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An Analytical Study of Religious Corruption in *The Canterbury Tales*

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Abstract

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer is written within a narrative framework. It is told by twenty-nine pilgrims who are on their way to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket. The host of the inn decides to go with them, and they tell tales along the way to entertain each other. Although the story is supposed to have twenty-four tales from thirty characters, religion and faith are the most dominant themes in the poem. Corruption of religious men is one of the most important themes in *The Canterbury Tales*. The characters are corrupted. They are very preoccupied with secular things. They have no time to spend on religious things. This paper aims at investigating the corruption and hypocrisy of characters in *The Canterbury Tales*. It argues that although some characters in *The Canterbury Tales* are religious men and women, in fact they are highly corrupted. To test the validity of this proposal, five tales are analyzed.

Key Word: religion, pilgrims, fourteenth century, hypocrisy, tales.

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دراسة تحليلية للفساد الديني في حكايات كانتربيري

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المستخلص

حكايات كانتربيري للكاتب جيوفري جوسري هي حكايات سردية قد كتبت على شكل ايطار. يروي هذه الحكايات تسعة وعشرون زائر الذين على طريقهم لزيارة ضريح القديس توماس بيكيت. يقرر مضيف الحانة السفر معهم ويقومون بروي الحكايات لتسلية بعضهم البعض. من المفترض ان يكون هنالك اربعة وعشرون حكاية من ثلاثون شخصية ولكن افكار الدين والايمان هي المسيطرة. فساد رجال الدين هي من اوضح المواضيع في **حكايات كانتربيري**. الشخصيات فاسدة في هذه الحكايات حيث انهم مشغولين جداً بالامور الدنيوية وليس لديهم اي وقت للاعمال الدينية. يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة الفساد والنفاق في **حكايات كانتربيري**. بالرغم من ان الشخصيات في هذه الروايات هم رجال ونساء دين لكنهم فاسدين جداً. وللتحقق من ذلك، نقوم بتحليل خمس حكايات.

الكلمات الدالة: الدين، الزائرين، القرن الرابع عشر، النفاق، الحكايات.

1. Introduction

The Canterbury Tales is a narrative poem by Geoffrey Chancer. It is Chaucer's first masterpiece. Its ideas are so deep and it is so skillfully narrated that we can call it the first English novel. Concerning the origin of the stories, some critics say that they come from Chaucer's contemporaries, or it is taken from the orient writers. They are an example of a large range of the European imagination, then addicted to stories especially those with sharp point of view or moral idea (Coghill, 1977, p. 12). It is a story of many Tales about religion, corruption of faith, and the church. Every story ends with a proverbial or a moral lesson. The host decides to go with them, and they tell tales along the way to entertain each other. Although the story was supposed to have four tales from each of thirty characters, the manuscript appeared never to be finished, since they are only twenty-two full tales, and two fragments. The story is not written to preach the reader, however, religion and faith are obvious.

2. Problems of the Study

Corruption of religious men and women is one of the most essential problems in the stories of this poems. The problem is most of the characters prefer the secular life rather than the sacred one. For example, the Pardoner gets money by providing physical pardons for the sinners. The Monk who was supposed to pledge his life to poverty instead takes money for forgiveness, refuses to help the poor. According to Chaucer, the Summoner and the Friar make money out of their occupations in the church while the Nun's Priest is described as a shadowy character. The only good religious man in this story is the Parson. The main

problem which the study aims to handle is that those who are supposed to be good are themselves highly corrupted.

3. Aims of the study

The current study aims at shedding light on the church and religion in the fourteenth-century. It highlights the influence of corruption in Chaucer's time and how it is discussed in *The Canterbury Tales* showing the corruption of the Monk, Nun's Priest, Friar, Prioress and Pardoner.

4. Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that religious character should be preoccupied with religion and sacred thing but if we test the characters of *The Canterbury Tales* we would find the opposite in their details. They are very interested in secular things, corrupted and they have negative impact on people.

5. Model of the study

The current study adopts an analytical model of analysis. We begin analyzing the literary elements and literary techniques of the text. The analysis is based on the analytical school led by the philosopher and psychologist William James and the writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. They valued the importance of gaining knowledge through experience rather than intuition.

6. Data Collection

The data is collected from Geoffrey Chaucer's narrative poem *The Canterbury Tales*. We take certain characters and analyze their behaviors in light of the main topic of the research paper; religious corruption.

7. Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is religion and religious figures in *The Canterbury Tales* and the corruption of these characters.

8. Value of the Study

It is hoped that this research paper will be of some value to students and researchers especially those engaged in literature. Hopefully, it could be of some value for English teachers interested in literary criticism.

9. Religion in the Time of Chaucer

The church, which was of course the Roman Catholic church, played a significant part in the life of people in Chaucer's time. The abbeys and monasteries were among the greatest landowners, the chancellor of the realm was usually a prelate, and many bishops held high secular office under the king. Only recently had laymen begun to replace clerics in what was the early civil service. But so deeply had the church become entrenched and privileged that it was highly conservative in its attitude and often negligent in its spiritual work. Corruption, intrigue, worldliness and greed were obvious and as a consequence a great deal of anticlericalism developed.

It was during Chaucer's life time that John Mycliff, the English reformer who was once called "the Morning star of the Reformation" translated the Bible into English and stressed the need for preaching directly to the people. He was helped by orders of wandering friars. But although it was a time of re-thinking over religion, most people were still deeply pious and inspired by a profound belief in heaven and hell as the only alternatives facing them after death. The horror awaiting sinners is compellingly illustrated in the medieval

conception of hell. The coffin is being lowered into a vault while the priest reads the service from a book and sprinkles holy water over the grave.

It is perhaps indicative of the penetrating role of the church at the time that over one third of Chaucer's tale-tellers were connected in some way or another with religion. There was the Prioress, and the poet's description of her in the prologue reminds us that the women who were made the heads of the great convents were appointed, frequently, not so much for their piety as for their aristocratic connections. There was her Chaplain, the Monk, the Second Nun, the Summoner (an official of an ecclesiastical court), the Parson, the Friar, the Oxford Clerk (who had found no preferment in the church) and the Pardoner. The Nun's Priest and the Parson, reproduces from the Ellesmere chronicle, are shown. Chaucer reflects the growing cynicism about the church as it was then in the description of these characters. The Monk enjoyed a wealthy life. The Friar is described as lavish and merry. The Summoner is sharp and lecherous. The Pardoner is judged to be like a mare, and so on. Only the Parson is rich in holy things and works and the Oxford Clerk who would gladly learn and gladly teach come in for praise. Yet, although the anti-clericalism was developing, people were generally deeply pious. The craftsmen of the day were usually inspired in their work by a genuine feeling for religion as we can see from the enameled roundel of a mazer or bowl of the time and the beautiful piece of carved alabaster now in an English church "alabaster and ivory were materials for artists" (Coghill, 1977, p.168).

The mixing of literature and religion, so easy and natural in many medieval texts, so difficult now, lies at the heart of much of Chaucer's best writing. It is a mixture that, in *The Canterbury Tales* at least, is often implicit and nuanced even when the narrative which sustains it is formal and explicit, but often too it is contested by class, by individual motive, or by convention and circumstance. Still, it is important in examining the constructions and assumptions which are present in Chaucer's religious attitudes to remember that he was not finally a churchman, and that the requirements of his art no less than those of his faith, conditioned his texts. In the end it is only by considering him both as a poet and as he presents himself in *The Canterbury Tales*, as a believing but not uncritical Christian, that we can finally understand the insight that drives certain of his narratives, and which both springs from and powerfully informs much of his best work (Sanders, 2006, p.241).

In spite of the fact that there were many manifestation of religion in the Fourteenth-Century in England, *The Canterbury Tales* is based on pilgrimage. The practice of Christianity was never an entirely private affair in the medieval period, and by the fourteenth-century in England. It had acquired a broadly based cultural approbation which was associated with the persons who made up the British society. The pilgrimage to Canterbury, as *The Canterbury Tales* amply demonstrate, revealed both the strengths and limitations of the late medieval church and as such presented both a mirror and a commentary. In addition to this, pilgrimage was a symbol for the life of humans. It is a symbol for spiritual perfection which is impossible to be found in our lives but all of us look for it. It is partly for this reason that it is worth remembering that the period of *The Canterbury Tales* was also the high period for English mysticism. Some of these mystics, like Richard Rolle (d.1349), Walter Hihon (d.1396), and the great fifteenth century mystic Julian of Norwich (d. after 1416). "Although (and interestingly), neither mystics nor anchorites appear in Chaucer's texts, they are important figures in estimating the state of Christianity in late

medieval England, and however indirectly their presence inform Chaucer's thought-world, particularly where Christian values appear conspicuously or even simply register" (Taggart, 2012, p. 47). Taken together, they give witness to a broad and felt understanding of the life of the spirit, and the availability of divine participation in the lives of all humans.

This larger Christian resonance echoes throughout *The Canterbury Tales*. While the emphasis on spiritual pilgrimage occurs most powerfully at the beginning, in the narrator's declaration of the full devout courage with which he means to undertake his pilgrimage and at the end. In the Parson's explicit linking of this viage with thilke parfil golorious pilgrymage, it deeply informed the idea of pilgrimage throughout the medieval period, and would have been assumed by perhaps the majority of Chaucer's audience. "In recent years, certain of Chaucer's stories have often been designated as his 'religious tales', though this is something of a misnomer, since religious themes, values, attitudes and assumptions are present throughout *The Canterbury Tales*, and it is finally a mistake to attach them only to four or six texts" (Bloom, 2008, p. 20). Each of the verse tales engages in different ways and to different degrees, three themes which identify the ways in which Chaucer constructed certain religious attitudes: the theme of travel; the theme of suffering either because of, or in the interests of Christian faith; and finally that of reward.

The theme of pilgrimage is one of the religious elements in the tales. In the period of Chaucer, it was often connected to travelling. What further binds Chaucer's religious tales together is a sense of marginality. Their suffering protagonists are often Christian women and their children, ones whose antagonists are usually at least, powerful and well-connected men. One hallmark of these Christians is a kind of secular power lessens, accompanied by a sense of alienation in an inhospitable world through which they can finally only pass. As though Chaucer has at least allowed that Christianity can have a somewhat complicated relationship with the church that sustains it, and draws strength from those intrinsic virtues that are rooted in its origins. Chaucer's view of Christianity is thus attached to representations and construction of personal faith, and though it admits of suffering and conflict, it holds out no promise of triumph, except finally. Christianity is omnipresent throughout *The Canterbury Tales*, but as part of an engaged, enquiring, even secular spirituality though one that is capable as well of embracing the totalizing apologia of the 'Retraction'. But it does not operate apart from the world through which Chaucer's protagonists move, and this action, as much as anything, invites a consideration of the church (Sanders, 2006, p. 242).

10. A Critical Analysis of the Tale of the Friar's

The Friar, who is the main character in this tale, comments on the wife of Bath because of her delay. He says that he will tell a tale about a Summoner. He does not want to disturb the Summoner, but he insists that Summoners are famous of lowed behavior.

“Whilom there was dwellynge in my contree
An Archedekene of high degree
That boldely did execucioun
In punysshynge of fornicacioun,
Of wicchecraft and eek of bawderye,
Of diffamacioun and of testamentz,

Of contractes and eek of lake of
Sacramentz,
Of usure and of symonye also.
But certes, lecchours did he grettest
Wo.” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 163)

In the Friar’s Tale, the archdeacon boldly tried to prevent adultery, magic and debauchery. The Summoner of the archdeacon discovered lechers although he himself was immoral. The Friar said that they are out of jurisdiction. The Summoner disagreed. The Host gave the Friar the chance and he continues attacking Summoners.

“To telle his harlotrye I will nat spare.
For we been out of his correccioun.
They han of us no jurisdiccoun,
Ne nevere shullen, terme of hir lyves.”
“Peter! So been wommen of the styves,”
Quod the Somonour, “yput out of my cure!”
“Pees with mischance and with
mysaventure” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 164)

The Summoners, the Friar says, only summon people who had enough money to give the church, and would take half the money for themselves. They are thieves and they also help the prostitutes.

“He hadde upon a courtepy of grene
An hat upon his heed with frenges blake.
SIRE, quod his summoner, hayl and wel atake!”
“WELCOME,” quod he, “and every good felawe!
Wher rydestow under this grene wode shawe?”
Seyde this yeman, “Wiltow fer today?”
THIS somnour hym answerde and seyde “Nay.
Here fast by,quod he, “is my entente
To ryden for to reysen up a rente
That longeth to my lords duetee.
“ARTOW thane a bailly?” “Ye,” quod he
He dorste not for verray filthe and shame
Seyde that he was a somonour for the
name.” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 165)

The Summoner was traveling and on his way he saw a yeoman. The Summoner was wearing a green jacket so that he seemed to be a bailiff because he knows that this job was hated. The two travelled with each other and the Summoner wondered him where he lives, in fact, he wanted to steal all the gold and silver he had. The Summoner asked how he got all this fortune from his job. The yeoman answered by deceiving people. The Summoner says that he collects money in the same way. The Summoner suggests that the two continue travelling and doing their business.

“BROTHER,” quod he, “wiltow that I thee telle?
I am a feend. My dwelling is in Helle,

And here I ryde about my rente.
Look how thou rydest for the same entente.
To wynne good thou rekkest nevere how.
Right so fare I, for ryde I wold right now
Unto the worldes ende for a preye.”
“A,” QUOD this somonour, “benedicite! What
sey ye?
I wende ye were a yeman, trewely!
Ye han a mannes shape as wel as I.
Han ye figure thanne determinat
In Helle, ther ye been in your
Estate?” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 166)

On their travel they found a carter stuck in the mud and loaded with hay “The devel have al, bothe hors and cart and hey!” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 167) cursed the carter literally, implored the devil, the yeoman, comments that, although this is what he means is “the Carl Spak oon but he thoghte another” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 168). The Summoner thinks of visiting the widow whom he used to visit. The Summoner tells her to appear before the archdeacon on the penalization of segregation. She refused saying that she is ill and cannot travel. She asks the Summoner if she can pay him instead of travelling. He wanted twelve pence but she thinks it is too much as she is not sinful. The Summoner emends and he claims that he paid a fine to make her husband a cuckold. She denies this cursing the Summoner. She says she gave his carcass to the devil, the yeoman tells him he will be in the hell tonight. Finally, the Summoner and the devil vanished.

11. A Critical Analysis of the Pardoner’s Tale

The Pardoner is the most marginalized character in the company as he rides in the very. His job is somehow doubtful. The person who wants to repent should make a donation to the church. He should give money to the Pardoner. Eventually, this charitable donation became a necessary part of receiving an indulgence. The Pardoner was not supposed to pocket the penitents’ charitable donations because the church pays him to offer these indulgences. The practice of offering indulgences is criticized by some churchmen because it looks like one could get rid of sins by giving money. Furthermore, it is suspected that the Pardoners counterfeit the Pope’s signature. The Pardoner is presented as someone of ambiguous gender and sexual orientation. He also challenges the social standards. The Pardoner takes with him the tools of his profession in his case which include: signed papal indulgences, a bag of false relics, including a brass cross filled with stones to make it seem as heavy as gold and pig’s bones, which he claims them to be saints’ relics.

“And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe
To saffron with my predicacioun
And for to satire hem to devocioun.
Thanne shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,
Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones.
Relikes been they, as wenen they
echoon.

Thanne have in latoun a sholder boon
Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheepe”.
“Goode men,” I seye, “taak of my wordes keepe.
If that this boon be wasshe in any welle,” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 261)

In fact, visiting relics on pilgrimage had become a tourist industry. So the Pardoner wants to make money out of this. He does this by selling tangible, material objects whether slips of paper that promise forgiveness of sins or animal bones that people can string around their necks as charms against the devil.

“What? Trowe ye, the whiles I may preche

And wyne gold and silver for I teche,

That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?

Nay, nay! I thoghte it nevere, trewely.

For I wol preche and begge in sondry

lands.” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 262)

In these lines the Pardoner admits that he gains gold and silver from his occupation as a Pardoner. After telling the group how he deceives people. The Pardoner tells a story on vice taken from his sermon. In addition to this, he tried to sell pardons although this is against the rules of the Host. The Pardoner tells us the story of three drunk friends who hear a funeral and decide to kill Death. There was an old man on the road. He told them that they can find Death near an oak tree. They do not find death there, but instead they find gold coins. They decide to transport it at night. The youngest one goes to the town to bring bread and wine. They decide to kill him when he returns but the youngest friend is thinking in the same way. He puts poison in the wine. When he returns, the two kill him and drink the poison. So in the end, they all die.

12. A Critical Analysis of the Monk’s Tale

The Monk’s hobby is hunting, and for this reason he keeps very expensive horses and greyhounds.

“I vowe to God, thou hast a ful fair skn.

It is a gentle pasture ther thou goost.

Thou art nat a penant or a goost.

Upon my faith, thou art som officer,

Som worthy sexteyn or som celerer.

For by my fader soul, as to my doom

Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom” (Chaucer, 2008, p. 323-324)

In these lines, the host is telling the Monk that from his appearance he seems to be a master not a Monk. Like the Prioress, the Monk has all sorts of things that, as religious figure, he should not have. He is a hunter, over weighted, wears expensive fur, gold and jewelry.

“Thou haddest bigeten ful many a creature
Allas, why werestow so wyd a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but and I were a pope,
Nat oonly thou but every myghty man,
Thoug he were shorn ful hye upon his pan,
Sholde have a wyf! For al the world is lorn.
Religioun hath take up al the corn
Of tredyng, and we borel men been shrympes.
Ympes.

[This maketh that oure heires beth so
Sklendir

And feble, that they may nat wel engender.]

This maketh that oure wyves wole assaye
Religious folk, for ye mowe bettre paye
Of Venus paimentz than mowe we!
God woot, no lussheburgh payen ye!
But be nat wroth, my lord for that I pleye.
Ful ofte in game a sooth I have herd seye.”

(Chaucer, 2008, p. 324)

The Monk admits that he is a modern man and he doesn't live a religious life of hard work, study, and fasting. He enjoys a life of sport, luxurious food and clothes, and all the other pleasures. From his physical appearance, we know that he is fat, bald, and greasy, with eyes that roll in his head. In medieval physiognomy, rolling eyes are a sign of lust for eating and sex. Like the Prioress, the Monk though is more self-aware about his departure from the pious life, taking the defensive stance of being a 'modern' man, an excuse for the way of life he is living. Concerning his tale, he tells a collection of tragedies that warn men against trusting prosperity and that future changes. He tells the stories of Lucifer, Adam, Sampson, Hercules, Nabugodonosor, Cenobia and Bernabo Viscont.

13. A Critical Analysis of the Nun's Priest Tale

The narrator of the tale is the Nun's Priest who is a very shadowy character. He was employed by a woman and no doubt had his anti-feminist resentments which could find full expression in his exquisite descriptions of Chauntecleer putting his wife in her place. This is what a nun-dominated priest could do. The anti-feminism of the tale, admittedly not a major theme, receives some reinforcement from the teller. Much more important, however, are his neutral personality and his mirror-like nature, which helps us to look through the layers of the animal world or at least to have the illusion of doing so. The host does not speak politely to the Nun's Priest. This is obvious in the epilogue when he criticizes his story.

“SIRE Nonnes Preest,” oure Hoost seide anoon,
“Iblissed be thy breche and every ston!
This was a murie tale of Chauntecleer.
But by my trouthe, if thou were seculer
Thou woldest ben a tredefoul aright.
For if thou have corage as thou hast might
The were nede of hennes as I wene,
Ya, moo than sevene tymes seventeen!
Se which braunes hath this gentil preest
So gret a nekke and swich a large breest.
He loketh as a sparhauke with hise eyen
Him nedeth nat his colour for to dyghen
With brasile ne with greyn of Portyngale
Now sire, faire falle yow for your
tale.”

(Chaucer, 2008, p. 353)

"The Host Picks the Nun's Priest, the Priest traveling with the prioress and her nun, and demands that he tells a tale that will gladden the hearts of the company members." (Vasta & Zacharias, 1997, P70). The Nun's Priest immediately accepts and starts telling his story. He tells a story of a widow who lives with her two daughters in a cottage. She has three sows, three cows, a sheep and some chickens. The story of the Nun's Priest is about these animals. The moral lesson of the story is never to trust a flatterer. The Nun's Priest tale is a fable which is one of the popular medieval genres that Chaucer used. It exposes the human weakness. Its narrative technique is outstanding. The fable belongs to the category of wisdom literature, which is extremely widespread but not widely recognized. Wisdom literature comprises a very large proportion of the preserved literature of the world. The purpose of the wisdom literature is to teach the wisdom of the past and of nature. A large part of the literature of the past is devoted to rules for conduct or for control of the environment and to give information about nature and man. Its general tone is pessimistic and worldly-wise. The general situation in the Nun's Priest tale is that a character that embodies an idea, is periodic and mock-heroic and yet curiously sympathetic. We start with a very poor widow, a humble person, and move to her barnyard.

“A POVRE wydwe somdeel stape
In age
Was whilom dwellyng in narwe
cottage
Biside a grene stondyng in a dale.
This wydwe of which I telle yow my tale,
Syn thilke day that she was last wyf.
For litel was hir catel and hir rente.
By housbondrie of swich as God hire sente
She foond hirsself and eek hir doghtren two.
Thre large sowes hedde she and namo,
Thre keen and eek a sheep that
highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hir bour and eek hir halle

In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel.
Of poynaut sauce hir neded never a deel.
No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir
throte.”

(Chaucer, 2008, p. 342)

Then we find ourselves in the animal world. The tale produces courtly love and philosophical dispute. The cock believes in dreams. He is not wise like his wife. He is so happy with his victory over his wife who does not believe in dreams. His quintessential male vanity is beautifully shown up. This tale is a parody of the story of Adam and Eve. Pride leads to a downfall, and in Chauntecleer's fall Adam's tragedy is relived. Pertelote is the female.

These animals with their human problems, human interests and human failures bring us close but we are never allowed to forget that they are animals. Marriage, women, love, learning, philosophy, male pride, human pretensions are all targets of the Nun's Priest tale but above all the style is a parody of the epic and epic manners are some of the epic features which are satirized. First of all, the dreams which are a regular feature of Virgilian. Dreams occupy a central place in the Nun's Priest tale in which affects the suspense of the plot, characterization, and rising the philosophical issue of fate and man's freedom. The Cock's dreams, with its overwhelming use of authority, are very amusing and rich in interest. Second, the changes of pace in the Nun's Priest tale are extraordinary apt, paralleled in the skill with which they are manse in *The Canterbury Tales*.

The slow moving philosophical disquisition contrasts vividly with the speedy chase the widow, her two daughters, Talbot, Gerland, Malkin, and the dog. The cow, calf, and even hogs frightened by the barking of the dogs and shouting of the men and women run madly. The ducks, geese, bees all join the merry throng. The shouting is like the noise of friends in hell. Third, and more specifically, we find parodies of epic apostrophes and set pieces in the tale, especially after the cock has been seized. Fourth, are the suggestions of epic simile and catalogues of comparable heroes. We find among these the inevitable comparisons to Troy and the almost inevitable one to Carthage. Finally, the tone of the vernacular language as always in medieval times is hard to define.

14. A Critical Analysis of the Parson's Tale

The Parson seems to be really a very good person. He is clever and a good leader of people. He is rich in holly things. A large part of his sermon deals with forgiving sins. His tale is set up into three parts; repentance, admission, and satisfaction. Repentance: The Parson spends a lot of time talking the act of being sorry. He also uses references from the Bible to make his point. He uses this section of his sermon to discuss the meaning of the terms confession and satisfaction. Confession: confession happen when you talk to the priest. He explains that sin in the struggle between the body and the soul. Then, he talks about the different types of sins. He divides sin into two sub groups: venial (or minor) and mortal (or deadly). Satisfaction: in this section the Parson lists the seven deadly sins: sloth, greed, wrath, lust, gluttony, envy and pride. He shows how to fortify against sins. He then

says that the seven deadly sins are like a tree: pride, the worst of them all. It is the trunk and the other sins are the branches.

“By that the Mauciple hadde his tale al ended,
The sonne fro the south lyne was descended
So lowe, that he has nat to my sighte
Degrees nyne and twenty as in highte.
Four of the klokke it was tho, as I gesse,
For ellevene foot or litel moore or lesse
My shadwe was at thilke tyme as there,
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.
Ther with the moones exaltacioun-
I meene Libra-alwey gan ascende,
As we were entryng at a thropes ende.
For which oure Hoost, as he was wont to gye,
As in this caas oure joly compaignye”,
Seyde in this wise: “Lordynges everichoon,
Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon.
Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree.
I trowe that we han herd of ech
degree.”

(Chaucer, 2008, p. 393)

The position of the tale is terminal which moves us to more unpalatable considerations of human defection and measures the minters of doctrine pure. The tale of the Parson is of course not a tale but a treatise of instruction for the priest dealing specifically with the sacrament of penance and confession, a long treatment of the seven deadly sins with the virtues that oppose them.

At the beginning, the Parson seems to be a kindly pulpit master. He says that God wants the salvation for all of us and gives us many means by which we can come to the kingdom. Of these penance sorrow for sin and desire for a men dent is a noble proper. After dividing the sacrament into three parts (contrition, confession, and satisfaction) which is a metaphor in which penance represents the life tree (its root, contrition, the branches and leaves, confession, the seed, grace, the heat in the seed, the love of God, its fruit, reparation). He offers us six reasons why a man should be contrite before he pleads for total contrition, reminding us that contrition is the means by which man becomes the heir of grace.

The Parson defines “one of the old ways” by which humans can get peace for their souls. They remember their sins. They acknowledge their slavery to them. They fear the day of judgment and the loss of grace through sin. They contemplate Christ’s passion. They cling to hope of forgiveness and seek the grace to prosper and to look forward to salvation all the necessary implications of contrition. The Christian should go farther; he should confess his sins and he should realize that man participates in Adam’s fall.

To focus attention exclusively upon the sins and the virtues is to deny the form of the treatise itself, which terminates with a discussion of the requirements of confession and satisfaction, or expiation. In section one the sins have quite naturally been inserted, and

that the process of cleaning the soul with its necessary examination of conscience, and is for many, a familiar and vital part of the Christian's spiritual life. Its value lies in what it is: the definition of a sacrament which enables man to repair a damaged relationship with his creator with its view, through the eyes of a spiritual counselor, of the battle taking place in the soul of man.

Whether the Parson discusses sovereignty, or gentiles or marriage, or business, or any of the myriad forms of rascality that interested Chaucer as literary artist, they are aspects of the pilgrimage of this life. Obviously, Chaucer is not grand, in the manner of Aquinas or Dante, but the schema outlined by the Parson depicts great drama of God and his creatures, and the better way by which man returns to him.

15. Conclusion

The result of the analysis reveals that Chaucer is the founding figure of the English literary tradition because he succeeded in developing the English literary tradition like that of the other European countries. Chaucer was the only person in England whose works survive. *The Canterbury Tales* provided a model for the workings of tradition; there he showed his successors how to use work as inspiration for another.

It is clear that throughout *The Canterbury Tales* corruption has a negative impact on people. People are committing all the types of corruption that religion in general and Christianity in particular reject. The Friar in his tale shows that the Summoners are famous of lowed behavior. Chaucer shows the Pardoner as a greedy person who makes use of people. He pockets the money of the penitent's charitable donation. The Monk enjoys a luxurious life. He seems to be a master not a monk. He is disdainful of the old traditional life. The Nun's Priest is a shadowy character and he has anti-feminist resentments.

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