



# CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S DOCTOR FAUSTUS AS A MORALITY PLAY

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra16854>

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Christopher Marlowe was the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors. He may be regarded as the true founder of English drama. Though he was born and brought up in very poor family. He was able to get good education. Marlowe was the greatest of a group of young writers generally called "University wits" Before his untimely death at the age of twenty-nine he had founded English romantic tragedy, had written one of the greatest poetical dreams in the English language. One of the best psychological grandeur with doctor Faustus. For this great symbolic tragedy deals with a theme which is not only of the author's inner experience but of the very stuff which nourished the renaissance spirit. The pride of intellect by which both the Faustus of Marlowe and the Lucifer of Milton feel was the subtlest and most dangerous temptation of the age.

Marlowe was able to give his audience an impression of greatness; he made them tremble with enthusiasm. His success was immediate but even when his plays had come to seem extravagant, they remained popular. His characters are too large to be realistic or convincing; and yet they have the breath of life in them. Marlowe is regarded as a pioneer and arable. He raised the standard of revolt against the convention of writing plays in rhyme and against the "clown age" of popular comedy. The place and the value of Christopher Marlowe as a leader among English poets would be almost impossible for historical criticism to overestimate. He first and he alone guided Shakespeare into the right way. He is the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer, in all our poetic literature. Before him there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival the way was prepared, the paths were made straight for Shakespeare.

The old Legend that a man could obtain supernatural power by selling his soul to the devil found in climax in the 16th century in a person of Doctor Faustus who really in the first half of that century. This man was a wandering scholar notorious as a necromancer, braggart and super- quack, who abandoning the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, in favor of its worldly exploitation and attaining some temporary success, ultimately met disaster Marlowe raises the character of Doctor Faustus to a higher level than is touched by his character in the original and the serious scenes of the play seem to some extent to be a

sublimation of the vulgar sensationalism of the original. The serious and the comic scenes together form a curiously incongruous alternation. Marlowe makes excellent use of a religious convention which is undoubtedly Christian. What Marlowe creates out of the story of Faustus is a medieval mortality play with a late Renaissance temper.

## FAUSTUS AS A MORALITY PLAY

Doctor Faustus marks the culmination of the English Morality tradition. As a morality it vindicates humility, faith and obedience to the law of god. Indeed, an eminent critic has described this play as the most obvious Christian document in all Elizabethan drama. It preaches the basic Christian values and should therefore be regarded as morality play.

The basic beliefs of Christianity are inherent in every line of Doctor Faustus and the Doctrine of damnation pervades it. The devil and hell are omnipresent in this play and are tarrying realities, Faustus makes a bargain with the devil and for the sake of Earthly learning, earthly power, earthly satisfaction goes down to horrible and everlasting prediction. The "Hero" is depicted as a wretched creature who for lower value give-up higher ones. Thus the drama is morality play in which heaven struggles with hell for the soul of a renaissance. Everyman loses the battle on account of his psychological and moral weaknesses.

It would be Incorrect to treat Faustus as the noble victim of tyrannical deity. On the contrary god is exceedingly good in his gifts to the hero until the latter becomes the victim of his own in satiable desires and even then god is willing to forgive of the repents. But Faustus intentionally refuses all aid and so goes down to damnation. There is no ambiguity at all in the play on this main issue. Marlowe establishes the moral values of the play by various means; by the Chorus, by Faustus's own recognition, by the good angel, by the old man, by the action itself and even Mephistopheles. As an example of the pervasive Christian view point, we also witness the deterioration and the coarsening of Faustus's character and his indulgence in cheap, sadistic fun.

The straggle between Faustus's uncontrolled appetites and the powers of haven continues the good angel and the evil angel



reappear the former urging him to give up magic, and the latter encouraging him to “go forward in that famous art”

Faustus consciously and deliberately sets his will against gods. But he is in this state Mephistopheles summons a few devils who offer him sensual satisfaction in order to distract his mind from spiritual concern. Repeatedly God Angel confirms Faustus’s feeling by saying; “Faustus repent; yet god will pity thee” but overwhelmed by the will power he says, “My heart is hardened, I cannot repent. This must be taken as an egocentric conclusion.

Hell Strives against Heaven and despair strives against repentance, but as soon as Mephistopheles threatens to tear Faustus’s flesh for disobedience. Then the weak-willed voluptuary quickly surrenders. There are some silent protests against the official Christianity of play. On the whole we can conclude that, if a person yields to a temptation, it would mean a

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failure of his willpower. But Faustus’s self damnation is not due to a failure of his will power but to an assertion of his willpower the foundation of Marlowe’s Philosophical position is that man has certain over-riding desires whose realization is denied by any form of servitude, and that the scheme of things as laid down by the god, who demands servitude.

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