not, or could be changed.

   A married couple, Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne, who suffer impermanence and separation after five years of marriage due to their infidelity, organizes The Cocktail Party. The first and last acts of the play feature cocktail parties held at their
home where their marital problems are aggravated by the pressure of having to keep up social appearances, portraying the modern society where the structure lacks in sincerity and lives in mere showbiz. Partially satire on the traditional British drawing-room comedy and partially philosophical discourse on the nature of human relations. Any how the play explores the modern human conditions of love, marriage, post marital affair, desire, infidelity and choosing of the right path after the intervention of a spiritual advisor who can be a psychiatrist too in this modern urban society and leading realization, guilt, sacrifice and penance in search of salvation.

Eliot himself had pointed out that this play owes to *Acestis*, by the Greek playwright Euripides (480-406 B c). In the Greek tragedy, the title character sacrifices her life for her husband, King Admetus of Thessaly, but is rescued from Hades by Hercules. In Eliot's version, Lavinia is brought back by a mysterious Unidentified Guest Sir Henry Harcourt Reilly, a psychiatrist at the party, who turns out, in true twentieth-century form. Edward and Lavinia both consult him. They learn that their life together, though hollow and superficial, is preferable to life apart; a lesson that is rejected by the play's third main character, Edward's mistress, who, with the psychiatrist's urging, sets out to experience a life of honesty and uncertainty. Edwards's mistress Celia is filled with guilt and chooses to go for penance and reconciliation with God through her services to the missionary. Thus reflecting the Christian elements of penance, sacrifice and martyrdom. The first act of *The Cocktail Party* is the only one divided into three separate scenes. The first scene opens on a party in the drawing room of the Chamberlayne home in London with all of the play’s
major characters—Edward, Julia, Celia, Peter, Alex, and the Unidentified Guest— present. There is witty bantering about people not present, making this seem like many British drawing-room comedies. Lavinia Chamberlayne is missing, and her husband, Edward, a lawyer, makes up a feeble excuse for the absence of his wife, who has invited the guests. He tells them that she has gone to visit an aunt in the country, but most of the party guests are skeptical. They had never heard of any such aunt of hers. They all leave except for the Unidentified Guest, whom Edward asks to stay and talk with him. As always Eliot introduces a spiritual guide who shows the way towards virtues and tells how to depart from the guilt as Amy does in The Family Reunion and Eggerson does in The Confidential Clerk.

Edward confesses the stranger that Lavinia left him the day before, and that he tried to cancel the party but could not reach the people who did attend. During the conversation, he expresses his concern over what his life will be like without her, and the stranger tells him that he will arrange for Lavinia to return the following day reflecting the Greek element. Although Edward speaks alone with Celia Coplestone, his mistress, and we learn that they planned to be together pending the breakup of his marriage. Yet Edward now seems uncertain about Celia, as if he has a mind to return to his wife after he talks to the unidentified guest. The next day the Unidentified Guest indeed brings Lavinia home, and she and Edward discuss their marital problems, and especially Edward’s indecisiveness. Edward becomes convinced that his indecision is a mental illness, and he seeks treatment, one day ending up in the office of the Unidentified Guest, finally identified as Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, a
psychologist. Lavinia joins their session, and reveals her own affair with Peter Quilpe, another frequent cocktail party guest. Through indirect means, including vague talk about a sanitarium, Reilly convinces the Chamberlaynes to resume their marriage. Then Celia comes in to see Reilly, and she later decides to do missionary work. In the final act, set two years later, the Chamberlaynes are depicted as having a more tranquil marriage, and we learn that Celia was killed violently in Kinkanja, where she was doing her missionary work. In spite of some characters’ shock on hearing the news, most accept her death as natural, perhaps even noble.

As the busybody Julia Shuttlethwait sums up for us: “Everyone makes a choice, of one kind or another./ And then must take the consequences. Celia chose / A way of which the consequence was crucifixion”. Clearly, this is the main idea of the play. Despite Eliot’s own well-known Christianity, *The Cocktail Party* does not argue specifically for Christian solutions to the human condition. Celia, endowed by her creator (Eliot) with such character traits, as having been a poet and a nurse, is something of a martyr for Christian ideals, as is made clear by her death at least twice being characterized as a crucifixion. However, this is seen as but one of several paths; holding cocktail parties may be an equally valid path. No, *The Cocktail Party* is simply an idea play, dramatizing the condition of Man as a moral agent, a chooser.

As an idea play, *The Cocktail Party* has a few things going for it. It is a “well-made” play in the sense that the conflicts spawned from Edward’s infidelity are introduced at the beginning and resolved by the play’s end. There is a plot that
develops. In addition, the characters all speak a dry verse, the meter of which helps suggest the lifeless custom of their lives. Eliot has a gift for this sort of dialogue; many of the characters sound like the defeated narrator of Eliot’s early *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The dialogue sparkles with intelligence, and is what keeps the play going. But its occasional wittiness almost seems out of place embedded within the more somber themes. Nevertheless, the play suffers from numerous problems. It is difficult to picture Celia participated in an affair with Edward thus committing adultery. Edward too was guilty of cheating his wife. Then he finds himself alone with the astute and slippery Unidentified Guest, who is a master of reverse psychology, and has the mysterious power to bring his wife back. Had the Unidentified Guest had not intervened, Edward might simply have chosen to marry Celia. Nevertheless, as usual Eliot wanted to uplift spirituality amongst his crisis-ridden characters so he introduced a spiritual advisor in the form of a psychiatrist reflecting the mood and temperament of the modern wastelanders. The Unidentified Guest’s eerie pronouncements about Edward’s indecision stacks the deck against Edward choosing for himself. Then Edward is roundly criticized for his lack of choice. He realizes his moral duty. Eliot fulfills his purpose to preach the society lacking in religion and conduct. Julia, Alex, and Reilly form a bizarre conspiracy, whose entire existence seems devoted to making people see that they must live with their choices. Surely, few of us have encountered such benevolence as theirs. Julia sends nearly all the characters mysterious telegrams to meet at the Chamberlayne’s, where she has planted a *de facto* spy in Reilly. Reilly as psychologist freely discusses
his patients’ problems with Julia and Alex, his co-conspirators. Because these three show human motives, these characters exist as device in the machinery of the play, to show the other characters their ultimate fates.

Eliot tries to show the illegitimate relationships as the hell in the modern society. He writes: “And other people bring no comfort or companionship. Edward echoes Sartre’s formula when he says: “What is hell? Hell is oneself, / Hell is alone, the other figures in it / Merely projections”. [CP 98] One senses that Eliot has a whole philosophy of choice and selfhood lurking under here somewhere, one that he may have been better off writing as a philosophical treatise but he employed these philosophies to show the fate of wrong doings on earth. Eliot was always firm to philosophize his literature. Eliot owns nearly unreadable masterpieces such as the long poem *The Wasteland* - a poem that uses six languages along the way, the Biblical allusions and the Hindu philosophy and *The Hollow Men*, which paint a dark vision of man as "broken" because of his lack of faith in God. There are religious overtones in *The Cocktail Party* too that tells that religion is the right path.

That psychologists such as Reilly have taken the role of father confessors from priests is a well-known twentieth century development. Eliot had spent a good time with priests and Bishops during his conflicts with his wife Vivienne so he reflects those priestly sermons in his preaching. Celia, the play’s martyr, describes her plight to Reilly as having a “sense of sin,” and believing that something is wrong with the world itself, and that she must “atone” for it. [CP 137] Here Eliot reflects the
Christian atonement. During Celia’s confession to Reilly, they converse about the meaninglessness of the human condition, and it is here that Eliot is at his eloquent best. Celia: “Everyone’s alone…They make noises, and think they are talking to each other”[CP 134] Reilly: “Both ways avoid the final desolation / of solitude in the phantasmal world / of imagination, shuffling memories and desires”[CP 142] an echo of the first lines of The Wasteland, “April is the cruelest month …mixing /Memory and desire.” Here he reflects the Buddhist philosophy that desire is the cause of sufferings. Perhaps Eliot’s distilled eloquence about Mankind’s quandary is best offered in poetry, where the reader is expected to pat every word in search of meaning. As a drama, the characters in The Cocktail Party feel like props for Eliot’s idea. Celia the martyr. Edward is Eliot’s stand-in, existentialist man. Reilly the Freudian father confessor. Julia the busybody, who seems to have no life of her own other than to help the Chamberlayne’s (and perhaps countless others) seek out their “salvation” through Reilly. And Alex the world-traveler with mysterious global connections, always speaking with a knowing air. Peter exists to square off the Edward/Lavinia/Celia love triangle.

The characters all speak with intelligence; they just sound too much like Eliot 58

Thomas Stearns Eliot has deep interest in Indian philosophical systems following his studies in Sanskrit, and the principal Upanishads at Harvard University, and his poetry and plays often showed the influence of Hindu thought and sensibility: ‘Impermanence and Suffering’; ‘The Wheel’; ‘Craving and Maya’; and ‘The Still Point’ are the elements that formulate the major part of the allusions Eliot
took from the Hindu and the Buddhist philosophies. In Act II of his verse play *The Cocktail Party*, there is an exact reference to the *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* of the *Digha-nikaya*.\(^{59}\)

Go in peace, my daughter.

Work out your salvation with diligence...

And when I say to one like her

Work out your salvation with diligence,

I do not understand

What I myself am saying...

And now O priests, I take my leave of you

All the constituents of being are transitory:

Work out your salvation with diligence. [CP]

In general, we may say from these that the Hindu and Buddhist thought noticeably influenced Eliot without sacrificing his personal High Anglican faith. Eliot’s references to recurrence, reincarnation and destiny, or karma typifies the attitude that conforms with both Hindu and Buddhist ideas. In *The Cocktail Party*, we find the lines: The man I saw before, he was only a projection- I see that now- of something I wanted- No, not wanted-something I aspired to- Something I desperately wanted to exist.[CP] It is with the metaphor of the still point or bindu that fascinated Eliot perhaps the most. Bradley’s magnum opus *Appearance and Reality*, which also draws heavily on Eastern thought, was a major influence on the young Eliot. He has fused
Indian philosophical themes and symbols with the western worldview. He examines in various aspect the symbolisms of the wheel of time, maya that is desire, and the bindu or ‘still point’, along with the problems raised by world suffering, impermanence, and facade and reality; he used quotations from the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita in his major works with his Anglican sermons and dogmas. His universally enlightened mind took shape in the form of his universally appealing literature.

Eliot's plays are not 'tragic' in the Greek sense: they contain too much assurance that for all their horror things ultimately, are controlled by benevolent forces. Ibsen's spiritual adventurers have no such assurance, neither do Sophoclean heroes or heroines have such assurances. The poetic heart of The Cocktail Party is in Act 2 in Celia's attempt to communicate her spiritual condition to Harcourt Reilley after we have seen the dismissal of Edward and Lavinia as somewhat commonplace sufferers of limited vision. They must return to be the 'chamberlains' of the ordinary world, after glimpsing the depths. The Celia-Harcourt-Reilley colloquy, for Eliot, is the ideal form of communication, a mutual searching for the precise and most adequate expression of an almost mystic reality. It is a 'high communion' between the Characters, the Poet and the attentive audience - a shared exploration of consciousness. However, again, there is that 'optimistic' assurance that, whatever Celia’s sense of inauthenticity, of 'sin' or anomie, there is a place for it in the larger scheme of things. Even Celia’s horrible death can be seen as meaningful: all the other characters now discover they have been in contact with a Saint, and they are suitably
chastened, illuminated and humbled. Just as the Christian community finds a meaning in the succession of years, as each year celebrates its martyrs and saints. Hence, once again we find a martyr spiritual advisor sin guilt and unhappiness and the search for peace and salvation in the drama making it religious and heavenly.

...action

None the less fruitful if neither you nor we

Know, until the judgment after death,

What is the fruit of action. [CP]

Celia Coplestone, guilt-ridden by her adulterous affair, goes to Sir Harcourt Reilly, the spiritual advisor who tells her to:

Go in peace, my daughter.

Work out your salvation with diligence.[CP]

The words of the Buddha to his disciple Ananda were: “So karohi dipam attano” (Be A lamp to yourself. Work out your nirvana.” The difference between “salvation” and “nirvana” is critical. Salvation suggests self-fulfillment after self-discovery; nirvana implies snuffing-out, self-extinction. Besides this we can see the Hindu belief that demons are beings that currently reap the fruits of their bad karma acquired in previous lives. However, the bad things they do are not arbitrary, as the law of karma makes sure that the humans afflicted by demons are justly punished for their own bad deeds performed in previous lives. Therefore, from a global point of view the demons' bad deeds must be seen as necessary in balancing karma. Existence as a demon is
limited, and eventually there is reincarnation back into human form and henceforth a new chance given to attain liberation. Same is the case with Celia who worked as a missionary and got killed while spreading the word of lord and the spiritual advisor Sir Harcourt Reilly consoles the Edwards and Peter not to be sad for her as she was destined for it. Therefore, does Celia, the heroine of Eliot’s play exhibiting eastern philosophy along with Christian faith.

5.4

*The Confidential Clerk and the Spiritual Crisis*

We have analyzed the above three plays in detail and now we will go for just thematic analyses of the coming two plays to locate the Biblical and Philosophical analysis. Sir Claude Mulhammer, a wealthy entrepreneur, decides to bring back his illegitimate son Colby into the household by employing him as his confidential clerk. He has hope that his eccentric wife, Lady Elizabeth Mulhammer, will develop a liking to the boy and will allow him to live as her adopted son. She in fact, becomes convinced that Colby is actually her own son, who was lost years ago. Meanwhile Lucasta Angel wants to marry B. Kaghan, but neither seems to have any parents at all. A drama of mistaken identity and confusion ensues.

The 'confidential clerk' of the title refers both to Colby, in his new job, and Eggerson, Sir Claude's old clerk who is seen retiring at the start of the play but returns in the final act in order to resolve the situation showing the perfect climax. As in his other plays, Eliot's interests in classical drama are obvious from the formal structures,
the subject-matter, and the judgement-scene ending. On the other hand, the influence of drawing room comedy is also paramount and the play is blessed not only with an entertaining if convoluted plot, but a regular peppering of witty one-liners. But in the whole scenario the message that Eliot wanted to convey was his own Anglican faith.

In the struggle for survival, every character is searching for self-satisfaction in the physical world that is the wealth and the relations. Where as the motive of Eliot was once again to deliver a sermon to the crisis ridden modern world to turn towards god renouncing the worldly pleasures. Therefore, he rotates the story around Colby, finally shows him as the Hero who decides not to live with Sir Claude’s wealth, and chooses to become a priest and play guitar in the church. He is happy to know that he is Mrs. Guzzard’s son and is free to pursue his choice of serving lord and the church. The message that Eliot wanted to convey to the then audience was done. His plays suffer from his own personal guilt and Anglican faith. After his separation with Vivienne, he had spent a good span of time with the bishop and the priests. He developed that instinct of spreading the word of the lord, and he could not stay away from it and he was a great scholar of Hindu philosophy so he took allusions from that too.

He was disturbed with the illegitimate relationships pf men and women in the modern world so his characters exhibit such a society and he tries to preach the humanity with the tragic end of his characters to uplift their spirituality. For that reason, only he always has a character in all of his plays who act as the spiritual advisor and suggests for purgation.
5.5

The Rock and the Sigh of the Degrading Church

The Rock, was specifically designed to be produced in a church, basically dealt with the collapse of cultural Christianity so evident in our day--a Church in disarray which "does not seem to be wanted any where except for the wedding purposes--a Church desperately needs to hear the voice of Christ, the "Rock". Lamentably, Eliot sighs in some lines. Such as" the wind shall say: ‘here were decent godless people: their only monument the asphalt road and a thousand lost golf balls.’

In order to understand T.S. Eliot’s poem, Choruses from “The Rock,” one must first understand Eliot’s views on contemporary theology and spirituality. He felt as if people were moving away from the Church and were losing their religion in goodwill of more secular worship. The following passage from Eliot’s choruses can summarize his entire argument that he makes in Choruses from “The Rock”. But it seems that something has happened that has never happened earlier than: though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where. Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no God; and this has never happened before that men both deny gods and worship gods, professing first Reason, And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or Dialectic. The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells upturned, and what have we to do but stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards in an age which advances progressively backwards. In T.S. Eliot’s Choruses from 'The Rock’ Eliot complains that something has happened that has never happened before: for the first time, man stands separated from God. He believes that
man stands lonely, in great darkness and gloom, with no light to guide him; and Eliot is right. Something has happened that has never happened before. One might ask why or how it has happened. These things do not happen in a certain moment. They happen so gradually that one never becomes aware of when, where, or how. The civilized man has lost something because now we live in the man-made world where it is almost impossible to find any sign of God. God is hard to find in the asphalt roads or in cement structures. These things are not alive. How can one find God in machines or in technology? Even facing the greatest machine you cannot feel awe, you cannot feel reverence, and you cannot feel like falling on your knees and praying. If you cannot feel like falling on your knees and praying even occasionally, how can God remain a part of your being? Eliot proclaims that man is in front of a tremendous flood of meaninglessness for the first time. Everything seems to be utterly irrelevant, and the reason is simple: without God, there can be no significance, no magnificence. Life can have meaning only in the milieu of something that surpasses life. The meaning always comes from the background; now man stands without a context. The meaning comes only when you can look upwards to something bigger than you can and something greater than you do.

When you feel connected with something greater, holier, your life has meaning. Man has left nature and has created an artificial world of his own. This fact has been the most devastating phenomenon, which has disrupted man from God, and all that is difficult to understand in God: meaning, significance, majesty, love, prayer, meditation, and all that is valuable. The irony is, man has never been as rich as he is
today. Both things have happened together: the inner, spiritual being has become shoddier while the outer being has become more affluent. We have more money than any other society before, we have in every way more power than any other society ever had before, and lived in vanity. Eliot thinks that we have cultivated reason too much and we have become unbalanced. Science functions from the head while religion functions from the heart. Because we have become too obsessed with the head, we think it is all. As we become more and more hung up in the head, we become more and more oblivious to the existence of the heart, and Eliot thinks that we will become more and more dejected. T. S. Eliot is right: ... something has happened that has never happened before: though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where. Men have left God not for other gods... That was very usual in the past; people used to move from one god to another. That was an evolution. The God of Moses is less urbane than the God of Jesus, since there are thousands of years between these two enlightened persons. Moses had to talk the language that could be understood by his people, and those people were very primitive. Therefore, Moses spoke in the language of law, commandments. By the time Jesus, arrived man had evolved. Jesus talked about love, not about law. Love is a higher value than law. The God of the Jews was an envious god and a very angry god; for small reasons he would destroy cities. It was not really the god that was violent and angry, it was the people. Their eyes were full of violence and anger; they could not see the real God. God is always the same, but our vision changes. Jesus could see God as love and compassion. Man was changing one god for another, for a higher conception of god.
In the past people had been changing gods: Men have left God not for other gods...
But in the present day something else has happened: Man has not left God for other
god. Man has dropped the whole idea of God, the whole idea of a divine presence in
existence. Now man is standing alone and is feeling empty. Man cannot remain
empty; it is difficult to remain empty. Therefore, a new trend is happening. According
to Eliot, man has created his own gods. Professing first Reason... -- and because man
cannot remain empty for long, he replaced it first with reason; reason became god.
However, reason is limited, it cannot prove many things. For example, it cannot prove
the beauty of a rose, but the beauty exists. Reason cannot prove the existence of love,
but love exists; reason is inadequate to prove it. Money also became god; millions of
people worship money as god. Power has become a god. The politician has become
the most important person in the world. We have denied God, but we
cannot deny our emptiness? We have rejected God, and we had to fill something in the empty space,
so we filled it with political power, with money, with reason, with race, with
dialectics. Man cannot live without religion. Man cannot live without God. If the true
God is not available, then man is bound to create homemade gods. The Church
disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells upturned, and what have we to do but stand
with empty hands and palms turned upwards in an age which advances progressively
backwards? Yes, T.S. Eliot is right. In his poem, Choruses from “The Rock,” Eliot
berates society for losing their faith in God and placing it in non-Christian symbols.
This is exactly the movement that will harm us all in the end. 61 Choruses: The
endless cycle of idea and action,  Endless invention, endless experiment, Brings
knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not of silence; Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word. All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance, all our ignorance brings us nearer to death, But nearness to death no nearer to GOD. Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust. Though you forget the way to the Temple, There is one who remembers the way to your door: Life you may evade, but Death you shall not. You shall not deny the Stranger 62

It shows how Eliot was trying hard to push men towards the God similar to the teachings of the Bible. Following extract from The Rock chorus also reflects Eliot’s worry for the civilization that did not give value to the God and the church.

Much is your reading, but not the Word of GOD
Much is your building, but not the House of GOD,
Will you build me a house of plaster, with corrugated roofing,
To be filled with a litter of Sunday newspapers?
But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before: though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where.
Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no God; and this has never happened before That men both deny gods and worship gods, professing
first Reason, And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or Dialectic. What have we to do but stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards in an age which advances progressively backwards? [TR]

Once again, we see Eliot trying to arouse the sleeping conscience of Christianity. The church meant only for wedding ceremonies and wedding bells for them as in general, no body had time in the contemporaray modern mechanized physical world to go to the church and pray. Eliot belonged to a utilitarian church religious family. These traits must have been inherited in him. He had a general tendency to preach through his poetry, drama and prose. He had quoted enough references from the holy Bible and the Indian philosophy to tell spiritually degraded humanity that if they will not repent they will have a tragic end. They must ask god for forgiveness and show their faith in God before it is too late. He wants his contemporary modern civilization to realize that the worldly pleasures are just transitory; it will end with death so prepare for salvation and eternal life.
Chapter V
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do so merely as a point of departure, and to conceal the origins so well that
nobody would identify them until I pointed them out myself. In this at least I have
been successful; for no one of my acquaintance recognized the source of my story
in the _Alcestis_ of Euripides.’


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