Another Look at the Hypocrisy of Chaucer's Pardoner

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Abstract

For us, readers of Chaucer living in an age when appeal to religious passions and sentiments as a means for the realization of worldly objectives by some charlatans has grown significantly, reviewing the theme of religious hypocrisy treated in *The Canterbury Tales* can be useful in a way that it proves a helpful means for recognizing and dealing with the hypocrites. The Pardoner of the *Tales* is definitely and consensually the most horrible hypocrite character in English literature, and this is evident from both the narrator's description of this character in the General Prologue and in his own self-confession in the prologue to his tale. Accordingly, the hypocrisy of the Pardoner has been a matter of debates and discussions from the very beginning of critical tradition on this character and his tale. The basic view of this critical tradition, however, is that in dealing with the hypocrisy of the Pardoner and in creating this character, Chaucer has drawn on different literary and theological sources. The first part of this study is an attempt to trace instances of the influence of Biblical definition of the word *hypocrisy* and biblical description of hypocrites in the character of the Pardoner. In the second part, the presence of traces of the Antichrist tradition with hypocrisy as a major attribute of the Antichrist figure will be treated in this character.

***Keywords**:* Hypocrisy; Bible; Pardoner; Antichrist; False preachers; The Canterbury Tales

1. Introduction

It is a truism that in highlighting the hypocrisy of the ecclesiastics of his age and criticizing it in *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer is showing his concern for the horrible consequences of this vice to both his religion and the society of the faithful that assumes these ecclesiastics to be its administrators in the affairs of this world and "the world which is to come." As Kellogg (1972) argues, it seems that:

> As a man of his age, Chaucer looked back upon an earlier age when faith formed the keystone to the whole structure of existence. Though there is for Chaucer a sense of exhilaration in

> the new—otherwise we should have no Alice of Bath—he is also the medieval man of letters whose artistic creed does not permit open evil to go unchallenged. (p. 229)

However, the interesting fact is that Chaucer's treatment of the theme of hypocrisy is not as straightforward as it might appear at first glance. For sharp readers of *The Canterbury Tales*, the literary merits rising from Chaucer's treatment of the theme can be easily appreciated; however, for those readers who are aware of the religious controversies regarding the topic, Chaucer's subtlety in adopting images, debates, ideas, and concepts from these controversies in his treatment of the theme provides a double appreciation. Indeed, due to the poet's comprehensive knowledge of the issues involved in the theological discourse of hypocrisy and his use of them, any critical analysis of the theme requires a familiarity with these issues. In the following study, thus, the aim is to examine hypocrisy in its religious context and see how Chaucer, by drawing on different religious materials related to the topic, gives his audience a horrible picture of the hypocrite of his age. For this purpose, the character of the hypocrite Pardoner is focused on as a case study. Accordingly, it might be argued that in the study of the hypocrisy of this character and his *Tale*, readers can observe traces of two sources:

1. Biblical definition of the word "hypocrisy" and biblical description of hypocrites
2. Antichrist tradition and hypocrisy as a major attribute of Antichrist figure

1.1 The Pardoner and the Biblical Definition of Hypocrisy

In societies, western or eastern, where religion has been brought to assume a major role in the sociocultural structure, the scripture of that religion becomes the touchstone, source of inspiration, and focus of many intellectual and artistic endeavors. In England of medieval era, for instance, Besserman (1988) maintains that for "men and women, members of the religious establishment and secular people, commoners and aristocrats the Bible was presumed to be the preeminent authority on all matters of human endeavor and concern" (p. 23). The extent of the influence of the Bible on the literature of the Western world during the Middle Ages is obvious from the fact that, unless we have an ample knowledge of this book, we will never be able to have a proper appreciation of this literature. Thus, the spirit of works of the great European poets, such as Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio as well as the English poets like Langland, Gower, and the Gawain poet were all nurtured by the Bible. An instance of the evident manifestation of this influence in England is the rise of a vernacular biblical drama and the school of the late medieval English authors of works of biblically focused religious meditation and affective spirituality.

As for Chaucer, Kaske (1960) argues that "medieval poets had biblical and exegetical knowledge and that Chaucer in particular knew the Bible and was familiar with several expositors" (p. 28), thus the presence of many biblical allusions and quotations throughout his works, especially *The Canterbury Tales*. It is maintained that in writing the *Tales*, Chaucer must have had the Vulgate beside him for a considerable time (Landrum, 1924, p. 92).

Accordingly, Chaucer's use of the Bible in the creation of the character of the Pardoner and his *Tale* can be considered from two points of view. The first is related to the Pardoner's use of the Bible and biblical quotations hypocritically as a means for satisfying his worldly desires. Readers can clearly see how the hypocrite Pardoner brandishes biblical authority as a means for carrying out his deceptive practices. In his sermon, for instance, the Pardoner cites some verses of the Bible asking his congregation to follow them, whereas he himself practices their opposite as we learn from the prologue to his tale. At the very beginning of his sermon, he famously cites as the text for his sermon what appears to be a complete sentence of biblical Latin, *radix malorumestcupiditas* (1 Timothy 6:10), "avarice is the root of all evils," whereas from the General Prologue and his self-confession, we see avarice itself to be the motive force for the Pardoner's hypocrisy. Furthermore, in the following lines from his sermon:

> Therwalkenmanyne of whiche yow toold have I—
> I sey it now wepyng, with pitousvoyse—
> They been enemyse of Cristescroys,
> Of wiche the ende is deeth; wombe is hir god!
>
> (*The Pardoner's Tale*, pp. 530-533)

Here, he is translating the following verses from Philippians (3:18-19) with slight changes out of metrical constraints:

> For many walk of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly.

The reader can easily imagine how dramatically and heartily the Pardoner, with a hue of holiness on his face and tears in his eyes, is rendering this passage to his lewd audience. The Pardoner, who has already shamelessly presented a catalogue of his own sins and vices in his self-confession, in line 547 of his sermon hypocritically, condemns those who commit these sins and vices:

But, certes, he that hauntethswitchedelices
Is deed, whil that he lyvethintho vices.

In these two lines, the Pardoner is, in fact, quoting I Tim 5:6, where it says:

For she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she is living.

And, in line 649 in his comment about the spiritual harms of swearing, he is, indeed, paraphrasing part of Ecclesiaticus 23:2, where it says:

…: so everyone that sweareth and nameth shall not be wholly pure from sin.

Thus, the Pardoner manipulates biblical verses hypocritically to help him reach his goal that is loosening his audience's purses.

The use of the Bible in *The Pardoner's Tale*, however, can be studied from another point of view: Chaucer's use of the biblical definition of the words *hypocrisy* and *hypocrite* in his depiction of the character of the Pardoner. In the etymological analysis of the word *hypocrisy*, it is maintained that the word was used as an equivalent by the Greek translators of the Bible for the Jewish "honef"that means "inwardly godless and wicked," and in Job 13, the word is applied to mean "all those who forget God" (Amory, 1986, p. 6). Accordingly, the Pardoner, as hypocrite in this sense, is the symbol of those who have lost trust in the Creator and seem to be in complete alienation from God (Kellogg, 1972) The other meaning of the word *hypocrisy* is "antagonism to God" (Amory, 1986, p.6), which is a prominent characteristic of the Pardoner. This antagonism is bluntly manifested in the Pardoner's aversion from God through pride, his defiance of the judgment of God when he superciliously refuses to pursue the rules of his orders:

What, trowe ye, that whiles I may preche,
An wynne gold and silver for I teche,
That I wollyve in povertewilfully"
Nay, nay I thoghte it nevere, trewely!
I wolnat do no labour with mynehandes,
Ne makebaskettes and lyvetherby,
By cause Iwolbeggenydelly.
I wol noon of the apostles countrefete;
I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,

(The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 439-448)

All he cares about is the carnal pleasure of this world, which seems to fulfill the lack of spirituality in this creature. The cause might be attributed to the great sin of pride, which is noticeable in the prologue to his tale and his contemptuous attitude toward his audience and "pride is the beginning of sin" as we are reminded in Ecclesiaticus10:13.

Moreover, as it is argued, in Job 20:5 and 27:8 the word *hypocrisy* means "wicked." Despite the views of some critics, who hold that there is some good in the Pardoner because the man does tell a "moral tale" that apparently is able to make his listeners "twynne/from avarice, and soore to repente," (The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 431-32) it might be argued that this view is not in accordance with what we read in the Bible. When addressing the hypocrite there it says, "thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). Accordingly, it is clear in *The Pardoner's Tale* that Chaucer does not favor the view that an evil man can preach and guide his people. The Pardoner is, moreover, wicked in two senses: He is wicked because in the name of God and Christ he defies God the Creator, instead of promoting God's words, and St. Augustine says the man who defies God is no exalted being, but the pain-racked, mentally deformed captive of an earthly hell (Kellogg, 1972, p.248). He is wicked also because of the malice and contempt he has toward his fellow human beings and the spiritual harm that he causes mankind. The second sense might be perceived also in the Pardoner's act of pouring sin into the hearts of the common people. For instance, he says he has "a sholder bone/which that was of anhooly Jewe sheep" (The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 350-51), and:

> …also it heeleth jalousie;
> For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
> Latmaken with this water his potage,
> And nevereshal he moore his wyfmystriste
> Though he the soothe of his defautewiste,
> Al had she taken prestes two or thre.
>
> (The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 366-371)

Thus, the Pardoner guarantees adultery to be committed with impunity. The word *hānēp*, which is the Hebrew source of the word *hypocrisy*, is used with a variety of meanings such as "lawlessness" and "impiety." Truly, the Pardoner is a lawless person in the sense of his rebelliousness against God and His rules of living in poverty the life of the apostles. The Pardoner has no habitual reverence and obedience to God. Devotion to religious duties and observances are the last things in the world the Pardoner ever cares about. In the New Testament, attitude of pretense

was added to godlessness that was in the hearts of the *hanefim* in the word *hypocrisy*. The very word *hypokritē* occurs in the New Testament where Christ denounces the Pharisees. Although Christ likens the hypocrite Pharisees to "whited sepulture, which outwardly appears to men beautiful," Chaucer denied the Pardoner even this external beauty. Nonetheless, in Luke 12:46, the word *hypokritē* has the meaning of "unfaithful" or "unbeliever" (Amory, 1986, p.7). Accordingly, the Pardoner himself flagrantly pronounces himself to be unfaithful to any religious or moral disciplines and mainly he is a man in pursuit of his worldly pleasures:

For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,
Andnothyng for correccioun of synne …

(The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 403-404)

But shortly myn entente I woldevyse:
I preche of nothyng but for coveitise.'

(The Pardoner's Prologue,pp. 423-424)

But that is not my principal entente;
I prechenothyng but for coveitise.'

(The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 431-432)

Furthermore, it is in Matthew 22:18 and Luke 20:23 that the reader perceives the combined meaning of "craftiness" and "wickedness" at the same time. In these verses, the Pharisees, through deception and out of malice, attempt to ensnare Christ, but reading through their intentions, he frustrates them. The craftiness of the Pardoner is such a vital means for his success in his business and in fact all he does in his self-confession is to lay bare in detail the mechanism of this craftiness:

… "inchircheswhan I preche,
I peyne me to han an hauteynspeche,
And rynge it out as round as gooth as belle,

(The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 329-331)

Or,

> Thane peyne I me to strecche forth the neckke,
> And est and west upon the peple
> Mynehandes and my tonge goon so yerne
> That it is joye to se my bisynesse
>
> (The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 395-398)

The end of his craftiness as he reveals to us is to satisfy his avarice. To conclude this part of discussion, it might be suggested that throughout *The Pardoner's Tale*, the Bible serves the Pardoner as a disguise behind which he can go about his work as a self-proclaimed apostle of Antichrist (Besserman, 1988). In sum, in revealing the true nature of the hypocrite himself, we notice how the character himself uses the Bible as a means to deceive and exploit his victims in the creation of this hypocrite. Also, we observe that Chaucer adopts the biblical definition of hypocrisy.

1.2 The Pardoner as False Preacher of Antichrist

> Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore, we know that it is the last hour.
>
> I John 2:18

In Christian theology, hypocrisy has been considered as the most prominent characteristic of Antichrist and his false prophets, and as an apocalyptic theme, it constituted one of the major topics of the exegesis of the Apocalypse and literary works of the age as well. "Antichrist the great persecutor of the church and the leader of the forces of evil in the last days was a central figure in medieval apocalypticism" (Emmerson, 1981, p. 11). Indeed, the idea of Antichrist comes from a Jewish apocalyptic literature and there the figure was referred to as the Belial, "the lawless one." This figure, it was believed, would appear in "the last days" and do battle with God and his Messiah. In certain passages of the Old Testament, as Emmerson (1981) argues,

> There is the expectation of a final great struggle between the forces of good and evil, between those faithful to God (the true Israel) and those hostile to Him (mainly identified with the pagan nations). The struggle is to culminate in the eschatological battle in which the victory will be won by God Himself intervening on behalf of His people to the accompaniment of cosmic signs and disturbances. Of a special significance in this regard is the

> reference in Ezekiel 38:2 in which Gog, chief prince of Meshach and Tulbal, leads an assembly of nations to attack and plunder the land of Israel, and the second is that of Antiochus IV, desecrator of the Temple and dreaded persecutor who was represented by the 'little horn' of the fourth beast of Daniel chapter 7 and was later to become a type of those who lead the anti-God forces. (p. 13)

The concept of Antichrist was adopted by Christianity, but it was turned into a new and distinctively Christian form. As it is explained by Fuller (1995):

> Shortly after the death of Christ the believers began to hope that he would return and establish the promised Kingdom of God. But when it became apparent that Christ's return was delayed, interest shifted to the Antichrist and things associated with the enemies responsible for postponing Christians' final victory. (p. 19)

Fuller (1995), then, argues that:

> Christians fervently believed that they were already in the last hour, yet all around them life was continuing as usual. The discrepancy between belief and outer appearance created a great deal of cognitive dissonance, but this dissonance could be reduced by interpreting world events against the background of apocalyptic myth. That is, the cryptic and evasive symbols associated with apocalyptic belief made it possible to see the "signs of times" being fulfilled and therefore gave assurance that the divine timetable—no matter how intricate and beyond full understanding—was nonetheless right on schedule. The symbol of the Antichrist, by a deceptive enemy against whom the believers could rally, made possible for the early church to refashion existing apocalyptic traditions into a new a distinctively Christian form. (p. 19)

The term *Antichrist* in the New Testament is found explicitly only in 1 John 2.18 and 2 John 7, which includes features of the tradition that are developed greatly in later interpretation, "children this is the last hour, and just as you heard that Antichrist comes, so now there are many Antichrists; whence we know that this the last hour." These letters stress the end of time, which can be confidently identified as the present because of the appearance of Antichrists. It is also the source of the medieval belief in multiple antichrists, the representatives of evil who already

plagued the church. However, it is in 2 John 7 where the emphasis is put on Antichrist as the deceiver of the church. In this verse, he is associated with many deceivers, "because many seducers have gone into the world who do not confess that Christ came in the flesh: This is the seducer and the Antichrist."

In the field of theology, however, prophecies of Antichrist flourished in the heat of 13th-century controversies and continued throughout the 14thand 15thcenturies. Emmerson (1981) states:

> Orthodox and heretics alike cited interpretations of Antichrist and the legends associated with him to champion specific causes, condemn one another, and predict the last days. This polemical manipulation of the apocalyptic complicated the late medieval understanding of Antichrist. Yet it too had its roots in the Scriptures and earlier patristic exegesis, in the idea that throughout history there have been and will be many Antichrists. Interpretations of 1 John 2:18 ("and now there are many Antichrists") and Matthew 24:5 ("for many will come in my name saying: I am Christ") often argued that anyone who prizes evil in his heart, who denies the life of Christ by words and actions is an Antichrist. Discovering Antichrist-like characters in the Scriptures and throughout history, theologians identified types of Antichrists who are, in a special sense, Antichrists. Exegetes also argued that false and hypocritical Christians are Antichrists, for although they profess Christ, they repudiate him in their everyday activities. (p. 62)

In sum, it might be concluded that the age, according to Anselm's interpretation of the opening of the fourth seal of the *Book of Apocalypse*, was the age of the dominance of the hypocrite clerics in the church, and this was the common belief of the faithful of the time (MacGiin, 1994, p. 186).

Thus, the prevalence of vices in society and particularly among the members of the church was considered a sign of the coming of Antichrist and the approaching of the End of Time. The people of the Middle Ages were taught by the exegesis that the most popular sign of the end is the universal moral and religious decay resulting in great increase of evil. Men will prefer evil to good and their own desires to God's will, so that there will be a general "cooling of love" (Matthew 24:12). The holy places of God will be polluted with blasphemy, fornication, and murder. Decay in the church will be prevalent, for evil priests, prophets, and teachers will deceive Christians (Emmerson, 1981, p. 84). They were also observing the realization of these apocalyptic prophecies in their time. For this reason, we notice that the main

topic of most of the sermons of the time is the admonishment of the Christians to be aware of their state (Emmerson, 1981):

> For example, in a sermon delivered in London in 1388, Thomas Wimbledon preached the great need for the correction of the society. The sermon developed a sense of urgency, for it pointed to the evils of the time and explains that a certain "doctour" argues that the great Antichrist will come in the fourteen hundredth year from the birth of Christ.(pp. 149-150)

Accordingly, in such a milieu, due to the influence of religion and consequently religious controversies in every layer of social life, it is not unusual, therefore, to see that the topic of hypocrisy of the clerics constitutes one of the main themes in the great works of literature in the Middle Ages. In other words, the Antichrist tradition itself, due to its rich symbolic potentiality, was a great source of inspiration for men of letters during the Middle Ages. Along with the theologians, they dealt with this theme either because of their own political concern and the commitment they had toward the society they lived in or because the concern they had for the fate of Christianity. Thus, literature, which develops or alludes to the legend, sometimes, refers to Antichrist only briefly, and sometimes, it treats it as the main subject. It might be suggested, however, that any treatment of the theme of hypocrisy in the literature of the 14thcentury can bring to the mind the complex Antichrist tradition with its association of hypocrisy. Based on this fact, a knowledgeable author like Chaucer, conscious of and even involved in the theological controversies and religious milieu of his time, cannot but have manipulated the topics, themes, images of the Antichrist tradition, and the exegesis of it, in his treatment of the theme of religious "hypocrisy."

The effective use of the implicit reference to Antichrist tradition is much evident in Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*. In fact, as we are informed, "medieval authors could obliquely allude to Antichrist and the legend associated with him to develop a character or strike a powerful image" (Emmerson, 1992, p.149), and in the case of the Pardoner, Chaucer by drawing on the complex resources of the Antichrist tradition, as we will see in detail later, has created one of the most timeless hypocrite characters of English fiction. Indeed, as it will be discussed, studying *The Pardoner's Tale* in the context of the Antichrist tradition will provide a new understanding of many details of the *Tale*. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, the aim will be to show how in the description of the character of the Pardoner in *The General Prologue* and *The Pardoner's Tale* Chaucer uses the interpretive ideas of different exegesis on the figure of the Antichrist. However, before beginning the analysis of the *Tale*, it seems necessary to consider two critical terms for our

discussion: *symbol* of Antichrist and *type* of Antichrist. In their efforts at identifying the symbols in the *Book of Apocalypse*, like the seven-headed beast that rises out of the sea as representing Antichrist, the exegetes also developed a typology of Antichrist. In other words, they tried to introduce the physically real and historical type of the awaited Antichrist. Thus, these exegetes "identify Antichrist not only with symbols of evil representing the continuing conflict between good and evil, but also with historical figures who in the past were in opposition to Christ, his people, and his church"(Emmerson, 1981, p.25). In regard to the types of Antichrist, Thomas Aquinas states that all evil characters who precede Antichrist are figures of Antichrist. In fact, the appearance of the terms "symbol" of Antichrist and his "type" is the outcome of the approach of the exegetes of the Antichrist tradition toward the application of the word itself in the first and the second letters of John.

Accordingly, it might be argued that by drawing on all the images, symbols and debates of the Antichrist tradition in his characterization of the Pardoner, Chaucer is, indeed, presenting a type of Antichrist who is roaming the English society, exploiting and demoralizing it under an aura of holiness. This was referred to by other critics such as Leicester (1982), who argues that the Pardoner's "self-presentation throughout the tale constantly stresses his culpability, and as the tale proceeds he seems to regard himself as truly exemplary and symbolic of the evil, corruption, and sinfulness of the world—finally perhaps as a type of the Antichrist" (p. 25). Galderwood (1964) also believes that "the Pardoner's consumed villainy, unqualified by any suggestion of better nature, seems to justify us in regarding him as a figure somewhat larger than life, as a study in evil, an archetype of malevolence and deceit, or whatever" (p. 303). As far as studies on medieval literature show, no figure is considered the archetype of malevolence and deceit but Antichrist and his types.

As for the idea of the Pardoner as an Antichrist type, in fact, it was Emmerson (1981) who in a chapter titled "The Canterbury Tales: Apocalypticism and Chaucer's Pilgrimage" who pointed to and discussed elements of the Antichrist tradition in *The Pardoner's Tale*. In the beginning of his discussion, Emmerson considers the Pardoner and his tale as a reflection of the "subtle mixture in *The Canterbury Tales* of the universal and personal eschatology and the interconnection between its concerns with both apocalyptic and contemporary time." Emmerson and Herzman(1992), then, propose the idea that the Pardoner "fits into a long tradition of spiritual hypocrites, a tradition most often identified with Simon Magus and Antichrist" (p. 171) because "throughout late medieval sermons and literature, the hypocrisy of the priesthood, particularly evidenced by its practice of simony, is a sign of the appearance of Antichrist" (p. 173). As evidence for his argument, Emmerson (1981) considers the Pardoner's selling of false pardons as an act of Antichrist. To confirm this, he refers to a lengthy treatise titled, "Of Prelate," that,

he says, was sometimes ascribed to Wycliffe. In this treatise, the act of selling of pardons is connected with simony and simony, in turn, is connected with apocalyptic fervor. Accordingly, pardons and simony are considered as acts of Antichrist.

The other resemblance that Emmerson (1981) argues the Pardoner bears to Antichrist is related to his performance. Reaffirming the point that the Pardoner is a showman of no small accomplishment, Emmerson and Herzman (1992) maintain, "like Antichrist, the Pardoner dazzles the crowds with his false magic and preaches blasphemy cloaked in doctrine." They add, "like Antichrist and his late-medieval representatives portrayed in the *Roman de la Rose* and *Piers Plowman*, he glosses Scripture not only for personal gain but for sheer pleasure of deceit" (p. 174). Quoting the Pardoner saying:

> Mynhoolypardoun may yow allewarice,
> So that ye offer nobles or sterlynges,
> Orelles silver broches, spoones, rynges.
> Boweth your heed under this bulle!
>
> (*The Pardoner's Tale*,pp. 906-909)

Emmerson and Herzman (1992) discover another point of resemblance between the Pardoner and Antichrist. From these lines, they infer that the Pardoner, like Antichrist, is encouraging his followers to idolatry. They argue that:

> The Pardoner wants the pilgrims to worship the bull as a papal document that has the force of compulsion, a bull that compels his audience to pay him what he wants. In this he deliberately makes it something other than what it is. Rather than a document that gives him the authority to preach, in the Pardoner's rhetoric this bull is a command to give him money. But the witty pun that equates one kind of bull with another—a papal bull with a golden calf—implies that his own avarice is indeed nothing more than a species of idolatry. (p. 175).

Emmerson and Herzman (1992)compare this idolatry with the idolatry of Antichrist, referred to in the apocalyptic imagination, which expected Antichrist to establish an image of himself in the temple of Jerusalem and claim, "Ego sum Christus."

In more theological language, Emmerson and Herzman (1992) maintain that the Pardoner also resembles Simon Magus and Antichrist in his inversion of

sacrament and ritual because there is a belief in the apocalyptic imagination that Antichrist in the last days inverts sacrament and ritual:

> He will use money and gifts to purchase spiritual support, parody liturgical language and Mass, pretend to die and be resurrected, stage his own parodic Pentecost, and finally attempt to rise to heaven in imitation of Christ's Ascension. Ultimately, he too will be cursed to Hell of his blasphemy. (p. 176)

Similarly, the Pardoner—like his apocalyptic associates, Simon Magus, and Antichrist, and like the literary forerunner Faus Semblant—repeatedly inverts the sacraments not only in his confession but in his tale. In addition, Emmerson and Herzman (1992) regard the events of the last episode of *The Pardoner's Tale*, in which the Pardoner surprisingly asks the pilgrims to come and kiss relics and buy pardons; the Host's furious reply and, eventually, the Pardoner's dumbness as resembling the fatal falls of Simon Magus and Antichrist. Moreover, Emmerson and Herzman (1992) consider one of the most critical points in the General Prologue, that is, what he calls the Pardoner's physical relationship as the companion and implied homosexual partner of the Summoner and considers it as another sign of resemblance between him and Antichrist. He argues that the medieval exegetes often described simony as "spiritual sodomy." To confirm this, he quotes one treatise, "For as the sin of Sodom was the greatest against nature and thus the greatest sin in the old law, so is simony as doctors say the greatest sin against grace and the law of grace." Emmerson and Herzman (1992) conclude, "the Pardoner's outward physical situation (the sign implying sodomy) reflects his inner spiritual condition (as evidenced by his sodomy" (p. 180).

At the end of the discussion, Emmerson and Herzman (1992) propose that by charging his portrayal of the Pardoner with allusions to the well-known traditions of the two great false spiritual leaders, that is, Simon Magus and Antichrist, Chaucer "provides thereby an apocalyptic urgency to his portrayal of this vivid band of men and women approaching the end of their pilgrimage and to understanding of the church at this point in the pilgrimage of history" (p. 181).They also suggest that "the dangers faced by the pilgrims are not manifest in the frontal attack of Antichrist, Pride, and other explicit personifications of the deadly sins, but arise from the Antichrist-like simoniac in their midst." Moreover, they add, "nevertheless Chaucer's portrayal clearly reflects the concerns of the rich apocalyptic imagination evident in a wide range of medieval literature" (p. 181).

Emmerson, Herzman, and McGinn seem to be one of the first critics who, due to their expertise, have initiated a new approach to reading *The Canterbury Tales* in the context of apocalyptic studies and Antichrist tradition. As they inform us, the

general structure and specific allusions developed in *The Canterbury Tales* suggest the many possibilities of reading through this approach. However, for a reader well familiar with the critical opinions on *The Pardoner's Tale* and other tales in the *Canterbury Tales* on the one hand, and the enlightening studies of Emmerson and McGinn and other critics in the field apocalyptic and Antichrist tradition on the other hand, there is still more to examine in reading, at least, the General Prologue and some of the *Tales* through this approach. Therefore, in the following study, unlike Emmerson's view and some other Chaucerian critics, the main audience of the Pardoner is not thought to be the pilgrims. The pilgrims, except the Knight, the Parson, and the Plowman, who are the ideals of the three estates of the medieval society, are morally no better than the Pardoner himself. Contrary to this view, it might be suggested that what concerns Chaucer as a humanist is the Pardoner's interaction with "lewedpepel." The horrible consequences of the Pardoner's hypocrisy to the moral and even the economic condition of these people, on the one hand, and the political-religious issues that definitely interested Chaucer as a court man, on the other hand, are treated ingeniously in the *Tale*. As an opportunist poet, in creating this horrible character, Chaucer draws on the very materials with which his contemporary audience had already been familiar through the works of the old exegetes and the contemporary ones like the sermons of Wimbledon.

One important point to make here is that, in the present writer's opinion, in his portrayal of the Pardoner, Chaucer draws more on the Augustinian view of Antichrist. As Fuller (1995) states:

> For Augustine, apocalyptic symbolism was to be understood in terms of continuing struggle between good and evil in the heart of every Christian. In *The City of God*, Augustine developed a tradition of multiple antichrists already living: all heretics, all schematics, every sinner was an Antichrist. Rather than looking to some supernatural entity for Antichrist, Augustine pointed directly to all perjurers, cheaters, evildoers, adulterers, drunkards, slave dealers, and users. As he wrote elsewhere, "For the Word of God is Christ: whatsoever is contrary to the Word of God is in Antichrist. (p. 32)

Besides, throughout history, two features of Antichrist were always described and highlighted: his tyrannical nature and his deceptive nature. Thus, based on his spiritual approach toward the matter, in his sermons, instead of discussing the origins or tyranny of Antichrist, Augustine concentrates on his deceit, his "contrariness," and his pride that is challenging the church and God (Emmerson, 1981, p. 149). Antichrist's pride is also believed to be a general symbol of deceit and hypocrisy of all those whom Augustine saw as puffed up in contrast to Christ's

example of humility. Gregory the Great following Augustine's line in his approach toward apocalyptic interpretations and Antichrist tradition highlighted pride and hypocrisy as the two main features of Antichrist. He wished that each Christian become "attentive to the Antichrist within, that is, the elements in his or her own life, especially pride and hypocrisy that constitutes us as precursors or members of Antichrist's body" (McGin, 1994, p. 135). He also reminds his audience that Antichrist is "the head of all hypocrites . . . who feign holiness to lead to sinfulness." As the chief of the deadly sins, pride is often coupled with Antichrist in later medieval literature. Wycliffe calls Antichrist the "king of alleþe children of pride" (McGinn, 1994, p.135). In sum, in pride he will raise himself above all divinities and attack the Bible. According to the exegesis, he puts on a pretended holiness, and it is very effective because through it he is immediately able to convert the ignorant and unprepared.

Accordingly, we see that throughout *The Pardoner's Tale*, these two features (i.e., pride and deception) are the most highlighted by Chaucer. Throughout the text itself, the reader can easily observe the Pardoner's pride, notably in the tone of his speech and also in his appearance. Indeed, his fashion does not seem to be proper for a man of the church. We notice that the narrator seems to be very impressed by the way this "noble ecclesiaste,""rood al of the newe jet":

This Pardoner haddeheer as yellow as wex,
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces hengehiselockes that he hadde,
And therwith he hiseshuldresoverspadde,
Butthinne it lay, by colpons, oon and oon.
But hood, for jolitiee, wered he noon,
For it was tussed up in his walet.
Him thoughte he rood al of the newe jet.
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.

(General Prologue, pp. 675-683)

The Pardoner also introduces himself as a complete scoundrel, and he is proud of it. In the very beginning of his speech, for example, when he addresses the pilgrims by the word "Lordynges," the half-patronizing, half-obsequious word as Brewer describes it (Brewer, 2001), the reader can easily perceive his sense of superiority and arrogance toward his audience. In the Prologue to his tale, he boasts of his vices, and in his tale, he displays the cunning of his tongue:

Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe
Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe

(General Prologue, pp. 421-422)

His pride is also perceivable in his contemptuous attitude toward those he dupes, and he exults in his own motives:

For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,
Andnothyng for correccioun of synne.
I rekkenevere, whan that they been beryed,
Though that hirsoules goon a-blakeberyed

(General Prologue, pp. 404-406)

Moreover, in the abovementioned lines, we see that the Pardoner's pride, which will not let him "lyve in poverte willfully," sets him in exact antithesis to the humility of Christ, who "In willful poverte chees to lyve his lyf." In fact, in this speech, upon his will the Pardoner demonstrates not only the aversion of the will from God, which is common to all sin, but the pure refusal of the will to serve God which is the sin of pride. In full knowledge of the existence of God upon which St. Augustine lays so much emphasis, he refuses to serve God that is the sin of pride. Out of pride he will never follow Christ's way of life, nor the Saints' and boasts of following the opposite of their instructions.

The Pardoner boasts how easy it is to gull the crowd and to persuade them that his relic has marvelous properties that can transmute the water of any well. Even in his showing off and flaunting his credentials, the reader can sense the Pardoner's pride:

Oureligelordesseel on my patente,
That shewe I first, my body to warente,
That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to destourbe of Cristeshoolywerk.

(The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 337-340)

Here, Kellogg (1972) argues that:

> The Pardoner proclaims the complete superiority of his evil will to God and man. He laughs at human law because it protects him; at

> the parish priest because he is powerless; at the "lewedpeple" his hypocrisy, at God because he, a miserable mortal, parodies the Christian doctrine with complete impunity. (p. 256)

His arrogance becomes even more blatant at the end of his tale, when he goes so far to declare that he has the power to absolve his clients so cleanly and so purely that they shall purely enter heaven without hindrance:

I yow assoile, by mynheigh power,
Yow that wol offer, as clene and eek as cleer
As ye were born.

(*The Pardoner's Tale*, pp. 913-915)

It is an honour to everich that is heer
That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoner
T'assoile yow, in contree as ye ryde,
For aventureswhiche that may bityde.

(*The Pardoner's Tale*, pp. 931-934)

Looke which a seuretee is it to yow alle
That I am in yourefelaweshipyfalle,
That may assoile yow, bothemoore and lasse,
Whan that the souleshalfro the body passe.

(*The Pardoner's Tale*, pp. 937-940)

These lines echo Antichrist-like pretention of having Christ-like miraculous power. The Parson of *The Canterbury Tales* in his illuminating moral treatise preaches that the "nombre of the twigges and of the harmes" (p. 389) that come of pride no man can fully count. He, then, mentions a number of them, "Ther is Inobidience, Avauntynge, Ypocrisie, Despit, Arrogance, Impudence, Swellynge of Herte, Insolence, Elacioun, Pertinancie, VeyneGlorie, and many another twig that I kannat declare" (*The Parson's Tale*, p. 390).

Hypocrisy is, thus, one of the many products of the sin of pride and in the General Prologue.The narrator exposes the true nature of the Pardoner as a false preacher of Antichrist. Moreover, in the prologue to his tale, he himself shamelessly reveals his hypocritical character and "explains with the utmost candor and the greatest pride in his own cleverness, the various guises his hypocrisy assumes"

(Donaldson, 1970, p. 1091). It is through his guise of holiness that he earns more money in a day than a parson can make in a year. In sum, as we know, on three occasions the Pardoner is introduced as a hypocrite. Once, the narrator in the General Prologue introduces him as so:

> And thus, with feynedflatterye and japes
> Made the person and the peple his apes.
>
> (General Prologue, pp. 705-706)

And, on other occasions, he himself, in his so-called confession, bluntly proclaims hypocrisy as the basis of his success in his business:

> For certes, many a predicacioun
> Comthoftetyme of yvelentencioun;
> Som for pleasance of folk and flaterye,
> To been avaunced by ypocrisye,
>
> (The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 407-410)

Explaining how he pays back people who attempt to offend him, he confesses:

> Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe
> Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe.
>
> (The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 420-421)

Thus, after reading the narrator's description of the Pardoner in the General Prologue and the Pardoner's prologue to his tale, we might agree with Fletcher (1990) who emphasizes that the Pardoner "without his 'hewe of hoolyness' would amount to nothing and his love of money would quite lack the potency to indulge itself. Unmitigated religious hypocrisy is the mainspring by which he moves" (p. 111).

In *The Pardoner's Tale*, thus, Chaucer removes the veil of religiosity from the seemingly "noble ecclesiaste" and shockingly reveals the true nature of a false preacher of Antichrist who shamelessly pronounces himself as one of Christ's preachers:

That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to destrourbe of Cristeshoolywerk.

(The Pardoner's Prologue, pp. 339-340)

As it is believed in Chaucer's time, one of the signs of the end is the presence of false preachers in society. Antichrist is believed to send out false prophets who, like Christ's disciples, preach his gospels. These preachers are very successful because of their persuasive language as we are told that along with Antichrist's working of false miracles, the medieval exegetes saw his cunning persuasion in his preaching as a means by which he will deceive the world. Meanwhile, his preachers are false because they pretend to be Christ's apostles. As a deceiver, Antichrist, himself, will begin by claiming to be the Messiah. He will preach new laws and teachings in order to destroy the law of God. His persuasive false doctrines accompany his specific examples of deceit. This study also shows us how Chaucer in his treatment of the hypocrisy of the Pardoner drew on motives, images, and ideas in these controversies and exegesis on the tradition of Antichrist that were occupying the minds of not only the elite but also the common man in the medieval ages. Chaucer's aim was to present to his fellowmen a palpable picture of what a false-prophet, Antichrist-like hypocrite the Pardoner is; thus, for this purpose Chaucer ingeniously manipulated devices from the discourse of Antichrist tradition that at the same time is very familiar to his audience.

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