

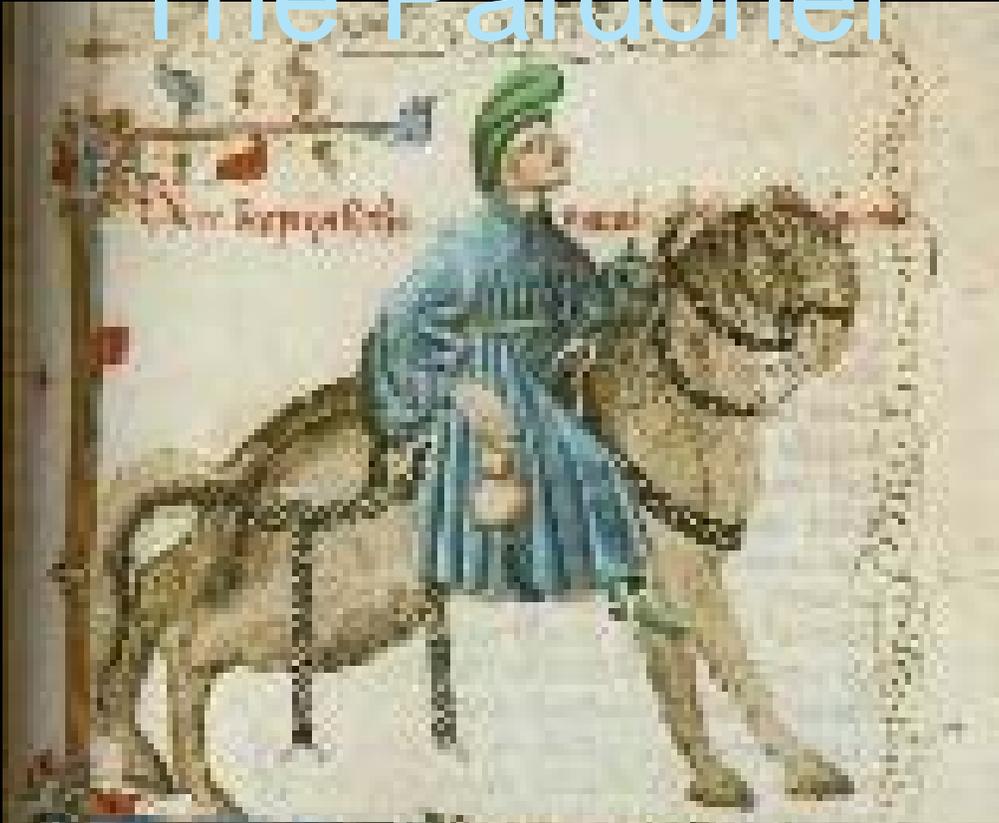


The Pardoner's Tale is rife with allusions to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and conversely to the association between the unredeemed dead and the corruption of the body.

The bodily resurrection of the dead was one of the doctrines that most concerned theologians from the origins of Christianity throughout the middle ages. In the first centuries of Christianity, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was that which most clearly separated Christianity from pagan religions.



The Pardoner



*My theme is alwey oon, and evere was,
Radix malorum est Cupiditas . . .*

Greed Is the Root of All Evil





The Host reacts to the Physician's Tale, which has just been told. He is shocked at the death of the young Roman girl in the Physician's tale, and mourns the fact that her beauty ultimately caused the chain of events that led her father to kill her.

Wanting to cheer up the Pilgrims, the Host asks the Pardoner to tell the group a merrier tale. The Pardoner agrees, but will continue only after he has food and drink in his stomach. Other pilgrims interject that they would prefer to hear a moral story, and the Pardoner again agrees.



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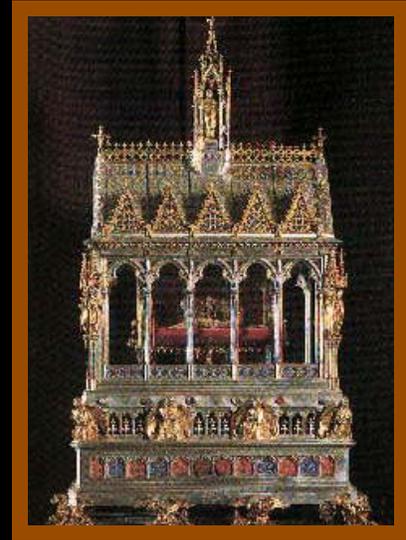
Prologue to the Pardoner's Tale

After getting a drink, the Pardoner begins his Prologue. He tells the company about his occupation: a combination of itinerant preaching and selling promises of salvation. His sermon topic always remains the same: *Radix malorum est Cupiditas*, or, "greed is the root of all evil."

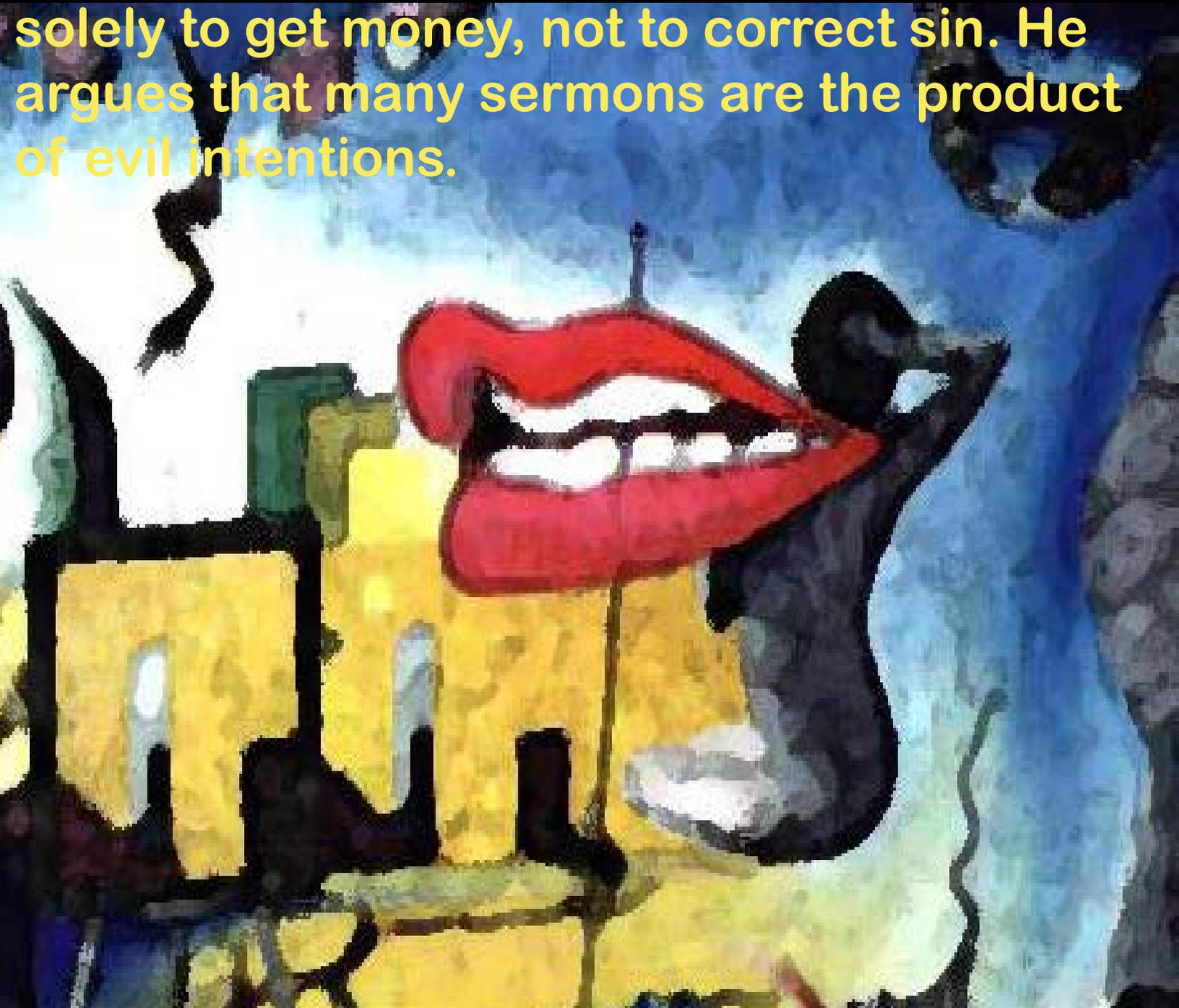
Relics



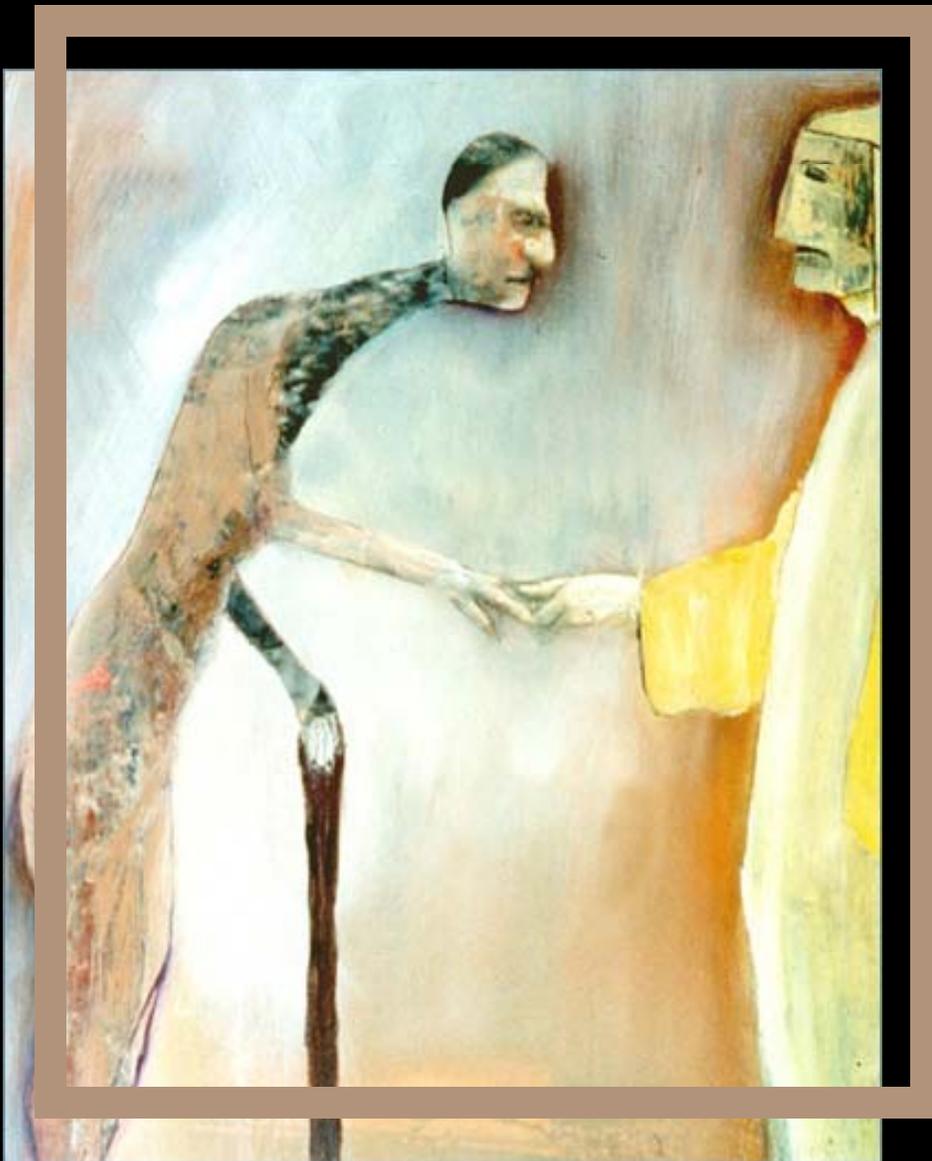
He gives a similar sermon to every congregation and then breaks out his bag of “relics” which, he readily admits to the listening pilgrims, are fake. He will take a sheep’s bone and claim it has miraculous healing powers for all kinds of ailments. The parishioners always believe him and make their offerings to the relics, which the Pardoner quickly pockets.



The Pardoner admits that he preaches solely to get money, not to correct sin. He argues that many sermons are the product of evil intentions.



In his sermon, he always preaches about covetousness, the very vice that he himself is gripped by. His one and only interest is to fill his ever-deepening pockets. He would rather take the last penny from a widow and her starving family than give up his money, and the good cheeses, breads, and wines that such income brings him. Speaking of alcohol, he notes, he has now finished his drink of “corny ale” and is ready to begin his tale.





Although the Pardoner's insistence on avarice as the root of all evil has been seen as a cover for his real sins of lechery and carnality, we should remember that medieval thought closely connected

unnatural sexual acts,

gluttony,

and avarice (greed).

This sets up the Pardoner's tale . . .

Once upon a time there were
THREE DRUNKARDS . . .