

Everyman must have
been an awesome
tool religion essay



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The play Everyman must have been an awesome tool for witnessing to the church and unchurched alike during medieval times. There were dramatic performances during spring and winter festivals in most countries during this period in history. This approach to drama helped to shape what came to be called the drama of the church. This form of public worship called liturgical services was most popular around Easter and Christmas.

In the medieval society, there were many things to keep people preoccupied to the point where they did not focus on the salvation of their souls. In lines 74 through 82 Death describes some of these things, he says "...Everyman will I beset that liveth beastly Out of God's laws, and dreadeth not folly. He that loveth riches I will strike with my dart, His sight to blind, and from heaven to depart-Except that Almsdeeds be his good friend-In hell for to dwell, world without end. Lo, yonder I see Everyman walking: Full little he thinketh on my coming; His mind is on fleshly lusts and his treasure,..."

Everyman depicts the inevitable as the reading suggests, facing death and coming to terms with life. The character Everyman is confronted with his present condition of sin and is about to be judged. In lines 103 through 110 Death tells him, " On thee thou must take a long journey: Therefore thy book of count with thee thou bring, For turn again thou cannot by no way. And look thou be sure of thy reckoning, For before God thou shalt answer and shew Thy many bad deeds and good but a few-How thou hast spent thy life and in what wise, Before the Chief Lord of Paradise. Everyman thinks that he can put off Death until he is ready by giving him money and asking Death to be kind, which is ironic. In lines 120 through 125 Everyman states, " O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind. In thy power it lieth me to

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save: Yet of my good will I will give thee, If thou will be kind, Yea, a thousand pound shalt thou have-And defer this matter till another day.”

Now faced with death you would think that Everyman’s main focus would be his salvation, but instead he thinks that Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin, Goods, and Good Deeds can go with him to help him to plead his case. Only Good Deeds was able to point him in the right direction towards Knowledge, who was the only one who could go with him at first. In lines 486 through 488 Good Deeds states, “ Here I lie, cold in the ground: Thy sins hath me sore bound That I cannot stear-(stir or move).”

After Good Deeds introduced Everyman to Knowledge, he was finally headed in the right direction. Knowledge said to him, “ Everyman, I will go with thee and be thy guide, In thy most need to go by thy side.” The lessons in plays such as Everyman were intended by the church to educate and steer medieval Christians in the right direction toward the salvation of their souls. This was important in their lives because of their belief that the salvation of the medieval Christian’s soul is achieved only through the church.

Also important were the seven sacraments-key spiritual events in the life of medieval Christians. Knowledge leads Everyman to Confession so that he could ask for mercy, to be cleansed, and receive his Good Deeds. Everyman prayed for the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation saying, in lines 544 through 553, “ O glorious fountain that all uncleanness doth clarify, Wash from me the spots of vice unclean, that on me no sin may be seen. I come with Knowledge for my redemption, Redempt with heart and full contrition, For I am commanded a pilgrimage to take An great accounts before God to

make. Now I pray you, Shrift, mother of salvation, Help my Good Deeds for my piteous exclamation. Next, in lines 581 through 608, Everyman prayed for the sacraments of Penitence-admitting guilt and sorrow for his sins and also for Penance-the punishment for his sins. He also prayed for Eucharist, which is Holy Communion, Holy Orders and Marriage. After this prayer Good Deeds returned to be with him to go with him and help him declare his good works.

Now with Everyman on his journey is Knowledge, Good Deeds, Discretion, Strength, Beauty, and Five-Wits. Knowledge tells Everyman about the sacrament of Extreme Unction in lines 706 through 711, " Everyman, hearken what I say: Go to Priesthood, I you advise, And receive of him, in any wise, The holy sacrament and ointment together; Then shortly see ye turn again hither: We will all abide you here.

After this Five-wits tells him about the importance of the priesthood. In lines 712 through 727 he says to everyman, " Yea, Everyman, hie you that ye ready were. There is no emperor, king, duke, ne baron, That of God hath commission As hath the least priest in the world being: For of the blessed sacraments pure and bening He beareth the keys, and thereof hath the cure For man's redemption-it is ever sure-Which God for our souls medicine Gave us out of his heart with great pine, Here is this transitory life for thee and me. The blessed sacraments seven there be: Baptism, confirmation, with priesthood good, And the sacrament of God's precious flesh and blood, Marriage, the holy extreme unction, and penance: These seven be good to have in remembrance, Gracious sacraments of high divinity. In the society of

the medieval Christian it is the priest who dispenses the seven holy sacraments of the Christian life.

The final act ends with everyone leaving Everyman except Good Deeds and Knowledge, who stayed with him until the end. Everyman gives a final warning for everyone to learn from his mistakes in lines 864 through 869, he says, “ Methink, alas, that I must be gone To make my reckoning and my debts pay, For I see my time is nigh spent away. Take example, all ye that this do hear or see, How they that I best loved do forsake me, Except my Good Deeds that bideth truly.

This ending was definitely one that the medieval Christian church wanted everyone in this society to understand and it is, that you can not take anyone or anything with you even if it is buried with your body, you will stand alone before God to be judged and things as well as other people will be of no use to you. They stressed the importance of being a part of the church and doing good works and living according to the seven holy sacraments so that your good works would not be in vein.