The most appealing subject matter in sixteenth-century Dutch and German drama has proved to be the story of Everyman, which the Fleming Pieter van Diest invented prior to 1495. Apart from translations, his Elckerlijk was followed by Christianus Ischyrius' Homulus (1536), Macropedius' Hecastus (1539), Thomas Naogeorgus' Mercator (1540), Jaspar von Gennep's Homulus (1540), and Johannes Stricerius' De dídesche Schlömer (1584). Other contemporary plays involved with death and its spiritual consequences, like the anonymous Vom aygen Gericht und sterbenden Menschen of 1510, Johannes Kolross' Von fünfferley Betrachtussen of 1532, Alexius Bresnicer's Comoedia von dem geystlichen Kampff of 1553, Hans Sachs' Tragedia des jüngsten Gerichts of 1558, Johannes Heros' Der irdisch Pilger of 1562, and Clemens Stephani's Geistliche Action of 1568, bear some resemblance to Elckerlijk but are less related to it than the five moralities by Ischyrius, Macropedius, Naogeorgus, von Gennep, and Stricerius. Basically these latter authors retained the plot of Elckerlijk, even though they altered it in a variety of ways, partly because of the Reformation. Whereas almost every scholar who has written about Hecastus, Mercator, von Gennep's Homulus, or De dídesche Schlömer has dealt to some extent with Luther's impact, the question of Everyman's relationship with Protestantism in the Netherlands and Germany has still not been completely answered. In fact, its complexity invites a deeper and more detailed examination than anyone has yet attempted.1

1. The principal surveys of Everyman plays are contained in these works:
a.) Karl Goedeke, Every-Man, Homulus und Hekastus (Hanover: Rümpler, 1865).
In *Elckerlijk*, as in the English version *Everyman*, the protagonist’s justification is really effected by the allegorical figure Confession, or Penance (Biechte), if also with the grace of God. When the title figure calls on his virtue (Deugd, rendered as Good Dedes in the English), she is incapacitated because of his sinfulness and refers him to her sister Knowledge (Kennisse). Knowledge conducts him then to Confession, whom she terms “the mother of salvation” (line 505, or 552 in *Everyman*). Confession hands a scourge to Elckerlijk, with which he punishes himself, after praying to Christ and Mary for mercy. The whip is his key to heaven, for his flagellation restores such strength to Virtue that she assures him of redemption (line 595, to which line 631 corresponds in *Everyman*). In other words, through heartfelt participation in the sacrament of penance (which comprises

g.) Helmut Wiemken, *Vom Sterben des reichen Mannes* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1965).