

# Everyman

by Anonymous



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# Notes

## **What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?**

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

The use of plays to educate the 16th century English audience on virtues, the predominance of archetypes and flat characters, and the simplicity of plot are staples of the genres known as Cycle and Morality Plays. Most members of a typical audience of the time could barely read or write, and the teachings of the Church were predominantly in Latin; therefore, the theater was a seemingly perfect way to reach and instruct the population. The drama evolved from the Bible, so the stories were familiar and could be capitalized upon; the plays were, therefore, sanctioned by the religious authorities, which had in the past and would in the future, condemn actors and acting. Traveling “troups” of players would set up a stage in a small town and perform for the residents. Frequently, members of trade guilds also were part of the cast.

While the characters in *Everyman* and *The Second Shepherds’ Play* are one-dimensional, they do provide the impetus for some later Elizabethan drama (Marlowe’s *Faust*, for example), and these two are considered the epitome of this type. However, audiences soon lost interest in the simplistic drama being presented and demanded more realistic, elaborate, and compelling theater, which set the stage for the rise of Elizabethan drama.

# Everyman

## Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

*Everyman* is one of the last and most well known plays of the 15<sup>th</sup> century genre called Morality Plays. The author of *Everyman* is unknown, but the play is believed to be the English translation of an earlier Dutch version, *Elckerlyc*, written in 1495. Although it's unclear exactly when *Everyman* was written, the last early editions of the play were printed between 1521 and 1537. The following information will assist you in understanding *Everyman* and the role it played in medieval society.

- Morality Plays were developed after 1485 as allegorical presentations of the conflict between virtue and vice. Most of the people during this time were illiterate, and morality plays were used to instruct people in a manner they could identify with.
- These plays were often parables (i.e., stories that teach a lesson). The lesson for *Everyman*, the character, is that death is inevitable, so one must prepare for God's judgment by leading a virtuous life.
- The Catholic Church was an integral part of medieval society. People led their lives based on the doctrines of the Church, as presented by priests, who frequently used stories to teach biblical precepts.
- In addition to morality, religious ideology was the focus of many plays, including these two.

### Characters:

In contrast to modern plays that use multi-dimensional characters who have individual qualities, *Everyman*, as is typical of most Morality Plays, employs one-dimensional characters to represent people, things, events, or symbols. For example, some characters in the play stand for specific traits, occurrences, or people:

- Everyman – the common individual; the ordinary church attendee
- Fellowship – friends, acquaintances, colleagues
- Goods – material possessions, wealth
- Good Deeds – virtues
- Knowledge – intellect

## Themes:

Several closely related themes are presented in *Everyman*, which are represented by the words and actions of the characters. As you read *Everyman*, the following concepts should become apparent:

- Giving to others is more rewarding than acquiring wealth and possessions.
- People are responsible for their own actions.
- The only thing humans can take with them in death is the virtue they lived with during life.
- Overindulgence leads to sin.
- God will forgive those who repent.
- Virtuous living is the path to salvation.

## Everyman

### NOTE

The opinion has been commonly accepted that the English version of the play was a translation from the Dutch version *Elckerlyc* ascribed to Dorlandus. The chief support of this view is the fact that the Dutch version was printed before the English. It may be safer to consider the question still open, for either may be the earlier, and both may go back to an earlier version now lost.

*Here beginneth a treatise how the High Father of Heaven sendeth Death to summon every creature to come and give an account of their lives in this world, and is in manner of a moral play.*

*[The Messenger enters.]*

### Messenger.

I pray you all give your audience,  
And hear this matter with reverence,  
In form a moral play.  
*The Summoning of Everyman* it is called so,  
That of our lives and ending maketh show<sup>(5)</sup>  
How transitory we be every day.  
This matter is wondrous precious,  
But the meaning of it is more gracious  
And sweet to bear away.  
The story saith: Man, in the beginning<sup>(10)</sup>  
Watch well, and take good heed of the ending,

Be you never so gay!  
Ye think sin in the beginning full sweet,  
Which, in the end, causeth the soul to weep,  
When the body lieth in clay.<sup>(15)</sup>  
Here shall you see how Fellowship and Jollity,  
Both Strength, Pleasure, and Beauty,  
Will fade from thee as flower in May,  
For ye shall hear how our Heaven's King  
Calleth Everyman to a general reckoning.<sup>(20)</sup>  
Give audience and hear what he doth say.

*[The Messenger goes.]*

**God speaketh:**

I perceive, here in my majesty,  
How that all creatures be to me unkind,  
Living, without fear, in worldly prosperity.  
In spiritual vision the people be so blind,<sup>(25)</sup>  
Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God;  
In worldly riches is all their mind.  
They fear not my righteousness, the sharp rod.  
My law that I disclosed, when I for them died,  
They clean forget, and shedding of my blood red.<sup>(30)</sup>  
I hung between two it cannot be denied,  
To get them life I suffered to be dead,  
I healed their feet, with thorns was hurt my head.  
I could do no more than I did truly,  
And now I see the people do clean forsake me;<sup>(35)</sup>  
They use the seven deadly sins damnable  
In such wise that pride, covetousness, wrath, and lechery,  
Now in this world be made commendable,  
And thus they leave of angels the heavenly company.  
Every man liveth so after his own pleasure,<sup>(40)</sup>  
And yet of their lives they be nothing sure.  
The more I them forbear, I see  
The worse from year to year they be;  
All that live grow more evil apace;  
Therefore I will, in briefest space,<sup>(45)</sup>  
From every man in person have a reckoning shown.  
For, if I leave the people thus alone  
In their way of life and wicked passions to be,  
They will become much worse than beasts, verily.  
Now for envy would one eat up another, and tarry not<sup>(50)</sup>  
Charity is by all clean forgot.  
I hoped well that every man  
In my glory should make his mansion,  
And thereto I made them all elect,  
But now I see, like traitors abject,<sup>(55)</sup>  
They thank me not for the pleasure that I for them meant,  
Nor yet for their being that I them have lent.  
I proffered the people great multitude of mercy,

And few there be that ask it heartily.  
They be so cumbered with worldly riches, thereto<sup>(60)</sup>  
I must needs upon them justice do,—  
On every man living without fear.  
Where art thou, Death, thou mighty messenger?

*[Death enters.]*

**Death.**

Almighty God, I am here at your will,  
Your commandment to fulfil.<sup>(65)</sup>

**God.**

Go thou to Everyman,  
And show him in my name  
A pilgrimage he must on him take,  
Which he in no wise may escape,  
And that he bring with him a sure reckoning<sup>(70)</sup>  
Without delay or any tarrying.

**Death.**

Lord, I will in the world go run over all,  
And cruelly search out both great and small.  
Every man will I beset that liveth beastly  
Out of God's law, and doth not dread folly.<sup>(75)</sup>  
He that loveth riches I will strike with my dart  
His sight to blind and him from heaven to part—  
Except if Alms be his good friend—  
In hell for to dwell, world without end.  
Lo, yonder I see Everyman walking.<sup>(80)</sup>  
Full little he thinketh on my coming!  
His mind is on fleshly lusts and his treasure,  
And great pain it shall cause him to endure  
Before the Lord, of Heaven the King.  
Everyman, stand still! Whither art thou going<sup>(85)</sup>  
Thus gayly? Hast thou thy Maker forgot?

*[Everyman enters.]*

**Everyman.**

Why askest thou?  
Wouldest thou know? For what?

**Death.**

Yea, sir, I will show you now.  
In great haste I am sent to thee<sup>(90)</sup>  
From God, out of his majesty.

**Everyman.**

What, sent to me!

**Death.**

Yea, certainly.  
Though thou hast forgot him here,  
He thinketh on thee in the heavenly sphere,(95)  
As, ere we part, thou shalt know.

**Everyman.**

What desireth God of me?

**Death.**

That shall I show thee.  
A reckoning he will needs have  
Without any longer respite.(100)

**Everyman.**

To give a reckoning longer leisure I crave.  
This blind matter troubleth my wit.

**Death.**

Upon thee thou must take a long journey,  
Therefore, do thou thine accounting-book with thee bring.  
For turn again thou canst not by no way,(105)  
And look thou be sure in thy reckoning,  
For before God thou shalt answer, and show true  
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.(110)  
Get thee prepared that we may be upon that journey,  
For well thou knowest thou shalt make none for thee attorney.

**Everyman.**

Full unready I am such reckoning to give.  
I know thee not. What messenger art thou?

**Death.**

I am Death that no man fear,(115)  
For every man I arrest and no man spare,  
For it is God's commandment  
That all to me should be obedient.

**Everyman.**

Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind!  
In thy power it lieth to save me yet ;—  
Thereto of my goods will I give thee, if thou wilt be kind,—(120)  
Yea, a thousand pounds shalt thou get!—  
And defer this matter till another day.

**Death.**

Everyman, it may not be in any way.  
I set no store by gold, silver, riches, or such gear,(125)  
Nor by pope, emperor, king, prince, or peer.

For, if I would receive gifts great,  
All the world I might get,  
But my custom is clean the contrary way.  
I give thee no respite. Come hence, nor delay!(130)

**Everyman.**

Alas, shall I have no longer respite!  
I may say Death giveth no warning!  
To think on thee, it maketh my heart sick,  
For all unready is my book of reckoning.  
But if I might have twelve years of waiting,(135)  
My accounting-book I would make so clear  
That my reckoning I should not need to fear.  
Wherefore, Death, I pray thee, for God's mercy,  
Spare me till I be provided with a remedy!

**Death.**

It availeth thee not to cry, weep, and pray,(140)  
But haste thee lightly, that thou mayest be on thy journey,  
And make proof of thy friends, if thou can,  
For, know thou well, time waiteth for no man,  
And in the world each living creature  
Because of Adam's sin must die by nature.(145)

**Everyman.**

Death, if I should this pilgrimage take,  
And my reckoning duly make,  
Show me, for Saint Charity,  
Should I not come again shortly?

**Death.**

No, Everyman, if once thou art there,(150)  
Thou mayest nevermore come here,  
Trust me, verily.

**Everyman.**

gracious God, in the high seat celestial,  
Have mercy on me in this utmost need!  
Shall I no company have from this vale terrestrial(155)  
Of mine acquaintance that way me to lead?

**Death.**

Yea, if any be so hardy  
As to go with thee and bear thee company.  
Haste thee that thou mayest be gone to God's magnificence,  
Thy reckoning to give before his presence.(160)  
What, thinkest thou thy life is given thee,  
And thy worldly goods also?

**Everyman.**

I had thought so, verily.

Everyman

**Death.**

Nay, nay, it was but lent to thee,  
For, as soon as thou dost go,(165)  
Another a while shall have it and then even so,  
Go therefore as thou hast done.  
Everyman, thou art mad! Thou hast thy wits five,  
And here on earth will not amend thy life,  
For suddenly I do come!(170)

**Everyman.**

O wretched caitiff, whither shall I flee  
That I may escape this endless sorrow!  
Nay, gentle Death, spare me until to-morrow  
That I may amend me  
With good avisement!(175)

**Death.**

Nay, thereto I will not consent,  
Nor no man respite, if I might,  
But to the heart suddenly I shall smite  
Without any “avisement.”  
And now out of thy sight I will me hie,(180)  
See that thou make thee ready speedily,  
For thou mayest say this is the day  
Wherefrom no man living may escape away.

**Everyman.**

Alas, I may well weep with sighs deep!  
Now have I no manner of company(185)  
To help me on my journey and me to keep,  
And also my writing is all unready.  
What can I do that may excuse me!  
I would to God I had never been begot!  
To my soul a full great profit it would be,(190)  
For now I fear pains huge and great, God wot!  
The time passeth—help, Lord, that all things wrought!  
For, though I mourn, yet it availeth naught.  
The day passeth and is almost through,  
I wot not well of aught that I may do.(195)  
To whom were it best that I my plaint should make?  
What if to Fellowship I thereof spake,  
And what this sudden chance should mean disclosed?  
For surely in him is all my trust reposed—  
We have in the world so many a day(200)  
Been good friends in sport and play.  
I see him yonder certainly—  
I trust that he will bear me company;  
Therefore to him will I speak to ease my sorrow.  
Well met, good Fellowship, and a good morrow!(205)

*[Enter Fellowship.]*

Everyman

**Fellowship speaketh:**

I wish thee good morrow, Everyman, by this day!  
Sir, why lookest thou so piteously?  
If anything be amiss, prithee to me it say  
That I may help in remedy.

**Everyman.**

Yea, good Fellowship, yea,(210)  
I am in great jeopardy!

**Fellowship.**

My true friend, show to me your mind.  
I will not forsake thee to my live's end,  
In the way of good company.

**Everyman.**

That was well spoken and lovingly.(215)

**Fellowship.**

Sir, I must needs know your heaviness.  
I have pity to see you in any distress.  
If any have wronged you, revenged ye shall be,  
Though I upon the ground be slain for thee,  
Even should I know before that I should die.(220)

**Everyman.**

Verily, Fellowship, gramercy!

**Fellowship.**

Tush! By thy thanks I set not a straw.  
Show me your grief and say no more.

**Everyman.**

If I my heart should to you unfold,  
And you then were to turn your heart from me,(225)  
And no comfort would give when I had told,  
Then should I ten times sorrier be.

**Fellowship.**

Sir, I say as I will do indeed!

**Everyman.**

Then you be a good friend at need.  
I have found you true heretofore.(230)

**Fellowship.**

And so ye shall evermore,  
For, in faith, if thou goest to hell,  
I will not forsake thee by the way.

**Everyman.**

Everyman

Ye speak like a good friend—I believe you well.  
I shall deserve it, if so I may!(235)

**Fellowship.**

I speak of no deserving, by this day,  
For he that will say, and nothing do,  
Is not worthy with good company to go.  
Therefore show me the grief of your mind,  
As to your friend most loving and kind.(240)

**Everyman.**

I shall show you how it is:  
Commanded I am to go a journey,  
A long way hard and dangerous,  
And give a strict account without delay  
Before the High Judge, Adonai.(245)  
Wherefore, I pray you, bear me company,  
As ye have promised, on this journey.

**Fellowship.**

That is matter, indeed! Promise is duty—  
But if I should take such a voyage on me,  
I know well it should be to my pain;(250)  
Afeard also it maketh me, for certain.  
But let us take counsel here as well as we can,  
For your words would dismay a strong man.

**Everyman.**

Why, if I had need, ye said  
Ye would never forsake me, quick nor dead,(255)  
Though it were to hell truly!

**Fellowship.**

So I said certainly,  
But such pleasant things be set aside, the truth to say;  
And also, if we took such a journey,  
When should we come again?(260)

**Everyman.**

Nay, never again till the day of doom.

**Fellowship.**

In faith, then, will I not come there.  
Who hath you these tidings brought?

**Everyman.**

Indeed, Death was with me here.

**Fellowship.**

Now, by God that all hath bought,(265)  
If Death were the messenger,

For no man living here below  
I will not that loathly journey go—  
Not for the father that begat me!

**Everyman.**

Ye promised otherwise, pardy!(270)

**Fellowship.**

I know well I do say so, truly,  
And still, if thou wilt eat and drink and make good cheer,  
Or haunt of women the merry company,  
I would not forsake you while the day is clear,  
Trust me, verily.(275)

**Everyman.**

Yea, thereto ye would be ready!  
To go to mirth, solace, and play,  
Your mind would sooner persuaded be  
Than to bear me company on my long journey.

**Fellowship.**

Now, in good sooth, I have no will that way—(280)  
But if thou would'st murder, or any man kill,  
In that I will help thee with a good will.

**Everyman.**

Oh, that is simple advice, indeed!  
Gentle Fellowship, help me in my necessity!  
We have loved long, and now I am in need!(285)  
And now, gentle Fellowship, remember me!

**Fellowship.**

Whether ye have loved me or no,  
By Saint John, I will not with thee go!

**Everyman.**

Yea, I pray thee, take this task on thee and do so much for me,  
As to bring me forward on my way for Saint Charity,(290)  
And comfort me till I come without the town.

**Fellowship.**

Nay, if thou wouldest give me a new gown,  
I will not a foot with thee go.  
But, if thou hadst tarried, I would not have left thee so.  
And so now, God speed thee on thy journey,(295)  
For from thee I will depart as fast as I may!

**Everyman.**

Whither away, Fellowship? Will you forsake me?

**Fellowship.**

Everyman

Yea, by my faith! I pray God take thee.

**Everyman.**

Farewell, good Fellowship,—for thee my heart is sore.  
Adieu forever, I shall see thee no more!(300)

**Fellowship.**

In faith, Everyman, farewell now at the ending.  
For you I will remember that parting is grieving.

*[Fellowship goes.]*

**Everyman.**

Alack! Shall we thus part indeed?  
Ah, Lady, help! Lo, vouchsafing no more comfort,  
Fellowship thus forsaketh me in my utmost need.(305)  
For help in this world whither shall I resort?  
Fellowship heretofore with me would merry make,  
And now little heed of my sorrow doth he take.  
It is said in prosperity men friends may find  
Which in adversity be full unkind.(310)  
Now whither for succor shall I flee,  
Since that Fellowship hath forsaken me?  
To my kinsmen will I truly,  
Praying them to help me in my necessity.  
I believe that they will do so(315)  
For “Nature will creep where it may not go.”

*[Kindred and Cousin enter.]*

I will go try, for yonder I see them go.  
Where be ye now, my friends and kinsmen, lo?

**Kindred.**

Here we be now at your commandment.  
Cousin, I pray you show us your intent(320)  
In any wise and do not spare.

**Cousin.**

Yea, Everyman, and to us declare  
If ye be disposed to go any whither,  
For, wit you well, we will live and die together!

**Kindred.**

In wealth and woe we will with you hold,(325)  
For “with his own kin a man may be bold.”

**Everyman.**

Gramercy, my friends and kinsmen kind!  
Now shall I show you the grief of my mind.  
I was commanded by a messenger

Everyman

That is a High King's chief officer.<sup>(330)</sup>  
He bade me go a pilgrimage to my pain,  
And I know well I shall never come again;  
And I must give a reckoning strait,  
For I have a great enemy that lieth for me in wait,  
Who intendeth me to hinder.<sup>(335)</sup>

**Kindred.**

What account is that which you must render?—  
That would I know.

**Everyman.**

Of all my works I must show  
How I have lived and my days have spent,  
Also of evil deeds to which I have been used<sup>(340)</sup>  
In my time, since life was to me lent,  
And of all virtues that I have refused.  
Therefore, I pray you, go thither with me  
To help to make my account, for Saint Charity!

**Cousin.**

What, to go thither? Is that the matter?<sup>(345)</sup>  
Nay, Everyman, I had liefer fast on bread and water  
All this five year and more!

**Everyman.**

Alas, that ever my mother me bore!  
For now shall I never merry be,  
If that you forsake me!<sup>(350)</sup>

**Kindred.**

Ah, sir, come! Ye be a merry man!  
Pluck up heart and make no moan.  
But one thing I warn you, by Saint Anne,  
As for me, ye shall go alone!

**Everyman.**

My cousin, will you not with me go?<sup>(355)</sup>

**Cousin.**

No, by our Lady! I have the cramp in my toe.  
Trust not to me, for, so God me speed,  
I will deceive you in your utmost need.

**Kindred.**

It availeth not us to coax and court.  
Ye shall have my maid, with all my heart.<sup>(360)</sup>  
She loveth to go to feasts, there to make foolish sport  
And to dance, and in antics to take part.  
To help you on that journey I will give her leave willingly,  
If so be that you and she may agree.

**Everyman.**

Now show me the very truth within your mind—(365)  
Will you go with me or abide behind?

**Kindred.**

Abide behind? Yea, that I will, if I may—  
Therefore farewell till another day!

**Everyman.**

How shall I be merry or glad?—  
For fair promises men to me make,(370)  
But, when I have most need, they me forsake!  
I am deceived—that maketh me sad!

**Cousin.**

Cousin Everyman, farewell now, lo!  
For, verily, I will not with thee go.  
Also of mine own an unready reckoning,(375)  
I have to give account of, therefore I make tarrying.  
Now God keep thee, for now I go!

*[Kindred and Cousin go.]*

**Everyman.**

Ah, Jesus, is all to this come so?  
Lo, “fair words make fools fain,”  
They promise, and from deeds refrain.(380)  
My kinsmen promised me faithfully  
For to abide by me stedfastly,  
And now fast away do they flee.  
Even so Fellowship promised me.  
What friend were it best for me to provide?(385)  
I am losing my time longer here to abide.  
Yet still in my mind a thing there is,  
All my life I have loved riches.  
If that my Goods now help me might,  
He would make my heart full light.(390)  
To him will I speak in my sorrow this day.  
My Goods and Riches, where art thou, pray?

*[Goods is disclosed hemmed in by chests and bags.]*

**Goods.**

Who calleth me? Everyman? Why this haste thou hast?  
I lie here in corners trussed and piled so high,  
And in chests I am locked so fast,(395)  
Also sacked in bags, thou mayest see with thine eye,  
I cannot stir; in packs, full low I lie.  
What ye would have, lightly to me say.

**Everyman.**

Everyman

Come hither, Goods, with all the haste thou may,  
For counsel straightway I must ask of thee.(400)

**Goods.**

Sir, if ye in this world have sorrow or adversity,  
That can I help you to remedy shortly.

**Everyman.**

It is another disease that grieveth me;  
In this world it is not, I tell thee so,  
I am sent for another way to go,(405)  
To give a strict account general  
Before the highest Jupiter of all,  
And all my life I have had joy and pleasure in thee,  
Therefore I pray thee go with me,  
For, peradventure, thou mayest before God Almighty on high(410)  
My reckoning help to clean and purify,  
For one may hear ever and anon  
That “money maketh all right that is wrong.”

**Goods.**

Nay, Everyman, I sing another song—  
I follow no man on such voyages,(415)  
For, if I went with thee,  
Thou shouldest fare much the worse for me,  
For, because on me thou didst set thy mind,  
Thy reckoning I have made blotted and blind,  
So that thine account thou canst not make truly—(420)  
And that hast thou for the love of me.

**Everyman.**

That would be to me grief full sore and sorrowing,  
When I should come that fearful answering.  
Up, let us go thither together!

**Goods.**

Nay, not so! I am too brittle, I may not endure,(425)  
I will follow no man one foot, be ye sure.

**Everyman.**

Alas! I have thee loved, and had great pleasure  
All the days of my life in goods and treasure.

**Goods.**

That is to thy damnation, I tell thee a true thing,  
For love of me is to the love everlasting contrary.(430)  
But if thou hadst the while loved me moderately,  
In such wise as to give the poor a part of me,  
Then would'st thou not in this dolor be,  
Nor in this great sorrow and care.

**Everyman.**

Lo, now was I deceived ere I was ware,<sup>(435)</sup>  
And all I may blame to misspending of time.

**Goods.**

What, thinkest thou I am thine?

**Everyman.**

I had thought so.

**Goods.**

Nay, Everyman, I say no.  
Just for a while I was lent to thee,<sup>(440)</sup>  
A season thou hast had me in prosperity.  
My nature it is man's soul to kill,  
If I save one, a thousand I do spill.  
Thinkest thou that I will follow thee?  
Nay, from this world not, verily!<sup>(445)</sup>

**Everyman.**

I had thought otherwise.

**Goods.**

So it is to thy soul Goods is a thief,  
For when thou art dead I straightway devise  
Another to deceive in the same wise  
As I have done thee, and all to his soul's grief.<sup>(450)</sup>

**Everyman.**

O false Goods, cursed may thou be!  
Thou traitor to God that hast deceived me,  
And caught me in thy snare.

**Goods.**

Marry, thou broughtest thyself to this care,—  
Whereof I am glad!<sup>(455)</sup>  
I must needs laugh, I cannot be sad!

**Everyman.**

Ah, Goods, thou hast had long my hearty love.  
I gave thee that which should be the Lord's above.  
But wilt thou not go with me, indeed?—  
I pray thee truth to say!<sup>(460)</sup>

**Goods.**

No, so God me speed!  
Therefore farewell, and have good-day.

*[Goods is hidden from view.]*

**Everyman.**

Everyman

Oh, to whom shall I make my moan  
For to go with me on that heavy journey!  
First Fellowship, so he said, would have with me gone,(465)  
His words were very pleasant and gay,  
But afterwards he left me alone;  
Then spake I to my kinsmen, all in despair,  
And they also gave me words fair,  
They lacked not fair speeches to spend,(470)  
But all forsook me in the end;  
Then went I to my Goods that I loved best,  
In hope to have comfort, but there had I least,  
For my Goods sharply did me tell  
That he bringeth many into hell.(475)  
Then of myself I was ashamed,  
And so I am worthy to be blamed.  
Thus may I well myself hate.  
Of whom shall I now counsel take?  
I think that I shall never speed(480)  
Till I go to my Good Deeds.  
But, alas! she is so weak,  
That she can neither move nor speak.  
Yet will I venture on her now.  
My Good Deeds, where be you?(485)

*[Good Deeds is shown.*

**Good Deeds.**

Here I lie, cold in the ground.  
Thy sins surely have me bound  
That I cannot stir.

**Everyman.**

O Good Deeds, I stand in fear!  
I must pray you for counsel,(490)  
For help now would come right well!

**Good Deeds.**

Everyman, I have understanding  
That ye be summoned your account to make  
Before Messias, of Jerusalem King.  
If you do my counsel, that journey with you will I take.(495)

**Everyman.**

For that I come to you my moan to make.  
I pray you that ye will go with me.

**Good Deeds.**

I would full fain, but I cannot stand, verily.

**Everyman.**

Why, is there something amiss that did you befall?

Everyman

**Good Deeds.**

Yea, Sir, I may thank you for all.(500)  
If in every wise ye had encouraged me,  
Your book of account full ready would be.  
Behold the books of your works and your deeds thereby.  
Ah, see, how under foot they lie  
Unto your soul's deep heaviness.(505)

**Everyman.**

Our Lord Jesus his help vouchsafe to me,  
For one letter here I cannot see.

**Good Deeds.**

There is a blind reckoning in time of distress!

**Everyman.**

Good Deeds, I pray you help me in this need,  
Or else I am forever damned indeed.(510)  
Therefore help me to make reckoning  
Before him, that Redeemer is of everything,  
That is, and was, and shall ever be, King of All.

**Good Deeds.**

Everyman, I am sorry for your fall,  
And fain would I help you, if I were able.(515)

**Everyman.**

Good Deeds, your counsel, I pray you, give me.

**Good Deeds.**

That will I do, verily.  
Though on my feet I may not go,  
I have a sister that shall with you be, also,  
Called Knowledge, who shall with you abide,(520)  
To help you to make that dire reckoning.

*[Knowledge enters.]*

**Knowledge.**

Everyman, I will go with thee and be thy guide,  
In thy utmost need to go by thy side.

**Everyman.**

In good condition I am now in every thing,  
And am wholly content with this good thing,(525)  
Thanks be to God, my creator!

**Good Deeds.**

And when he hath brought thee there,  
Where thou shalt heal thee of thy smart,  
Then go with thy reckoning and thy good deeds together,

Everyman

For to make thee joyful at heart<sup>(530)</sup>  
Before the Holy Trinity.

**Everyman.**

My Good Deeds, gramercy!  
I am well content, certainly,  
With your words sweet.

**Knowledge.**

Now go we together lovingly<sup>(535)</sup>  
To Confession, that cleansing river fair.

**Everyman.**

For joy I weep—I would we were there!  
But, I pray you, give me cognition,  
Where dwelleth that holy man, Confession?

**Knowledge.**

In the House of Salvation.<sup>(540)</sup>  
We shall find him in that place,  
That shall us comfort by God's grace.

*[Confession enters.]*

Lo, this is Confession. Kneel down, and ask mercy,  
For he is in good favor with God Almighty.

**Everyman.**

O glorious fountain that all uncleanness doth clarify,<sup>(545)</sup>  
Wash from me the spots of vice unclean,  
That on me no sin be seen!  
I come with Knowledge for my redemption,  
Redeemed with heartfelt and full contrition,  
For I am commanded a pilgrimage to take,<sup>(550)</sup>  
And great accounts before God to make.  
Now I pray you, Shrift, Mother of Salvation,  
Help my good deeds because of my piteous exclamation!

**Confession.**

I know your sorrow well, Everyman,  
Because with Knowledge ye come to me.<sup>(555)</sup>  
I will you comfort as well as I can,  
And a precious stone will I give thee,  
Called penance, voice-voider of adversity.  
Therewith shall your body chastened be  
Through abstinence and perseverance in God's service.<sup>(560)</sup>  
Here shall you receive that scourge of me  
That is penance stronge, that ye must endure,  
To remember thy Saviour was scourged for thee  
With sharp scourges, and suffered it patiently—  
So must thou ere thou escape from that painful pilgrimage.<sup>(565)</sup>

Knowledge, do thou sustain him on this voyage,  
And by that time Good Deeds will be with thee.  
But in any case be sure of mercy,  
For your time draweth on fast, if ye will saved be.  
Ask God mercy, and he will grant it truly.(570)  
When with the scourge of penance man doth him bind,  
The oil of forgiveness then shall he find.

*[Confession goes.*

**Everyman.**

Thanked be God for his gracious work,  
For now will I my penance begin.  
This hath rejoiced and lightened my heart,(575)  
Though the knots be painful and hard within.

**Knowledge.**

Everyman, see that ye your penance fulfil,  
Whatever the pains ye abide full dear,  
And Knowledge shall give you counsel at will,  
How your account ye shall make full clear.(580)

**Everyman.**

O eternal God, O heavenly being,  
O way of righteousness, O goodly vision,  
Which descended down into a virgin pure  
Because he would for every man redeem  
That which Adam forfeited by his disobedience—(585)  
O blessed God, elect and exalted in thy divinity,  
Forgive thou my grievous offence!  
Here I cry thee mercy in this presence.  
O spiritual treasure, O ransom and redeemer,  
Of all the world the hope and the governor,(590)  
Mirror of joy, founder of mercy,  
Who illumineth heaven and earth thereby,  
Hear my clamorous complaint, though late it be,  
Receive my prayers, unworthy in this heavy life!  
Though I be a sinner most abominable,(595)  
Yet let my name be written in Moses' table.  
O Mary, pray to the Maker of everything  
To vouchsafe me help at my ending,  
And save me from the power of my enemy,  
For Death assaileth me strongly!—(600)  
And, Lady, that I may, by means of thy prayer,  
In your Son's glory as partner share,  
Through the mediation of his passion I it crave.  
I beseech you, help my soul to save!  
Knowledge, give me the scourge of penance;(605)  
My flesh therewith shall give acquittance.  
I will now begin, if God give me grace.

**Knowledge.**

Everyman, God give you time and space!  
Thus I bequeath you into the hands of our Saviour,  
Now may you make your reckoning sure.(610)

**Everyman.**

In the name of the Holy Trinity,  
My body sorely punished shall be.  
Take this, body, for the sin of the flesh.  
As thou delightest to go gay and fresh,  
And in the way of damnation thou didst me bring,(615)  
Therefore suffer now the strokes of punishing.  
Now of penance to wade the water clear I desire,  
To save me from purgatory, that sharp fire.

**Good Deeds.**

I thank God now I can walk and go,  
And am delivered of my sickness and woe!(620)  
Therefore with Everyman I will go and not spare;  
His good works I will help him to declare.

**Knowledge.**

Now, Everyman, be merry and glad,  
Your Good Deeds cometh now, ye may not be sad.  
Now is your Good Deeds whole and sound,(625)  
Going upright upon the ground.

*[Good Deeds rises and walks to them.]*

**Everyman.**

My heart is light and shall be evermore.  
Now will I smite faster than I did before.

**Good Deeds.**

Everyman, pilgrim, my special friend,  
Blessed be thou without end!(630)  
For thee is prepared the eternal glory.  
Now thou hast made me whole and sound this tide,  
In every hour I will by thee abide.

**Everyman.**

Welcome, my Good Deeds! Now I hear thy voice,  
I weep for sweetness of love.(635)

**Knowledge.**

Be no more sad, but ever rejoice!  
God seeth thy manner of life on his throne above.  
Put on this garment to thy behoof,  
Which wet with the tears of your weeping is,  
Or else in God's presence you may it miss,(640)  
When ye to your journey's end come shall.

**Everyman.**

Gentle Knowledge, what do you it call?

**Knowledge.**

A garment of sorrow it is by name,  
From pain it will you reclaim.  
Contrition it is,<sup>(645)</sup>  
That getteth forgiveness,  
Passing well it doth God please.

**Good Deeds.**

Everyman, will you wear it for your soul's ease?

*[Everyman puts on the robe of contrition.]*

**Everyman.**

Now blessed be Jesu, Mary's son,  
For now have I on true contrition!<sup>(650)</sup>  
And let us go now without tarrying.  
Good Deeds, have we all clear our reckoning?

**Good Deeds.**

Yea, indeed, I have them here.

**Everyman.**

Then I trust we need not fear.  
Now, friends, let us not part in twain!<sup>(655)</sup>

**Knowledge.**

Nay, Everyman, that will we not, for certain.

**Good Deeds.**

Yet must thou lead with thee  
Three persons of great might.

**Everyman.**

Who should they be?

**Good Deeds.**

Discretion and Strength they hight.<sup>(660)</sup>  
And thy Beauty may not abide behind.

**Knowledge.**

Also ye must call to mind  
Your Five Wits as your counsellors beside.

**Good Deeds.**

You must have them ready at every tide.

**Everyman.**

How shall I get them hither?<sup>(665)</sup>

**Knowledge.**

You must call them all together,  
And they will hear you immediately.

**Everyman.**

My friends, come hither and present be,  
Discretion, Strength, my Five Wits, and Beauty.

*[They enter.]*

**Beauty.**

Here at your will be we all ready.<sup>(670)</sup>  
What will ye that we should do?

**Good Deeds.**

That ye should with Everyman go,  
And help him in his pilgrimage.  
Advise you—will you with him or not, on that voyage?

**Strength.**

We will all bring him thither,<sup>(675)</sup>  
To help him and comfort, believe ye me!

**Discretion.**

So will we go with him all together.

**Everyman.**

Almighty God, beloved mayest thou be!  
I give thee praise that I have hither brought  
Strength, Discretion, Beauty, Five Wits—lack I nought—<sup>(680)</sup>  
And my Good Deeds, with Knowledge clear,  
All be in my company at my will here.  
I desire no more in this my anxiousness.

**Strength.**

And I, Strength, will stand by you in your distress,  
Though thou wouldest in battle fight on the ground.<sup>(685)</sup>

**Five Wits.**

And though it were through the world round,  
We will not leave you for sweet or sour.

**Beauty.**

No more will I unto Death's hour,  
Whatsoever thereof befall.

**Discretion.**

Everyman, advise you first of all.<sup>(690)</sup>  
Go with a good advisement and deliberation.  
We all give you virtuous monition  
That all shall be well.

**Everyman.**

My friends, hearken what I will tell.  
I pray God reward you in his heavenly sphere.(695)  
Now hearken all that be here,  
For I will make my testament  
Here before you all present.  
In alms, half my goods will I give with my hands twain,  
In the way of charity with good intent,(700)  
And the other half still shall remain  
In bequest to return where it ought to be.  
This I do in despite of the fiend of hell,  
Out of his peril to quit me well  
For ever after and this day.(705)

**Knowledge.**

Everyman, hearken what I say.  
Go to Priesthood, I you advise,  
And receive of him in any wise  
The Holy Sacrament and Unction together,  
Then see ye speedily turn again hither.(710)  
We will all await you here, verily.

**Five Wits.**

Yea, Everyman, haste thee that ye may ready be.  
There is no emperor, king, duke, nor baron bold,  
That from God such commission doth hold  
As he doth to the least priest in this world consign,(715)  
For of the Blessed Sacraments, pure and benign,  
He beareth the keys, and thereof hath the cure  
For man's redemption, it is ever sure,  
Which God as medicine for our souls' gain  
Gave us out of his heart with great pain,(720)  
Here in this transitory life for thee and me.  
Of 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.(725)  
These seven are good to have in remembrance,  
Gracious Sacraments of high divinity.

**Everyman.**

Fain would I receive that holy body.  
And meekly to my spiritual father will I go.

**Five Wits.**

Everyman, that is best that ye can do.(730)  
God will you to salvation bring,  
For Priesthood exceedeth every other thing.  
To us Holy Scripture they do teach,  
And convert men from sin, heaven to reach.  
God hath to them more power given(735)

Than to any angel that is in heaven.  
With five words he may consecrate  
God's body in flesh and blood to make,  
And handleth his Maker between his hands.  
The priest bindeth and unbindeth all bands<sup>(740)</sup>  
Both in earth and heaven.—  
Thou dost administer all the Sacraments seven.  
Though we should kiss thy feet, yet thereof thou worthy wert.  
Thou art the surgeon that doth cure of mortal sin the hurt.  
Remedy under God we find none<sup>(745)</sup>  
Except in Priesthood alone.—  
Everyman, God gave priests that dignity,  
And setteth them in his stead among us to be,  
Thus be they above angels in degree.

### **Knowledge.**

If priests be good, it is so surely;<sup>(750)</sup>  
But when Jesus hung on the cross with grievous smart,  
There he gave out of his blessed heart  
That same Sacrament in grievous torment.—  
He sold them not to us, that Lord omnipotent.  
Therefore Saint Peter the apostle doth say<sup>(755)</sup>  
That Jesus' curse have all they  
Which God their Saviour do buy or sell,  
Or if they for any money do "take or tell."  
Sinful priests give sinners bad example in deed and word,  
Their children sit by other men's fires, I have heard,<sup>(760)</sup>  
And some haunt of women the company,  
With life unclean as through lustful acts of lechery—  
These be with sin made blind.

### **Five Wits.**

I trust to God no such may we find.  
Therefore let us do Priesthood honor,<sup>(765)</sup>  
And follow their doctrines for our souls' succor.  
We be their sheep, and they shepherds be,  
By whom we all are kept in security.  
Peace! for yonder I see Everyman come,  
Who unto God hath made true satisfaction.<sup>(770)</sup>

### **Good Deeds.**

Methinketh it is he indeed.

### **Everyman.**

Now may Jesus all of you comfort and speed!  
I have received the Sacrament for my redemption,  
And also mine extreme unction.  
Blessed be all they that counselled me to take it!<sup>(775)</sup>  
And now, friends, let us go without longer respite.  
I thank God ye would so long waiting stand.  
Now set each of you on this rood your hand,

And shortly follow me.  
I go before where I would be.(780)  
God be our guide!

**Strength.**

Everyman, we will not from you go,  
Till ye have gone this voyage long.

**Discretion.**

I, Discretion, will abide by you also.

**Knowledge.**

And though of this pilgrimage the hardships be never so strong,(785)  
No turning backward in me shall you know.  
Everyman, I will be as sure by thee,  
As ever I was by Judas Maccabee.

**Everyman.**

Alas! I am so faint I may not stand,  
My limbs under me do fold.(790)  
Friends, let us not turn again to this land,  
Not for all the world's gold,  
For into this cave must I creep,  
And turn to the earth, and there sleep.

**Beauty.**

What—into this grave! Alas! Woe is me!(795)

**Everyman.**

Yea, there shall ye consume utterly.

**Beauty.**

And what,—must I smother here?

**Everyman.**

Yea, by my faith, and never more appear!  
In this world we shall live no more at all,  
But in heaven before the highest lord of all.(800)

**Beauty.**

I cross out all this! Adieu, by Saint John!  
I take “my tap in my lap” and am gone.

**Everyman.**

What, Beauty!—whither go ye ?

**Beauty.**

Peace! I am deaf, I look not behind me,  
Not if thou wouldest give me all the gold in thy chest.(805)

*[Beauty goes, followed by the others, as they speak in turn.]*

Everyman

**Everyman.**

Alas! in whom may I trust!  
Beauty fast away from me doth hie.  
She promised with me to live and die.

**Strength.**

Everyman, I will thee also forsake and deny,  
Thy game liketh me not at all!(810)

**Everyman.**

Why, then ye will forsake me all!  
Sweet Strength, tarry a little space.

**Strength.**

Nay, Sir, by the rood of grace,  
I haste me fast my way from thee to take,  
Though thou weep till thy heart do break.(815)

**Everyman.**

Ye would ever abide by me, ye said.

**Strength.**

Yea, I have you far enough conveyed.  
Ye be old enough, I understand,  
Your pilgrimage to take in hand.  
I repent me that I thither came.(820)

**Everyman.**

Strength, for displeasing you I am to blame.  
Will ye break "promise that is debt"?

**Strength.**

In faith, I care not!  
Thou art but a fool to complain,  
You spend your speech and waste your brain.(825)  
Go, thrust thyself into the ground!

**Everyman.**

I had thought more sure I should you have found,  
But I see well, who trusteth in his Strength,  
She him deceiveth at length.  
Both Strength and Beauty have forsaken me,(830)  
Yet they promised me fair and lovingly.

**Discretion.**

Everyman, I will after Strength be gone—  
As for me, I will leave you alone.

**Everyman.**

Why, Discretion, will ye forsake me!

**Discretion.**

Yea, in faith, I will go from thee,<sup>(835)</sup>  
For when Strength goeth before  
I follow after, evermore.

**Everyman.**

Yet, I pray thee, for love of the Trinity  
Look in my grave once in pity of me.

**Discretion.**

Nay, so nigh will I not come, trust me well!<sup>(840)</sup>  
Now I bid you each farewell.

**Everyman.**

Oh, all things fail save God alone—  
Beauty, Strength, and Discretion!  
For when Death bloweth his blast,  
They all run from me full fast.<sup>(845)</sup>

**Five Wits.**

Everyman, my leave now of thee I take.  
I will follow the others, for here I thee forsake.

**Everyman.**

Alas! then may I wail and weep,  
For I took you for my best friend.

**Five Wits.**

I will thee no longer keep.<sup>(850)</sup>  
Now farewell, and here's an end!

**Everyman.**

O Jesu, help! All have forsaken me.

**Good Deeds.**

Nay, Everyman, I will abide by thee,  
I will not forsake thee indeed!  
Thou wilt find me a good friend at need.<sup>(855)</sup>

**Everyman.**

Gramercy, Good Deeds, now may I true friends see.  
They have forsaken me everyone,  
I loved them better than my Good Deeds alone.  
Knowledge, will ye forsake me also?

**Knowledge.**

Yea, Everyman, when ye to death shall go,<sup>(860)</sup>  
But not yet, for no manner of danger.

**Everyman.**

Gramercy, Knowledge, with all my heart!

**Knowledge.**

Nay, yet will I not from hence depart,  
Till whereunto ye shall come, I shall see and know.

**Everyman.**

Methinketh, alas! that I must now go<sup>(865)</sup>  
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 love best do forsake me,  
Except my Good Deeds that abideth faithfully.<sup>(870)</sup>

**Good Deeds.**

All earthly things are but vanity.  
Beauty, Strength and Discretion do man forsake,  
Foolish friends and kinsmen that fair spake,  
All flee away save Good Deeds, and that am I!

**Everyman.**

Have mercy on me, God most mighty,<sup>(875)</sup>  
And stand by me, thou Mother and Maid, holy Mary!

**Good Deeds.**

Fear not, I will speak for thee.

**Everyman.**

Here I cry God mercy!

**Good Deeds.**

Shorten our end and minish our pain,  
Let us go and never come again.<sup>(880)</sup>

**Everyman.**

Into thy hands, Lord, my soul I commend—  
Receive it, Lord, that it be not lost!  
As thou didst me buy, so do thou me defend,  
And save me from the fiend's boast  
That I may appear with that blessed host<sup>(885)</sup>  
That shall be saved at the day of doom.  
*In manus tuas*, of mights the most,  
Forever *commendo spiritum meum*.

*[Everyman goes into the grave.]*

**Knowledge.**

Now that he hath suffered that we all shall endure,  
The Good Deeds shall make all sure;<sup>(890)</sup>  
Now that he hath made ending,  
Methinketh that I hear angels sing,  
And make great joy and melody,  
Where Everyman's soul shall received be!

*[The Angel appears.]*

**The Angel.**

Come, excellent elect spouse to Jesu!<sup>(895)</sup>  
Here above shalt thou go,  
Because of thy singular virtue.  
Now thy soul from thy body is taken, lo!  
Thy reckoning is crystal clear.  
Now shalt thou into the heavenly sphere,<sup>(900)</sup>  
Unto which ye all shall come  
That live well before the day of doom.

*[The Angel goes and the Doctor enters.]*

**Doctor.**

This moral men may have in mind,—  
Ye hearers, take it as of worth, both young and old,  
And forsake Pride, for he deceiveth you in the end, as ye will find,<sup>(905)</sup>  
And remember Beauty, Five Wits, Strength, and Discretion, all told,  
They all at the last do Everyman forsake  
Save that his Good Deeds there doth he take.  
But beware, if they be small,<sup>(910)</sup>  
Before God he hath no help at all,  
None excuse for Everyman may there then be there.  
Alas, how shall he then do and fare!  
For after death amends may no man make,  
For then Mercy and Pity do him forsake.<sup>(915)</sup>  
If his reckoning be not clear when he doth come,  
God will say, *Ite, maledicti, in ignem aeternum.*  
And he that hath his account whole and sound,  
High in heaven he shall be crowned,  
Unto which place God bring us all thither<sup>(920)</sup>  
That we may live, body and soul, together!  
Thereto their aid vouchsafe the Trinity—  
Amen, say ye, for holy Charity!

***Finis.***

*Thus endeth this moral play of **Everyman**.*

# The Second Shepherds' Play

## Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

*The Second Shepherds' Play* is, not surprisingly, the second play about shepherds in the Towneley/Wakefield Cycle. The first came immediately before this one, and many scholars believe the second play is actually a revision of the first. The Wakefield/Towneley Cycle is a series of thirty-two pageants based on the Bible, that was performed in the town of Wakefield, England, during the late Middle Ages and into the early Renaissance. It is also called the Towneley Cycle because the one existing manuscript that contains all thirty-two plays was once owned by the Towneley family.

It is entirely likely that, as a young boy, William Shakespeare was entertained by pageants such as *The Second Shepherds' Play*.

To better appreciate the impact of the play on its medieval audience, the reader should be aware of how and why these “cycle” or “mystery” plays were performed. In an era when there was virtually no local, daily entertainment—no organized sports, no local theater for live performances, no music except perhaps in church—the common person eagerly anticipated the springtime when, in the weeks following the festival of Easter, most towns and cities would host their pageant cycle. Caravans of colorful double-decked wagons paraded the streets, and short plays dramatizing key stories from the Old and New Testaments would be performed on these wagons. The juxtaposition of past and present, contemporary and biblical, common and holy would surely move the medieval spectators in ways no formal sermon ever could. The excitement of the festival, the riotous colors of the wagons and costumes, and the noise of performers and crowd all combined to create an unforgettable experience for people whose lives were hard and for whom fun was scarce.

The thirty-two plays in the cycle were clearly written by several authors over the course of approximately two hundred years. However, several plays, including *The Second Shepherds' Play*, are so superior to the others that they are believed to have been authored by one playwright, today known simply as the Wakefield Master. Other plays in the cycle presumed to be by the Master include *Noah*, *The First Shepherds' Play*, *Herod the Great*, and *The Buffeting of Christ*. The common authorship of these specific plays is assumed based on their comedy, social satire, and sympathetic and realistic portrayal of humanity.

By watching the performances in this parade of plays, even a Middle Ages peasant could sample the full scope of biblical history, from Creation to Judgment. *The Second Shepherds' Play* is the Cycle's Nativity play, but the anonymous “Wakefield Master” tells this familiar tale with a comic twist that has made this one of the most famous medieval cycle plays still in existence.

Several of the plays are written in a unique pattern sometimes called the “Wakefield Stanza.” When reading, *The Second Shepherds' Play*, you might notice that the rhyme is both unusual and remains the same throughout the play. It is a nine-line stanza with the rhyme scheme AAAAB CCCB. In addition, each of the first four lines contains a caesura. The last word before the caesura in every line rhymes. For example, *The Second Shepherds' Play* begins:

Lord, but this weather is **cold**, // and I am ill **wrapped**!  
Night dazed, were the truth **told**, // so long have I **napped**;  
My legs under me **fold**; // my fingers are **chapped**—  
With such like I don't **hold**, // for I am all **lapt**

In **sorrow**.

s

In storms and **tempest**,  
Now in the east, now in the **west**,  
Woe is him has never **rest**

Midday nor **morrow**!

Other plays in the Wakefield/Towneley Cycle include:

*The Creation*

*The Slaying of Abel*

The stories of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*

*The Exodus*

*The First Shepherds' Play*

*The Flight into Egypt*

*The Raising of Lazarus*

*The Crucifixion*

*The Parable of the Talents*

*The Resurrection*

*The Ascension*

*The Last Judgment*

## The Second Shepherds' Play

[*The First Shepherd (Primus Pastor) enters.*]

### Primus Pastor.

Lord, but this weather is cold, and I am ill wrapped!  
Night dazed, were the truth told, so long have I napped;  
My legs under me fold; my fingers are chapped—  
With such like I don't hold, for I am all lapt  
In sorrow.<sup>(5)</sup>  
In storms and tempest,  
Now in the east, now in the west,  
Woe is him has never rest  
Midday nor morrow!  
But we seely shepherds that walk on the moor,<sup>(10)</sup>  
In faith we're nigh at hand to be put out of door.  
No wonder, as it doth stand, if we be poor,  
For the tilth of our land lies fallow as the floor,  
As ye ken.  
We're so burdened and banned,<sup>(15)</sup>  
Over-taxed and unmanned,  
We're made tame to the hand  
Of these gentry men.  
Thus they rob us of our rest, our Lady them harry!  
These men bound to their lords' behest, they make the plough tarry,<sup>(20)</sup>  
What men say is for the best, we find the contrary,—  
Thus are husbandmen oppressed, in point to miscarry,  
In life,

Thus hold they us under  
 And from comfort sunder.<sup>(25)</sup>  
 It were great wonder,  
 If ever we should thrive.  
 For if a man may get an embroidered sleeve or a brooch now-a-days,  
 Woe is him that may him grieve, or a word in answer says!  
 No blame may he receive, whatever pride he displays;<sup>(30)</sup>  
 And yet may no man believe one word that he says,  
 Not a letter.  
 His daily needs are gained  
 By boasts and bragging feigned,  
 And in all he's maintained<sup>(35)</sup>  
 By men that are greater.  
 Proud shall come a swain as a peacock may go,  
 He must borrow my wain, my plough also,  
 Then I am full fain to grant it ere he go.  
 Thus live we in pain, anger, and woe<sup>(40)</sup>  
 By night and day!  
 He must have it, if he choose,  
 Though I should it lose,  
 I were better hanged than refuse,  
 Or once say him nay!<sup>(45)</sup>  
 It does me good as I walk thus alone  
 Of this world for to talk and to make my moan.  
 To my sheep will I stalk, and hearken anon,  
 There wait on a balk, or sit on a stone.  
 Full soon,<sup>(50)</sup>  
 For I trow, pardie,  
 True men if they be,  
 We shall have company,  
 Ere it be noon.

*[The First Shepherd goes out (or to one side). The Second Shepherd enters.]*

**Secundus Pastor.**

Ben'cite and Dominus! What may this mean?<sup>(55)</sup>  
 Why fares the world thus! The like often we've seen!  
 Lord, but it is spiteful and grievous, this weather so keen!  
 And the frost so hideous—it waters mine een!  
 That's no lie!  
 Now in dry, now in wet,<sup>(60)</sup>  
 Now in snow, now in sleet,  
 When my shoes freeze to my feet,  
 It's not all easy!  
 But so far as I ken, wherever I go,  
 We seely wedded men suffer mickle woe,<sup>(65)</sup>  
 We have sorrow once and again, it befalls oft so.  
 Seely Capel, our hen, both to and fro  
 She cackles,  
 But if she begins to croak,  
 To grumble or cluck,<sup>(70)</sup>

Then woe be to our cock,  
 For he is in the shackles!  
 These men that are wed have not all their will;  
 When they're full hard bestead, they sigh mighty still;  
 God knows the life they are led is full hard and full ill,<sup>(75)</sup>  
 Nor thereof in bower or bed may they speak their will,  
 This tide.  
 My share I have found,  
 Know my lesson all round,  
 Woe is him that is bound,<sup>(80)</sup>  
 For he must it abide!  
 But now late in men's lives (such a marvel to me  
 That I think my heart rives such wonders to see,  
 How that destiny drives that it should so be!)  
 Some men will have two wives and some men three<sup>(85)</sup>  
 In store.  
 Some are grieved that have any,  
 But I'll wager my penny  
 Woe is him that has many,  
 For he feels sore!<sup>(90)</sup>  
 But young men as to wooing, for God's sake that you bought,  
 Beware well of wedding, and hold well in thought,  
 "Had I known" is a thing that serves you nought.  
 Much silent sorrowing has a wedding home brought,  
 And grief gives,<sup>(95)</sup>  
 With many a sharp shower—  
 For thou mayest catch in an hour  
 What shall taste thee full sour  
 As long as one lives!  
 For—if ever read I epistle!—I have one by my fire,<sup>(100)</sup>  
 As sharp as a thistle, as rough as a briar,  
 She has brows like a bristle and a sour face by her;  
 If she had once wet her whistle, she might sing clearer and higher  
 Her pater-noster;  
 She is as big as a whale,<sup>(105)</sup>  
 She has a gallon of gall,—  
 By him that died for us all,  
 I wish I had run till I had lost her!

**Primus Pastor.**

"God look over the row!" like a deaf man ye stand.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Yea, sluggard, the devil thy maw burn with his brand!<sup>(110)</sup>  
 Didst see aught of Daw?

**Primus Pastor.**

Yea, on the pasture-land  
 I heard him blow just before; he comes nigh at hand  
 Below there.  
 Stand still.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Why?

**Primus Pastor.**

For he comes, hope I.(115)

**Secundus Pastor.**

He'll catch us both with some lie  
Unless we beware.

*[The Third Shepherd enters, at first without seeing them.]*

**Tertius Pastor.**

Christ's cross me speed and St. Nicholas!  
Thereof in sooth I had need, it was worse than it was.  
Whoso hath knowledge, take heed, and let the world pass,(120)  
You may never trust it, indeed,—it's as brittle as glass,  
As it rangeth.  
Never before fared this world so,  
With marvels that greater grow,  
Now in weal, now in woe,(125)  
And everything changeth.  
There was never since Noah's flood such floods seen,  
Winds and rains so rude and storms so keen;  
Some stammered, some stood in doubt, as I ween.—  
Now God turn all to good, I say as I mean!(130)  
For ponder  
How these floods all drown  
Both in fields and in town,  
And bear all down,  
And that is a wonder!(135)  
We that walk of nights our cattle to keep,

*[Catches sight of the others.*

We see startling sights when other men sleep.  
Yet my heart grows more light—I see shrews a-peep.  
Ye are two tall wights—I will give my sheep  
A turn, below.(140)  
But my mood is ill-sent;  
As I walk on this bent,  
I may lightly repent,  
If I stub my toe.  
Ah, Sir, God you save and my master sweet!(145)  
A drink I crave, and somewhat to eat.

**Primus Pastor.**

Christ's curse, my knave, thou'rt a lazy cheat!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Lo, the boy lists to rave! Wait till later for meat,  
We have eat it.  
Ill thrift on thy pate!(150)  
Though the rogue came late,  
Yet is he in state  
To eat, could he get it.

**Tertius Pastor.**

That such servants as I, that sweat and swink,  
Eat our bread full dry gives me reason to think.(155)  
Wet and weary we sigh while our masters wink,  
Yet full late we come by our dinner and drink—  
But soon thereto  
Our dame and sire,  
When we've run in the mire,(160)  
Take a nip from our hire,  
And pay slow as they care to.  
But hear my oath, master, since you find fault this way,  
I shall do this hereafter—work to fit my pay;  
I'll do just as much, sir, and now and then play,(165)  
For never yet supper in my stomach lay  
In the fields.  
But why dispute so?  
Off with staff I can go.  
“Easy bargain,” men say,(170)  
“But a poor return yields.”

**Primus Pastor.**

Thou wert an ill lad for work to ride wooing  
From a man that had but little spending.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Peace, boy, I bade! No more jangling,  
Or I'll make thee full sad, by the Heaven's King,(175)  
With thy gauds!  
Where are our sheep, boy? Left lorn?

**Tertius Pastor.**

Sir, this same day at morn,  
I left them in the corn  
When they rang Lauds.(180)  
They have pasture good, they cannot go wrong.

**Primus Pastor.**

That is right. By the Rood, these nights are long!  
Ere we go now, I would someone gave us a song.

**Secundus Pastor.**

So I thought as I stood, to beguile us along.

**Tertius Pastor.**

I agree.(185)

**Primus Pastor.**

The tenor I'll try.

**Secundus Pastor.**

And I the treble so high.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Then the mean shall be I.  
How ye chant now, let's see!

*[They sing (the song is not given).]*

*Tunc entrat Mak, in clamide se super togam vestitus.*

**Mak.**

Now, Lord, by thy seven names' spell, that made both moon and stars on high,(190)  
Full more than I can tell, by thy will for me, Lord, lack I.  
I am all at odds, nought goes well—that oft doth my temper try.  
Now would God I might in heaven dwell, for there no children cry, So still.

**Primus Pastor.**

Who is that pipes so poor?(195)

**Mak.**

Would God ye knew what I endure!

**[Primus Pastor.]**

Lo, a man that walks on the moor,  
And has not all his will!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Mak, whither dost speed? What news do you bring?(200)

**Tertius Pastor.**

Is he come? Then take heed each one to this thing.  
*Et accipit clamiden ab ipso.*

**Mak.**

What! I am a yeoman—since there's need I should tell you—of the King,  
That self-same, indeed, messenger from a great lording, And the like thereby.  
Fie on you! Go hence  
Out of my presence!(205)  
I must have reverence,  
And you as “who am I!”

**Primus Pastor.**

Why dress ye it up so quaint? Mak, ye do ill!

**Secundus Pastor.**

But, Mak, listen, ye saint, I believe what ye will!

**Tertius Pastor.**

I trow the knave can feint, by the neck the devil him kill!(210)

**Mak.**

I shall make complaint, and you'll all get your fill,  
At a word from me—  
And tell your doings, forsooth!

**Primus Pastor.**

But, Mak, is that truth?  
Now take out that southern tooth(215)  
And stick in a flea!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Mak, the devil be in your eye, verily! to a blow I'd fain treat you.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Mak, know you not me? By God, I could beat you!(220)

**Mak.**

God keep you all three! Me thought I had seen you—I greet you, Ye are a fair company!

**Primus Pastor.**

Oh, now you remember, you cheat, you!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Shrew, jokes are cheap!  
When thus late a man goes,  
What will folk suppose?—  
You've a bad name, God knows,  
For stealing of sheep!(225)

**Mak.**

And true as steel am I, all men know and say,  
But a sickness I feel, verily, that grips me hard, night and day.  
My belly is all awry, it is out of play—

**Tertius Pastor.**

“Seldom doth the Devil lie dead by the way—”

**Mak.**

Therefore(230)  
Full sore am I and ill,  
Though I stand stone still;  
I've not eat a needle  
This month and more.

**Primus Pastor.**

How fares thy wife, by my hood, how fares she, ask I?(235)

**Mak.**

Lies asprawl, by the Rood, lo, the fire close by,  
And a house-full of home-brewed she drinks full nigh—  
Ill may speed any good thing that she will try  
Else to do!—  
Eats as fast as may be,(240)  
And each year they'll a day be  
She brings forth a baby,  
And some years two.  
But were I now kinder, d'ye hear, and far richer in purse,  
Still were I eaten clear out of house and home, sirs.(245)  
And she's a foul-favored dear, see her close, by God's curse!  
No one knows or may hear, I trow, of a worse,  
Not any!  
Now will ye see what I proffer?—  
To give all in my coffer,(250)  
To-morrow next to offer  
Her head-mass penny.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Faith, so weary and worn is there none in this shire.  
I must sleep, were I shorn of a part of my hire.

**Tertius Pastor.**

I'm naked, cold, and forlorn, and would fain have a fire.(255)

**Primus Pastor.**

I'm clean spent, for, since morn, I've run in the mire.  
Watch thou, do!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Nay, I'll lie down hereby,  
For I must sleep, truly.

**Tertius Pastor.**

As good a man's son was I,(260)  
As any of you!

*[They prepare to lie down.]*

But, Mak, come lie here in between, if you please.

**Mak.**

You'll be hindered, I fear, from talking at ease,  
Indeed!

*[He yields and lies down.]*

From my top to my toe,(265)  
*Manus tuas commendo,*  
*Poncio Pilato,*

Christ's cross me speed!  
*Tunc surgit, pastoribus dormientibus, et dicit:*  
Now 't were time a man knew, that lacks what he'd fain hold,  
To steal privily through then into a fold,(270)  
And then nimbly his work do—and be not too bold,  
For his bargain he'd rue, if it were told  
At the ending  
Now 't were time their wrath to tell!—  
But he needs good counsel(275)  
That fain would fare well,  
And has but little for spending.  
But about you a circle as round as a moon,

*[He draws the circle.*

Till I have done what I will, till that it be noon,  
That ye lie stone still, until I have done;(280)  
And I shall say thereto still, a few good words soon  
Of might:  
Over your heads my hand I lift.  
Out go your eyes! Blind be your sight!  
But I must make still better shift,(285)  
If it's to be right.  
Lord, how hard they sleep—that may ye all hear!  
I never herded sheep, but I'll learn now, that's clear.  
Though the flock be scared a heap, yet shall I slip near.

*[He captures a sheep.*

Hey—hitherward creep! Now that betters our cheer(290)  
From sorrow.  
A fat sheep, I dare say!  
A good fleece, swear I may!  
When I can, then I'll pay,  
But this I will borrow!(295)

*[Mak goes to his house, and knocks at the door.]*

**Mak.**

Ho, Gill, art thou in? Get us a light!

**Uxor Eius.**

Who makes such a din at this time of night?  
I am set for to spin, I think not I might  
Rise a penny to win! Curses loud on them light  
Trouble cause!  
A busy house-wife all day(300)  
To be called thus away!  
No work's done, I say,  
Because of such small chores!

**Mak.**

The door open, good Gill. See'st thou not what I bring?(305)

**Uxor.**

Draw the latch, an thou will. Ah, come in, my sweeting!

**Mak.**

Yea, thou need'st not care didst thou kill me with such long standing!

**Uxor.**

By the naked neck still thou art likely to swing.

**Mak.**

Oh, get away!  
I am worthy of my meat,(310)  
For at a pinch I can get  
More than they that swink and sweat  
All the long day.  
Thus it fell to my lot, Gill! Such luck came my way!

**Uxor.**

It were a foul blot to be hanged for it some day.(315)

**Mak.**

I have often escaped, Gillot, as risky a play.

**Uxor.**

But "though long goes the pot to the water," men say,  
"At last  
Comes it home broken."

**Mak.**

Well know I the token,(320)  
But let it never be spoken—  
But come and help fast!  
I would he were slain, I would like well to eat,  
This twelvemonth was I not so fain to have some sheep's meat.

**Uxor.**

Should they come ere he's slain and hear the sheep bleat—(325)

**Mak.**

Then might I be a ta'en. That were a cold sweat!  
The door—  
Go close it!

**Uxor.**

Yes, Mak,—  
For if they come at thy back—(330)

**Mak.**

Then might I suffer from the whole pack  
The devil, and more!

**Uxor.**

A good trick have I spied, since thou thinkest of none,  
Here shall we him hide until they be gone—  
In my cradle he'll bide—just you let me alone—  
And I shall lie beside in childbed and groan.<sup>(335)</sup>

**Mak.**

Well said!  
And I shall say that this night  
A boy child saw the light.

**Uxor.**

Now that day was bright  
That saw me born and bred!<sup>(340)</sup>  
This is a good device and a far cast.  
Ever a woman's advice gives help at the last!  
I care not who spies! Now go thou back fast!

**Mak.**

Save I come ere they rise, there'll blow a cold blast!

*[Mak goes back to the moor, and prepares to lie down.]*

I will go sleep.<sup>(345)</sup>  
Still sleeps all this company,  
And I shall slip in privily  
As it had never been I  
That carried off their sheep.

**Primus Pastor.**

*Resurrex a mortuis!* Reach me a hand!<sup>(350)</sup>  
*Judas carnas dominus!* I can hardly stand!  
My foot's asleep, by Jesus, and my mouth's dry as sand.  
I thought we had laid us full night to England!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Yea, verily!  
Lord, but I have slept well.<sup>(355)</sup>  
As fresh as an eel,  
As light do I feel,  
As leaf on the tree.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Ben 'cite be herein! So my body is quaking,  
My heart is out of my skin with the to-do it's making.<sup>(360)</sup>  
Who's making all this din, so my head's set to aching.  
To the doer I'll win! Hark, you fellows, be waking!  
Four we were—

See ye aught of Mak now?

**Primus Pastor.**

We were up ere thou.(365)

**Secundus Pastor.**

Man, to God I vow,  
Not once did he stir.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Methought he was lapt in a wolf's skin.

**Primus Pastor.**

So many are wrapped now-namely within.

**Tertius Pastor.**

When we had long napped, methought with a gin(370)  
A fat sheep he trapped, but he made no din.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Be still!  
Thy dream makes thee mad,  
It's a nightmare you've had.

**Primus Pastor.**

God bring good out of bad,(375)  
If it be his will!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Rise, Mak, for shame! Right long dost thou lie.

**Mak.**

Now Christ's Holy Name be with us for aye!  
What's this, by Saint James, I can't move when I try.  
I suppose I'm the same. Oo-o, my neck's lain awry(380)  
Enough, perdie—  
Many thanks!—since yester even.  
Now, by Saint Stephen,  
I was plagued by a sweven,(385)  
Knocked at the heart of me.  
I thought Gill begun to croak and travail full sad,  
Well-nigh at the first cock, with a young lad  
To add to our flock. Of that I am never glad,  
To have "tow on my rock more than ever I had."  
Oh, my head!(390)  
A house full of young banes—  
The devil knock out their brains!  
Woe is him many gains,  
And thereto little bread.  
I must go home, by your leave, to Gill, as I thought.(395)  
Prithee look in my sleeve that I steal naught.

I am loath you to grieve, or from you take aught.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Go forth—ill may'st thou thrive!

*[Mak goes.]*

Now I would that we sought  
This morn,<sup>(400)</sup>  
That we had all our store.

**Primus Pastor.**

But I will go before.  
Let us meet.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Where, Daw?

**Tertius Pastor.**

At the crooked thorn.<sup>(405)</sup>

*[They go out. Mak enters and knocks at his door.]*

**Mak.**

Undo the door, see who's here! How long must I stand?

**Uxor Eius.**

Who's making such gear? Now "walk in the wenyand."

**Mak.**

Ah, Gill, what cheer? It is I, Mak, your husband.

**Uxor.**

Then may we "see here the devil in a band,"  
Sir Guile!<sup>(410)</sup>  
Lo, he comes with a note  
As he were held by the throat.  
And I cannot devote  
To my work any while.

**Mak.**

Will ye hear the pother she makes to get her a gloze—<sup>(415)</sup>  
Naught but pleasure she takes, and curls up her toes.

**Uxor.**

Why, who runs, who wakes, who comes, who goes,  
Who brews, who bakes, what makes me hoarse, d'ye suppose!  
And also,  
It is ruth to behold,<sup>(420)</sup>  
Now in hot, now in cold,  
Full woeful is the household

That no woman doth know!  
But what end hast thou made with the shepherds, Mak?

**Mak.**

The last word that they said when I turned my back<sup>(425)</sup>  
Was they'd see that they had of their sheep all the pack.  
They'll not be pleased, I'm afraid, when they their sheep lack,  
Perdie.  
But how so the game go,  
They'll suspect me, whether or no,<sup>(430)</sup>  
And raise a great bellow,  
And cry out upon me.  
But thou must use thy sleight.

**Uxor.**

Yea, I think it not ill.  
I shall swaddle him aright in my cradle with skill.<sup>(435)</sup>  
Were it yet a worse plight, yet a way I'd find still.

*[Gill meanwhile swaddles the sheep and places him in the cradle.]*

I will lie down forthright. Come tuck me up.

**Mak.**

That I will.

**Uxor.**

Behind!

*[Mak tucks her in at the back.]*

If Coll come and his marrow,<sup>(440)</sup>  
They will nip us full narrow.

**Mak.**

But I may cry out "Haro,"  
The sheep if they find.

**Uxor.**

Harken close till they call—they will come anon.  
Come and make ready all, and sing thou alone—<sup>(445)</sup>  
Sing lullaby, thou shalt, for I must groan  
And cry out by the wall on Mary and John  
Full sore.  
Sing lullaby on fast,  
When thou hear'st them at last,<sup>(450)</sup>  
And, save I play a shrewd cast,  
Trust me no more.

*[The Shepherds enter on the moor and meet.]*

**Tertius Pastor.**

Ah, Coll, good morn! Why sleepest thou not?

**Primus Pastor.**

Alas, that ever I was born! We have a foul blot.  
A fat wether have we lorn.<sup>(455)</sup>

**Tertius Pastor.**

Marry, God forbid, say it not!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Who should do us that scorn? That were a foul spot.

**Primus Pastor.**

Some shrew.  
I have sought with my dogs  
All Horbury Shrogs,<sup>(460)</sup>  
And of fifteen hogs  
Found I all but one ewe.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Now trust me, if you will, by Saint Thomas of Kent,  
Either Mak or Gill their aid therto lent!

**Primus Pastor.**

Peace, man, be still! I saw when he went.<sup>(465)</sup>  
Thou dost slander him ill. Thou shouldest repent  
At once, indeed!

**Secundus Pastor.**

So may I thrive, perdie,  
Should I die here where I be,  
I would say it was he<sup>(470)</sup>  
That did the same deed!

**Tertius Pastor.**

Go we thither, quick sped, and run on our feet,  
I shall never eat bread till I know all complete!

**Primus Pastor.**

Nor drink in my head till with him I meet.

**Secundus Pastor.**

In no place will I bed until I him greet,<sup>(475)</sup>  
My brother!  
One vow I will plight,  
Till I see him in sight,  
I will ne'er sleep one night  
Where I do another!<sup>(480)</sup>

*[They go to Mak's house. Mak, hearing them coming, begins to sing lullaby at the top of his voice, while Gill groans in concert.]*

**Tertius Pastor.**

Hark the row they make! List our sire there croon!

**Primus Pastor.**

Never heard I voice break so clear out of tune.  
Call to him.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Mak, wake there! Undo your door soon!

**Mak.**

Who is that spake as if it were noon?<sup>(485)</sup>  
Aloft?  
Who is that, I say?

**Tertius Pastor.**

Good fellows, if it were day—

*[Mocking Mak.]*

**Mak.**

As far as ye may,  
Kindly, speak soft;<sup>(490)</sup>  
O'er a sick woman's head in such grievous throes!  
I were liefer dead than she should suffer such woes.

**Uxor.**

Go elsewhere, well sped. Oh, how my pain grows—  
Each footfall ye tread goes straight through my nose  
So loud, woe 's me!<sup>(495)</sup>

**Primus Pastor.**

Tell us, Mak, if ye may,  
How fare ye, I say?

**Mak.**

But are ye in this town to-day—  
Now how fare ye?  
Ye have run in the mire and are wet still a bit,<sup>(500)</sup>  
I will make you a fire, if ye will sit.  
A nurse I would hire—can you help me in it?  
Well quit is my hire—my dream the truth hit—  
In season.  
I have bairns, if ye knew,<sup>(505)</sup>  
Plenty more than will do,  
But we must drink as we brew,  
And that is but reason.  
I would ye would eat ere ye go. Methinks that ye sweat.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Nay, no help could we know in what's drunken or eat.(510)

**Mak.**

Why, sir, ails you aught but good, though?

**Tertius Pastor.**

Yea, our sheep that we get  
Are stolen as they go; our loss is great.

**Mak.**

Sirs, Drink!  
Had I been there,(515)  
Some one had bought it sore, I swear.

**Primus Pastor.**

Marry, some men trow what ye were,  
And that makes us think!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Mak, one and another trows it should be ye.(520)

**Tertius Pastor.**

Either ye or your spouse, so say we.

**Mak.**

Now if aught suspicion throws on Gill or me,  
Come and search our house, and then may ye see  
Who had her—  
If I any sheep got,(525)  
Or cow or stot;  
And Gill, my wife, rose not,  
Here since we laid her.  
As I am true and leal, to God, here I pray  
That this is the first meal that I shall eat this day.(530)

**Primus Pastor.**

Mak, as may I have weal, advise thee, I say—  
“He learned timely to steal that could not say nay.”

**Uxor.**

Me, my death you've dealt!  
Out, ye thieves, nor come again,  
Ye've come just to rob us, that's plain.(535)

**Mak.**

Hear ye not how she groans amain—  
Your hearts should melt!

**Uxor.**

From my child, thieves, begone. Go nigh him not,—there's the door!

**Mak.**

If ye knew all she's borne, your hearts would be sore.  
Ye do wrong, I you warn, thus to come in before<sup>(540)</sup>  
A woman that has borne—but I say no more.

**Uxor.**

Oh, my middle—I die!  
I vow to God so mild,  
If ever I you beguiled,  
That I will eat this child<sup>(545)</sup>  
That doth in this cradle lie!

**Mak.**

Peace, woman, by God's pain, and cry not so.  
Thou dost hurt thy brain and fill me with woe.

**Secundus Pastor.**

I trow our sheep is slain. What find ye two, though?  
Our work 's all in vain. We may as well go.<sup>(550)</sup>  
Save clothes and such matters  
I can find no flesh  
Hard or nesh,  
Salt nor fresh,  
Except two empty platters.<sup>(555)</sup>  
Of any "cattle" but this, tame or wild, that we see,  
None, as may I have bliss, smelled as loud as he.

**Uxor.**

No, so God joy and bliss of my child may give me!

**Primus Pastor.**

We have aimed amiss; deceived, I trow, were we.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Sir, wholly each, one.<sup>(560)</sup>  
Sir, Our Lady him save!  
Is your child a knave?

**Mak.**

Any lord might him have,  
This child, for his son.  
When he wakes, so he grips, it's a pleasure to see.<sup>(565)</sup>

**Tertius Pastor.**

Good luck to his hips, and blessing, say we!  
But who were his gossips, now tell who they be?

**Mak.**

Blest be their lips—

*[Hesitates, at a loss.]*

*Primus Pastor*  
Hark a lie now, trust me!

*[Aside*

**Mak.**

So may God them thank,(570)  
Parkin and Gibbon Waller, I say,  
And gentle John Horn, in good fey—  
He made all the fun and play—  
With the great shank.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Mak, friends will we be, for we are at one.(575)

**Mak.**

We!—nay, count not on me, for amends get I none.  
Farewell, all three! Glad 't will be when ye're gone!

*[The Shepherds go.*

**Tertius Pastor.**

“Fair words there may be, but love there is none  
This year.”

**Primus Pastor.**

Gave ye the child anything?(580)

**Secundus Pastor.**

I trow, not one farthing.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Fast back I will fling.  
Await ye me here.

*[Daw goes back. The other Shepherds turn and follow him slowly, entering while he is talking with Mak.]*

**[Tertius Pastor.]**

Mak, I trust thou 't not grieve, if I go to thy child.

**Mak.**

Nay, great hurt I receive,—thou has acted full wild.(585)

**Tertius Pastor.**

Thy bairn 't will not grieve, little day-star so mild.  
Mak, by your leave, let me give your child  
But six-pence.

*[Daw goes to the cradle, and starts to draw away the covering.]*

**Mak.**

Nay, stop it—he sleeps!

**Tertius Pastor.**

Methinks he peeps—(590)

**Mak.**

When he wakens, he weeps;  
I pray you go hence!

*[The other Shepherds return.]*

**Tertius Pastor.**

Give me leave him to kiss, and lift up the clout.  
What the devil is this?—he has a long snout!

**Primus Pastor.**

He's birth-marked amiss. We waste time hereabout.(595)

**Secundus Pastor.**

“A weft that ill-spun is comes ever foul out.”

*[He sees the sheep.]*

Aye—so!  
He is like to our sheep!

**Tertius Pastor.**

Ho, Gib, may I peep?

**Primus Pastor.**

I trow “Nature will creep(600)  
Where it may not go.”

**Secundus Pastor.**

This was a quaint gaud and a far cast.  
It was a high fraud.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Yea, sirs, that was 't.  
Let's burn this bawd, and bind her fast.(605)  
“A false scold,” by the Lord, “will hang at the last!”  
So shalt thou!  
Will ye see how they swaddle  
His four feet in the middle!  
Saw I never in the cradle(610)  
A horned lad ere now!

**Mak.**

Peace, I say! Tell ye what, this to-do ye can spare!

*[Pretending anger.]*

It was I him begot and yon woman him bare.

**Primus Pastor.**

What the devil for name has he got? Mak?—  
Lo, God, Mak's heir!(615)

**Secundus Pastor.**

Come, joke with him not. Now, may God give him care,  
I say!

**Uxor.**

A pretty child is he  
As sits on a woman's knee,  
A dilly-down, perdie,(620)  
To make a man gay.

**Tertius Pastor.**

I know him by the ear-mark—that is a good token.

**Mak.**

I tell you, sirs, hark, his nose was broken—  
Then there told me a clerk he'd been mis-spoken.

**Primus Pastor.**

Ye deal falsely and dark; I would fain be wroken.(625)  
Get a weapon,—go!

**Uxor.**

He was taken by an elf,  
I saw it myself.  
When the clock struck twelve,  
Was he mis-shapen so.(630)

**Secundus Pastor.**

Ye two are at one, that's plain, in all ye've done and said.

**Primus Pastor.**

Since their theft they maintain, let us leave them dead!

**Mak.**

If I trespass again, strike off my head!  
At your will I remain.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Sirs, take my counsel instead.(635)  
For this trespass  
We'll neither curse nor wrangle in spite,  
Chide nor fight,  
But have done forthright,  
And toss him in canvas.(640)

*[They toss Mak in one of Gill's canvas sheets till they are tired. He disappears groaning into his house. The Shepherds pass over to the moor on the other side of the stage.]*

**Primus Pastor.**

Lord, lo! but I am sore, like to burst, in back and breast.  
In faith, I may no more, therefore will I rest.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Like a sheep of seven score he weighted in my fist.  
To sleep anywhere, therefore seemeth now best.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Now I you pray,<sup>(645)</sup>  
On this green let us lie.

**Primus Pastor.**

O'er those thieves yet chafe I.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Let your anger go by,—  
Come do as I say.

*[As they are about to lie down the Angel appears.]*

*Angelus cantat "Gloria in excelsis." Postea dicat:*

**Angelus.**

Rise, herdsmen gentle, attend ye, for now is he born<sup>(650)</sup>  
From that fiend that shall rend what Adam had lorn,  
That warlock to shend, this night is he born,  
God is made your friend now on this morn.  
Lo! thus doth he command—  
Go to Bethlehem, see<sup>(655)</sup>  
Where he lieth so free,  
In a manger full lowly  
'Twix where twain beasts stand.

*[The Angel goes.]*

**Primus Pastor.**

This was a fine voice, even as ever I heard.  
It is a marvel, by St. Stephen, thus with dread to be stirred.<sup>(660)</sup>

**Secundus Pastor.**

'T was of God's Son from heaven he these tidings averred.  
All the wood with a levin, methought at his word  
Shone fair.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Of a Child did he tell,  
In Bethlehem, mark ye well.<sup>(665)</sup>

**Primus Pastor.**

That this star yonder doth spell—  
Let us seek him there.

**Secundus Pastor.**

Say, what was his song—how it went, did ye hear?  
Three breves to a long—

**Tertius Pastor.**

Marry, yes, to my ear<sup>(670)</sup>  
There was no crotchet wrong, naught it lacked and full clear!

**Primus Pastor.**

To sing it here, us among, as he nicked it, full near.  
I know how—

**Secundus Pastor.**

Let's see how you croon!  
Can you bark at the moon?<sup>(675)</sup>

**Tertius Pastor.**

Hold your tongues, have done!  
Hark after me now!

*[They sing.]*

**Secundus Pastor.**

To Bethlehem he bade that we should go.  
I am sore adrad that we tarry too slow.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Be merry, and not sad—our song's of mirth not of woe,<sup>(680)</sup>  
To be forever glad as our meed may we know,  
Without noise.

**Primus Pastor.**

Hie we thither, then, speedily,  
Though we be wet and weary,  
To that Child and that Lady!—<sup>(685)</sup>  
We must not lose those joys!

**Secundus Pastor.**

We find by the prophecy—let be your din!—  
David and Isaiah, and more that I mind me therein,  
They prophesied by clergy, that in a virgin,  
Should he alight and lie, to assuage our sin,<sup>(690)</sup>  
And slake it,  
Our nature, from woe,  
For it was Isaiah said so,  
*“Ecce virgo  
Concipiet”* a child that is naked.<sup>(695)</sup>

**Tertius Pastor.**

Full glad may we be and await that day  
That lovesome one to see, that all might doth sway.  
Lord, well it were with me, now and for aye,  
Might I kneel on my knee some word for to say  
To that child.<sup>(700)</sup>  
But the angel said  
In a crib was he laid,  
He was poorly arrayed,  
Both gracious and mild.

**Primus Pastor.**

Patriarchs that have been and prophets before,<sup>(705)</sup>  
They desired to have seen this child that is born.  
They are gone full clean,—that have they lorn.  
We shall see him, I ween, ere it be morn,  
For token.  
When I see him and feel,<sup>(710)</sup>  
I shall know full well,  
It is true as steel,  
What prophets have spoken,  
To so poor as we are that he would appear,  
First find and declare by his messenger.<sup>(715)</sup>

**Secundus Pastor.**

Go we now, let us fare, the place is us near.

**Tertius Pastor.**

I am ready and eager to be there; let us together with cheer  
To that bright one go.  
Lord, if thy will it be,  
Untaught are we all three,<sup>(720)</sup>  
Some kind of joy grant us, that we  
Thy creatures, comfort may know!

*[They enter the stable and adore the infant Saviour.]*

**Primus Pastor.**

Hail, thou comely and clean one! Hail, young Child!  
Hail, Maker, as I mean, from a maiden so mild!  
Thou hast harried, I ween, the warlock so wild,—<sup>(725)</sup>  
The false beguiler with his teen now goes beguiled.  
Lo, he merries,  
Lo, he laughs, my sweeting!  
A happy meeting!  
Here's my promised greeting,—<sup>(730)</sup>  
Have a bob of cherries!

**Secundus Pastor.**

Hail, sovereign Saviour, for thou hast us sought!  
Hail, noble nursling and flower, that all things hast wrought!

Hail, thou, full of gracious power, that made all from nought!  
Hail, I kneel and I cower! A bird have I brought<sup>(735)</sup>  
To my bairn from far.  
Hail, little tiny mop!  
Of our creed thou art the crop,  
I fain would drink in thy cup,  
Little day-star!<sup>(740)</sup>

**Tertius Pastor.**

Hail, darling dear one, full of Godhead indeed!  
I pray thee be near, when I have need.  
Hail, sweet is thy cheer! My heart would bleed  
To see thee sit here in so poor a weed,  
With no pennies.<sup>(745)</sup>  
Hail, put forth thy dall,  
I bring thee but a ball,  
Keep it, and play with it withal,  
And go to the tennis.

**Maria.**

The Father of Heaven this night, God omnipotent,<sup>(750)</sup>  
That setteth all things alright, his Son hath he sent.  
My name he named and did light on me ere that he went.  
I conceived him forthright through his might as he meant,  
And now he is born.  
May he keep you from woe!<sup>(755)</sup>  
I shall pray him do so.  
Tell it, forth as ye go,  
And remember this morn.

**Primus Pastor.**

Farewell, Lady, so fair to behold  
With thy child on thy knee!<sup>(760)</sup>

**Secundus Pastor.**

But he lies full cold!  
Lord, 't is well with me! Now we go, behold!

**Tertius Pastor.**

Forsooth, already it seems to be told  
Full oft!

**Primus Pastor.**

What grace we have found!<sup>(765)</sup>

**Secundus Pastor.**

Now are we won safe and sound.

**Tertius Pastor.**

Come forth, to sing are we bound.  
Make it ring then aloft.

*[They depart singing.*

*Explicit pagina Pastorum.*