
UNIT 3 IRONY AND THE TRAGIC DILEMMA IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit helps you to understand irony as the distinguishing feature of *Doctor Faustus'* tragedy and how the essence of irony and tragedy lies in a dilemma with which *Doctor Faustus* dies without being able to resolve it.

3.1 NATURE & DEFINITION OF IRONY

In the preceding unit, we discussed how *Doctor Faustus* holds a sort of balance of opposites between the morality and the heroic strains of tragedy. This oppositional balance is not simply thematic or intellectual but is the core of drama, and particularly that of tragedy, defined as irony. The subtlety of irony, in the form of a flux of opposite experiences distinguishes a good play from an inferior one and, to an extent, drama itself, which attempts to realize the human paradoxes in the dramatic action, and distinguishes itself from other genres of literature.

Dramatic irony is an intermediary between the subjectively felt ironies of experience on the part of the dramatist and the objectively found ironies of the world. Understood textually, dramatic irony refers to the possibilities of a multivocal or a privileged reading as against a popular reading of a play that is not available to the character and, at times, to the playwright himself. Renaissance drama favours irony

or an ironic reading by virtue of its transitional experience wherein the acceptance of medieval values has become uncomfortable and, at the same time, there is a hesitation to accept the aspirations of the new age. Consequently, the transitional experience of the times required a dramatic strategy or trope that would play an uncharacteristic role of remaining subtly evasive instead of standardizing the dramatic experience. The term irony was given literary sophistication by Friedrich Schlegel in the nineteenth century. He liberated the term from "simple verbal raillery" to explain the paradoxes in Shakespeare and the romantic poets. In Schlegel's understanding, Bert O. States writes:

Irony was the highest principle of art, and the poet stands ironically above his creation, as God does above his own; the creation is utterly objective in character, and yet it reveals the subjective wisdom, will and love of the creator. Thus the author pervades his characters and their actions but he is never subjectively identifiable with them. Like God, he always expresses less than he thinks.¹

Crediting irony with an infinitely variable strategy for encompassing nature's possibilities and an ability to summon "vital tension—producing mechanism of dramatic action", Bert O. States attempts to define irony:

By irony, in its widest context, I do not refer to that negativity of attitude we associate with common irony, but rather to the very principle of negation itself. The difference between irony as dry mock or perverse negativity, and irony as an unlimited capacity to negate, or oppose ideas, is not a difference in the kind of operation the mind performs but rather a difference in the mind's intentions towards the observed content. Hamlet is ironic in the first sense. Shakespeare creating Hamlet is ironic in the second... Irony is the dramatist's version of the negative proposition. It helps him to avoid error, and by this I mean that it widens his vision, allows him to see more circumspectively the possibilities in his "argument"; and in so doing it ensures his not falling into the incomplete attitudes of naivete, sentimentality, selfrighteousness, or unearned faith. In short, the complete dramatist-- if there is such a person -- is unironically ironic.²

3.2 MARLOWE: AN IRONIST

More than any dramatist of his time, Marlowe faced the task of intellectual and artistic correction or reformulation. He had no more the world of established truths to live in but rather one of half-truths, the age-old truths which have become half-truths by his time and, further, the axioms of the new humanist learning which are limiting in themselves. The Christian faith in his time was at loggerheads with the new humanist values of material prosperity and pagan aesthetics. There was also the schism between the Catholics and the Protestants within the Christian faith. A scholar of vast learning, unlike many of his contemporaries, Marlowe could not help a critical and even a sceptical attitude towards both the dogmatic and the resurgent ideas current in his time. Scepticism, undoubtedly, represented the intellectual acumen and rigour of the Elizabethan mind. Marlowe's intellectual predecessors are the Latinist Erasmus and the great Thomas More. In *The Praises of Folly*, written in England at Thomas More's house, Erasmus, formulating the concept of serio-ludere-- the serious or the great as inseparable from the weak or the frivolous-- sums up the ironic perspective necessary for the cultural experience of the times. More wrote a companion piece to *The Praises of Folly* in Latin called *Utopia* (1515) presenting the tragi-comicality of his times.

Irony as a self-defeating human presumption was the structure of medieval Miracle and Morality plays. Marlowe follows the dramatic form of these plays but the point

"live eternally" and also "raise the dead" to life. Law does not suit human excellence and only divinity comes nearest to it but divinity does not recognize human excellence but presupposes human sin:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.

Why, then, belike we must sin, and so consequently die.

Ay, we must die an everlasting death.

What doctrine call you this, Che sera, sera--

What will be, shall be. Divinity, adieu!³

(1,i,42 -47)

The belief in religion is an admission of human sinfulness and religion must be dispensed with but Faustus does not consider whether there is any human failure outside the realm of religious formulations of sin and, further, as Douglas Cole points out, Faustus

arrives at his fatalistic conclusion by joining together two premises which themselves are glaring half-truths for each of the propositions he cites from the Bible is drawn from contexts and passages which unite the helplessness of the sinner with the redeeming grace of God... "For the wages of sinne is death but the gifte of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"... "If we acknowledge our sinnes he is faithful and just to forgive our sinnes to cleanse Us from all Unrighteousness."⁴

Phoebe S. Spinard observes that Faustus' translation of Che sera, sera could just as easily have been, "What shall be will be". In the first, there is a rejection of will; in the second, an affirmation at least of the "possibilites of the will". Faustus is indeed refusing to consider his "being" in God, but by disposing of the question along with the answer, he is betraying the humanist goal of seeking the truth of "being" outside of religious systems.⁵

3.4 FAUSTUS' TRAGIC DILEMMA

Faustus' dilemma is essentially that while religion precludes human possibilites other than sin and repentance, the Humanist thought and learning gives him no solace being in itself self-limiting. Faustus is frustrated by the divine limitation of the human condition but the human condition, left to itself is as frustrating as the divine limitation. 'Yet, art Thou Faustus, and a man' and Faustus' dilemma is tragic for the human aspirations are whetted by divine power but the divine power is not within the human realm even if human capabilities are strained to the utmost. There is no escape from a sense of limitation, either religiously felt or humanly realized. Hence the need for religious faith, however constrictive it may be.

The human condition, at its best, is, thus, a delicately built irony of unrealizable ambitions. The irony compounds itself when man does not contend with this irony. Transgressing this irony is demeaning the human condition and subverting religious faith. Faustus' acts of necromancy and the sale of his soul to the devil are diabolic. The diabolic is the very antithesis of the human as well as the divine.

3.5 SELF-MULTIPLICATIVE IRONY IN DOCTOR FAUSTUS

The play presents a course of regenerative irony, for Faustus having strained the delicate irony of human condition has set it on a course *sui generis*. The theological

The tragic dilemma is all the more tormenting for there is no truly human resolution of this dilemma: God calls upon him to return to Him but the devil manipulates him to retain his contractual bond with him.

The parity of God and the devil in the centrality of man, however, is only a stage in the human predicament of Faustus and does not last long. Faustus has not, in fact, rejected one in favour of the other but has replaced God by the devil, with the divine awareness constituting his being, remaining more or less intact.

The divine awareness is a sense of humility and veneration towards a superior being. What Faustus gave as a devout soul to God, he would now give to the devil raising an altar and building a church. He would complete the bond with the devil using the same words, "Consummatum est", Christ used in completing the "work of redemption on Calvary". However, the devil does not redeem Faustus from his divine awareness but rather intensifies it and generates deep despair:

Home fuge: whither should I fly?
If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell.⁸

(II, i. 75-76)

The devil is no less despairing of Faustus' ambitions of divine power on earth. Neither could Faustus give wholehearted commitment to the devil nor could the devil keep up the obligations of the contract. Both despair of god, reject Him and lead a life of distraction as wounded rebels rather than as defiant fighters. The analogy between the man and the devil ends there for the loss is gruesome for Faustus who can only fall back on his despair whereas the devil could live on the thoughts of avenging their defeat as ineffectual angles.

The signing of the pact with the devil starts unfolding the fundamental irony of Faustus' aspirations. Faustus signed the pact only to undo himself totally. The pact signed to gain absolute power on earth only leads to Faustus' mental disintegration, for what he gets through the pact is only an increased despair in God as well as in the human condition. Mephostophilis would not answer Faustus' query about hell for it reminded him of his own tortured state of being. He wouldn't answer Faustus' question about the creation of the earth as well, for the creator is his bitter enemy nor could he give Faustus a wife, for marriage is a divine sacrament. Ironically, the show of the Seven Deadly Sins, he arranges is what he could give and what Faustus could relish vicariously. The period of contract of twenty four years turns out to be not only a denial of Faustus' aspirations but one of a progressive degradation of Faustus as a man. Douglas Cole writes:

In not choosing the God in his desire to be as God, Faustus has provided not only for his destruction, but also for his degradation. Instead of reaching the stature of demi-God or even commander of the world, Faustus becomes an imperial entertainer. The restless scholar hemmed in by the limits of mortality gains his satisfaction by playing the practical jokes on the papal court: the man who looked forward to controlling the lives and the power of all the earthly rulers now becomes the magician of the emperor, building castles in the air, and presenting spirits that resemble great men of the past.⁹

Further, the fascinating devil providing allurements turns out to be a tormentor threatening punishment as Faustus attempts to seek divine grace which amounts to disobedience to the devil.

The devil is temptation, distraction and sovereign power but doesn't stand by the contractual obligations. Faustus who aspired to rule the world cannot even insist on

the devil's obligations much less abrogate the contract for its breach but meekly assures obedience without insisting on the same from the devil.

Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul,
For disobedience to my sovereign Lord.¹⁰

Sweet Mephostophilis, entreat thy lord
To pardon my unjust presumption,
And with my blood again I will confirm
My former vow I made to Lucifer.¹¹

(V, i, 74-81)

Faustus asks Mephostophilis to torment the old man who agonizes him with his advice. Mephostophilis' reply is significant.

His faith is great; I cannot touch his soul;
But what I may afflict his body with
I will attempt, which is but little worth.¹²

(V, i, 85-90)

Implicitly, Faustus could be tormented, for his faith in God is so shaky, but not the old man. Obedience to the devil and faithlessness to God bring the same fate. In fact, the devil heaps degradation whereas God could only pose a serious limitation on his human condition. Further, faith in God could be such a terrifying human strength that the devil would not dare to touch him. If the human condition is limiting, the limitation is a virtue, and a divine blessing too. Faustus should not have despaired in being Faustus and a man but should have felt supreme confidence in his human state. This realization couldn't be farther from Faustus but the human will would rather suffer its choice than retract meekly even if the choice is degrading and torturous.

At best, Faustus can distract himself from the gravity of wilful choice with whatever appeals to the baser human instincts. He asks for Helen but Mephostophilis can only give him a devilish shadow of Helen in whom we can read his predicament.

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.-
Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.

.....
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele:
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms.¹³

(V i, 95-100)

Imagery builds up the irony of Faustus' predicament. Douglas Cole sums up the ironical thrust in Faustus' passions:

Helen, whose beauty caused Troy to burn, will do the same for Faustus; the immortality offered by the kisses of a demon lover is an eternity in hell; the soul that is sucked forth cannot be given back again; hell not heaven is in these lips; the flames of Jupiter that destroyed admiring Semele are the flames of this Helene's abode which will destroy a hapless Faustus; wanton Faustus, like Arethusa, will hold the burning sun in his arms but not without fiery pain.¹⁴

The apostrophe to the devil in Helen's form is a desperate attempt to heighten his predicament and allow it to reach its logical end where the nature of his undoing comes in full force to his realization.

But Faustus' offence can ne'er be pardoned; the
serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus¹⁵
(V, ii, 13-15)

3.6 SUMMING UP : TRAGIC IRONY AND DILEMMA IN DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Faustus comes to full repentance at the end of the play. The last soliloquy is an admission of the possibility of divine grace and forgiveness. Ironically, the realization comes at a time when the devil is around to torture him to death and if only his doom could be postponed, he would gain the divine forgiveness. Faustus willed his destruction so long, now he craves for time to be able to gain his salvation. But Faustus knew that the possibility of repentance and forgiveness waited on him until he reached his end. As he dies with all the opportunities of repentance and forgiveness thrown away wantonly, what remains is the burden of the human condition that contained the germs of his degradation and destruction.

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
... This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
unto some brutish beast! All beasts are happy ...¹⁶
(V, iii. 100-110)

The pain of devilish torture is so intense, Faustus cries to God to save him from the tortures of the devil:

O God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet, for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransom'd me
Impose some end to my incessant pain.¹⁷
(V, iii. 100-104)

Faustus who sought the devil to oppose God, seeks God's mercy and his innate forgiveness to rescue him from the devil. Christian theology proves itself forcefully in Faustus' predicament. However, its point is religious didacticism whereas Marlowe brings out irony and a tragic dilemma. For Christian theology, Faustus' predicament falls short of a tragedy for he was motivated by nothing but presumption which could have been easily remedied by repentance and, consequently he could have been rescued by divine forgiveness. But for Marlowe, the immensity of the human condition forces desperate choices on man which could not justifiably be termed right or wrong but which have to be understood in terms of reality that constitutes human condition. What happened to Faustus may justify Christian theology but what it explains are the irredeemable paradoxes of man. Hence the irony of Faustus' career and his tragic dilemma. Douglas Cole sums up the Marlovian irony:

For Marlowe, the tragedy lies, not in the inevitable falling off of human achievement from the ideal, but in the travesty of the ideal that the deeds of man so often represent, and in the illusory aura of nobility with which man persistently invests his base desires. It is the tragic view of the ironist who sees in man the responsible cause of his own undoing, who presents man as a destructive agent who, by the abuse of freedom and will, persistently betrays others and inevitably betrays himself.¹⁸

3.7 REFERENCES

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2. Ibid.,p.xviii.
3. Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus*, p.5.
4. Douglas Cole. *Suffering: Evil in the plays of Christopher Marlowe*. Princeton, Princeton UP.1962,p.198.
5. Phoebe S. Spinard. "The Dilettante's Lie in *Doctor Faustus*". *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 24,2, 1982. pp.245 to 247.
6. Douglas Cole. *Suffering and Evil in the plays of Christopher Marlowe*, p. 191
7. Christopher Marlowe. *Doctor Faustus*,pp. 16-17.
8. Ibid., p. 19.
9. Douglas Cole. *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Marlowe*. p. 216.
10. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*,_ p. 46.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.,
13. Ibid., p.17.
14. Douglas Cole. *Suffering and Evil in the plays of Marlowe* p. 220.
15. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* p. 46.
16. Ibid.,p.57.
17. Ibid.
18. Douglas Cole. *Suffering Evil and Evil and in the plays of Marlowe*. p. 263.

3.8 KEY WORDS

Arethusa:

A nymph in Greek mythology who was pursued by the river God, Alpheus. She flies to Sicily where she takes the the form of a spring in Ortygia, an island near Syracuse. Alpheus, flowing under the sea, was there united with her.

Fredrick Schlegel (1772-1829): German critic, aesthetician and writer of romanticism, Schlegel formulates the aesthetic theory of romantic poetry and also the notion of romantic irony.

Helen:

The most beautiful woman in Greek legend; married to Menelaus, later the King of Sparta. She was abducted by Paris the Prince of Troy. Aided by many admirers of Helen's beauty, Menelaus wages a war against Troy. When Paris dies, Helen marries his brother Deiphobus whom she betrays to the Greeks. Helen returns to Sparta with Menelaus after the Fall of Troy.

Semele:

Princess of Thebes in Greek mythology with whom the Greek God Zeus falls in love. By Zeus, she conceives, Dionysus. While Dionysus was still unborn Semele gets consumed by the radiance of Zeus Olympian splendour which Semele herself entices him to wear, under the malicious prompting of Zeus' wife, Hera.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss how irony constitutes the chief element in the characterisation of Faustus.
2. Illustrate the use of dramatic irony from the text of *Doctor Faustus*.
3. The essence of irony is dilemma: Discuss the statement with reference to *Doctor Faustus*.
4. Tragic irresolution is the dramatic strength of *Doctor Faustus*. Discuss.

3.10 ANNOTATIONS

Annotate the following passages with reference to the context.

- A. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.

Why, then belike we must sin, and consequently die?
- b. What doctrine call you this, che sera, sera - What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!
- c. Alas, poor slave! see how poverty jesteth in his nakedness! The villan is bare and out of service, and so hungry, that I know would give his soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though it were blood-raw.
- d. To him I'll build an altar and church, And offer Jukewarm blood of new-born babes.
- e. Hell hath no limits nor is circumscribed In one self place; for where we are is hell, and where hell is, there we ever be:
- f. O, no end is limited to damn'd souls! why were thou not a creature wanting soul?
- g. This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd unto some brutish beast!

broader conflict of religious and secular values, the former does not gain serious dramatic cognizance. The ideological conflict between the Catholics and the Protestants was a part of Marlowe's learning at Cambridge. Critical perception of *Doctor Faustus* largely centered around the ideology of the medieval morality but the possibility that Faustus's religious revolt could ideologically have been shaped by English Protestantism, not merely by Renaissance aspirations, was not seriously considered. The movement of the Reformation synchronized with the Renaissance in opposing the dehumanization implicit in the ideological formulations of institutional Christianity. English Protestantism, deriving inspiration from John Calvin, besides opposing several religious practices of the orthodox church, propounded the rebellious doctrine of justification by Faith or conscience as against the institutional mediation or determination of the individual's faith. Further, Protestantism believed in absolute predestination and in the notion of the elect. Though the concept of human sin, as a flight from God in exercise of choice, is the same to the Protestants as it is to the orthodox Church, Calvinist Protestants and anti-Calvinist champions of the Roman church differed diametrically in the possibility of divine mercy for the sinner. The orthodox Church presented the idea of an ever benevolent God waiting to save the repentant at any time, Protestantism advocated the idea of a sinner as being a born reprobate through predestination whose predicament is one of endless despair from which there is no escape.

In his ruminations about the possibility of divine grace to him after he signs the pact with the devil, *Doctor Faustus* reflects the divergent positions of the Catholic and the Protestant positions. The religious controversy was so near Marlowe at Cambridge where he was a student when the defenders and opponents of the Calvinist faith like William Parkins and his follower, William Barret, on the one hand, and opponents like Peter Baro on the other, entered into endless polemics. Lily B. Campbell calls *Doctor Faustus'* despair a case of a torturous Protestant conscience while the possibility or impossibility of divine grace for Faustus holds the dramatic tension in the play:

It is the continuing struggle of conscience, the conflict between hope and despair, where hope would lead him to God again and despair would keep him from salvation, that makes the suspense of the play. The outcome remaining in doubt till the eleventh hour, the tension continues throughout the play and gives it its peculiar dramatic compulsion.⁴

In fact, Faustus' despair, either in itself or in juxtaposition with his religious hope or Renaissance aspirations presents the rich complexity of the Elizabethan mind fluctuating among several alternatives without being able to affirm or reject anything decisively.

4.6 FAUSTUS: THE RENAISSANCE ASPIRATIONS AND RHETORIC

From the beginning, *Doctor Faustus* explores religious and human dilemmas characterising the Elizabethan mind. Marlowe begins Faustus' story in a duality of Renaissance ambitions and religious values. There is Faustus' craving for classical learning, "Sweet Analytiks", "live and die in Aristotle's works" "who has ravished" him and a craving for a "world of profit and delight, of power, of honour, of omnipotence". The extent and depth of ambitions could only be expressed in liturgical images like "heavenly" for the delights of necromancy and the reach out of the worldly power could only be like "jove in the sky" and hence the dissatisfaction with the human state, "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man". Though divine power is the ultimate test of human achievements, pursuit of divinity, according to

Faustus, is self-defeating, for human aspiration in a world of sin, and man cannot deceive himself by denying sin or ambition. "Why, then, belike we must sin and consequently die". He would ignore the eternal possibility of divine grace that the Catholic church promises and would rather go by the Calvinist argument that a sinner, a man of ambitions like him, is a born reprobate, his sin resulting from his predestined state.

Faustus gives necromancy the thrust and power of scientific method through which the Renaissance scholars attempted to understand nature's treasure as well as the aesthetics of human beauty.

Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
Resolve me of all ambiguities,
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
I'll have them to fly to India for Gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates;
.....
....sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than has the white breasts of the Queen of Love.
From Venice shall they drag huge argosies,
And from America the golden fleece
That yearly stuffs old Philip's treasury⁵..... I, i 75-130.

"Nature's treasure" is an obsession with the Renaissance scholars since from nature proceeds human nature and the diversity of its desires, and taste for jewels, food, gossip, fashion, etc. Along with the gluttony of desires, there is a rhetoric of words. In fact, words play a greater role, for words have a thrust that impel desires rather than vice versa. Bartlett Giamatti writes:

Renaissance man felt he had the power to transform himself because he had the power of language. Words were units of energy. Through words man could assume forms and aspire to shapes and states otherwise beyond his reach.⁶

With a Renaissance focus on linguistic and rhetorical skills, Marlowe "wrestled with the multiform angel (or demon) of language".

... he expanded the limits of the stage by writing of human mind in its battle to surpass human limitation. He used soaring words as symbols of man's aspiring mind. And he used the lurking dangers in words to image the terrors of aspiring too far.⁷

In a characteristically Renaissance attitude, Faustus chooses to be impulsively rhetorical, driving himself into a state of aspiration beyond his abilities. Rhetoric drives Renaissance man towards knowledge, beauty and material power. There is an impatient blending of the intellectual, aesthetic and the material resulting in the overturning and undoing of the inherent strength of all three urges. Thus, the multivalent urges of the Renaissance display human magnificence as well as the tragic entrapment of man in his own self-exalted state of being. After rhetoricizing the possibility of manifold human grandeur, Faustus begins his tragic undoing with "waxen wings" of words "mounting above his reach."

Words fly past ideas as Faustus dismisses one discipline after another to convince himself that only necromancy fits his genius. What Faustus does not realize is that in the very name of human excellence he is flying away from human excellence into

areas that have not done any credit to man. He signs a pact with the devil who is the very antithesis of the moral being of man. Ironically, he is not frightened of damnation but would confound hell in Elysium and would allow his ghost to rest with the old Greek philosophers forgetting that heaven and hell are human inventions made to ennoble human life. The classical mythology is used not to elevate himself intellectually but used self-deceptively for self aggrandisement. The rhetoric of learning becomes a medium, not of self-elevation but of unlearning and degradation. The apostrophe to Helen in the final act is Faustus' finest rhetoric of learning and taste but all that Faustus gains is a self-deluding exercise to overcome the tormenting fears of damnation.

4.7 FAUSTUS' RENAISSANCE TRAGEDY

Phoebe S. Spinard sums up Faustus' tragic undoing as that of an accomplished scholar choosing the ways of a "diletante" who uses learning superficially, and causes a yawning gap between what he says and what he is led to. Bartlett Giamatti sums up Faustus' Renaissance tragedy

Where at the outset Faustus was a creator, at the end he is a creature; where before he dreamed of unlimited power and glory now he is assured of limitless torment. The words by which he reshaped himself into a demigod at the beginning have now exploded into a horror all about him. What we see on stage are the contents of his head - the Hell he will possess forever, the heaven he will shortly lose. He brought it on himself: this deformed world, when he converted, when he turned to magic from God, when he turned the power of words from God's praise to his own.⁸

Faustus fails as he is simply carried away by the Renaissance aspirations instead of understanding the spirit of these aspirations that looked forward to human excellence and splendour. With all his accomplishments, Faustus fails tragically as a Renaissance hero, but the question arises as to whether Faustus deserved the tormenting suffering he had to experience. What is the nature of Faustus' sin that invites so much of divine wrath? The answer again lies in the humanist aspirations, though of a different kind. If the Renaissance posited man at the center of a secular world, the religious movement of the Reformation posited man in a direct relation with God bypassing the institutional authority of the church and its liturgical practices. Faustus' inability or refusal to repent may, in one sense, be his Renaissance pride but, in another sense, it is a protestant's admission of conscientious suffering and a despairing awareness that he is not the elect of God and, is thus, a reprobate.

4.8 DOCTOR FAUSTUS: CATHOLIC FAITH AND PROTESTANT DESPAIR

In the dramatic conflict between faith and despair in *Doctor Faustus*, the possibility of a strain of Protestant faith in Marlowe's making of Faustus, makes Faustus' despair all the more acute. The possibility of divine grace that Faustus is alternately hopeful of, in the immediate context of the schism, in the Church becomes a Catholic proposition but Faustus' despair triumphs in the play making his hope of salvation ineffectual and giving the protestant faith an edge over its Catholic rival.

Marlowe gives Faustus, for his rejection of divinity, the initial motivation of Renaissance aspirations. However, very soon *Marlowe qualifies Faustus' motivation by the latter's awareness of eternal damnation having already taken place by his "desperate thoughts against Jove's deity" even before he sold his soul to the devil.* The Pact with the devil is yet to come, despair precedes it:

Now, Faustus, must thou need be damn'd?
And canst thou not be sav'd.
What boots it then to think on God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies, and despair
Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub.

However, Faustus has not removed all traces of hope

...O, something sounds in my ears,
Abjure this magic, turn to God again
Ay, and Faustus will turn to God again

The hope is ineffectual

To God? He loves thee not;

There is also the self-loving Renaissance man in the despairing Protestant.

The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite.
Wherein is fixed the love of Belzebub
(II, i 1-15)⁹

Faustus' blood congeals as he signs the bond with the devil but his faith is not that strong, the blood flows on just being warmed by fire. What is strong is his despair.

Homo fuge! Whither should I fly?
If unto God, he'll throw me down to hell. (II, i, 75-76)¹⁰

Repentance is an impossibility to Faustus the way he is made

My heart's so harden'd, I cannot repent;
Scarce can I name salvation, faith or heaven,
But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears
'Faustus thou art damn'd'
(II, ii, 18-20)¹¹

Faustus does cry for God's mercy although he knows that it is impossible to get it. Lucifer makes the nature of Protestant faith clear to Faustus: He chooses people for His Mercy, who would never sin in the first instance and only those outside his grace would sin and, these are outside his justice too.

Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just. (II, ii, 87)¹²

Until the end, Marlowe dramatizes the ineffectual possibility of divine grace for Faustus.

See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: Ah, my Christ.
(V, iii, 77-78)¹³

But there is no escape from Faustus' predicament:

If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake whose blood hath ransom'd me,