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the canterbury tales
theology religion
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Avarice is defined as an extreme desire for personal material gain or wealth. It is also considered to be a deadly sin among others like gluttony and wrath. One of the main themes in The Canterbury Tales is that greed is the root of all evil. The message about avarice is clearly ironic, however, because each of the pilgrims on his and her way to Canterbury displays a greedy and self-centered quality. For example, the Pardoner sells sinners religious relics, to which he admits in his tale are not even real. He pockets the money in order to live lavishly instead of putting it towards improving the church. The Monk disregards his monastic order to never kill a creature, and instead engages in hunting for entertainment. The Summoner uses his position as a method of taking advantage of young women. The Summoner's immoral choices are especially ironic because it is his job to punish those who violate the law of the church or act immorally. Nearly every pilgrim, with the exception of the Parson, demonstrates a sort of sneaky method to manipulate their surroundings into a way to experience personal gain. It becomes obvious that the entire message about greed in The Canterbury Tales is ironic. Ultimately, greed in the clergy is a main factor that contributes to the loss of followers for the church in the Middle Ages. They were no longer setting positive examples that others wanted to live by. With a morally weak and undependable clergy came a corrupt and undependable church.

The Pardoner's Tale is a specific part of The Canterbury Tales where Chaucer puts the most amount of irony and satirical content. The Pardoner starts his tale by talking about the disastrous effects of possessing drunkenness, swearing, gambling, and being greedy. He says that " The Bible's words you cannot well deny: drinking by magistrates is called a vice.. and now that I

have told of gluttony, I'll take up gambling, showing you thereby" (Chaucer 125-128). At first, he seems like an honest man who is without corruption. However, he then tells the others that relics are fake and that they are simply used for him to gain money. He admits that instead of returning a sinner with salvation, that the money is kept to himself no matter how poor the sinner is. The Pardoner tells the entire tale while drinking alcohol and relaxing while the others gave him their attention. Halfway through his narrative yells " N for the love of Crist, that for us dyde.. sires, now wol I telle forth my tale" (Chaucer 196-198). Immediately after shunning those who swear and drink, the Pardoner uses God's name in vain before continuing his story and is brutally blunt, perhaps because he is drunk. Instantly, he shows himself to be a hypocrite and a nonbeliever in the very message that he preaches. He goes on to tell a tale about three young men who set out to kill " Death" for taking so many people's lives when they discover a ton of gold at the roots of a tree. They forget about their incentive and they all become too individually greedy to want to share the gold they find. Two of the men kill the third and then are poisoned by the first man by drinking tainted wine. None of them get the chance to enjoy the gold. At the end, and one of the most shocking parts of the tale, the Pardoner preaches to the people like he would in a regular town or a village. He asks if any of the pilgrims want to buy a relic or indulgence, as if they've forgotten that he openly admitted the falseness of his offerings. Those like the Pardoner are the typical hypocrites that were found in the Middle Ages. He is one that preachers to others about how to live a life free of sin, yet exemplifies everything that is immoral to him. His words can not be taken seriously by others because he does not

take them seriously himself. Those like the Pardoner are believed to be a major reason in the decline of the Catholic Church.

Decameron focuses more on relationships between men and women in order to show a decline in morals similar to those portrayed in Geoffrey Chaucer's work. It takes place around the time that the bubonic plague struck Europe and began to kill nearly a third of its entire population. The Black Death marks a time where even the most religious people questioned God for letting so many innocent people be swept up by disease. The European people were already discouraged and there was no longer a strong religion to turn to. The tales are about a group of people who join to escape the plague. They go on to tell tales every night like the pilgrims in The Canterbury Tales. The stories begin with open topics but go on to center the truth of the changing church. Decameron is another work that shows the nature of church officials by exploring their personal desires, such as lust and greed, despite the Bible's words.

Another serious sin spoken of in the Bible is lust. Lust is described as a desire for pleasure for the body or physical company. In Corinthians 6: 18 of the Bible, it is explained that sexual immorality is a sin against one's own body because longing for physical pleasure is wrong internally. In Europe, the Catholic Church enforced a doctrine that states that sex should be saved for marriage, and that even then, it is only to procreate. On the third day of the journey of those in Decameron, a story about lustful nuns is told explicitly by Filostrato. The tale is about a man who pretends to be mute and deaf and gets a gardening job at a covent for nuns. One day when he is laying, two of the nuns explore their lust. A quick dialogue between the two says "what is <https://assignbuster.com/geoffrey-chaucers-the-canterbury-theses-theology-religion-essay/>

't thou sayst? Knowest thou not that we have vowed our virginity to God?' 'Oh,' rejoined the first, " think but how many vows are made to Him all day long, and never a one performed: and so, for our vow, let Him find another or others to perform it'" (Boccaccio 26-27). They both decide to lay with the man. The nonchalant manor in which the second nun says that tons of people make vows and that none are performed shows that even she had lost faith in God. In time, every single nun in the covent and their Abbess have made love to the man solely for pleasure. The tale goes to show that even the purest of women who devote themselves to God become suspects of lust and disregard their promises to Him. The tale focuses on young women longing for lust and not only men. Tales like Filostrato's in Decameron are those that cause the book to become a forbidden read in parts of Europe during the Middle Ages. Those who read Decameron were engaging in " pornography" and could therefore be excommunicated by the church. Whether its tales were true or not, the church was certainly trying to hold onto its followers and mask any evidence of its impurities.

The loss of morals and virtue of the Roman Catholic Church is ultimately what discouraged many people from joining. People viewed it as a greedy and corrupt organization that only wanted to take money by selling indulgences and stealing from its followers. Stories like Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio and The Canterbury Tales are a few of many novels published that capture the essence of the changing church by means of exposing its unjust leaders. A era then began where tons of Europeans still wanted to follow their religion but the Catholic Church became too dishonest to be seen as a holy center. The decline in churchgoers during the end of the

Middle Ages leads to a time of new ideas presented to Europe by Martin Luther. While the end of the Middle Ages changed the general attitude to distrust the church,

its consequences can be seen as positive as it leads to monumental changes in years to come.