Conclusion

The major motive of Greek tragedies is the enactment of sin and its expiation; this motive is clearly observed in Eliot’s plays also. Though the word sin may not have expressed, but it can be assumed as such. But the milieu of the plays except Murder in the Cathedral is modern. The problem faced by man is similar in all times hence they are paradigms, like archetypes, which recur again and again in human life. The solutions to them can be of similar type that the mythical characters found during their period. Eliot resents his contemporary social situation in his plays which is godless and devoid of love: sterility. It is caused by wanton pursuit of sensual pleasures. Its cure can be possible by imbibing the spirit of the past with a new sense of social responsibility and conscious choice. Thus life of the past is revived in the present and sets an example for the future generation as well. Thus Eliot brings out the time, into a single unbroken chain, binding past, present and future. The time is eternal and indivisible; it is we that change. Eliot likes to retain the best of ancient classical values, and add to them the modernist trend of compassion, honesty, a sense of social responsibility and universal love. This is to bind the modern men to community with the help of a small group of people called community of Christians as visualised by Christopher Dawson. In his plays contemporary man faces an identity crisis; he looks for his self, undergoes introspection; realises his guilt and identifies himself with God. The characters chose the negative path of renunciation or the positive path of affirmation enunciated by Charles William. He choses his path according to his potentiality. The hero chooses martyrdom; his sacrifice fertilises the life of the living. Both the ways are important; so also a conscious choice between them. They represent the Greek way, the way
Zeus had ordained for men: knowledge through suffering. The doer must suffer (on to the doer what he doeth); the suffering brings knowledge and the knowledge brings the bliss and happiness. This knowledge is true of all times; and shows the modern men how to master problems of the modern age: the ills of civilization, the stress, strained relationship in the family, and sterility. Loving and be loved is the main objective of life and from there he must transcend himself to the love of God; and attain salvation.

The principal conflict of the Greek tragedies is between gods and men. Gods send their will through oracles. Men concerned with them try to prevent them being realised. But it is always the oracle, which is the destiny that succeeds. In Eliot’s plays characters struggle to realise their own desires but can not succeed. The destiny is arranged by the guardians and it always wins.

In Murder in the Cathedral Becket wishes to impose his own will as an Archbishop upon King Henry. But he fails; instead of staying in his diocese, he runs away to France. In his exile he repents for this and returns. He has pride; he thinks only as an archbishop; not as a servant of god. His returning to England has various motives like regaining Chancellorship, the post of Archbishop, rebellion against king, and again put-up with an uncompromising stand on Clarendyne declaration, annulling prince Philips’ Coronation, and withdrawing suspension of bishops who did it. The fourth tempter enlightens him. Becket’s desire to wilful Martyrdom is only to take revenge on his enemies, to humble them and rule them from the tomb. It was a dream of damnation not permitted by Christianity. He repents for it and surrender’s his will to the will of God; it was his conscious choice. He takes all the responsibilities of the struggle on himself and boldly faces drunken Knights who kill him. He is recorded in the history as a role model for administrators and clergy with his honesty,
daunting courage and determination. No university can train such person; only faith in god and prayer can do so. Thus his life brings relevance of the values of religion, prayer, forgiveness, humility and universal love. His life is the enactment of myth of Oedipus and Crucifixion of Jesus. Oedipus runs away from Corinth to avoid oracle that he would kill his father and marry his mother; but succeeds in realising it only. His pride of wisdom ended in tracing his shameful birth and sin. At last he accepts god's will, suffers and expiates his sin by blindness, wandering, and hunger and finally becomes acceptable to gods. Both Oedipus and Becket suffered exile, poverty and lived on alms. Their appalling capacity to endure suffering is a lesson and it gives modern men strength to face the complexities of modernity.

Orestes in Oresteia could not stay in exile because of an oracle by Apollo ordering him to avenge his father's death by killing his mother. If he killed his mother the furies will torture him. In The Family Reunion, Harry is put to similar condition, after his wife's death, he was tortured by his guilt and furies. Then he thought of returning to Wishwood in search of peaceful life with Mary but Furies were there even before he reached it. He decided that the family life is not made for him; his suffering is due to a hereditary sin for which he has to expiate; otherwise his entire family will be erased. So he abandons his home to go on a pilgrimage to expiate the sin of his family even though his decision will kill his mother. An unhappy married life and a country life in a house called Wishwood, where there is no love but only sterility was the reason for his suffering; it was the reason for the death of his father also. Harry learns to love, the love beyond any desire; hence learns to live. He selects the negative path of life, the life of a sage:

So that knot is unknotted, the crossed is uncrossed. The crooked be made strait and the curse be ended.
In The Cocktail Party, Edward realises that he wants to have his wife back because he wants to know who she is and who he is. He severs his relationship with his secret lover Celia because his life is predetermined; and he can not live without his wife. When she returned he can not live with her. It is a similar situation for Admitus in Euripides' Alcestis. When Alcestis was living, he consented to her offer of dying in his place. When Alcestis died, he realised that life is not worth living without her. Sir Henry, the Psychiatrist advises Edward and Lavinia to forget the past and make a new beginning by making the best of bad job. He advises them to tolerate each other with a feeling of give and take, kindness, and to control themselves with restrain which is a an affirmative way of life as is preached in The Waste Land and in Brihadarukaranya Upanishad: 'Datta, Dayadwam, and Damyatha'. He prescribes the negative way of life for Celia who was disillusioned with worldly life, which leads her to martyrdom. Edward, Lavinia and Peter repent for their mistakes in sending Celia to death. Henry consoles them that it was her destiny to die; and it was their destiny to carry on their work with new vigour which will be a tribute to the memory of Celia. The Guardians, as a community of Christians, nudge the erring individuals to their right path. The play ends with a positive note that one should do his duty. 'Every one to his task' that is what the leader in the Rock says and that is what Krishna said to Arjuna; one should perform his duty as devotion which is the path of salvation. It is hoped that turbulence of tomorrow, due to rapid change will drive the people deeper into their families. People will marry for stable families. Dr. Irwing M Greenberg hopes:

Family serves as one portable roots anchoring one against the storm of change.

Ancient Indians knew the importance of home and wife. To an Indian his house is no less than a temple. A wife is called
goddess of prosperity of his house. Manu, the ancient Indian law giver, interprets in his Manu smriti that:

Yathra naryasthu poojyanthe Ramanthe thathra
Devathaha. Grihini grihamuchyathe. (Where, women are respected, there, gods are pleased and a wife herself constitutes a house.)

In The Confidential Clerk, Colby is put to a condition similar to Ion in Euripides’ Ion. Ion liked the job of devotion to the God than to be a heir to King Xuthus in the busy Court of Athens. Colby longs to be an organist which is a symbol of devotion to God. But he is forced to be a financier by Claude; he is advised to keep music as a hobby. This duality is not liked by Colby. When Elizabeth also claims Colby to be her lost son, Mrs. Guzzards is asked to appear for an interview before Eggerson. Then the plot of the play takes new turns. It is revealed that Kaghan whom Elizabeth dislikes is her son. Colby likes to have a dead father. Mrs. Guzzards lets out the secret that Colby is not the son of Claude but her own son; his father was a disappointed Church organist. Colby selects the job of a church organist in Joshua Park and decides to stay with Eggerson. This gives a message to modern young men to choose only a job that will give them pleasure; then only they will excel in their career. No other inducement like money and other obstacles should come in the way. In this way Colby wanted to know his true father ands Jesus as one. He, like Jesus, comes out to do his father’s job. Eliot here symbolically points out that spiritual life is better than mundane life. Thus Colby can lead a life where there is duality in his job and pleasure; treasure does not matter. Beneath age old formula of farce, there is the search for one’s true parentage: It is God. According to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Srila Prabhupada propounds in his Classic translation of Sreemadbhagavatham:

Only three things in life are worth considered doing; to realise our true relationship with God, to do devotional
service complimentary to the first one; and through these services find the ways to reach the abode of god.¹

This is salvation; all religions of the world preach it; and Colby is on this path with his conscious choice.

The Elder Statesman is the modern version of Sophocles’ Oedipus at Colonus. Oedipus had committed grave sins of patricide, married his mother and begot children through her. He blinded and exiled himself to expiate these sins. His daughter Antigone accompanied him. He reaches Attica of Colonus near Athens, confesses his unintentional sins before the leader of the chorus and King of Athens. He was given asylum and shelter. He again becomes acceptable to gods who award him the status of a Greek hero who can curse his enemies and help his friends.

In the same way Lord Claverton, the retired politician and businessman had spoiled Fred Culverwell, a boy of scholarship at Oxford, who deviated from his studies, became a forger, get caught, underwent sentence and left England to San Marco became a rich man by corruption and bribing. In those days Claverton had run his car over an old man who was already dead. But he had not stopped to report it to police. Culverwell meets Claverton in his home, solicits his company and threatens to expose his crime if he declines it. Lord Claverton had loved a young woman called Maisie Montjoy and later deceived her. Besides old age he felt terror to be alone and feared to be exposed to strangers. His doctor advised him to spend his last days at Badgley Court, an expensive convalescent home. He felt better for few days. Then Maisie appeared before him and threatens to use his love letters. Lord Claverton confesses before his daughter and her fiancé Charles of his crimes and of the fact that he was only a selfish man, who made use of others and his status of an Elder

statesman was only a mask. He felt relieved; his daughter loved him more on knowing these facts. In The Elder Statesman Claverton’s love is directed not only towards young lovers but he also learns to love his wicked son Michael. He is brought down to earth, rather humanised out of his selfish nature. His love for his daughter is human but loving his disobedient dishonest and insincere son is the divine Christian love. In this way he is dehumanised; in a way it is similar to deification of Oedipus: off course in a Christian way

Both Oedipus and Claverton have suffered in their life. Their endurance of miseries is colossal and a paradigm to modern men. The message to them is loud and clear. Good comes with evil, and that there is rhythmical law of change. We may welcome good that comes after so much evil and yet be prepared for further evil in the future. These heroes resisted what looked like an overwhelming onslaughts on their peace and happiness. Their endurance is heroic and worthy of admiration. Miseries in life call out greatness in Oedipus to resist them. Oedipus nobility in suffering is another sign of worthiness to be a hero. Oedipus may be assailed by miseries but he endures them heroically like rocky promontories to which waves wash and winds beat from every quarter of the horizon; but it withstands firmly.

Claverton blesses the young lovers and asks them to let him be allowed to die at Bagley Court peacefully. The death of Lord Claverton is not shown at all in the play but he is reported by Monica and Charles to have been standing beneath the beech tree which had attracted him earlier. According to Greeks the dead not only give life, nourishment, plenitude, fertility and other less tangible blessing, but also are believed to partake in the life of the living and those who are living owe a peculiar regard to the dead. With this spirit in mind towards the dead, Charles in The Elder Statesman says the dead has showered blessings on the living. Heraclites
concludes the relationship between the living and the dead thus:

Mortals are immortal and immortals are mortals; Living other deaths and dying the other life.²