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## **A Study of the Conflict Between Good and Evil in Doctor Faustus**

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Education (English Literature)

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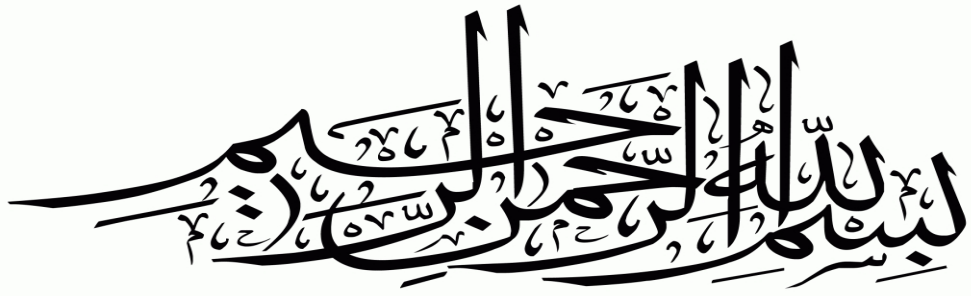
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(مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٌ ۗ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِّ مَا  
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ) (النحل، ٩٦)

**"In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the  
Compassionate"**

{Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting. And We will surely give those who were patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do.} (Al- Nahal, 96)

## Dedication

*This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to our beloved parents who have been our source of inspiration and gave us strength when we thought of giving up , who continually provide their moral, spiritual , emotional , and financial support .*

*To our brothers , sisters , relatives , mentor , and classmates who shared their words of advice and encouragement to finish this study*

*And lastly , we dedicated this work to the Almighty God , thank you for the guidance , strength , power of mind , protection and skills and for giving us a healthy life . All of these , we offer to you.*

## Acknowledgment

*We would like to present our thanks fist to our Almighty Allah, SWT, for giving us power, strength, and patience .*

*Secondly, Our supervisor, Asst. Inst. Omar Kareem, for his guidance and for giving us the golden notes . Without his help, this research would not have been completed.*

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**Abstract**

This work is sometimes understood to defend Doctor Faustus. The good and evil are presented as two polarized ideas, God and Heaven on one side, and Lucifer and Hell on the other. Contrasting representations of this division also appear, such as the old man and the Good Angel opposed to Mephistopheles and the Bad Angel. Initially, this struggle between good and evil is Faustus' major internal conflict as he is deciding whether to make the blood bond. However, by the time Faustus views the seven deadly sins, evil persists as the dominant force and is the path that Faustus follows to his final damnation. The struggle between good and evil begins with Faustus' divided conscience.

This work is divided into two chapters. The first one discusses the playwright's life and works as well as the play, Dr. Faustus. While the second chapter deals with the main idea of this research which is the conflict between good and evil.

## **The Aim of the Research**

This research aims at studying the conflict between Good and Evil presented in the work of Marelow, Dr. Faustus. It also aims at showing Faustus's struggle between Good and Evil as well as his struggle concerning following either Good or Bad angels .

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## Chapter One

### Marlowe's Life

The existing sources on Marlowe's life remain incomplete and scattered, leaving only a partial portrait of the Elizabethan playwright. An enigma even during his own day, Marlowe was accused by contemporaries of being a murderer, an atheist, a homosexual and a government spy working for Sir Francis Walsingham (Riggs,2004:24)

Arrested for counterfeiting and for assault on more than one occasion, Marlowe remained a controversial figure during his time. Christopher Marlowe was born in 1564 to a shoemaker in Canterbury. After attending the King's School in Canterbury, Marlowe entered Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in December of 1580. He completed his Bachelor's Degree in July of 1584 and remained at Cambridge to complete his Masters. During this period, Marlowe was noted for his frequent absences and when it came time to receive his Masters, Cambridge authorities were reluctant to award him his degree. At this time, rumors began to circulate that Marlowe had defected to a Catholic seminary at Rheims. Others thought that Marlowe had recently become a part of Elizabeth's secret service. In June 1587, the Privy Council wrote a letter to the Cambridge authorities explaining his truancy by stating that Marlowe "had done her Majesty good service... in matters touching the benefit of his country." (Riggs,2004:29)

Many historians agree that it is likely that Marlowe was working as an intelligence operative during this period. A significant part of Marlowe's social circle during his adult life, including Richard Baines, Thomas Watson and Thomas Walsingham, were known to have worked for the Elizabethan government at one point or another. In the late 1580s, Marlowe began writing plays for Lord



Strange's acting company, producing *Dido Queen of Carthage*, *Tamburlaine* parts one and two, *The Jew of Malta*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Edward II* and *The Massacre at Paris* by 1592. *Tamburlaine* was the only play published during Marlowe's lifetime, with the others published after his death. Marlowe also wrote five known poems though none of them made it into print during his lifetime. It is likely that during this period, Marlowe may have also continued his work for the secret service either as a messenger or as a spy (Nicholls, 1992: 28)

Within this time, Marlowe also had several run-ins with the law and was arrested for sword fighting, counterfeiting and assault. In May of 1593, Marlowe was fatally stabbed in the eye while fighting over 'the reckoning,' or bill of food, at an inn at Deptford. Ingram Frizer, who was responsible for killing Marlowe, claimed self-defence and was acquitted on charges of murder at the official inquest. The circumstances surrounding Marlowe's death have spawned several conspiracy theories, many of which deal with the three men who were with Marlowe the night he died and their connections to the Elizabethan secret service. Some theories also claim that Marlowe was never killed at all, and that he faked his death for reasons connected to espionage. In either case, Marlowe's literary career ended at age twenty-nine though many of his works continued to be performed until the closing of the theatres in 1642. (Downie, 2000 30-31)

"Scholars who have examined the source on Marlowe's life have also become interested in any information that may provide a greater understanding of his religious views. In addition to being accused of Catholicism for his alleged time in Rheims, Marlowe was branded an atheist by several of his contemporaries. In 1592, playwright Robert Greene, in his *Groatsworth of Wit*, referred to Marlowe as the one "who hath said... like the foole in his heart, There is no God...".(Kocher, 1964: 23)

In May 1593, shortly before Marlowe's death, his fellow lodger Thomas Kyd was arrested for writing seditious and anti-Christian literature against foreigners. Kyd claimed that the heretical text, which contained several references to Tamburlaine and The Jew of Malta, belonged to Marlowe. This accusation reinforced Marlowe's reputation as a blasphemer and possible atheist. Though he was eventually arrested for allegedly publishing the text, Marlowe died May 30 of 1593, shortly before he was to attend trial for charges of heresy. Around the time of his arrest, Richard Baines sent a letter to the Privy Council further alleging that Marlowe was an atheist. (Kocher, 1964: 25)

The charge of atheism was a dangerous one in early modern England and though several contemporaries claimed that Marlowe was a religious deviant, it remains unclear what his actual spiritual beliefs truly were. Many historians and biographers have attempted to reconstruct Marlowe's religious views in order to understand how they may have impacted his writings. Scholars have searched his plays and poems looking for insight into his spirituality and religious affiliations. Within his works, Marlowe tends to generally criticize all religions. The Massacre at Paris criticizes religious violence and fanaticism while The Jew of Malta parodies Christian, Muslim and Jewish institutions. Faustus and Tamburlaine both transgress God in their ambitious quests for fame and glory, blaspheming against traditional Christian values during the process. Though religious controversies and topics often appear within his works, it does not seem as if Marlowe has any straightforward agenda when discussing spiritual matters. Religion was an integral part of sixteenth century English society, bleeding into all aspects of political and family life; therefore, it only seems appropriate that it would somehow appear in Marlowe's works as 'raw material' for his artistic endeavors (Shell, 1999: 19)

Hattaway (2003) stated that Marlowe was expected to become a minister once he completed his education at Cambridge. While studying for his degree, it was likely that Marlowe learnt a great deal of Christian theology and especially became familiar with the intense debate over Calvinism, and particularly free will and predestination, that were taking place within Cambridge at this time. Whatever Marlowe's religious views were, it is problematic to assume a direct connection between what he may have believed and how religion is represented within his works. As Michael Hattaway writes, "literary texts provide evidence not necessarily of the realities of the period nor of the opinions of their authors but rather of the imaginative and ideological constructions or mentalities of the period." (97)

### **Doctor Faustus**

Scholars estimate that Doctor Faustus was written in 1588 or 1589 shortly after Marlowe had finished his education at Cambridge. The first documented performance of the play was on September 30, 1594 by the Lord Admiral's Men at the Rose Theatre. This was followed by several other performances that very year, as well as eight more between 1595 and 1597. (Brandt, 2010:21)

"Edward Alleyn, the famous Elizabethan actor, played the title role in its earliest productions. Between 1596 and 1603, the play continued to be performed by the Earl of Nottingham's acting company. Doctor Faustus remained popular in the early seventeenth century until the closing of the

theatres in 1642 after which it seems to have been forgotten until its revival in the mid eighteenth century".(Bevington, 2010: 43)

The play was likely popular due to its intense visuality and spectacle, as well as its dramatic themes which dealt with sin, evil and the consequences of personal ambition. In 1633, William Prynne wrote that during an Elizabethan performance of the play, a real devil appeared on-stage alongside the actors which terrified audience members. The presence of demons and dragons onstage is an example of the type of visual experience which early modern audiences may have found appealing.(Bevington, 2010: 43)

Bevington (2010) said that Much of the popularity of Doctor Faustus may have been due to the theatrical experience it was able to provide for viewers. To the present day, it remains Marlowe's most performed and most critically debated play.(43)

Though popular in performance, Doctor Faustus was not published in print form until eleven years after Marlowe's death. Two known versions of the text exist; the a-text which was published in 1604 by Valentine Simmes and the b-text published in 1616 by John Wright. The b-text omits thirty-six lines from the a-text text, and then introduces new speeches totalling 676 lines. There are also two extra characters within the b-text, as well as several minor verbal changes from the a-text. Significant dramaturgical, structural and ideological differences also exist between the two texts. In 1602, Phillip Henslowe paid playwrights Samuel Rowley and William Birdie four pounds to make additions to the play.(Deats, 2002: 24)

However, it is unknown what these specific additions were, and how many of them actually made it into either version of the printed text. As a result, critics have been left with two different versions of the play with no hint as to which is closer

to what Marlowe originally wrote. Marlovian scholarship of the twentieth century has tried to establish which of these two versions of Doctor Faustus is more authentic. In judging which text is more authoritative, scholars have looked for consistency in themes, language and structure to identify which scenes were likely added by contributors. For example, many seem to agree that the comic scenes of the play were probably not written by Marlowe alone as they do not fit in with the dramatic tone of the rest of the play. (Maguire, 2004: 48)

However, there is little overall consensus on how much of the play as it currently exists was written by the dramatist himself. Within the traditional morality play, the central character represents ‘everyman,’ and his or her journey can be generalized to reflect some greater part of the human condition. Much of the scholarship surrounding Faustus’ character has attempted to establish whether Faustus is someone that audiences would have been able to identify with, or if he is a unique personality whose spectacular journey is far removed from sixteenth century life. The character of Faustus himself has been interpreted in several different ways. One line of scholarship sees him as a tragic humanist hero whose quest for knowledge and personal ambition leads to his downfall. Others see him as a foolish individual who wastes his attained power on frivolous pursuits and childish activities . (Duxfield, 2005: 3)

Those studying the religious undertones of the play attempt to discern to which extent Faustus’ actions are self-guided, and to which extent he is victim to forces of good and evil beyond his control. It is difficult to assess how much sixteenth century audiences would have sympathized and identified with Faustus’ character, or how much they would have judged and blamed him for his own damnation. Nevertheless, he remains a complex figure whose exploration of sin, damnation, salvation and penitence may have spoken to post-Reformation audience members who were themselves grappling with

these concepts. Much like the Faust book, Doctor Faustus can be divided thematically into three parts.(Maguire, 2004: 48)

The first part of the play deals with Faustus' frustration with academia, his exploration of magic, and his pact with Mephistopheles for supernatural power. The second part of the play deals with his many adventures and his quest for knowledge and fame while part three deals with Faustus' damnation and the consequences of his bargain with the devil. Marlowe however, explores a psychological dimension of Faustus that the Faust book does not. Within the collection of stories, the motivations for Faustus' behavior include his curiosity for knowledge and desire for material pleasures. Within Marlowe's play, Faustus' motivations are more complex and his thirst for endless knowledge reveals deeper aspirations for power, wealth and fame.(Gent, 1992: 34)

Deats(2002) points Other differences between the Faust book and the play include the length of time it takes Faustus to negotiate his pact with Mephistopheles which is significantly shorter in the play than within the book. As well, the Faust book contains more detailed and spectacular episodes of Faustus' travels and adventures than any performance of the play would logistically be able to reproduce.(24-25)

Marlowe is able to produce a work that borrows elements from both the traditional morality play of the early modern period and a well-known legend about a German sorcerer. His contribution to this story is that he explores the psychological torments of his central character in a way that produces mixed feelings about the consequences of sin and the nature of redemption and damnation. (Bevington, 2010: 43)

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Struggle Between Good and Evil**

In Doctor Faustus, good and evil are presented as two polarized ideas: God and Heaven on one side, and Lucifer and Hell on the other. Contrasting representations of this division also appear, such as the old man and the Good Angel opposed to Mephistopheles and the Bad Angel. Initially, this struggle between good and evil is Faustus' major internal conflict as he is deciding whether to make the blood bond. However, by the time Faustus views the seven deadly sins, evil persists as the dominant force and is the path that Faustus follows to his final damnation. (Baum, 2009: 28)

"The struggle between good and evil begins with Faustus' divided conscience. The Good and Bad Angels represent the conflict between his devotion to knowledge and his longing for power. They most blatantly exemplify the traits of good versus evil when the Good Angel tells Faustus to "think of heaven and heavenly things" (p. 20) while the Bad Angel tells Faustus to "think of honor and wealth" (p. 21)". (James, 2001: 83)

However, at the end of the play, the Good Angel and the Bad Angel no longer appear. This absence represents Faustus' commitment towards evil, symbolized through the blood bond. No longer does he reminisce about turning to God, nor does he lament the path he has chosen until the end. Rather, he resorts to a wasteful use of his powers through playing pranks and satisfying royalty, such as his tricks on the Pope and the conjuring of Alexander the Great.(Baum, 2009: 28)

The most important part of the good versus evil conflict occurs at Faustus' turning point from good to evil. The dilemma between which paths to follow has settled towards evil by the time the seven deadly sins are paraded in front of him. Before this event, Faustus has good intentions. For example, he promises that he will "fill the public schools with silk, wherewith the students shall be bravely clad" (p. 90-91). He is persistent in his search for knowledge even though he is naïve about the eternal torment that awaits him in hell .(Rees, 2012: 67)

Faustus is even repulsed enough by the physical manifestation of evil that he asks Mephistopheles to change his appearance. He commands the devil to, "Go, and return an old Franciscan friar; That holy shape becomes a devil best" (p. 25). Faustus cannot bear to see the reality of hell; rather, he misinterprets it to be less evil than it actually is and even nonexistent at times. This blissful innocence can be seen in his succinct reply that hell is a myth immediately after Mephistopheles' terrifying description of hell. However, after making a blood bond with Mephistopheles, Faustus delights in the seven deadly sins, even when seeing them firsthand. He describes his anticipation to Lucifer: "That sight will be as pleasant to me as Paradise was to Adam the first day of his creation" (p. 103). In



comparison to his disgusted reaction towards Mephistopheles' devil figure(p. 103)

In comparison to his disgusted reaction towards Mephistopheles' devil figure, his acceptance of evil has become evident here and will later free him from his initial claims of benevolent aspirations, demonstrated with his later pranks and frivolous feats. Three main factors contribute to this change of nature from good to evil after the presentation of the sins. One of these is that the forbidden, ultimate knowledge which he so desires at the beginning of the play is revealed to him as being elementary and redundant. In reply to Mephistopheles' answers on astronomy, Faustus says, "Tush, these slender trifles Wagner can decide. Hath Mephistopheles no greater skill? . Tush, these are freshmen's suppositions" (p. 55). The suppositions" (p. 55). The strongest blow may occur when he is denied the knowledge of the world's origin. At this point, Faustus cries out in distress for his soul to be saved but is denied salvation. As a result, he realizes that his contract with the devil is irreversible. This awareness of damnation becomes the second main contributor towards his acceptance of evil. In the middle of Faustus' plea to Christ, Lucifer appears and destroys any hope for repentance by stating that " Christ cannot save thy soul for he is just. There's none but I have interest in the same" (p. 82).

Baum (2009) stated that after this crucial moment, Faustus believes that no matter how hard he tries to repent, he has already sinned once and is thus permanently damned to eternal hell. Believing he cannot be saved, he tries to drown his pending damnation through pranks. For example, after having fooled the horse dealer, he laments that he is simply a man destined to die soon. His only consolation is in "confound[ing] these passions with a quiet sleep" (p. 135).

All of the practical jokes and feats that he performs serve merely as distractions to purge his mind from thoughts of repenting, as he knows he has chosen the path of evil. One event that clearly shows his conformance with evil is his insistence for Helen near the end of the play. Remarkably, he openly acknowledges that he is guilty of one of the deadly sins, the only time that he does so. By demanding Mephistopheles to "let [him] crave of thee, to glut the longing of [his] heart's desire" (p. 80), he is clearly aware of the path he is taking, yet proceeds to commit the evil deed. Irrelevant now is whether he can be saved as he has willingly submitted to evil. Faustus tells Helen to "make [him] immortal with a kiss" (p. 92) and exclaims how "her lips suck forth [his] soul" (p. 93).

The immortality that he is asking for is rather the eternal torment of hell, and it is possible that he sees how evil his soul has become. Furthermore, his first thought after his evil act is to ask Helen to give him his "soul" again. Thus, this realization of his irreversible damnation liberates him from any responsibilities to do good and encourages him to commit sin repeatedly. The third influence that plays a part in Faustus' turning towards evil is from the overwhelming presence of evil compared to good. Oddly enough, God does not appear throughout the play, while Lucifer and Mephistopheles consistently arrive at critical moments of Faustus' doubts. The presence of the devils is important as it prevents Faustus, who initially regrets his decision, from renouncing their contract. For example, as Faustus contemplates repentance, Mephistopheles appears and threatens to tear Faustus to pieces. There is no reply from God nor is there any other counter to this evil.(Rees, 2012: 69)

The closest influence we have to rival the powerful impact of evil is that of the Good Angel and the Old Man. Both are helpless at affecting Faustus' conscience. The Good Angel asks Faustus to repent, to which he responds by immediately "cast[ing] no more doubts" (p. 26) in favor of signing the contract.

The Old Man is condemned to torment "with [the] greatest torments that our hell affords" (p. 77). Thus, calls for evil drastically outweigh any appeals for good, primarily because God does not exert any direct influence. Faustus is torn between good and evil as he decides to exchange eternal life for power. This conflict quickly changes after he makes the blood bond and mocks the seven deadly sins. Even when given the choice for good, best experience Good Angel asks Faustus to repent, but rather an inevitable demise towards evil .

### **Good and Bad Angels**

"Good Angel. O Faustus, lay that damnèd book aside And gaze not on it lest it tempt thy soul And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head! Read, read the Scriptures—that is blasphemy! Bad Angel. Go forward Faustus, in that famous art Wherein all nature's treasure is contained. Be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky, Lord and commander of these elements"!

The Good Angel and Bad Angel represent characters in this play as they symbolize the divided will of Faustus's conscience. In these lines at the beginning of the play, the Good Angel and Bad Angel go back and forth, each providing counterarguments and contradicting directives to Faustus. The Good Angel tries to convince Faustus to avoid the devil's book and read only Scripture, while the Bad Angel provides reasons why moving toward evil will benefit Faustus. (Christian, 2011: 65)

Bad Angel. Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art. Good Angel. Sweet Faustus, leave that execrable art. Faustus. Contrition, prayer, repentance, what of these? Good Angel. O, they are means to bring thee unto heaven. Bad Angel. Rather illusions, fruits of lunacy; That make men foolish that do use them most.

The Good Angel and Bad Angel's back-and-forth dialogue continues as they represent Faustus's thinking as he contemplates sin versus redemption. In these

lines, the Good Angel connects with Medieval thought as he encourages Faustus to repent and go back to God. Meanwhile, the Bad Angel represents the Renaissance individual as he tells Faustus that prayer is just an illusion so he should move forward toward Lucifer. (Rees, 2012: 70)

Good Angel. Faustus, repent: yet God will pity thee! Bad Angel. Thou art a spirit: God cannot pity thee! Faustus. Who buzzeth in mine ears I am a spirit? Be I a devil, yet God may pity me— Yea, God will pity me if I repent. Bad Angel. Ay, but Faustus never shall repent.

Here, the Good Angel and the Bad Angel go back and forth with Faustus once again. However, these lines end with the Bad Angel declaring that Faustus will not repent. Since the Good Angel and Bad Angel represent Faustus's thinking, this line confirms that evil is winning the battle for Faustus's soul. Soon after these lines are spoken, Faustus admits that he cannot repent, proving the Bad Angel's prediction or perhaps merely following the Bad Angel's suggestion.(Christian, 2011: 67)

"Good Angel. O Faustus, if thou hadst given ear to me Innumerable joys had followed thee. But thou did'st love the world. Bad Angel. Gave ear to me, And now must taste hell's pains perpetually. Good Angel. O, what will all thy riches, pleasures, pomps Avail thee now? Bad Angel. Nothing but vex thee more, To want in hell, that had on earth such store".

In the final act of the play, the Good Angel and Bad Angel represent and give voice to Faustus's regret and second-guessing as he approaches his final damnation in Hell. While the Good Angel reminds Faustus of the joys he lost by giving up god, both the Good Angel and the Bad Angel question Faustus on how the riches, fame, and power will help him now. The angels basically present Faustus with his moral lesson.(Clute, 1997: 45)

"Good Angel. . . . And now, poor soul, must thy good angel leave thee, The jaws of hell are open to receive thee. Bad Angel. Now Faustus, let thine eyes with horror stare Into that vast perpetual torture-house . . . Nay, thou must feel them, taste the smart of all: He that loves pleasure must for pleasure fall. And so I leave thee Faustus, till anon: Then wilt thou tumble in confusion".

As the play concludes, the Good Angel's and Bad Angel's back-and-forth ends as the Good Angel concedes the loss of Faustus's soul. In these lines, the Bad Angel also tells Faustus that he must prepare for hell by looking at the tortured, fallen souls before him. In the end and despite the Good Angel's best efforts, the Bad Angel wins Faustus's soul, symbolizing how Faustus finally accepts his dark fate.(Clute, 1997: 45)

## **Conclusion**

Doctor Faustus is a lesson of morality. The never ending conflict between good and evil is vividly exposed in the play and until today every person could still

see and experience such a conflict. Having read Doctor Faustus, one would surely make a deep contemplation of all the negligence ever made instead of expressing gratitude to God, the Almighty. When divinity is abandoned damnation is sure to come, crushing all to a total demolition and when such a time comes, atonement will be of no use. Even today the name 'Faustus' has become familiar to anyone engaged in English Literature with an idiomatic expression of 'Faustus Bargain', which means a deal made to quench thirst of earthly possessions with a high risk of short-lived benefits and a hell of a price.

Dr. Faustus, as a scholar and play, is not an epitome of achievement but an easily-obtained damnation. Faustus leaves God and abuses religion without realizing that religion, apart from being concrete or not, helps individuals interpret life events, acquire a sense of meaning and purpose and understand their relationship to a larger whole, in both the social and cosmic sense. Without religion maturation and ongoing growth will not be fostered and by this everyone should know that by the existence of religion, people become more fulfilled and complete .

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