

# Church going philip larkin

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CHURCH GOING — PHILIP LARKIN A typical Larkin poem begins with precisely observed description of a scene from contemporary life and moves on to a conclusion which reflects on the significance of what has been described. Church Going is one such poem. Larkin begins the poem with a precisely observed description of a church he visited one weekday. The church was empty and looked like any other church he has visited with matting, seats, organ and flowers, now fading. He noticed the roof which looked as if it had been recently cleaned or restored. He walked around, mounted the lectern and then, having seen all that he wanted to, he signed the visitors' book, dropped a coin into the donation box and reflected that " the place was not worth stopping for. " However, he remarked that he had stopped as he often did, and each time the visit ended with a sense of loss and he was left " wondering what to look for. " The poet went on to reflect on the future of churches when they fell into disuse. What would they be used for, " a few cathedrals chronically on show, " would become historical monuments and the rest would be given " rent free" to rain and sheep" and would end up as ruins. The poet continues to wonder whether people would stop coming to church because they are superstitious and consider them to be unlucky places or would they be drawn to them because of the same superstition. Would women bring their children to touch a particular stone for good luck, for a cure of cancer, or to see a ghost. Larkin reasons that superstition, like belief, will die and then all that would be left would be " grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky. " He then wonders who would be the last person to visit the church. Would it be someone who comes to worship, or an archaeologist, or someone " randy for antique", or it might even be a "

Christmas addict, " looking for the sound of the organ and the smell of the myrrh. Finally, he imagines that the last visitor could be someone like him, who is bored and uninformed and yet is drawn to the church because of what it stood for. He longs for the past ritual vitality of the church and its special significance at the time of birth, marriage and death. Larkin ends his speculation by stating that the church is a " serious house", a sanctuary to which people with a hunger for something more serious will forever be drawn. It is a place to gain wisdom, if only because " that so many dead lie around".