

There was a **Summoner** with us in the place
Who had a fire-red angelic. [This is an ironic statement. Chaucer
is saying that he has a bright red angelic face, but there is
nothing angelic about him. The fact that his face is “fire-red”
hints that he’s devilish.]

Black, scabby brows he had, and a thin beard.

Children were afraid when he appeared.

No quicksilver, lead ointments, tartar creams,

Boracic, no, nor brimstone, so it seems,

Could make a salve that had the power to cure,

Clean up or curve his a boil of knobby white. [The Summoner’s
face was covered with runny sore that no medicine could heal.

His looks were as scary as the job he did for the church.]

Well he loved garlic, onions, and leeks, [His breath smelled as
bad as he looked.]

And drinking of strong wine as red as blood.

Then would he talk and shout as a madman would. [He is an
alcoholic who speaks Latin phrases he’s heard in the church
court when he is drunk.]

And when a deal of wine he'd poured within,

Then he would utter no word save Latin.

Some phrases had he learned, say two or three,

Which he had acquired out of some decree;

No wonder, for he'd heard it all the day

And all you know right well that even a jay

Can call out "Walter" as well as can the pope. [This Summoner
can say the words in the same way a bird can be taught to talk,

but like the bird, he doesn't have any idea what the words mean.]

But when, for aught else, into him you'd grope,
'Twas found he'd spent his whole philosophy;
Just " The question is what part of the law applies? " would he
cry.

He was a noble rascal, and kind;
A better comrade 'twould be hard to find.