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The Other Everyman: Christian Echoes of the Figure of Job in the Fifteenth Century Morality Play *Everyman*

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« Sorti nu du ventre de ma mère, nu j’y retournerai. » (Job 1:21). A quel point les paroles de Job, l’homme le plus apprécié par Dieu d’après le livre éponyme, peuvent-elles être utilisées pour faire le portrait d’Everyman dans la pièce éponyme ? Au premier abord, il existe une grande différence entre les deux personnages : Job est une personne unique, alors qu’Everyman a tout de l’homme quelconque, et n’a aucun trait de caractère particulier. Dans cet article, j’essaierai de montrer qu’Everyman n’est pourtant pas si différent de Job. En effet, il y a un parallélisme entre le héros de l’Ancien Testament et, à première vue, l’antihéros de la pièce médiévale.

Nous pouvons remarquer que la platitude apparente du caractère du personnage principal de la pièce *Everyman* peut être la conséquence du changement important dans la morale opérée par la perspective chrétienne : aucun homme, sauf le Christ, n’est sans péché (Héb 4:15).

C’est pourquoi le pécheur prend la place du héros. Il ne s’agit tout de même pas d’un homme mauvais dans la pièce : comme dans l’histoire de Job, son innocence transparaît même clairement, bien qu’elle soit recouverte par l’épaisseur matérielle de son corps.

Nous pouvons souligner que, dans la moralité, Dieu parle de deux Everyman, et non d’un seul. Le premier Everyman représente tous les hommes sans posséder de personnalité distincte, et plus précisément ceux qui font des actions passionnelles communes à tous, sous l’empire de la chair. Le second est un homme particulier, à l’image de Job, qui entend la voix de la mort et qui est prêt à sacrifier les biens matériels pour une place dans la maison de Dieu.

Il est important de noter que, dans cette pièce, Everyman ne meurt pas mais, à l’instar de Job, il est celui qui restera vivant : la mort lui rend visite pour lui annoncer que tout ce qu’il y a autour de lui périra.

One difficulty in establishing the authorship of *Everyman* is the fact that the play appears to be a synthesis of theological and secular ideas, especially in the Dutch version. The opinion of the exegetes on this point is that popular humour and other secular details indicate that the author is unlikely to be a rigorous theologian, or a monk.¹ While this paper does not attempt to produce an argument regarding the authorship, the question may serve as an introduction to the strategy I have adopted: in the first part of my study I will argue that, before speaking of a difficult synthesis between theology and secular views, the reader must be aware that there is a difficult synthesis in the play’s theology itself. There are, especially in the first half of the play, a number of Jewish theological ideas which introduce a certain ambiguity in the theological content of the play. This is why,

¹ Clifford Davidson; Martin Walsh; Ton J. Broos, *Everyman and Its Dutch Original Elckerlijc* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), p. 2.

besides showing that the author is not a rigorous theologian, the presence of these Jewish theological ideas (slightly altered to fit the author's purpose) point to the possibility that one source for the composition of the play was the Book of Job.

In the second part I shall emphasize an aspect which may reinforce secular interpretations of the play, but from a narrow perspective: my argument will be that there are in *Everyman* the germs of a pre-modern political theory. This incipient political theory does not have a great role in the economy of the play. It was used by the author to depict the conditions of an earthly life, which Everyman must abandon in order to accede to the eternal one. Because the political views are only secondary, I try to elucidate the passage the author wants to emphasize, from one type of Everyman with an earthly mentality, to a second Everyman, an *Imitatio Christi*, with a divinely inspired mentality. The arrival of the main character to the state of a new Everyman will constitute the object of the third part of this paper, where I will show more clearly why in the prologue to the play God seems to speak about two types of Everyman, not one. I will argue that, if in the first part of the play there have been ambiguities regarding the theology drawn upon, the author makes serious efforts at the end of the play to synthesize all theological ideas under a predominant Catholic moral frame of reference. It is here that the author shows a fully Catholic theological solution to a problem which announces the dawn of the Reformation: the discussion regarding the relation between faith and works and the importance of works for salvation. As we shall see, while in the first part of the play the Jewish theological influence seems to indicate a theological mutation from traditional Catholic thought, in the last part the echoes of the figure of Job in the theological perspective of the author support a clear Catholic tradition.

***Everyman* and the Difficult Synthesis between Christianity and Judaism**

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither."² How much can the words of Job be applied to characterize Everyman? At first sight there is a great difference between the two characters: Job is a specific person, while Everyman is any human. However, as we will see, there is a sort of parallelism between the hero of the Old Testament book and the non-hero of the medieval play. As I will argue further, this parallelism may not be a chance occurrence. I want to specify that it is not my purpose to assert that *Everyman* was directly

² *BibleWorks*, King James Version (KJV), 1611/1769 (Bigfork, HERMENEUTIKA, 2001), Job 1:21.

influenced by the Book of Job. Instead, I prefer a weaker thesis, namely that there are some clear influences of this Old Testament book on the play and that a comparison between some related elements in the two works would be helpful for a more profound interpretation of the text of *Everyman*.³ The first theatrical image present in the Book of Job is in the prologue which depicts God among his servants, who are named by the Jewish author « sons of God »: « Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. »⁴ The prologue to the central poem of the Book of Job is a consequence of the Jewish popular need for theatrical images. As the compilers of *Jewish Encyclopedia* sustain, the central poem is integrated in a prose folk book.⁵ In the Jewish prologue God is presented as being proud of his human servant, Job: “And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?”⁶

Obviously, the tone of God in the 15th century popular Christian prologue is different. God reproaches men for having become so blind of “ghostly syght”, in spite of the fact that God himself was hung on the cross, “bytweue two”, for the restoration of *Everyman*. They live after their own pleasure, they are worse “fro yere to yere” and, as we will see, the most important thing, “Charyte they do all clene forgete”.⁷ However, at the end of his discourse God adopts a milder tone:

I hoped well that euery man
In my glory sholde make his mansyon,
And therto I had them all electe;⁸

From this point of view the two Gods have something in common: both want the best for their servant, in one case Job, in the other case, *Everyman*. The change in tone in *Everyman* is almost imperceptible, and is introduced by the term “hope”: God hopes that *Everyman* will make his

³ My thesis will be limited to the consideration of the Book of Job as Jewish, and will not question the originality of this Old Testament book itself. According to Samuel Noah Kramer the Book of Job derived from the Mesopotamian poem *Ludlul bel nemeqi*. It is not the purpose of my paper to analyse the process of composition either of the Book of Job, or of the morality play *Everyman*. See Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer; Thirty-Nine Firsts in Recorded History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 111-116.

⁴ KJV, Job 1:6.

⁵ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, last revised 2002 by The Kopelman Foundation, <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=331&letter=J&search=job#1227>> (01.20.2009).

⁶ KJV, Job 1:8.

⁷ *Everyman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), lines 25, 31, 43, 51.

⁸ *Everyman*, lines 52-54.

mansion in his glory. In the same way in the Book of Job God isn't absolutely certain that Job will remain faithful to him when he is faced with earthly sufferings. This uncertainty of God will be the basis for the acceptance of the testing of Job. This is why God tells Satan, his servant: "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."⁹ The author of the morality play applies this same model of divine attitude in spite of the concern of Christian medieval theology to emphasize God's omniscience.¹⁰ This choice introduces an ambiguity in the depiction of the figure of the Christian God: the absence of omniscience downplays the idea of the mercy of God. In Old Testament times, God was conceived both as the Just and the Merciful, but was perceived especially in the first attribute. In proclaiming the Ten Commandments God spoke to the people of Israel:

The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.¹¹

Reading this text one may be impressed by the complex dimension of God's mercy in Judaic thought. However, the last part of the text shows the pre-eminence of God's justice in comparison with his mercy. In a very simplified manner Moses reproduces the same assertion of God in chapter XXXIII of Exodus, this time in a non-official manner, because, according to Jewish tradition, God was speaking with Moses as one speaks with a friend¹²: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against

⁹ KJV, Job 1:12.

¹⁰ The origins of Christian theology regarding the omniscience of God consist in the words of Christ: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (KJV, *Matthew* 10:30). Jewish theology itself is not alien to the idea of God's omniscience, as shown in KJV, *Psalms* 11: 4 (this is Psalm 10 in any Jewish source): "the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." One of the first Jewish philosophical approaches of the idea of God's omniscience is represented in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, especially in *De Eo Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiatur*, § 42. However, in the prologue of the Book of Job God is presented as being uncertain about the faith of his favorite subject. This aspect, which may be interpreted as a Jewish popular influence may be another argument in favor of the idea that there is in Everyman an echo of this popular understanding of God. Besides that, the depiction of God as sometimes being uncertain about men's attitude is not isolated: In *Genesis* 22:2 God tests the faith of Abraham, by asking him to sacrifice his one and only (legitimate) son. For more information on the book of Philo see *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=282&letter=G#968>> (01.26.2009).

¹¹ KJV, Exodus 34:6-7.

¹² KJV, Exodus 33:11.

me, him will I blot out of my book.”¹³ This attitude of the God of the Old Testament is significant for the evaluation of God’s speech in the prologue of *Everyman*: while God reminds the people that he himself had mercy upon men and suffered death for them, at the same time he emphasizes the pre-eminence of his righteousness:

Of ghostly syght the people be so blynde,
Drowned in synne, they know me not for theyr God.
In worldely ryches is all theyr mynde;
They fere not my ryghtwysnes, the sharpe rod.
My lawe that I shewed, whan I for them dyed [...].¹⁴

In spite of the fact that *Everyman*’s God reminds people that he died for them, from the general tone of his discourse it is difficult to perceive that in the prologue to the play it is Christ who speaks, not God the Father. This ambiguity illustrates the minor place given in God’s discourse to unlimited mercy. Even if God’s mercy has an important place in the construction of the play, it is not yet clear how and if his mercy would be effective. In this sense the author does not develop in the rest of the play the image he uses regarding the crucifixion of Christ “between two”: “I hanged bytwene two theues, it can not be denyed;”¹⁵ The obvious step forward should have been the emphasis laid upon the idea that there are two *Everyman*, both sinners, one receiving salvation, and the other not.¹⁶ However, the author chooses not to emphasize right away that there are two types of *Everyman*. This idea of God’s unconditional mercy would have to be understood by the public as the play went on.

The assimilation of the figure of the Father with that of the Son generates some theological transformations. One of these is the role the author gives to the “myghty messengere” of God¹⁷. First of all, the New Testament writings do not support the idea that death is a servant of God. On the contrary, death is an anomaly, which Christ challenged through his suffering. The idea of death as a servant of God is present only in the Old Testament. For example, in the book of Exodus it is recorded:

And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians;

¹³ KJV, Exodus 32:33.

¹⁴ *Everyman*, lines 25-29.

¹⁵ *Everyman*, v. 31.

¹⁶ KJV, Matthew 37:38.

¹⁷ *Everyman*, v. 63.

and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.¹⁸

The medieval morality play has echoes of this Old Testament declaration. As for the people of Israel, death becomes the phenomenon that warns Everyman that he should always be prepared for the journey whose end is the reckoning before the throne of God:

Go thou to Eueryman
And shewe hym, in my name,
A pylgrymage he must on hym take,
Whiche he in no wyse may escape;
And that he brynge with hym a sure rekenynge
Without delay or ony taryenge.¹⁹

We see this same theological ambiguity in regards to the Christian tradition when we consider the limits the author of the morality play imposes on the doctrine of salvation: the motive of man's determination to repent is not the desire to be with Christ, but the fear of death and eternal torments. As we can see from the text above, it is Death who speaks to Everyman about the possibility of salvation, not God directly.

At the same time the author has to completely redefine some Jewish theological elements in order to remain in line with the doctrine of the Church. The most obvious transformation effected by the author of Everyman is the elimination of the popular Jewish figure of Satan. In the Jewish Scriptural tradition Satan is seen either as an adversary²⁰ or, more specifically, as a celestial or independent prosecutor who, even if he has no independent power of action, outside the permission of God, opposes human's good intentions.²¹ In parallel with that figure one may find in the Old Testament secondary figures of demons, "se'irim" and "shedim", the first name usually indicating satyr-like demons or pagan gods and being a source of diseases, and the second indicating the angel of God which spreads death, at God's command.²² The Gospels, presenting the life and the activity of Christ on Earth, make up a synthesis of the two perspectives, but especially emphasize the idea of the devil as the source of diseases,

¹⁸ KJV, Exodus 12:29-30.

¹⁹ *Everyman*, lines 66-71.

²⁰ KJV, 1 Samuel 29:4; 1 Kings 11 :17.

²¹ KJV, 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1: 6-12; Zechariah 3: 1-2.

²² It is obvious that this last figure of a demon has a lot in common with that of Satan in the Book of Job, which had the power to bring death to the sons, daughters and servants of Job, but not to Job himself. For more information on the devil see *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=245&letter=D#690>> (01.26.2009).

spiritual and physical.²³ This is why, for a Christian mentality it would have been hard to understand the ascription of a positive role to Satan. We might say that the author of *Everyman* tries to justify himself by replacing Satan with Death. While not in complete conformity with Christian doctrine, this would have ensured the positive aspect of the role that the Christian Satan lost when he became assimilated with a demon. A practical argument for this replacement is also the presence of death in the urbanized areas in the Middle Ages, where the high death rate increased the feeling of insecurity.

The First Steps towards Another Everyman: from Political to Theological Behavior

The call which arouses *Everyman*'s attention is not the voice of God, but something more striking in daily life: the voice of Death. As in the *Book of Job*, the old-fashioned God in the play needs a preliminary sacrifice from the person with whom he wants to establish direct contact. *Job*'s loss was gradual: first his sons and daughters, secondly all of his goods and thirdly he lost his health. The author of the Jewish book does not emphasize this gradual loss, because it was only secondary to the main part of the book which is the lamentation of *Job*, his discussion with his friends and the discourse of God.²⁴ In the case of the late Middle Ages play, the author places greater emphasis on the process of losing all of that which characterizes human earthly life, before one can truly meet God.

There is also a great difference between *Job*'s and *Everyman*'s reactions towards their loss, which highlights a great change, introduced by Christianity, in the assessment of the moral status of the one who suffers.

There are two major reactions of *Job* to the actions of Satan, both approved by God. The first is to praise God: "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."²⁵ The second is to be horrified by the same afflictions and to provoke God into giving an explanation for them: "I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me."²⁶ The attitude of *Job* in front of God is thus heroic: he does not care what consequences his words might have on his life. *Job* has the feeling that he is fighting for truth. In contrast, the reaction of *Everyman* may be considered as cowardly, because he tries to bribe Death:

²³ See especially the Gospel according to Mark which is centered on the casting out of demons by Christ. KJV, Mark 1:32-39; 3:22-30; 5:1-19; 9:38-39; 16:9-17.

²⁴ Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985), pp. 35-42.

²⁵ KJV, Job 1:21.

²⁶ KJV, Job 33:9.

O Deth, thou comest whan I had the leest in mynde!
in thy power it lyeth me to saue;
Yet of my good wyl I guye the, yf thou wyl be kynde -
Ye, a thousande pounce shalte thou haue -
And dyfferre this mater tyll an other daye.²⁷

In order to understand the difficult position of Everyman, in comparison with that of Job, we must be aware of the change introduced in morals by the Christian tradition, which attributes to Christ the following words in speaking about the adulteress: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."²⁸ In addition, Saint Paul asserts that only Christ among humans is without sin.²⁹ Under the influence of Christian thought the figure of the hero fades, being replaced by the idea of equality between human beings. The Gospel asserts that in the time of Christ Jewish society was structured on the idea that there are some persons who are just, first because they accomplish the demands of the Jewish law, and secondly because they erase non-intended sins by making sacrifices at the Temple. Usually only the wealthy could have made the numerous sacrifices, so only they were considered just and without sin.³⁰ In opposition to this situation, Christianity established that the only hero is Christ. Others can only hope for an imitation of Christ. This attitude provided a principle for the establishment of a Christian society, against the idea that some are better than others. Even if it was not always practically applied to a Christian society, as we see in the divine right of kings and even the dogma of papal infallibility,³¹ the principle of the equality of human individuals survived into the Middle Ages, and may be seen in the response of Death:

Eueryman, it may not be by no waye.
I set not by golde, syluer, nor rychesse,

²⁷ *Everyman*, lines 119-123.

²⁸ KJV, John 8:7.

²⁹ KJV, Hebrews 4:15.

³⁰ There are some examples of Christ's critiques of the *mores* of his time. One is his parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, both rich, but the Pharisee fasted twice in the week and gave tithes of all his possessions, in order to obtain his justification while the tax collector was aware of the fact that riches cannot help him to obtain the justification (KJV, Luke 18: 10-14). Another example is Christ's comment, when seeing a widow giving only two coins for the Temple, that the widow gave more than the rich who had given large amounts of money (KJV, Mark 12:41-44). In short, the central message of Christ regarding the problem of riches is: "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (KJV, Matthew 19:23).

³¹ See Takashi Sogimen, "The Relationship between Theology and Canon Law: Another Context of Political Thought in the Early Fourteenth Century", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 60, 3 (1999), 417-431.

Ne by pope/emperour/kyngē/duke, ne prynces;³²

Outside of an imitation of Christ there was no place for heroism in the Christian tradition, as Saint Paul asserts: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”³³ After the coming of Christ, there still remained the possibility of making heroic acts, but only as a sacrifice for others, in the same way Christ sacrificed himself. The author of the play departs from this idea to show the weakness of human relations: the first character from which Everyman asks help will be Fellowship, which is the personification of human relations on earth in general. Fellowship is sincere when she promises to help Everyman in his need, but she is not aware of the fact that what Everyman needs is a complete sacrifice from her.

Fellowship: [...] And also, yf we toke suche a iournaye,
Whan sholde we agayne come?

Everyman: Naye, neuer agayne tyll the daye of dome.

Fellowship: In fayth, than wyll not I come there!³⁴

The loss of Fellowship is significant, because it means losing the other friends as well. If Fellowship is only a symbolical name for the totality of earthly relations outside Christ, then the condition for a politics of salvation between concrete individuals is lost. After the loss of Fellowship, Everyman asserts for the first time in the play:

It is sayd, ‘In prosperyte men frendes may fynde,
Whiche in aduersyte be full vnkynde.’³⁵

These lines resemble those of Job: “All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.”³⁶ At first sight they are identical, but if we bear in mind the observation made above regarding the difference between Job as hero and Everyman as non-hero, we see that the two assertions actually differ. The friends of Job abhorred him because they considered him not worthy of their friendship. The main point in the discourses of these three friends is that Job must have sinned, therefore deserved the afflictions.³⁷ They believe that they themselves have a heroic status, and that there is good reason that Job was excluded from the category of upright men. In contrast, the attitude of each friend of

³² *Everman*, lines 124-126.

³³ KJV, Galatians 6:14.

³⁴ *Everyman*, lines 259-262.

³⁵ *Everyman*, lines 309-310.

³⁶ KJV, Job 19:19.

³⁷ KJV, Job 4:5: “[Eliphaz]: Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?”

Everyman is characterized by the desire to be by his side to face all the difficult challenges of life.

However, when the friends are asked to make the supreme sacrifice, they refuse. We see this especially in the response of Cousin:

Also of myne owne an vnredy rekenyng
I haue to accounte; therfore I make taryenge.
Now God kepe the, for now I go.³⁸

This response shows the limits of earthly political life: even if Cousin and Kindred wish him all the good in the world,³⁹ they admit that their relation cannot go beyond the social sphere, because a more intimate relation would require the sacrifice of their efforts for their own salvation. The political life thus remains in the individualistic perspective, an idea which will later be emphasized by Protestant political thought in England.

A significant step in Everyman's evolution is his conclusion after he has spoken with Cousin and Kindred:

My kynnesmen promysed me faythfully
For to a-byde with me stedfastly,
And now fast a-waye do they flee.⁴⁰

The expression "my kinsmen" shows that Everyman has reached the stage of an awareness that he himself is like his friends. Unlike Job, when criticizing the attitude of his friends, he admits that there is no difference between him and his friends in regards to the justice of his acts. It is not by chance that the author chose Cousin and Kindred as names for his friends: they both show an essential resemblance to Everyman. In the two friends Everyman sees himself as he was, dominated by the comfort of earthly life, before Death awakened him and told him to "stande styl".⁴¹

The idea that fellowship between individuals cannot constitute a politics of salvation has other theological roots. As we have seen, in the prologue God asserts:

I hoped well that euery man
In my glory sholde make his mansyon,
And therto I had them all electe;⁴²

The expression I want to emphasize is "I had them all electe", because it resembles the attitude of Saint Augustine towards salvation. From this point of view we may understand that *Everyman's* author uses initially an Augustinian theology, because from the prologue to the play we find out

³⁸ *Everyman*, lines 375-377.

³⁹ "Kynrede: A, syr, what ye be a mery man!/Take good herte to you, and make no mone." *Everyman*, lines 351-352.

⁴⁰ *Everyman*, lines 381-383.

⁴¹ *Everyman*, v. 85.

⁴² *Everyman*, lines 52-54.

that God's project was to give salvation as a free gift to humans.⁴³ As the play continues, however, the reader discovers that after all, salvation requires sacrifices. The author changes his view because he needs to present the struggle of Everyman between choosing to ignore death and choosing to make an effort for his salvation. The author emphasizes human effort in spite of the Augustinian idea of the eternal will of God to give salvation as a gift to all humans. While this change of attitude is not regarded as problematic,⁴⁴ the author clearly condemns a third possibility: that salvation is exclusively the work of human individuals outside any help from God. This idea had been developed at the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century A.D. by Pelagius of Britain (ca. 354 – ca. 420/440), and was condemned, initially by some local councils, Carthage (416, 418), and generally by the Third Ecumenical Council, Ephesus (431). After ten centuries the theological opposition towards this idea remained strong. In England, in the 14th century Thomas Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury wrote a refutation of Pelagian doctrine, entitled *De causa Dei contra Pelagium et de virtute causarum*. Other critiques to this doctrine were put forth in the fifteenth century by the German Gabriel Biel.⁴⁵

⁴³ Harry A. Wolfson, "Philosophical Implications of the Pelagian Controversy", *Proceedings, American Philosophical Society*, 103, 4 (1959), 554-562.

⁴⁴ I tend to believe that the author is going towards what has been considered by Catholic theologians to be Semipelagianism: the first steps towards salvation are made exclusively by the natural powers of the individual, without any grace. God intervenes further and strengthens the human faith by his grace, completing the salvation. I suspect that in the text of *Everyman* there was initially an Augustinian understanding, because God asserts that by his sacrifice he wanted to "have them all elect", but afterwards, a number of changes, made partially under the influence of the Jewish elements in Job and partially under the influence of the mores and the Pelagian doctrine, still powerful at the time, show the tendency to Semipelagianism. Some arguments: it is Death not God who tells Everyman to "stand still" (*Everyman*, v. 85); he seeks help first from friends and goods, which are radically different than the grace of God; Everyman's first invocation for the grace of God is only after he meets Knowledge (*Everyman*, v. 607). Semipelagianism has its source in the works of John Cassian (ca. 360 – 435) and was condemned as heresy at the local councils of Orange in 529. It should be distinguished from the doctrine of Synergeia, which presents salvation as the cooperation between God and human from baptism to the day of death. See David Allen, "Apostles of Balance: Semi-Pelagianism in Southern Gaul", *The Expository Times*, 113 (2002), pp. 364-367; Lauren Pristas, "John Cassian, The conferences (review)", *The Catholic Historical Review*, 87, 3 (2001), pp. 483-484; John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), p. 10.

⁴⁵ Reese, William L., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought* (New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1980), p. 421.

A sort of concession made in the play to this heretical doctrine is the value the author gives to Fellowship. However, this value would be considered only for earthly purposes. The effect of this concession would be the idea of the play that, in spite of the decayed nature of men, humans are generally not like wolves regarding one another.⁴⁶

The total renouncement of Everyman and the renewal in Christ on the model of the Eucharist

After reaching the conclusion that his fellows cannot help him acquire salvation, Everyman feels the need to develop a new sort of fellowship, which would truly help him make a good reckoning before God's throne:

What frende were best me of to proude?⁴⁷

I lose my tyme here longer to abyde.⁴⁷

The first friend who comes uppermost in his mind is represented by Goods. This type of effort to obtain salvation is different from the previous one. Not trusting the power of his friends, he looks for salvation in his own power, or to be accurate, in his power to obtain worldly riches. While this capacity may seem a noble one, as it distinguishes between lazy and diligent individuals, it is condemned by the author of *Everyman*. In my opinion this occurs because the author is aware of the fact that this is still a Pelagian perspective: in order to obtain Goods Everyman does not need the grace of God.

This is why a step further is needed in his search for the right friend to accompany him on his pilgrimage. He remembers another friend: Good Deeds. In the Book of Job also, good deeds were important for an

⁴⁶ The major figure of the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes, as well as his contemporaries, argues in favor of a different political theory than that implied in the fifteenth century *Everyman*: Hobbes's political theory of a natural state of war between individuals is based on the decayed nature of humans after original sin. In Hobbes's perspective only a Leviathan, taken as a symbol for the state, can end the state of war, by tempering the passions of the "children of pride" (KJV, Job: 41:34). See also Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan* (London: Molesworth Edition, 1651), p. 307. A possible explanation for the different perspective in which the seventeenth century political thinkers were situated remains theological: the new Protestant paradigm. However, some of the political ideas which resemble those of *Everyman*, especially the emphasis on the idea that humans can live naturally in a state of peace, were recapitulated by a political thinker and philosopher of the late seventeenth century, John Locke. For Hobbes's political theology see Franck Lessay, "Hobbes's Protestantism", in *Leviathan after 350 years*, edited by Tom Sorell, Luc Foisneau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 265-294. For Locke's Protestantism see Edward G. Andrew, *Conscience and its Critics; Protestant Conscience, Enlightenment Reason, and Modern Subjectivity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 79-98.

⁴⁷ *Everyman*, lines 385-386.

individual in order to become just. But, as we understand from the prologue, it was not important that the good deeds be made by the person who desired justification, but they could be made by another person in his name:

And his [Job's] sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.⁴⁸

In the text above there is a distinction between persons and good deeds. This distinction would be appropriated also by the author of *Everyman*. However, in this particular point we may not conceive a direct influence by the text of Job, but the influence may come from the doctrine of indulgences. In 14th century England the doctrine of indulgences was already unpopular. Chaucer and Langland wrote satires against this practice of the Catholic Church.⁴⁹ Under the influence of these critiques the doctrine of *Everyman* stays clear of any conception of gaining salvation through the good deeds made by another person. Rather, it evolves in another direction, inspired by Job's discourse, but more in line with the Catholic doctrine.

The author of the medieval morality play presents the character of Good Deeds as very weak, in a condition which could not guarantee her as a healthy companion for the journey. But what helps *Everyman* to heal Good Deeds is the latter character's sister, Knowledge. In order for *Everyman* to heal Good Deeds, the first advice of Knowledge is for him to go to Confession.⁵⁰ It is not a chance occurrence that the author of *Everyman* presents Knowledge, first as sister of Good Deeds, and second as providing a solution for the healing of her sister. This conversation between *Everyman*, Good Deeds and Confession shows that, in popular and theological thinking of the time, a debate over the preeminence of faith or of good works for salvation was already present. Whereas the *Sola Fide* doctrine will soon be established by Martin Luther (1483-1546),⁵¹ the author of *Everyman* tries to offer a solution which will be developed in a Catholic way. At first sight, faith is preeminent because, as we have seen, it contributes to the strengthening of the power of good works. From the text

⁴⁸ KJV, Job 1:4-5.

⁴⁹ William Komowski, "Chaucer and Wyclif: God's Miracles Against the Clergy's Magic", *The Chaucer Review*, 37, 1 (2002), 5-25; Gray, Nick, "Langland's Quotations from the Penitential Tradition", *Modern Philology*, 84, 1 (1986), 53-60.

⁵⁰ *Everyman*, v. 536.

⁵¹ W. Joest, "L'horizon eschatologique de la justification *Sola Fide* dans la pensée de Martin Luther", *Etudes théologiques et religieuses*, 1-2 (1968), 69-76.

of the play we see that only if combined with God's grace is Knowledge able to become a real faith; without God's grace Knowledge can give Everyman only "the scourge of penance". But this is not enough, because, as we have seen, salvation is primarily a gift from God, and secondarily the work of Everyman. Thus, ultimately, salvation is awarded after Everyman displays this complex understanding which is a blend of humiliation and joy:

Knowledge, gyue me the scourge of penaunce;
My flesshe therwith shall guye acqueyntaunce.
I wyll now begyn yf God gyue me grace.
Knowledge: Eueryman, God gyue you tyme and space!
Thus I bequeth you in the handes of our Sauyour;
Now may you make your rekenynge sure.⁵²

After Everyman flagellates himself Knowledge asks him if he will accept the garment of Contrition. The acceptance of this garment marks a step further in his spiritual evolution, now a composite of joy and remorse:

Knowledge: Be no more sad, but euer reioyce;[...]
Put on this garment to thy behoue,
Whiche is wette with your teres, [...]
It is a garment of sorowe;
Fro payne it wyll you borowe.
Contrycyon it is
That getteth forgyuenes;
He pleaseth God passynge well.⁵³

According to the author of the play, after penance, Everyman indeed finds the new fellowship he wanted, a new relation with Knowledge, Good Deeds, Beauty, Strength, Discretion and Five Wits. This is an intermediate stage, where the author is trying to present allegorically the ideal moral life of a Christian on earth. In addition, the fact that the author considers this moment as a favorable one for the presentation of the doctrine of the Church regarding the seven sacraments is not a simple parenthesis in the play's action. It is a necessary step, by which the new Everyman actually reaches a stage in his life where he lives out the true liberty within the limits laid down by the seven sacraments of the Christian tradition.

From this point of view we understand that the play *Everyman* is not simply about the repentance of an individual in the last moment of his life, but speaks about living one's life as if every moment were the last.

In the concluding passages I will try to argue that in this ideal moral life described in the play, there is still an echo of the figure of Job, but this time it contributes not to a mutation in the doctrine, but to a better understanding

⁵² *Everyman*, lines 605-610.

⁵³ *Everyman*, lines 636, 638, 639, 643-647.

of how a Christian moral life is fashioned after the model of the Eucharist. After rejoicing in a new fellowship with his friends, Everyman must make the essential meeting with God while still in this life. He makes this meeting alone without his friends. This is not the official reckoning about which he spoke,⁵⁴ because a reckoning would require the presence of some of his friends. Instead, he goes alone to this meeting, which is only a foreshadowing of the eternal life in the company of Christ.

While Everyman is taking communion his friends are waiting outside. This is significant: as in the case of Job, God waited for him to renounce everything that may constitute an obstacle to direct contact with him. In God's discourse with Job, the Jewish character discovers that God was not speaking from the perspective of a just person who simply returns good deeds with rewards and bad deeds with castigation. The posture of God is that of an almighty creator, who shows that he is not obliged to consider Job as a specific person but only as an indistinguishable part of his creation:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. [...] Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, [...] Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? [...] Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?⁵⁵

As we have seen in the first part of the morality play Christ's voice resembles that of Job's God. Therefore the meeting with Everyman in the sacrament of the Eucharist is not a meeting simply between the specific person of Everyman and the specific person of Christ, but is the meeting between God the Creator with human substance which must be recreated. In the sacrament of Eucharist Everyman renounces even his general identity as Everyman. We have here a third dimension experienced by Everyman: the first was the longing for community with other Everymen (earthly fellowship), the second was the experience of his human attributes as a moral person in earthly life, the third will be total nakedness, like Job: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither."⁵⁶ In this absolutely intimate meeting God purifies the substance of Everyman, without altering its attributes. Whereas on earth the New Everyman keeps his earthly attributes, when he prepares to descend to the tomb, these attributes will be of no use. For example, Five Wits, when they

⁵⁴ "Good Dedes, [...] helpe me to make rekenynge / Before the Redemer of all thyng, / That Kynge is, and was, and euer shall." *Everyman*, lines 509-513.

⁵⁵ KJV, Job 38:4, 8-10, 31, 33.

⁵⁶ KJV, Job 1:21.

are asked to look into the grave, cannot do so and as a response, flee.⁵⁷ Knowledge goes with Everyman until the gates to the other world are opening. She will never enter these gates, but will remain buried outside the heavenly kingdom. The only friend that can go with Everyman is Good Deeds, because, with the help of Good Deeds Everyman will be able to ask of God a new final identity.

⁵⁷ *Everyman*, lines 845-846, 849-850.