

Henry and Becket - Moral Issues

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The appointment of Becket as Archbishop of Canterbury

One of the main reasons I have appointed Becket as Archbishop is because he is my friend, and I believe he will support me in my decisions as King.

Henry II

The king has made me Archbishop of Canterbury; I am the most powerful man in England after the king. In the past I know that I have lived in great luxury, but I will change my lifestyle.

Thomas Becket

Henry, Becket and the Church Courts

I want to increase my control. Therefore, I want to eliminate the Church's own courts. So I have passed a law that says priests should be tried in my court. The Church courts are too lenient on the priests that are tried there- they get away with light sentences. Everyone should be tried in the King's court.

Henry II

Henry should not be allowed to close the Church courts. It is against God's law. The king is interfering with the rights of the Church. As Archbishop of Canterbury, and therefore head of the Church, I will not give in to Henry's demands.

Thomas Becket

The Murder of Becket – Henry and the priests;

Henry could not believe that Becket had excommunicated the bishops who helped him whilst Becket was in France. Henry was overheard saying the following by four knights;

‘Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?’

The four knights decided that Henry wanted Becket dead and murdered him. Henry later claimed that he had not meant that at all.



The murder of Becket in Canterbury Cathedral

*Today’s lesson is focusing on moral issues (what is right and what is wrong).
Think about the following:*

The appointment of Becket as Archbishop

- Should Henry have appointed Becket as Archbishop of Canterbury?
- Should Henry have expected Becket to support him?
- Should Becket have accepted the title of Archbishop?

Henry, Becket and the Church Courts

- Why was Henry eliminating Church Courts – what is your opinion about Henry’s reasons?
- Why does Becket think the Church Courts should remain open? What do you think?

The Murder of Thomas Becket

- What do you think about the action of the four knights?