

**THE STATE VERSUS THE CHURCH OR TEMPORAL, NATIONALISTIC, PROTESTANT POWER  
VERSUS SPIRITUAL, IMPERIALISTIC, PAPAL POWER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF T. S.  
ELIOT'S *MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL* AND WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *THE FAMOUS  
HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF KING HENRY THE EIGHT***

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**ABSTRACT**

*A close reading of T.S. Eliot's seminal modernist "poetic drama" Murder in the Cathedral and William Shakespeare's monumental, pivotal "history play" Henry VIII reveal a serious and deadly conflict between the state and the church or the Crown and the Pope. This paper sets out to investigate the cause(s) of this conflict, the winner and loser, who is to blame and the possible ideal solution on the relationship between the church and the state. Using New Historicism this paper argues that Murder in the Cathedral and Henry VIII superficially or explicitly dramatize or present a conflict between the State/King/Crown and the Roman Catholic Church/Pope but implicitly these two plays are nationalistic plays whose aims are geared towards establishing an English protestant state free from papal domination and imperialism in its Roman Catholic disguise. This argument is buttressed by King Henry VIII during the trial of Queen Katharine:*

*Campeius: So please your highness,*

*The queen being absent, it's a needful fitness*

*That we adjourn this court till further day*

*Meanwhile must be an earnest motion*

*Made to the queen, to call back her appeal*

*She intends unto his holiness. [They rise to depart]*

*King Henry: [Aside] I may perceive*

*These cardinals trifle with me; I abhor*

*This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome.*

*(Act II Lines 228-235)*

*Cardinal Campeius is sent by the Pope to represent him in the divorce trial case between King Henry and Queen Katharine. At the end of this study, it is realized that the conflict between the state and the church is always deadly to the church as seen in Becket and Cardinal Wolsey. In any union between church and state, the state will always want to lead the church. This is seen in Henry II and Henry VIII. Any religious authority who wants to combine temporary power and spiritual power will always lose spiritual power in favour of temporary power. This is seen in Cardinal Wolsey. Becket sees the trap and refuses to fall into it. Lastly the quest of the English monarchs to do away with the imperialistic papal power started by Henry II is completed or realized in Henry VIII with complete separation from Rome/Roman Catholic Church. The biblical statement let us give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's defines the ideal*

*relationship between the state and the church and prevents any conflict between the two. Generally while the state deals with temporary affairs of governance, legal, social and economic issues, the church preoccupies itself with the moral or spiritual issues of its christians or citizens of the country.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pope, King/Crown, Beckett, Wolsey and Katherine*

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