

CHAUCER'S PARDONER, THE SCRIPTURAL EUNUCH, AND THE PARDONER'S TALE

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A RECENT article in *SPECULUM* suggested that Chaucer's Pardoner may best be understood in terms of Augustinian theology.¹ It is possible that the principles discussed there may be profitably elaborated. The intent of this paper is to indicate that the tradition of which St. Augustine was perhaps the most influential expositor provides more than a general climate of idea: specifically, that Scriptural imagery, utilized by Chaucer in the portrait and tale of the Pardoner, serves to illuminate quite precisely the nature of the man and the "moralite" of his sermon.

We are learning that the mediaeval author sought to build up the surface or *cortex* of his work in such a way as to indicate some particular *nucleus*, or inner meaning.² For this purpose he had at his command two main sources of material: the Book of Nature or God's Creation — the data of sense perception, and another Book — the Bible — which offered the unperceived data of revelation. Both "Books" provided the opportunity to achieve by study and interpretation a better knowledge of their Author. The Old Testament foreshadowed the "New Law" of charity under a series of types or figures, and was consequently to be reinterpreted in this light. Both the Bible and the Book of Nature provided a type of surface reality — a series of signs which, if properly understood, reflected the will and the law of God.

The *campaigne* created by Geoffrey Chaucer for the most famous fourteenth-century literary pilgrimage has been almost microscopically examined by the modern scholar in the effort to arrive at the most satisfactory understanding possible of the text of the *Canterbury Tales*. The characters are so firmly conceived that attempts have been made to identify the actual prototypes whom Chaucer may himself have known; and considerable study has been devoted to the various mediaeval sciences which provided details of psychological or physiognomical characteristics. It is surprising, however, to find scholarly effort directed so intensively upon what the mediaeval author called the *cortex* of his work, without an equally persistent effort to discover what *nucleus* might lie beneath. What we now call realism was of itself only a point of departure in a

¹ A. L. Kellogg, "An Augustinian Interpretation of Chaucer's Pardoner," *SPECULUM*, xxvi (1951), 465-481.

² Readers familiar with the recent work of Prof. D. W. Robertson, Jr. will recognize my indebtedness to his method of interpreting mediaeval vernacular poetry through its use of conventional Scriptural symbolism. For the distinction between *cortex* and *nucleus* see his "Some Medieval Literary Terminology, with Special Reference to Chrétien de Troyes," *SP*, xlviii (1951), 669-692, esp. 671 ff. An interrelated series of specific Scriptural images is examined at length in his "The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens," *SPECULUM*, xxvi (1951), 24-49. A full analysis of a mediaeval poem in accordance with these principles is found in *Piers Plowman and the Scriptural Tradition* (Princeton, 1951) by Professors Robertson and B. F. Huppé.

world where man's sensible experience consistently reflected the presence and nature of his Creator — where reality itself lay beneath the sign. The criterion of ulterior signification is, in fact, a hallmark of literature as a mode of expression. We expect the "cortex" to set forth a "nucleus" which is not denotable by scientific description. The reality of literature in any age may be said to lie beneath the sign, although the complexity of signification may not, perhaps, be as extensive or as arbitrary as that afforded the mediaeval artist by a highly developed system of conventional Scriptural symbolism.

Surface realism, however, even in the Middle Ages, was desirable insofar as it did not obscure the real issue of a particular work; and there is ample justification for historical study of the "realistic" details of mediaeval literature by which its inner sense is communicated to the reader. We have tended, nevertheless, to minimize the importance of the main source of mediaeval symbolic expression: that is, the Bible which, as the Word of God, provided, along with the Book of God's other works, the means for ulterior knowledge. Even if enigmatic, the words of the Bible could not be doubted, and here too, as with the Book of nature, interpretation demanded insight. With respect to either, the letter killed, while the spirit gave life.

In his analysis of the Pardoner and his "secret" eunuchry, Professor Curry has adequately demonstrated that Chaucer's account is "scientifically correct."³ But, although he approaches an inner equivalent for the detail he examines, Curry clarifies only the "letter" of this provocative characteristic.⁴ It would be strange indeed if Chaucer had intended his characters to be recognizable as particular living individuals, or as scientific phenomena, and nothing more. In this paper I wish first to indicate the literary purpose of the detail of eunuchry used in the description of the Pardoner — the *nucleus* beneath this element of the *cortex*. The detail may be shown to apply, not particularly to an individual *quaestor* of the House of Rouncevale, but to any pilgrim on his earthly pilgrimage. The Pardoner's "secret" may thus hold the secret of his literary existence. It will be my purpose to show how Chaucer, in making his Pardoner a eunuch, intended to expose and to stress the essential nature of this Canterbury pilgrim. It should be understood that this paper does not attempt to establish sources for idea or phraseology, except generally in Biblical context. For the present purpose it has been necessary to limit severely the associations connected with various Scriptural images, and citations of patristic writers have usually been minimized to offer an indicative selection of statements which may be found repeated in different ways elsewhere.

I

The last of all the pilgrims described in the General Prologue, the Pardoner is pictured as riding along singing a duet with that other "noble ecclesiaste," the Summoner:

³ W. C. Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences* (New York, 1926), 54-70. See p. 61.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64. See G. G. Sedgewick, "The Progress of Chaucer's Pardoner, 1880-1940," *MLQ*, 1 (1940), 435, 436.

With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER
 670 Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
 That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
 Ful loude he soong "com hider, love, to me!"
 This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
 Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.⁵

These two compeers, whose business in theory is to increase and multiply the congregation of the faithful in the Church, are ironically singing a popular song of carnal, rather than spiritual, love — of cupidity (to use the conventional mediaeval distinction) rather than of charity.⁶ Like January in his garden,⁷ the Pardoner tries to put on a gay and new exterior: with his hood folded in his wallet, "Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet." Chaucer does not fail to note, however, that, despite his "newe" appearance and the lecherous look in his eye, this man is somewhat less than he seems.

684 Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare . . .
 A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
 No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;
 690 As smothe it was as it were late shave.
 I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.

The images of the hare, goat and horse — all common symbols of lechery — do not prevent notice that this man is also described as a eunuch. In choosing this descriptive detail Chaucer may have had in mind a concept used in several Biblical texts and dealt with by many patristic commentators. In such terms the rather extraordinary detail of eunuchry may be shown not to be haphazard.

The symbol of the eunuch receives noteworthy Scriptural treatment in three separate texts: Deuteronomy xxiii, 1, Isaiah, lvi, 3-5, and Matthew, xix, 12. They are sometimes considered independently in Biblical commentaries, but more often the texts are referred to each other for clarification and exposition. Thus Rupertus, in a very full consideration of the prohibition of eunuchs under the Old Law, cites all three texts:

Non intrabit eunuchus attritis vel amputatis testiculis et abscisso veretro in ecclesiam Domini. In Isaia legimus: Et non dicat Eunuchus: Ecce ego lignum aridum, quia haec dicit Dominus eunuchis: Si custodierint sabbata mea, et egerint quae volui, et tenuerint foedus meum, dabo eis in domo mea, et in muris meis locum et nomen melius, a filiis et filiabus nomen sempiternum dabo eis quod non peribit (Isa. lvi). Ergone sic sibi contraria sunt lex et prophetae, ut dicat lex, non intrabit eunuchus in ecclesiam Domini, dicat econtra Dominus in propheta: Dabo eunuchus locum in domo mea, et in muris meis? Quae est enim domus, aut qui muri

⁵ All quotations and line references to the *Canterbury Tales* are from *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1933). See A. L. Kellogg and L. A. Haselmayr, "Chaucer's Satire of the Pardoner," *PMLA*, LXVI (1951), 275-276 on the satiric juxtaposition of the Pardoner with the Summoner.

⁶ Robinson notes, with disapproval, Gollancz's suggestion of a reflection of Cant. iv, 7-8. Here Christ the Bridegroom bids his Church to come forth to Him. What really matters is that Chaucer has his churchmen sing of "secular" love. It is worth noting that the old man, January (*MerchT.* 2144-2147) echoes the same verse in a similarly perverted manner. See Robertson, *SPECULUM*, XXVI, (1951), 45; and below, n. 28.

⁷ *MerchT.*, 2025-2026.

Domini, nisi ecclesia Domini? Sed profecto intellectus eunuchi non idem hic est et illic. Illic enim in littera, hic autem in spiritu eunuchus intelligendus est, quia spiritualis est. Quapropter jam ipsas eunuchorum enumeremus species. In Evangelio Dominus dicit: *Sunt eunuchi qui sic nati sunt; et sunt eunuchi qui ab hominibus facti sunt; et sunt eunuchi qui se castraverunt propter regnum caelorum* (Matth. xix). Haec tertia eunuchizatio, sive castratio, quia non ferro abscissionis, sed proposito fit castitatis, magis quidem spiritualis est, verumtamen non omnino, quia manifestus in carne caelibatus est. Et hi procul dubio laudabiles sunt eunuchi, quibus, juxta prophetam praedictum, dat Dominus *locum in domo sua, et in muris suis* nomenque melius a filiis et filiabus.⁸

The eunuch according to the Old Law is prohibited from entering the church of the Lord; under the New Law he is given a place within its walls. Rupertus' preliminary distinction between two types of eunuchry is according to the conventional principle that the Old Law was literal, while the New was to be understood according to the spirit. The "spiritual eunuchs" are those who, by an act of will, lead the life of chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He continues with an interpretation of the letter of the Old Law:

Horum omnium generum de nullo veraciter dicas, quia non ingreditur ecclesiam Domini, nisi quod sacros tantum altaris honores auctoritas canonica truncatis vel abscissis interdicat. Quapropter quaerendum adhuc est qualis sit ille eunuchus, qui non ingreditur ecclesiam Domini. Quaerentibus hoc illis quoque illud sese offert quod alibi dictum est: *Maledictus omnis qui non fecit semen in Israel* [Deut. vii:14]. Neutrum quippe sine altero recte intelligi potest, quia videlicet verba quidem diversa, sensus tamen idem est. Igitur eunuchus qui non ingreditur in ecclesiam Domini, et non faciens semen in Israel, qui et ideo maledictus esse debeat, quia semen non fecerit in Israel, ille est, qui cum possit verbo aedificare proximum, mutus incedit, vel cum bona et utilia noverit, otiosa magis et vana diligit. Hic illi oppositus est qui se castravit propter regnum coelorum, quia videlicet quantum ille laudabilis est, eo quod facultatem habens naturalem seminandi filios, carnis continens est propter regnum coelorum, scilicet ut vacare possit orationi, et juxta apostolicum consilium tantum sollicitus sit quae sunt Domini: tantum hic detestabilis est, eo quod commissum habens talentum verbi Dei, quo ad aedificationem multorum bene possit operari et utiliter negotiari, vacat otio, et acceptam indigne gratiam negligit.

This exposition may be valuable for an understanding of Chaucer's use of the idea of eunuchry in his description of the Pardoner. By following the standard exegetical principle of interpreting the letter of the Old Law in terms of the spirit of the New, Rupertus arrives, in effect, at a triple distinction among varieties of eunuchry equivalent to the statement in Matthew. Of the three types of eunuchry, then, one is literal (Deuteronomy according to the letter, and the *eunuchi qui nati sunt* of Matthew), and two are spiritual. Besides eunuchry thought of as voluntary chastity, we are presented with another figurative type (Matthew's second) which Rupertus characterizes as *detestabilis*, the antithesis of the laudable spiritual eunuchry — an opposition emphasized in the parallel grammatical construction of his discussion. This eunuchry is also the result of an act of will, but of an opposite act in that this man, in full knowledge of the *bona et utilia*, chooses the worse part: the *otiosa . . . et vana*. This man, possessing the ability to

⁸ Rupertus Tuitiensis, *De Trinitate et operibus ejus*. In *Deuteronomia*, I, xxii (PL, CLXVII, col. 941-942). Rupertus' commentary is quoted as it contains a very clear development of these conventional ideas.

inform his neighbor, remains silent; knowing the value of good works, he chooses idleness. Instead of cutting himself off from evil works,⁹ he cuts himself off from good works. He refuses offered grace. In short, he is the presumptuous man who, by *his* act of will, commits the unpardonable sin, not for the sake of, but in despite of, the kingdom of heaven. He holds a position in Babylon exactly equivalent to that held by his opposite in Jerusalem. Other commentators reflect a similar conception, though usually in less detail.

In the light of the division in Matthew and the exegetes, the "natural eunuch," or the *eunuchus ex nativitate*, treated by Professor Curry in his discussion of the Pardoner is not, for the purpose of significant characterization, as pertinent as the opposition between the two states of spiritual eunuchry. We need not assume from Chaucer's text that the character described was a eunuch from birth. Indeed, even if we recognize the exactness of the description, literary justification of this usage demands the shift to its spiritual analogy. The second class distinguished in Matthew is, in fact, often considered as both literal and spiritual eunuchry.¹⁰

Besides the significant treatment of the idea by Rupertus, it is not difficult to find equally suggestive statements in other places. The *Glossa Ordinaria* itself reflects the opposition already noted. In the second class of eunuchs it places those false religious who deceptively put on the guise of religion, but in reality are not chaste: the wolves in sheep's clothing. "Inter hos computantur etiam hic qui specie religionis simulant castitatem."¹¹ Consonant with these remarks is also the opposition by Paschasius Radbertus between the *eunuchus Dei* and the *eunuchus non Dei*.¹² Rabanus Maurus gives a most significant account of the *eunuchi qui facti sunt*:

Possumus et aliter dicere, eunuchi sunt ex matris utero qui sunt frigidioris naturae, nec libidinem appetentes, et aliqui ab hominibus fiunt quos aut philosophi faciunt, aut propter idolorum cultum emolliuntur in feminas, vel persuasione haeretica simulant charitatem, ut mentiantur religionis veritatem; sed nullus eorum consequitur regnum coelorum, nisi qui se propter Christum castraverit.¹³

The *eunuchus non Dei* — the perverted, or perverse, churchman — is he who, according to Deuteronomic law, *non intrabit in ecclesiam Domini*. Commentaries on Deuteronomy xxiii, 1 also describe this type of eunuchry with clarity. The *Glossa Ordinaria* explains the prohibition thus: "*Non intrabit*. Omnes qui molliter vivunt, nec virile opus perficiunt, non possunt permanere in congregatione sanctorum nec digni sunt introitu regni coelorum, quod violentiam patitur, et violenti diripiunt illud."¹⁴ The false eunuch is the man who lives at ease (*vacat*

⁹ Herveus, *Commentarii in Isaiam*, vii, lvi (PL, CLXXXI, col. 512): "Eunuchi, sunt qui pressis motibus carnis effectum in se pravi operis excidunt."

¹⁰ E.g., by Rupertus, *loc. cit.*; *Glossa Ordinaria* (PL, cxiv, col. 148); Rabanus Maurus, *Commentarii in Matthaeum* (PL, cvii, col. 1018-1019).

¹¹ To Matth. xix, 12 (PL, cxiv, vol. 148). Cp. *Pard. prol.* 421-422.

¹² *Expositio in Matthaeum*, ix, xix (PL, cxx, col. 654-656).

¹³ *Op. cit.*, PL, cvii, col. 1019.

¹⁴ PL, cxiii, col. 477. Bede, *In Pentateuchum commentarii — Deuteronomium* (PL, xci, col. 391), and Rabanus Maurus, *Enarratio super Deuteronomium*, iii, vii (PL, cviii, col. 929) make the same statement almost verbatim.

otio, in Rupertus' words), and does not carry out "manly" works. That is to say, he is sterile in good works, impotent to produce spiritual fruit. Bruno Astensis is more specific yet: "Per hoc enim significatur, quod in coelestem patriam nullus intrabit, qui bonorum operum sterilis, spiritualis generationis et fecunditatis instrumenta non habuit."¹⁵ This eunuch might truly cry, "Ecce ego lignum aridum."¹⁶

We may carry the metaphor one step farther. The spiritual fruits, or progeny, which the upright produce are, traditionally, as Bruno suggests, virtues or good works. St Augustine refers several times to the analogy by which good works represent spiritual offspring. "Quid est, filios tuos? Opera tua quae hic agis. Qui sunt filii filiorum? Fructus operum tuorum. Facis eleemosynas, filii tui sunt: propter eleemosynas accipis vitam aeternam, filii filiorum tuorum sunt."¹⁷ For this idea the most obvious Scriptural basis is Genesis, i, 28, in which the Lord, having created man in His own image, male and female, "Benedixitque illis, et ait: Crescite et multiplicamini, et replete terram et subjicite eam." This benediction is usually distinguished from that given the beasts (Gen. i, 22) which was a precept for physical multiplication only. While man was granted the necessity of such increase, his blessing referred also to the soul by which he was superior to the beasts. For man, then, the precept instituted the state of honorable marriage,¹⁸ but further prescribed for the soul the multiplication of virtues by spiritual fertility.¹⁹ Common also is the interpretation according to which man is thus commanded to "increase and multiply" the congregation of the faithful that the number of the elect might be fulfilled: "... suavius est hoc sentire quod si homo non peccasset, tam multa tamque vitiosa progenies de carne ejus non pullulasset, sed solum praedictae benedictionis fructum, id est, electos omnes et solos germinasset, non more jumentorum ruendo in libidinem, sed rationis imperio per mundam carnis naturam aedificando predestinatam coeli progeniem."²⁰ With respect to the concept of spiritual "multiplication" reference is also frequently made to Psalm lxxvii, 3: "Multiplicabis me in anima mea, virtute."²¹ By increase in good

¹⁵ *Expositio in Deuteronomium* (PL, CLXIV, col. 526).

¹⁶ See Herveus, *op. cit.*, col. 511-512: "Et hujusmodi eunuchis prohibetur dicere: *Ecce ego lignum aridum*, id est homo infructuosus, quia non de carnali, sed de spirituali fecunditate debet cogitare." Haymo, *Commentarius in Isaiam*, III, lvi (PL, cxvi, col. 1007): "Non abscedendo sibi virilia, sed luxuriam refrenando. . . . Ibi enim non de semine procreationis dicitur, sed de semine bonae operationis, . . . quia non separabuntur a gloria electorum, si semen spirituale hic, id est opus bonum fecerint: sed coronam et bravium virginitatis a Domino recipient."

¹⁷ *Enarratio in Psalmum CXXVIII* [:6] (PL, xxxvii, col. 1688). See also, e.g., PL, xxxvii, col. 1724; PL, xlii, col. 1004; above, n. 16.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Rabanus Maurus, *Commentarii in Genesim* (PL, cvii, col. 458-459; 461-462); Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica, Liber Genesim*, x (PL, cxviii, col. 1064); Angelomus, *Commentarius in Genesim* (PL, cxv, col. 128); *Commentarii in Genesim*, attrib. St Eucherius (PL, l, col. 901); etc.

¹⁹ "Fecunditas animae" in the *Commentarii in Genesim*, attrib. St Eucherius, *loc. cit.*, which interprets *implete terram*: "Terram intelligunt carnem, quam implet anima, et dominatur, cum in virtute multiplicatur." Thus also Angelomus, *loc. cit.*, states: "Salva historiale narratione, potest referri ad fecunditatem animae, *crescite*, id est, multiplicamini augmentando virtutes, et *replete terram*, sub carnis virtutibus fecunditate, et subjicite spiritui, et dominamini bestiis, hoc est motibus, quos similes bestiis, per temperantiam." See also Rabanus Maurus, *Commentarii in Genesim* (PL, cvii, col. 468).

²⁰ Rupertus, *op. cit.*, *In Genesim*, II, ix (PL, clxvii, col. 254).

²¹ See St Augustine's exposition (PL, xxxvii, col. 1778).

works and multiplication in virtues, or by augmenting the number of the faithful, the *eunuchus Dei* may properly be said to be fecund. "Porro in tertio [eunuchizatio] spes regni coelestis fide genita propagatur in charitate, qua multos generare filios magis quam carne creditur."²² It is in just such spiritual multiplication that the *eunuchus non Dei* is sterile, a *lignum aridum*. As Rupertus said, he deliberately refuses to perform good works, and wilfully turns away from virtue.

II

If we look at Chaucer's Pardoner in terms of the Christian concept of eunuchry, both the utility of the image and the true character of this "noble ecclesiaste" are illuminated. According to these terms we should indeed expect him to be a eunuch. As a man in orders, he should be one of those "qui seipsos sua sponte castraverunt propter regnum coelorum . . . permanentes in castitate."²³ That is, the ecclesiastic is figuratively supposed to be the third type of eunuch distinguished in Matthew — one who by his own will has cut himself off from temporal pleasures, "non ferro . . . sed totus gladio Spiritus sancti praecisus, quod est verbum Dei: atque circumcisis intus forisve, ne ulla in eo prurigo concupiscientiarum praevaleat."²⁴ Castration or circumcision by the word of God is equivalent to cutting away the *vetus homo* that the *novus homo* might live:²⁵ this eunuch's "voluntas," says Radbertus, is "nova secundum Spiritum sanctum procreata."²⁶

The Pardoner, according to his own boast, is by no means a eunuch in this sense. The opposite, however, implicit in the developed Christian concept of eunuchry, provides a sense quite appropriate to the man as he presents himself in his prologue and tale; and this opposition itself implies a biting and bitter satire directed at the type of churchman he represents. It is evident that by *his* act of will he has cut himself off from virtue and good works, and that this act has been performed, not "amore Christi,"²⁷ that is, through charity, but through its antithesis, *cupiditas*. The animal symbols of lechery with which he is associated immediately suggest that, although he is perhaps physically frustrated, the inner man hardly "abides in chastity." If the *eunuchus Dei* is the *novus homo* of Scripture, the Pardoner, having cut away this possibility, lives impenitently the life of the *vetus homo*.

Upon such oppositions, basic to Scriptural imagery and exegesis, the portrait of the Pardoner is developed by Chaucer. The song of cupidity with which he is introduced, for example, strongly suggests the *vetus canticum* sung by the *vetus homo*, itself the reverse of the *canticum novum* which the new man sings: "vetus homo canticum vetus cantare potest, non novum. Ut autem cantet canticum novum, sit novus homo."²⁸

²² Radbertus, *op. cit.*, (PL, cxx, col. 655).

²³ *Ibid.*, col. 654.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 654-655.

²⁵ See Rom. vi, 6-11; Col. iii, 7-10; Eph. iv, 22-23. This associated concept is treated more fully below.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, col. 655.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ St Augustine, *Sermo IX: de decem chordis* (PL, xxxviii, col. 81).

More definite, however, is the comparison provided between the Pardoner and the parson whom he is said to gull with his false relics.

But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
705 And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,
He made the person and the peple his apes.

The comparison seems to be purposefully introduced in order to play off the character of the Pardoner against that of the "povre PERSON OF THE TOWN" who yet was rich "of hooly thought and werk" — that is, of virtue and good deeds, the spiritual progeny of the true eunuch. The Parson, we recall, "also a lerned man, a clerk, That Cristes gospel *trewely wolde preche*,"²⁹ preaches in churches for motives other than *cupiditas*; his interest, as it should be, is in increasing and multiplying the congregation of the faithful:

To drawn folk to hevene by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.³⁰

He is a shepherd, not a mercenary. Of all these traits the Pardoner possesses the opposite, by his own rather proud admission. The Parson who with his "brother" may be said to live in "parfit charitee," like the true eunuch who has devoted his life to others *propter regnum coelorum* and thus multiplies spiritually, is a perfect foil to the Pardoner. By spiritual standards the best of all the pilgrims, he is ironically compared with one who, in his perfect cupidity, is possibly the worst of the lot.

The Pardoner does better the Parson in one respect: "he gat hym moore moneye." But to do this he subverts the Parson and all that he stands for. The analogy of his "Com hider, love," in Church, is the "offertorie," the purpose of which he reverses by applying it to his own benefit rather than to God's. Like the song he sings with the Summoner, this is the *vetus canticum* of cupidity rather than the *canticum novum* of charity. The increase of his money is typical of the Pardoner's *multiplicatio*. Sterile in the spiritual multiplication of heavenly treasure, he lays up his treasure on earth. Since Deuteronomy stated that such eunuchs shall not enter *in ecclesiam Domini*, it is ironic that the Pardoner is said to conduct most of his business "in chirches."³¹ Here he advertises his own variety of multiplications with a calculated propaganda. The goodman who uses his "sholdre-boon, Which that was of a hooly Jewes sheep," with the proper magic ritual, "As thilke hooly Jew our eldres taughte," (suggestive of the Old Law) will

²⁹ *Gen. Prolog.*, 479–481, italics mine. The Pardoner, in what H. R. Patch called "Chaucer's most unsparing couplet in all his works" (*On Rereading Chaucer* [Cambridge, Mass., 1939], p. 164), says: "Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe Of hoolynesse, to *semen* hooly and *trew*e." "Truth" is also "loaded" as a Christian term. Christ calls himself Truth (John xiv, 6). Compare Chaucer's *Balade de Bon Conseyl* (*Truth*). The opposite is falseness, *mendacium* (see below, n. 46).

³⁰ And see his prologue, 49–51.

³¹ *Gen. Prolog.* 707 states: "He was *in chirche* a noble ecclesiaste." The first line of the Pardoner's prologue runs: "'Lordynges,' quod he, 'in chirches whan I preche'" (329; cf. 378).

find "His beestes and his stoor *shal multiplye*." His marvellous mitten, equally useful to the man who wishes to get ahead in the world, will provide "*multiplying* of his grayn."³² The formula here is the offering of "pens, or elles grotes."

The Pardoner thus makes of the Church a kind of medicine show, and will promise to multiply earthly and material things, a function singularly appropriate to the particular type of sterility he represents.

Multis modis multiplicatio intelligi potest. Est multiplicatio terrenae generationis, secundum primam naturae nostrae benedictionem. . . . Et ista plane multiplicatio fructuosa est, et non venit nisi de benedictione Domini. Jam quid dicam de aliis multiplicationibus. Multiplicatus est ille auro, ille argento, ille pecore, ille familia, ille possessionibus, ille his omnibus. Multae sunt terrenae multiplicationes. . . . Etenim curis homines in anima multiplicantur. Multiplicatus videtur in anima, in quo etiam multiplicata sunt vitia. Ille tantummodo luxuriosus; iste et avarus, et superbus, et luxuriosus: multiplicatus est in anima sua, sed malo suo. Multiplicatio ista egestatis est, non ubertatis.³³

Multiplicationes terrenae, the increase of earthly treasure, are those at which the spiritually sterile excel. The Pardoner in this activity uses his "relikes" to turn the mind of the goodman not to God through charity, but to his personal material wealth through cupidity: a reversal insidiously perverse with regard to his victim's eternal well-being. The increase he offers (and even this is "feyned") is that of the *vetus homo* — the opposite of the multiplyings of the *novus homo*. So far as the latter are concerned, the Pardoner is wilfully a sterile man; and it is probable that this is what Chaucer alludes to when he remarks, "I trow he were a gelding or a mare," a gelding, that is, "qui bonorum operum sterilis, spiritualis generationis et fecunditatis instrumenta non habuit"; and a mare, that is, one of those who "propter idolorum cultum emolliuntur in feminas."

If the Pardoner may be analyzed in terms of the *eunuchus non Dei*, his nature and status among the pilgrims of the *Canterbury Tales* may be further clarified in terms of its equivalent — the *vetus homo*. The term "Old Man" is Paul's (cf. Col. iii, 1-10; Eph. iv, 17-24; Rom. vi, 1 ff.), who also calls him the "body of sin." As an aspect of the nature of man, the *vetus homo* represents the flesh and its manifold lusts, opposed to the *novus homo*: that is, the spirit and reason, by which these are subdued.³⁴ In terms of the Biblical history of man, the Old Man, in any human being, is the image of fallen Adam, unregenerate in accepted grace and unredeemed by Christ, Who is called the "New Man."³⁵ As the result of original sin, all men are said to be born in the image of the *vetus Adam*. By bap-

³² In this and the previous quotation, italics mine.

³³ St. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum CXXXVII*[:3] (*PL*, xxxvii, col. 1778). Compare his *Enarratio in Psalmum IV*[:8] (*PL*, xxxvi, col. 82): "Non enim multiplicatio semper ubertatem significat, et non plerumque exiguitatem: cum dedita temporalibus voluptatibus anima semper exardescit cupiditate, nec satiari potest, et multiplici atque aerummosa cogitatione distenta, simplex bonum videre non sinitur."

³⁴ Equivalent terms are the "exterior man" and the "animal man," which likewise have their opposites, the "interior man" and the "rational man." A more complete understanding of this familiar concept may be gained from the popular commentaries upon the Biblical texts cited. It is also a staple of sermon literature.

³⁵ The *vetus homo* is often called the *vetus Adam*; Christ the *novus Adam*.

nizable as the man impenitent in sin. Thus there is no hesitation in the confession of his prologue:

But shortly myn entente I wol devyse;
I preche of no thing but for coveitise.
425 Therefore my theme is yet, and evere was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Thus can I preche agayn that same vyce
Which that I use, and that is avarice.³⁸

It is not difficult to recognize the theological type after which the Pardoner is figured. It is a type of sinner on which behavioristic sympathy is wasted (for the Pardoner is himself responsible for his figurative eunuchry). His eunuchry, his *vetustas*, and his pride, would easily have identified him as a man sinning vigorously against the Holy Ghost.

Presumption, or *peccatum in Spiritum sanctum*, is the one sin which is irremissible, since it involves the refusal of grace. St Augustine stressed final impenitence as the irremissible sin, for God is said not to pardon where penitence is absent.³⁹ This sin is usually described in terms of malice, the opposite or absence of charity. The less serious sin against the Father arises through frailty (absence of power), and that against the Son through ignorance (absence of wisdom).⁴⁰ Impenitence, or other aspects of this sin, are absolutely opposed to the remission of sins which is appropriated to the Holy Ghost.⁴¹ It refuses proffered grace without which there can be no pardon.⁴² The grace of the Holy Ghost precedes contrition, the first requisite of penitence, as the Pardoner knows. Of the last requisite, penance, he sells partial indulgence.⁴³

³⁸ It should be noted that Faux-Semblant, disguised as a friar, makes a similar false confession in the *Roman de la Rose* (see D. S. Fansler, *Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose* [New York, 1914], p. 162 ff.). Confession is said to be false if unaccompanied by contrition (see below, n. 45). Prof. B. F. Huppé is preparing an article on the dramatic significance of the Pardoner's presumption.

³⁹ See, e.g., *Epistolae ad Romanos, inchoata expositio* (PL, xxxv, col. 2097). Peter Lombard's standard discussion of the *peccatum in Spiritum sanctum* is in the *Sententiae*, II, dist. xliii. The text I use is that printed in the Quaracchi edition of the works of St Bonaventura (Vol. II, 1885). He treats Augustine's position on p. 980a.

⁴⁰ See Lombard, *op. cit.*, p. 981b. The Pardoner says he sometimes preaches out of malice, or "hate," for revenge (*Pard. prol.* 412 ff.). He may again be contrasted with the Parson.

⁴¹ Lombard, *op. cit.*, p. 980a: "Recte ergo in Spiritum sanctum delinquere dicuntur, qui sua malitia Dei bonitatem superare putant, et ideo poenitentiam non assumunt, et qui iniquitati tam pertinaciter inhaerent, ut eam nunquam relinquere proponant et ad bonitatem Spiritus sancti nunquam redire, patientia Dei abutentes et de misericordia Dei nimis praesumentes."

⁴² St Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, I (PL, xxxiv, col. 1267): "Et hoc est fortasse peccare in Spiritum sanctum, id est, per malitiam et invidiam, fraternam oppugnare charitatem post acceptam gratiam Spiritus sancti, quod peccatum Dominus neque hic, neque in futuro saeculo dimittit."

⁴³ Technically, the Pardoner receives a free gift of alms, itself effective as penance (cf. Kellogg and Haselmeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 252). According to the rule of opposites, almsgiving is usually specified for the sin of *coveitise*. It is impossible, within the limits of this article, to elaborate the full irony of the situation. The Pardoner's false confession — perversion of the second requisite in penitence; the full significance of his refusal to "bye it on [his] flesh so deere," or of his own impenitence in relation

Again the contrast with the Parson, whose tale is a penitential manual, is evident. According to their offices, both the Pardoner and the Parson are *media* through which grace may be brought to the faithful;⁴⁴ but the Pardoner, like Rupertus' *eunuchus detestabilis*, "acceptam indigne gratiam negligit." A type of the impenitent man, the Pardoner accumulates temporal wealth by making a mockery of penitence and pardon. Like the eunuchs described by Rabanus Maurus, who "persuasione haeretica simulant charitatem, ut mentiantur religionis veritatem," he knowingly perverts the function of his office. According to St Augustine, the duplicity characteristic of the sinner in *Spiritus sanctum* is likely to appear in a discrepancy between words and deeds⁴⁵ — a concept which elsewhere forms part of his definition of a lie.⁴⁶ This characteristic obviously applies to the Pardoner, who stirs his hearers to devotion in order to increase his sales. In the bragging confession of his misdeeds there is not a sign of contrition. The same distinction, highly conventional, also forms part of the traditional exegesis of the *lignum aridum* with which Isaiah compared the eunuch. Of the sterile tree St Augustine remarks in another place, "Folia sola habebat, fructum non habebat . . . : sic sunt qui verba habent, et facta non habent."⁴⁷

III

I have tried thus far to indicate that the three terms suggested for identifying the character of the Pardoner — that is, consideration of the man as the conventional *eunuchus non Dei*, as the *vetus homo*, and as the sinner in *Spiritus*

to his official duties; his character and activities in the light of the theology of indulgence and of preaching — all deserve investigation and can only be suggested here.

⁴⁴ See Dom Jean Leclercq, "Le Magistère du Prédicateur au XIII^e Siècle," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* (1946), 108–115, esp. 109.

⁴⁵ See *Epist. ad Romanos, inchoata expositio* (PL, xxxv, col. 2105–2106: "Verbum enim dicere, non ita videtur hic positum, ut tantummodo illud intelligatur quod per linguam fabricamus, sed quod corde conceptum, etiam opere exprimimus. Sicut enim non confitentur Deum, qui tantum oris sono confitentur, non etiam bonis operibus . . . Sic etiam qui hoc verbum, quod sine venia vult intelligi Dominus, in Spiritum sanctum dicit, hoc est, qui desperans de gratia et pace quam donat, in peccatis suis perseverandum sibi esse dicit, dicere intelligendus est factis, ut quomodo illi factis Dominum negant, sic isti factis dicant se in mala vita sua et perditis moribus perseveraturos, et ita faciant, hoc est perseverent." The reference to the false confession should be noted.

⁴⁶ Some idea of the pervasive significance of duplicity may be gained from Augustine's tractate, *de mendacio*. See also Col. iii, 9; Eph. iv, 25; and n. 29, above. The Parson is, again, just the opposite: "first he wroughte, and afterward he taughte."

⁴⁷ *Enarratio in Psalmum CXXVIII*[:6] (PL, xxxvii, col. 1688). Compare PL, xxxvi, col. 334. So with the Pardoner's "preaching," in contrast to the Parson's, only part of the office is fulfilled — the "letter" rather than the "spirit." *A Late Medieval Tractate on Preaching* states: "Jesus undertook to do and to teach, or rather, first to do and then to teach. To denote this, each faithful preacher today is held to preaching first by deed and then by sermon. Would indeed that each preacher were to become such a diligent imitator of Jesus Christ, that he should preach not with the word alone but also with works!" [trans. Harry Caplan, in *Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking in Honor of James A. Winans* (New York, 1926) p. 72: cited by C. O. Chapman, "Chaucer on Preachers and Preaching," *PMLA*, xlv (1929), 184].

When considered as a class, it is apparent that the *steriles* or *aridi ligni* are the same as the *arbor malorum* which the Pardoner takes as "his theme." In a sense, his tale may thus be quite literally about himself. See below, n. 60.

sanctum — are merely different emphases with respect to the same spiritual phenomenon. The eunuch is the *vetus homo*, who by wilfully cutting himself off from grace presumptuously sins against the Holy Spirit. Chaucer suggests this spiritual state by using the image of eunuchry, reinforcing his point by allusions to the concept of the *veteres homines* who, according to Paul, “semet-ipsos tradiderunt impudicitiae, in operationem immunditiae omnis in avaritiam” (Eph. iv, 19).

The significance of the concept of the *vetus homo* for an understanding of the character of the Pardoner can be grasped only by examination of all of Paul's statements in their full Scriptural and exegetical context. However, a few details may be mentioned with regard to the statement in Ephesians, iv, 17 ff. A specific reference to this text indicates its importance. To Paul's exhortation to those who have “put off the Old Man”: “qui furabitur, jam non furetur; magis autem laboret, operando manibus suis, quod bonum est, ut habet unde tribuat necessitatem patienti (iv, 28), the Pardoner retorts, “I wol nat do no labour with myne handes,” and engages rather in thievery of spiritual offerings.⁴⁸ Through his false preaching he also identifies himself with the *vetus homo*. “Propter quod deponentes mendacium, loquimini veritatem unusquisque cum proximo suo” (iv, 25) is further developed in iv, 29: “Omnis sermo malus ex ore vestro non procedat: sed si quis bonus ad aedificationem fidei, ut det gratiam audientibus.” In this activity, we have seen, the Pardoner should specifically take part. The phraseology here is echoed by that of Rupertus concerning the eunuch. Neither the Old Man nor the eunuch, it may be added, abide by the precept which follows immediately: “Et nolite contristare Spiritum sanctum” (iv, 30).

In portraying the Pardoner of Rouncevale, then, Chaucer provides the *cortex* of his description with details which individualize his character, but which also expose for the reader a *nucleus* of deeper significance. By recalling the conventional concepts of the false eunuch and of the *vetus homo*, they help to identify the nature and enormity of the Pardoner's sin. He emerges as a type of the false ecclesiastic — the eunuch “qui specie religionis simulat castitatem.” Among the pilgrims of the *Canterbury Tales* he stands at the opposite pole from the Parson, the true leader in the Church, who strives

To shewe you the wey, in this viage,
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrimage
That highte Jerusalem celestial:

that is, the straight and narrow “wey”⁴⁹ which Christ identifies with Himself. On the other hand, the Pardoner, dealing as he does with spiritual merchandise, commits the most vicious and dangerous hypocrisy possible. Of the character on the pilgrimage to Canterbury he is the representative of the false leader within the Church, who “commissum habens talentum verbi Dei, multorum bene possit operari et utiliter negotiari, vacat otio, et acceptam indigne gratiam

⁴⁸ Not recorded in Robinson's notes. Fansler, *op. cit.*, p. 164, says Chaucer imitates Faux-Semblant's statement, “Sans james de mains travailler” (RR 12504), which follows the same text.

⁴⁹ Matth. vii, 14; Heb. xii, 14; etc.

negligit." He will not make baskets nor counterfeit the apostles. Cloaked in the outward aspects of his office, he wilfully misdirects those whom he can move. As he says, he "saffrons" his speech with Latin

. . . for to strike hem to devocioun.

Than shewe I forth my longe crystal stones . . .

The shift in intent expressed between these two lines dramatizes his tactics, the gap between his *verba* and *facta* — his "handes" and his "tonge." It parallels significantly his concluding effort with Harry Bailly. The relics in those "stones" turn the love of his victim from God and into *amor sui*, reversing the proper ladder of love, for they claim to provide increase in temporal or earthly treasure. As a selling technique he makes his hearers "soore to repente."

The "wey," therefore, that the Pardoner shows "in this viage" is the opposite to that pointed out by the Parson. The Parson's way is through penitence;⁵⁰ the Pardoner's, although he knows the better path, through impenitence in evil. Sterile in good works, wilfully sinning against the Holy Ghost, he remains boastfully impenitent in full knowledge of his sin. Chaucer has produced a daring and effective irony in creating as his Pardoner the eunuch who presumptuously glories in the one unpardonable sin.

IV

Rupertus' method in analyzing the concept of the eunuch may be applied to a great variety of signs, with much the same results. A case in point is Professor Robertson's illustration of the mediaeval treatment of gardens, trees, flowers and related symbols. As he says, "similar studies might be made of names, numbers, animals, stones, or other things,"⁵¹ and they might be similarly documented. When the more familiar Scriptural images appear literally in the *cortex* of Christian art, they immediately suggest one of their spiritual analogies which are themselves usually twofold, referring to their significance in both Jerusalem and Babylon. We may often determine the exact spiritual analogy only from context, since the opposite spiritual equivalent is usually implied. Concepts such as the concept of Death may be considered literally, as the rioters themselves do in the tale, still preserving the spiritual opposition — in this case, death to sin (Rom. vi, 11) or death to Christ or life (Col. iii, 4).⁵² To use pertinent terms, the concepts of either the death of the *vetus homo* or the death of the *novus homo* may be symbolized by physical death. Thus, taking an example from the *Pardoner's Tale*, the literal image of the treasure suggests the spiritual opposites of Matthew, vi, 19. In the context of the tale we recognize that the rioters do not find the "true" treasure (in which the "povre" Parson is "rich") they should have laid up in heaven, but the "false" earthly treasure which is itself the death they seek — as was understood by the hermit of the analogue in the *Cento Antiche*

⁵⁰ Cf. *ParsT.* 75–80.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, *SPECULUM*, xxvi (1951), 25.

⁵² Cf. *ParsT.* 183–184.

Novelle. The concept of the heavenly treasure, strongly implied, stresses how far down the "croked" way the rioters have gone.

In these terms I wish now to outline briefly an interpretation of the tale itself, in which the calculated description of the Pardoner may be seen to be functionally appropriate. Recognizing the importance of the form of the sermon (one of the effects of which is to throw the Pardoner into bolder contrast with the Parson) and of the theological subdivisions of its *expositio* for a detailed analysis of the *Pardoner's Tale*, I confine my attention here almost exclusively to the *exemplum* intended to illustrate his exposition of the theme: *Radix malorum est Cupiditas*. One of the best conceived stories in all literature, this *exemplum* possesses an undeniable universality, provocative despite any change in systems of values. I feel, however, that an interpretation based on Chaucer's use of Scriptural imagery, without precluding others, provides an additional dimension of philosophical importance.

The Pardoner — this *quaestor* — himself a seeker after the false treasure, tells a tale of seekers after Death. We should remember that the basic concern of the *exemplum* is Death. Death in the tale is the literal result of each of the aspects of *cupiditas* distinguished in the *expositio*. The tale is first an example showing the evils of drunkenness, that "verray sepulture Of mannes wit and his discrecioun." The rioters' day begins in drink, to the solemn background of their "fordronke"⁵³ comrade's funeral bell, and ends in death, brought to two of the three in a bottle of wine. They swear, furthermore, an oath of brotherhood, the breaking of which leads directly to death. After they find their treasure they draw lots to decide who is to bring back the "breed and wyn," and *hasardrye* becomes involved in all the murders.

Ironically, the Pardoner, of course, is himself a chief offender with regard to most of the vices he treats in his sermon. He will not tell his tale until he has eaten and drunk his fill.

320 "It shal be doon," quod he, "by Seint Ronyan!
But first," quod he, "heere at this ale-stake
I wol bothe drynke, and eten of a cake."

He is a man of many oaths (*Ronyan*, in both French and English a word for the "coillons," is an appropriate saint for a eunuch to swear by). More generally, as the *vetus homo* and the *aridum lignum* of spiritual eunuchry, he is the literal embodiment of *cupiditas*, the larger theme of his sermon.

425 Therefore my theme is yet, and evere was,
Radix malorum est Cupiditas.

Death is conceived in the *exemplum* in the variety of senses implicit in Christian thought. Death of either the *vetus homo* or the *novus homo* is the *modus vivendi* of the other: a phenomenon suggested by Chaucer's metaphor of eunuchry, and expressed by the Pardoner himself:

⁵³ Drunkenness tropologically symbolizes spiritual blindness, love of temporalia: i.e., spiritual death. Cf. Robertson and Huppé, *Piers Plowman*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 52, 110-111.

But, certes, he that haunteth swiche delices
548 Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices.

In attempting to "slay" Death, then, the rioters do not engage in an entirely meaningless quest. Adam's fall brought death, both physical and spiritual, into the world, and all men after, born in his image, have been mortal. The virtuous man *should* slay Death, the inheritance of the Old Man. By crucifixion and burial of this "earthly image" — the "body of sin" — the soul may put on the image of Christ and achieve its heavenly treasure in eternal life, the inheritance of the New Man. As Christ slew Death upon the Cross, so his followers can gain eternal life and cause the death of Death.

The symbolic quest of the rioters to cause their version of the death of Death is significantly introduced.

In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye
Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,
465 As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes,
Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes,
They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and nyght,
And eten also and drynken over hir myght,
Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifice
470 Withinne that develes temple, in cursed wise,
By superfluytee abhomynable.

Like the Pardoner himself, they are classed ironically as "yonge folk." That these men are literally but not spiritually "young" is apparent from Chaucer's compact exposition. Dancing the "olde daunce," subjecting themselves to fortune in their play, engaging in the false banquet of sense, "they doon the devel sacrifice Withinne that develes temple."

And right anon thanne comen tombesteres
478 Fetys and smale, and yonge frutesteres,
Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres,—

the purveyors of the "olde daunce," the false feast, the *vetus canticum* — "Whiche been the verray develes officeres." Into this atmosphere of spiritual death is introduced the spectre of physical death: "they herde a belle clynke Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave."

The irony of the situation is now heightened. One of the rioters tells his "knave" to ask the corpse's name. The "boy" provides not only this information, but also some suitable advice.

680 "And, maister, er ye come in [Death's] presence,
Me thynketh that it were necessarie
For to be war of swich an adversarie.
Beth redy for to meete hym everemoore;
Thus taughte me my dame; I sey namoore."
685 "By seinte Marie!" seyde this taverner,
"The child seith sooth . . .
690 To been avysed greet wysdom it were,
Er that he dide a man a dishonour."

The advice of the "child" can be duplicated endlessly in sermons and moral

tracts. One should be ready to meet death at all times in view of the judgment after death.⁵⁴ The "truth" of the young man's assertion has been recognized, however, by few other than the taverner. As a point of departure for the tale the false "yonge folk" literalize (and thus pervert) the word of the true "young man,"⁵⁵ whose "dame" is the Church,⁵⁶ the source of such doctrine. They set out to seek a literal Death.

Having perverted the counsel of the *novus homo*, the rioters turn for advice to a mysterious "olde man" who directs them on their way. Their search is not fruitless. The Death they discover, however, is no literal "traytour," but *spiritual* death which their spiritual blindness prevents them from recognizing: the gold which turns their hearts from the life of their souls.⁵⁷ It is clear that this is the false "treasure" — almost eight bushels of earthly treasure: the opposite of the eternal treasure which should be laid up in heaven. The quest of Death personified and the resultant physical death of the revellers emphasize the real spiritual death found under the oak tree to which the old man guides them. Physical death comes to all; but spiritual death is the root of all evil.

The circumstances in which the treasure is discovered reinforce this identification. Although he says that he seeks Death himself, the old man points the way:

760 "Now, sires," quod he, "if that ye be so leef
To fynde Deeth, turne up this croked wey,
For in that grove I lafte hym, by my fey,
Under a tree, and there he wole abyde;
Noght for youre boost he wole him no thyng hyde."

Death, he says, lies up the "croked wey" — the opposite of the straight and narrow; "in that grove" — that is, in the false paradise of cupidity;⁵⁸ and "under a tree" — *in medio ligni*, where Adam and Eve lost their true Eden and found Death first.⁵⁹ In terms of mediaeval Christian imagery, this is surely the way to find death, but not the way to slay him. Furthermore, if the *exemplum* as a whole illustrates the Pardoner's theme, in a sense the oak tree under which the gold is discovered literally exemplifies the words of his text, *Radix malorum est Cupiditas*. For this tree may itself be regarded as the *arbor malorum* — the tree of evil (or of death)⁶⁰ — whose root is cupidity symbolized by the golden

⁵⁴ Cf., e.g., *ParsT.* 157 ff.

⁵⁵ The figure of the "youth" as man spiritually regenerate is as traditional as that of his opposite, the Old Man. Alanus defines "*Juvenis*, proprie dicitur renovatus per gratiam" (*Distinctiones*, *PL*, ccx, col. 825); "*Juventus*, proprie, innovatio virtutum" (*ibid.*). The *Allegoriae in sacram Scripturam* of Rabanus Maurus (*PL*, cxii, col. 975) defines "*Juventus*, reversio ad bonum, ut in Psalmis: 'Renovabitur ut aquila vita tua [Ps. cii, 5], id est ad instar aquilae a pravi vetustate.'" Isidore's *Etymology* includes the following: "*Puer* . . . pro obsequio et fidei puritate" (*PL*, lxxxii, col. 416).

⁵⁶ Cf. Gal. iv, 26.

⁵⁷ This is the treasure for which the Pardoner strives, and that to which he directs the souls of those who buy his "reliques." Cf. Col. iii, 4.

⁵⁸ See Robertson, *op. cit.*, *SPECULUM*, xxvi (1951), *passim*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 25-26.

⁶⁰ The Parson describes the *lignum vitae*, its opposite, in some detail: cf. *ParsT.* 112-126. Cf. Robertson, *op. cit.*, *SPECULUM*, xxvi (1951), 25-27.

earthly treasure. This tree, whose *radix* is cupiditas, is also a version of the symbolic sterile tree to which the eunuch is compared by Isaiah.

It is finally appropriate that the director on the "croked wey" should be the old man, who thus assumes a position in the tale suggestively analogous to that of the teller.⁶¹ Spiritual death is arrived at by failing to follow the counsel of the *novus homo* in preference to that of the *vetus homo*. The cupidinous desires of the fallen aspect of man not only point out the way of perdition, the false paradise and the tree of death, but in a sense create them. In the tale the figure of the old man stands as a symbolic opposite to that of the tavern boy.

Like the youth, the old man refers to his mother:

Thus walke I, lyk a resteleees kaityf,
And on the ground, which is my moodres gate,
730 I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late,
And seye "Leeve mooder, leet me in!"

In contrast to the youth, he is of the generation of the earth, earthy. There is a broad suggestion of the "earthly image" of Adam, the *vetus homo*, the antithesis of the *imago Christi*, or *novus homo*.⁶² Like the wandering Jew, the Old Man of whom Paul wrote cannot die, and will not die so long as human nature does not change. Significantly the revellers refer to him as a spy of Death, an ally of Death, and he is dressed in a shroud — "al forwrapped" save his face: for the *vetus homo* represents the state of spiritual death. He desires "an heyre clowt to wrappe" himself in — i.e. the hair shirt of penance, and he wishes to be buried: for the Old Man must be crucified and buried that the New Man may live. The *vetus homo* may die only by the assumption of the *novus homo*. This familiar concept lies behind a significant passage which previous discussions of the old man have avoided: his response to the question of the rioters:

"Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?"
720 This olde man gan looke in his visage,
And seyde thus, "For I ne kan nat fynde
A man, though that I walked into Ynde,
Neither in citee ne in no village,
That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;
725 And therfore moot I han myn age stille,
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille."

Like the Pardoner, this old man can quote Scripture to his own purpose;⁶³ his mouth is full of verbal holiness. Like the Pardoner, too, in full knowledge he points the way to spiritual death, directing the "riotoures" up the "croked wey" into the garden of cupidity, just as the desires of the *vetus homo* lead any

⁶¹ The old man has been variously identified: as the personification of Death; as the personification of Old Age; as the Wandering Jew — that remnant of the Old Law who wanders through Christendom seeking to die; and most recently as just an aged man. Identification as the *vetus homo* has not previously been made.

⁶² Cf. I. Cor. xv, 45–49, esp. 48–49; John iii, 31; etc.

⁶³ He quotes the Old Law: Leviticus, xix, 32, according to the letter. Cp., e.g., the comment of Rabanus Maurus (*PL*, cvm, col. 460) on this verse: "Canum autem vere senem, id est, cum qui sapientia profectus est, intelliget." Rabanus' gloss reflects an opposite sense of figurative age than that understood with reference to the *vetus homo*.

soul astray. Lacking that peace which passeth understanding, he wanders, a "resteles kaityf," in a manner reminiscent of a description provided by the Parson with respect to the Judgment of the *veteres homines*:

Right so fareth the peyne of helle; it is lyk deeth for the horrible angwissh, and why? For it peyneth hem evere, as though they sholde dye anon; but certes, they shal nat dye. / For, as seith Seint Gregorie, "To wrecche caytyves shal be deeth withoute deeth, and ende withouten ende, and defaute withoute failynge. / For hir deeth shal alwey lyven, and hir ende shal everemo bigynne, and hir defaute shal nat faille." / And therfore seith Seint John the Evaungelist: "They shullen folwe deeth, and they shul nat fynde hym; and they shul desiren to dye, and deeth shal flee fro hem."⁶⁴

The result of the old man's direction is death, both spiritual and physical. The old bottles for which the "yongeste" reveller runs are filled not with the new wine of grace, but with the poison of the Old Law;⁶⁵ and the *exemplum* closes with a picture of the false feast at which such wine is drunk.

"Now lat us sitte and drynke, and make us merie,
884 And afterward we wol his body berie."

This *convivium* under the oak, with its reversed sacramental "breed and wyn," serves to symbolize the subjection of these Cain-like "brothers" to their earthly treasure; and recalls the Pardoner's own repast at the "ale-stake." The *exemplum* pictures the discovery and the effect of the "root of all evil."

V

The extraordinarily tight-knit organization of the *Pardoner's Tale* does not permit full explication in a limited space. Other details of the *cortex* might be shown to be similarly significant. What should be clear, however, is the consistent philosophical pattern artistically presented through the manipulation of Scriptural images, the main points of which have here been suggested rather than defined. The import of the *nucleus* is thus a consistent exemplification of the Pardoner's text.

It should also be more evident how the *Pardoner's Tale* fits generally into a scheme of opposition between Charity and Cupidity in the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. The extreme maliciousness of the Pardoner as a person sets him at the far end of the scale among the pilgrims. As a type he is even more definitely evil. He is the false eunuch who stands and points the way up the wrong road. He represents the way of cupidity, malice, impenitence, spiritual sterility — just the opposite of the way of the Parson and his spiritual brother, the Plowman.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *ParsT.* 213–216. The Scriptural citation is to Apoc. ix, 6. "Kaityf" etymologically derives from *captivus* (i.e., in context, thrall to sin).

⁶⁵ Matth. ix, 17: *Neque mittit vinum novum in utres veteres*. The *Glossa Ordinaria* refers to Jerome, who says, "Veteres utres debemus intelligere Scribas et Phariseos" which hold the Old Law (*Comentar. in Evangelium Matthaei* [PL, xxvi, col. 59]). Only the "old wine" of *carnalitas* will fill the *utres veteres*: cf. St Augustine, *Sermo CCLXVII* (PL, xxxviii, col. 1230). Bede, *In Matthaei Evangelium Expositio* (PL, xcii, col. 48), glosses: "Utres veteres fuerunt apostoli ante infusionem Spiritus sancti . . . Vino . . . novo fervor fidei, spei et caritatis, exprimitur, quo in novitatem sensus nostri reformamur." The "new wine" of grace causes spiritual *ebrietas*: cp. n. 53.

⁶⁶ Cf. the Parson's text and his "glose" of it: *ParsT.* 75 ff. For the symbolic Plowman cf. Robertson and Huppé, *Piers Plowman*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–19.

He is that Old Man as he lives and exerts his influence in the great pilgrimage of life. And as the *vetus homo* he is to be opposed to the Christlike figure of the *novus homo*, the true guide — the “povre PERSON OF A TOWN.”

Unfortunately, as Chaucer pictures his world, both exist *in ecclesia*. Utilizing the various levels of meaning connected with the idea of the Church,⁶⁷ we can see more clearly the full significance of the Pardoner in Chaucer's total conception. If we consider the literal Church, this Pardoner may be thought of as representing the evil ecclesiastic — the unregenerate hypocrite who undermines its structure from within: the wolf in sheep's clothing. If the Church is thought of as the whole congregation of the faithful — that is, as Christian society — the Pardoner is representative of those insidious, malicious evils that bring *confusio* into society. If the idea of the Church is looked at tropologically — from the point of view of human nature — that is, as the soul of the individual, this Pardoner is a representation of that Old Man of whom Paul wrote. Anagogically, the *vetus homo* is the devil himself, from whose “temple” the rioters begin their quest. The analogy may be carried out on all of these levels. In each case this Old Man must be crucified and buried before confusion and Death may be conquered. For each level of allegory the figure represents the appropriate *radix malorum*.

Behind Chaucer's conception of the Pardoner and his tale lies the familiar Christian thesis that all men should be *quaestores* — not, like the Pardoner, for the material treasure, but for what the Pardoner should seek, the spiritual “offertorie.” They should seek not the false pardons of which the Pardoner's wallet is so “bret-ful,” but that pardon which Chaucer cannot forbear mentioning albeit in the words of the Pardoner: that is, the Pardon of “Jesu Crist, that is oure soules leche.” Important also is the concept that all should be seekers of Death, too — but the death of that Old Man, through whose burial Death is really conquered; and who must be put down before we cease to find *confusio*, or disorder, such as that which literally breaks out between the Pardoner and Harry Bailly at the end of this tale. And it is clear that this is a spiritual matter. All the worthy Knight can do as representative of the temporal arm of the law is to make a temporary peace — an earthly equivalent of the *visio pacis*. But the Old Man still goes on wandering through the world, glaring with sterile lust out of his hare-like eyes.

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⁶⁷ Cf., e.g., Hugh of St Victor, *Sermons* I-III (*PL*, CLXXVII, cols. 901-907), where the idea of the Church receives detailed treatment according to the conventional levels of allegory. The *vetus homo* transforms *Ecclesia* into “that develes temple.”