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Week 10 Assignment

An Analysis of *Everyman* A Morality Play

This essay explores the 15th-century moral play *Everyman*, and its role in the literature of the Western World and Christianity. The play *Everyman* is a literary piece that is unauthored but has transcended time. Since its appearance in the medieval period to the present day it is a literary work that discusses the theme of death while providing Christian based themes and understanding to the reader. This analysis will define the theme of death, analyze who the character Everyman is and who he represents, and examine what must Everyman do?

The play opens with God speaking to Death to summon Everyman, who is the main character of the piece. Death arrives before God and says, "Almighty God, I am here at your will, Your commandment to fulfill" (Halsall, 1998). After a discussion with God about an unavoidable journey Everyman must make, Death who is God's messenger heads to earth which is the primary setting for the play to get Everyman. As Death locates Everyman and says, "in great haste I am sent to thee from God out of his great majesty" (Halsall, 1998). Death then tells Everyman that he has been summoned and that he must go with Death. Everyman begins a discussion with Death and says that he requests "a reckoning longer leisure I crave" (Halsall, 1998). Death continues to say that Everyman must take the journey to God; while Everyman bids for more time on earth, as he is not ready to leave. Everyman bids for mercy but to no avail Death said that Everyman must and will go before God (Davenport, 1982).

It is clearly at this point in the play that Everyman cannot escape the journey and the theme of death as an avoidable fate is truly revealed.

The character Everyman represents every man, woman, and child created by God living on the earth. As Everyman cannot argue or debate out of the fate of death it made clear that all must go before God when they are called by death at the end of life. As Everyman “weep with sighs deep” and states there is no companionship on the journey, Death listens but does not provide sympathy or an alternative (Bouchard, 2002). Everyman reaches out for companions for the journey but is abandoned by all he knows in his time of distress. Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin, Material Goods listen to his please but do not agree to go with him before God (Bouchard, 2002). It is at this point that it is made clear to Everyman and the reader that the path before God through the messenger Death is not only avoidable but must be taken alone.

In reviewing what Everyman must do the reader realizes that he must journey to God and follow the path that has been outlined for him. He cannot negotiate with Death or avoid his true fate. He has a conversation with Fellowship and his other friends to only discover that he cannot take anyone with him to see God. What he realizes is that Death is indeed God’s messenger. Everyman realizes that he and all humanity will die, and that death is unavoidable, and nothing can be taken with an individual to the grave but the body that they possess. However, in his search for assistance Everyman realizes what does survive from an individual’s legacy is their good deeds. As the play ends, Everyman accepts his journey to God through Death for judgment.

The moral play *Everyman* is a true glimpse into what Christians believe as tenets of faith. The author intends for all of humanity to see that death is truly unavoidable and that God has a journey for humans that transcends space and time and this earth. With this play the anonymous author truly provides clarity to the fate of humanity and does so with the dignified and understandable approach.

References

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