



“Who Was Then the Gentleman?” : Devil, Faustus or God¹? Marlowe’s “Mighty Line”² and the Devils’ Craft

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Abstract

As a new born of the Renaissance, like many his peers, Faustus craves for classical knowledge while thinking less of Christianity. He changes from an innocent mistaker to a grievous sinner, however, at the start he is not a sinner, and what he requires is not overdone. His two weak points – the ignorance of Christianity and the extreme desire of knowledge—are grasped by devils to choose him as the victim of temptation, as well as the breakthrough to take down the whole Wittenberg. In fact, he is tempted by devils step by step from mistake to sin, and also turns the whole city into a desire swelling hell. The result is not only of Faustus and the devils’ effort, but God’s absence in the play as well. In this battle with God, devils do far more things than God, both mentally and materially, which lead to Faustus’s suspicion and despair of God so that the devils finally win.

Key words: Faustus; Devil; Craft

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¹ From The slogan of the 1381 peasant uprising: “When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?”

² See T. S. Eliot, “Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe,” in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1928), pp. 86-94; Brooke, T. (1922), “Marlowe’s Versification and Style,” *SP*, *XIX*, 186-205.

INTRODUCTION

*The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*³ never loses its position as a most often focused and discussed work. Many critics focus on some single elements in the play, like Christianity, devils, magic and magician, damnation and conscience, mostly argues from the perspective of the relevant cultural context, but little attention has been paid to the text itself and what really happens throughout the play⁴. Of course, from previous studies we know there is a battle between God and devils (Greg, 1946, p. 97), just as Greg presents; and Faustus’s impotence to pray may originate from his ignorance and disbelief of God. (McAlindon, 1997, p.215) But what we don’t know is the whole story, the specific plan of the devils, and why devils choose Faustus, and how devils take advantage of Faustus to achieve what final purpose of theirs.

Devils choose Faustus because, according to his weak points he is easy to err, so he is also easy to sin. He has studied knowledge to extremity, at least he himself thinks that he has learned all the knowledge that the existing books can offer (I, i, 4). Yet he desires more knowledge than exist in the mortal life. And his ignorance of Christianity can prevent him from praying, thus from redemption. As the result, he is the best candidate to be tempted and to tempt others around him

³ Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus* (“A” Text), in Roma Gill (eds.), *New Mermaids (A & C Black [Publishers] Limited: 2004)*. In this article all citations are to this version of the play and the ‘B’ text in the same edition.

⁴ For recent achievements in Marlowe scholarship see Thomas Healey, “Doctor Faustus.” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, England: CUP, 2003), pp.174-192. For contributions a list of works and articles are included at the end of the section, the major scholars are: C. L. Barber, Marx Bluestone, Nicholas Brooke, Lawrence Danson, Jonathan Dollimore, William Empson, Leah S. Marcus, Gareth Roberts, Edward Snow and Michael Warren.

to hell. Nevertheless, devils can not make such a choice for anyone without God's disappearance. God's effort, loving property and power, is not so strong as to make Faustus believe in him. The unbalanced scale of the hell and heaven is a critical premise for the condition of devils' plot against him.

In this paper I would like to argue that it is God Himself who has made it possible for the Devils to turn traitor to him. In order to clarify this, it is absolutely necessary to locate the contents of the accusation against Faustus. And here follows how.

1. FAUSTUS' SIN: AN INTERPRETATION FROM CLASSICAL, CHRISTIAN AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Whether or not what Faustus does can be defined as sinful is the crucial point and the premise of the play. The definition of sin can be explained from three perspectives, the sin of Christianity, of classical ideology, and that of philosophy. The idea of sin is systemized in St. Augustine's *Confessions*:

...and I enquired what iniquity should be: but I found it not to be a substance, but a swerving merely of the will, crooked quire away from thee, O God, (who art the supreme substance) towards these lower things; easting away its inward parts, and puffed up outwardly. (1631, pp.383)

Iniquity, or regarded as "sin", is a movement driven away from God, from all his creations. Time is God's creation, so dead people can't turn back. Faustus' asking Alexander and Helen to go back is a behavior of iniquity, and to have summer fruit to grow out in winter is also iniquity. Also, Faustus wants to be omnificence, and almighty, which is just like God, Faustus here commits another sin of being in pride. Theological concerns are often a guide to pure tranquility to free one from matter mattered things. We can understand this as a point of taking God's forbiddance to inquire and acquire so as to be as almighty as God Himself is. As is described in T. S. Coleridge's *Rime of Ancient Mariner*, nobody is to compete with God, nobody who claims such thing as to harm, or hurt or destroy the works of God will never be redeemed⁵. Milton boast a kind of Satan style of competing with God, is considering an attempt to inquire, acquire and to conquer. It will be absolutely sure to suppose that the Faustus tradition, a tradition by which ambitious Geothe has spared no

⁵ A Chinese scholar Luo has exhausted this point in an article discussing the geographical map of man's travelling from his childhood garden of Eden to his wandering trip to his fall. For a necessity, man needs and is never able to achieve any salvation. See *The Wanderer in the Marriage Songs, Foreign Literatures*, 2004, 1.

effort for pursuing, has exerted influence upon John Milton the fighter⁶.

The classical sin can find example in *Oedipus Tyrannous*, where Oedipus solved the riddle of Sphinx, which should not be solved because the gods use the monster to block the road intentionally. Here Oedipus regards himself one of the gods, super clever and saving the whole kingdom. His ignorance resides in his fancying himself knowing everything, but on the contrary he confuses truth and complicates the situation. So his sin is hubris, just as Faustus classical sin: He wants to let everything unto his command. The deformed state of Sphinx lies in the reason conscious philosophy of evolution of man that has to be brought into being by the meta-physical mechanics of a logos or Chinese entitled Taoism. Oedipus, though appearing as an image of hero for redemption and salvation, in fact knows not much this logos or Tao for building up reason. From the fact that he himself committed the crime of breaking through natural ethics chains speaks for this and justifies the correctness of God. It has ridiculously become a sharp and disappointing irony of challenging man's wit and man's ability. Although convention does not claim Greek theology as religion, it puts much in thinking in the Christian way. *The Metamorphoses* of Ovid, has descriptively pictured the map of god's action and behavior of creating and administering and reordering things. The Bible sort of scripture resembles much of Christianity and defines the norm, concept of sin.

The philosophical sin is first proposed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)⁷, but it's full expression finds answer in existentialism. For existentialists, alienation is sin, and alienation from relationship between people and nature, people and people, and people and themselves causes sin. Faustus

⁶ For general information of Milton criticism see Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns, *John Milton, Life, Work, and Thought* (2008), interesting resources see The John Milton Reading Room: Selected Criticism at URL: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/bibliography, especially Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994; Sharon Achinstein, "Cloudless Thunder: Milton in History." *Milton Studies* 48 (2008), 1-12; Richard Arnold, *Logic of the Fall: Right Reason and [Im]pure Reason in Milton's Paradise Lost*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2006; Saint Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. 2 Vols. Trans. John Hammond Taylor, S. J. New York: Newman Press, 1982.

⁷ "Hegel's principal achievement was his development of absolute idealism as a means to integrate the notions of mind, nature, subject, object, psychology, the state, history, art, religion and philosophy. In particular, he developed the notion of the master-slave dialectic and the concept of Geist ("mind-spirit") as the expression of the integration ("sublation", *Aufheben*), without elimination or reduction, of otherwise seemingly contradictory or opposing ideas." cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Wilhelm_Friedrich_Hegel, extracted 2015-06-09 16:38:35. His *Das Leben Jesu (Life of Jesus, 794)* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (1825-1826)* contributes to elaborate the topics and attitudes toward both religion and philosophy.

turns nature upside down (alienation between people and nature), and changes other people with a bad moralistic direction (alienation between people to heaven), and then ruins himself (alienation in himself). As a matter of fact, he commits sin from philosophical perspective by having had alienation come true. In a matter of fact, alienation happens ever since the beginning of man. The legend of the Fall and God’s foreshadowing suggests and prophesizes such possible or likely result. In the eyes of religious beliefs or philosophies, such event is a process of alienation. Satan himself is not, at the very innocent beginning, never a Street Car Name Desire, nor Lilliput citizen of turning his own being into some unwanted or unexpected state of thing. Alienation occurs when change exists. No man is able to jump into one river at two jumps, because they change and have been alienated. The cosmos has kept its natural or Godly order while nobody is to stir this. A kind of inquiry or curiosity of inspecting such potentials will just enhance this stirring. Faustus has perchance disturbed this state of well and good being, hence the sin.

Conclusion can be drawn that Faustus has sinned if we look into sin in any of these angles, and as Professor McAlindon argues, he has sinned on deliberation (McAlindon, 1997, pp.215). This deliberation is just the part of devils’ huge plan or plot, for his intention is not aroused by himself, but by devils. Devils know well the boundary of sin, so they let Faustus step by step from an innocent ignorant scholar to a devil. A great and obvious blame has been traced back and put up onto the Devils, the race or nation of Satan and his followers.

2. FAUSTUS’ UNCONSCIOUS TEMPTATION OF ALL PEOPLE AROUND TO HELL

If Faustus’ wonderful ability is not spread to the whole Wittenberg, people won’t be stirred by their sinful desires and should not have asked him to satisfy their immoral requirements that drag finally them down to hell. In this sense it was rightly the devils who not only drag Faustus to hell, but make possibilities and chances to drag people around toward the hell. At the same time, people around also in return allure him to commit sins that are of more grievous wrong. This mutual interaction gives interpretation of a sort of general sense of wrong-sin occurrence among man and devil kind so that God in His power prophesys the future events of the whole “world”. Samson Agonistes, for instance, he as a hero reacts in

between very similarly under Milton’s quill pen⁸ and those desiring and alluring spirits, knights, fairies among Spenser’s books and chapters of the allegory of moral stories of the Red Cross hero with the Sansfoy, Sansloy, Sansjoy gangs. Like the humorous tales told by Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Canterbury pilgrims days and hours*⁹. In all, sinful interaction happens inevitably as a vehicle for representing the descriptive painting of the literary as well as the earthly world of human and human-varified (those of devils and gods) life. Anybody who reads Shakespeare especially will find this among his history play stories. Sir John Falstaff¹⁰, the angel of both good and bad, or we may say, the good angel and bad angel combines in him, allows all possible (in the Aristotelian sense) interactive sins or crimes. People may look at him as a fun of all selves hidden as Sigmund Freud has miraculously found in one’s id, ego or superego. No critic would agree that it is only Price Hal is to blame for the final killing of this guy for his deserving actions, Falstaff is also the root of the hurting poisons to murder and to kill. Shakespeare repay him with prizes of merry wives of Windsor is in one sense a spreading technique of shaping this sin figure to a more vivid degree. Thus we may safely say that devil things happen not merely by himself. The context around is also the elements that incite and incur these explosives to the final flaming.

In Marlowe’s own story of Faustus, an obvious change happens in his not-so-kind servant student Wagner from Scene 2 to Scene 4. Relying to his master’s knowledge, he teases and bullies those scholars in Scene 2, but when his

⁸ In *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), a “ground-breaking study of the cultural contradictions that gave birth to the English Protestant epic”, Linda Gregerson “examines the fraught ideological, political, and gender conflicts that are woven into the texture of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*”, the book may serve as a clue for understand moral topics with a concentration on sin which changes and pollutes.

⁹ For text’s consideration, available are Larry D. Benson, gen. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*. Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2008; *Boke of Chaucer named Caunterbury Tales* [electronic resource]. [Emprynted at Westmestre: By Wynkyn de Word the, yere of our lord. M.CCCC., 1498; Robert A. Pratt, ed. *The Canterbury Tales*. Atlanta, London, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974; Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*. trans. into modern English by Ronald L. Ecker and Eugene J. Crook. Palatka, FL: Hodge & Braddock, 1993.

¹⁰ Bernard Spivack, “Falstaff and the Psychomachia”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Autumn, 1957), pp.449-459. Spivack’s conscious articulation of Falstaff’s character tells only something stirs the itching of questions and suspicions while a humanistic understanding of the problem will solve the problem at the one stroke effort.

master's power is stronger by magic¹¹, he acts even worse by forcing a clown to be his servant in Scene 4. As a poor student serving as servant to earn a living, facing graduates students (Scholar 1 and Scholar 2), he acts inappropriately pride and absurd, saying words of vulgarity like "God in heaven knows", "acknowledge your error" and "dunces" while at the same time pretending like a knowledgeable scholar speaking Latin words like "mobile" and "naturale". (pp.1029)¹² His hubris is not a very big deal in getting along with scholars around him, because they just regard him as a jester.¹³ But in Scene 4, while Faustus determines to step into the magic world, Wagner becomes inhuman, cruel and tyrannous. When he meets the clown he reserves to become master himself, and offers the similar deal as Methastophilis – sell clown's soul in exchange of a raw mutton. But in the end we don't see his promise, he just sends two devils Baliol and Belcher to threaten the clown, and commands him to "let thy right eye be diametrically fixed upon my right heel, with *quasi vestigias nostrras insistere*." (p.1033) Wagner has changed into a total devil, not without Faustus's temptation.

¹¹ Magician at the beginning of human civilization does not separate itself from other branches of sciences. We critical have found that intellectuals before the age of Enlightenment, have talents in such speculating miracles. Both the convention of Homeric hale of gods for inspiration for the sake of speaking out verse, as believed by Plato permeates literature, think of the starting lines of *Paradise Lost* and the like. Macbeth witches, Tempest magician, Renaissance astrology, the traditional cosmology of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic system, Meanwhile, both Hamlet and Faustus are a blending of quack and scholar so as to discover the mystery of the universe. Why does not the ghost Hamlet speak to people other than Hamlet? What's identity of young Prince Hamlet?

¹² Chaucer satirizes the Oxford clerk in the prologue to his *Canterbury Tales* by pluck fun of the man: "A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also, /That unto logyk hadde longe ygo. /As leene was his hors as is a rake, /And he nas nat right fat, I undertake, /But looked holwe and therto sobrelly. /Ful thredbare was his overeste courtpey; /For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice, /Ne was so worldly for to have office. /For hym was levere have at his beddes heed /Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed, /Of Aristotle and his philosophie, /Than robes riche, or fithete, or gay sautrie. /But al be that he was a philosophre, /Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre; /But al that he myghte of his freendes hente, /On bookes and on lernynge he it spente, /And bisily gan for the oules preyre /Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye. /Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede. /Noght o word spak he moore than was neede, /And that was seyde in forme and reverence, /And short and quyk, and ful of hy sentence; /Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche, /And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche." (Fragment I, Group A, The General Prologue, 285-308, I use the Riverside Benson edition based on the F. N. Robinson text, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. Interesting web sources see especially the Librarian website: <http://www.librarian.com/canttran/genpro/genpro287-310.htm>, the text edited by Sinan Kökbugur with modern spelling translation side by side) Think of Chaucer as a non college faculty member today, how should he portray such a figure if he stayed wholly as a professor? That's why Kant refuted such humour though he had concerns about literary criticism.

¹³ Scholar 1 says, "Go to sirra, leave your jesting." in Scene 2.

In Scene 9, emperor commits two crimes because of Faustus, and intensifies Faustus's sin with the same reason. He firstly asks for dead people's return to life; second, he loses his dignity of king by mocking the knight. It is reasonable that all the emperors, like Caesar, want to see this great king due to the largest kingdom he established. But there is huge difference between "want" and "ask for", the emperor is asking for something opposite to the divine law. He creates the Judgment Day of Revelation.

In the *New Testament Bible* there has been the only occasion when the dead resurrects:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, which is the book of life: And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (*Revelation* 20:11)

Revelation is the last book of the *New Testament*, it also represents eschatology. When the dead comes back, it must be the Judgment Day, the end of the world. Apparently the emperor absolutely ignores this. Thanks to Faustus, the Emperor's stomach enlarges to the brink of blasphemy. If there isn't merely one Faustus, the emperor will never be able to dream of asking others to show him the dead ancient king. The Emperor's language changes from elegance to vulgar after seeing Alexander the Great, which signifies his fall of both faith and morality:

How now, sir knight! why, I had thought thou hadst been a bachelor,
But now I see thou hast a wife, that not only gives thee horns,
But makes thee wear them. Feel on thy head. (I, ix, pp.71-73)

The scholars commit the same sin as Faustus does: desire for being omniscient. At the beginning they know clearly between the right and the wrong, for instance, In Scene 2, they worry about Faustus because Valdes and Cornelius "are infamous through the world". But in Scene 12, they come up with the requirement of seeing Helen, which is as worse as the emperor's requirement of letting dead people return and revive:

...Therefore, Master Doctor, if you will do us
That favour, as to let us see that peerless dame of Greece, whom
All the world admires for majesty, we should think ourselves
much
Beholding unto you. (I,xii, pp.4-7)

In fact, their requirements make Faustus to see Helen and lead to his final damnation, though Faustus' frenzied love for Helen causes him to forget the reason he calls for her so that the scholars have not seen her eventually.

In the last scene, when it comes to the topic of how to save Faustus, some of them should regard his behaviour as "grown into some sickness by being over-solitary" and advice him to "have physicians to cure him" (I, xiii, 8,9)

It is a big sarcastic irony that some of them cannot see such simple spiritual crisis as "spiritual", but as purely physical only. The irony suggests that some of the

scholars have absolutely been apart from Heaven. This time, when all the scholars facing the problem of salvation of Faustus again, some of their attitudes alter, comparing the last time when all of them have the same opinion of not staying close to magic. In the time of crises some of the scholars believe in knowledge, or even absurd logic, instead of religion, which can be taken as the sign of scholars' falling towards the hell.

Faustus's book tempts the two bad men Robin and Rafe, like Wagner, to degenerate. With his big name, though infamous, also allures the Duke of Vanholt and Duchess to ask to reverse the season from winter to summer, which is also offensive to God's creation of time.

Religion exists for the sake of temperament. However, Faustus exceeds this all-known limits and deadline to uncross. For Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, his first part is to do with the soul, but since it has been sold, the second part of the tragedy the focus here is no longer on the soul of him, "but rather on social phenomena such as psychology, history and politics, in addition to mystical and philosophical topics"¹⁴. Goethe aimed high and dealt with broader aspects of topics while Marlowe "narrows" to the legend-sourced story. The theological taste in contrast to the humanistic orientation shines more glitteringly, for he was a pioneer to early modern Elizabethan and James England Renaissance, which puts the sorting of knowledge as a first purpose. But the critical point remains, what was then knowledge for? Like a famous slogan for the 1,381 uprising in England: Who was then the gentleman? Desire and its alluring temptation whether outside or inside the layer of consciousness function as the key to the great problem. It is clear that no matter how things appear or present, that is, whether it is good or bad, it entices and allures. The devils also has their magnetic attractive force, and Faustus is of no exception.

3. EVOLUTION VS REVOLUTION: FROM ACADEMIC PLEASURE TO SIN

Thinkers or sages or wits have high esteem of change. Ancient Greek philosophers like the Sophists have wisely found and meditated on this. That's why Ovid had for his book entitle "metamorphoses". But not all things can change as quickly as constancy controls. The matter of existence happens more in evolution than in revolution. Although Satan, likewise, in Marlowe's or Goethe's

¹⁴ Goethe's *Faust*, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goethe's_Faust, extracted 2015/5/10, "Although rarely staged in its entirety, it is the play with the largest audience numbers on German-language stages. *Faust* is Goethe's most famous work and considered by many to be one of the greatest works of German literature. " qtd in as above, from Laura Spencer Portor, *The Greatest Books in the World: Interpretative Studies* (Chautauqua, NY: Chautauqua Press, 1917, p.82).

representation, the devils, they cannot wait for long. Thus they prefer revolution than evolution. The former, as goes to Milton's subversive convention, finds a way of quick change. Say, Samson acts like the long bearing Moses in Egypt, overturns the temple, a symbol of constancy and control. While according to the history of civilization, Charles Darwin has found a different perspective. He concerns about living animals, "survival of the fittest" was his deafening motto, as he declared. We may approach being or existence from a more proper and more logical perspective. First, things change gradually, that is, step by step, then to a degree of sudden turning from the corner and thus has changed to a sheerly different state. Often border between the two is not easily obvious. And the gradual evolution actually matters more than the sudden turn. Like the Freudian map of his psychological iceberg chart, the usual case is that ego or superego acts slower while the energetic and dominant id hides long. The most formidable is that this gradual hiding or change for most the time is the leading factor which controls things. Understanding this well, it might be clearer or better clarified to believe that academic pleasure will never be taken as something vicious or negative. Hence Faustus, as so vividly can be recollected in man's Eden times, glides somewhat unconsciously to the abyss of sin, that is, the fall.

Faustus's ignorance (of both what is, how and why, and the gradual change and the border between good and bad) and the devils' cunningness are the causes of his final damnation. Faustus is so vividly like a new-born of the Renaissance going and reaching to extremity. He has completely abandoned Christianity, but his classical knowledge is not that good. By devils' temptation, he changes from an innocent scholar to a damned monster.

Faustus lives in a period of transference — the Renaissance, an age of interests of people transferred from ancient Greek and Roman ideas and culture, while Christian ideology still is, at least on the surface and stubbornly, the dominant power. Renaissance humanism indeed gradually displaced the spiritual and communal values of the Middle Ages, with the assertion that man was the center of the world, yet the big human figure is not at all totally isolated from religion, for theologies' ideas like Augustine's self choice theory was also applied in Renaissance literary works. A lot of Latin works were pored over among students, covering every field that is the reason why that pagan gods and goddesses flower almost every literature even like the devotedly religious poetry such as Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (Greenblatt, 2006, p.485). Scholars have earnest interests on classical works while not abandoning Christianity so thoroughly like Faustus, the latter, however, confuses almost all the important concepts of the two cultures.

Faustus's desire of "knowing" is the occurring theme of the play. What he actually does at first was

to learn more knowledge about the world, which is grasped by devils for tempting him. He wants to have the knowledge immediately, not by “learning”, but by direct “knowing”. His desire for Doctor Faustus, from the start, the protagonist wants not to learn, but to know; and Marlowe’s insult is that man’s most primarily motivated quest leads not through learning more and more learning until senility and death stop the process, but leads rather through the brief hell of showing one knows the right answers into the illusorily everlasting comforts of academicism. It remained for Nietzsche to discover that a man’s only joy, if he can stand to do so, is in rejecting these comforts (Matalene, 1927, p.495). In his *Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (Yates, 1979, p.5), Frances Yates mentioned that one magician friend of Faustus’ is Cornelius Agrippa de Bettelheim, who is not a friar, but great magician who does something good to make the God’s world better, and forbids evil’s harassment. So his two friends never appear again when he turns white magic into black magic and this can be understood as a sense of disagreement.

The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus is, like all the other cotemporary literature, also based on Christianity. There are Mephistophilis, Lucifer and Belzebub, all figures from the Holy Bible. The society of Marlowe’s time was also a Christian society in which nobody will ever commit such mistakes as confusing the terms “soul” or “hell”.

His soul, according to his own understanding, is, as important as his body.

MEPHASTOPHILIS: Ay, of necessity, for here is the scroll
Wherein thou hast given thy soul to Lucifer.

Faustus Ay, and body too; but what of that? Think’st thou that
Faustus is so fond to imagine That after this life there is any
pain? Tush, these are trifles and mere old wives’ tales.

MEPHASTOPHILIS But Faustus, I am an instance to prove the
contrary; For I am damned, and am now in hell.

FAUSTUS How, now in hell? Nay, and this be hell. I’ll
willingly be damned here! What? walking, disputing, etc.... (I, v,
pp.138-139)

Faustus says twice “and body too” while Mephistophilis reminds him that he has made a contract with Lucifer, also when he reads his scroll to Mephistophilis about what he demands, the word “body” has been with “soul” for three times: “A deed of gift of body and of soul” (I, v, p.90), “do give both body and soul to Lucifer”, “or carry the said John Faustus, body and soul, flesh, blood...” It is a nose in the face to all that the grievous lack of Christian common sense is seen and found in Faustus. Faustus should have known well of such commonsensical facts that about the relationship between body and soul, Christianity and Greek and Hebrew traditions differ in dualism (body is opposed to soul) and holism (body and soul are both important). However, this Faustus really has surprised his audience for such ignorance.

And, his hell is not Christian but Elysium. Elysium is from Greek Mythology, the place at the ends of the earth to which certain favoured heroes were conveyed by the gods after death.

So Faustus hath already done, and holds this principle: There is no chief but only Belzebub, to whom Faustus doth dedicate himself. This word damnation terrifies not him. For he confounds hell in Elysium: His ghost is with the old philosophers. But leaving these vain trifles of men’s souls, Tell me, what is that Lucifer thy lord? (I, iii, pp.56-63)

Here Faustus commits two mistakes. First, Christian hell is not Elysium. Second, Greek hell is not Elysium, it is Hades, and Elysium is a place of ghosts of heroes. “His ghost be with the old philosophers” also indicates how ancient Greek ideology, or Pythagorean-Platonic doctrine wrongly effects Faustus’ mind (McAlindon, 1997, p.215).

In spite of his ignorance of the Christian common sense, his ignorance of magic has been altered from the good side to the bad as well. A lot of attention has been paid this magic element. Critics believe that not all magic are black, they can be white, too and which will benefit both man and make it possible for the magician to approach and become nearer to God. Woodman also suggests that white magic can show the personal power of searching for knowledge of Renaissance (1973, pp.137), which serves as a sound evidence to clarify the point.

4. GOD DISAPPEARS, THE DEVIL PREVAILS

Mephistophilis’s claim that everybody including himself is in hell (“Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.” I.i. pp.10-35) betokens the whole Wittenberg’s fate: all people here are heading for hell. It is also true that Faustus drags many people around downward, and they in turn make him commit the more heinous crime and drag him deeper down.

From all above facts we can safely prove that the power of devils in the play seems to be stronger than that of God, in other words, there is a sense of the absence of God. God just sends Faustus very ambiguous warnings by stopping the blood, or sending good angels and an old man to him. While devils do more, they appear, both Mephistophilis and Satan; they offer rich material and immaterial things, such as books, knowledge, beauties and power; and they also try their best to persuade and threaten Faustus whenever his will wavers. In this sense, God’s power is overwhelmed by devils.

There is an ostensible fact of Faustus’s failure to pray. He should have known that his contract and promise to devils are not binding, to respect them is a double offence against God, as some critics have believed (Griffiths, 1895, p.78). He does not believe in God because he can’t

feel the existence of God’s power, as is proved by the victory of the devils over God aforementioned.

God just reminds a little of the devils for stopping the blood, or sending good angels and the old man, while devils warn and threaten and offer those required. Although God’s power is overwhelmed by devils, he has done nothing in reply to such reaction. Faustus sees heaven in Mephistophilis’ book, but God isn’t absent. Just as what critics have found, Marlowe’s God is a deity of power, but not that of love. What’s more, Mephistophilis may define hell as the place of absence of God. In Faustus’s eyes, God is neither benevolence nor loving, instead, he is the tyrannous Jehovah who never forgives the fallen angels (Greg, 1946, p.98). God in fact has disappeared, and Faustus has failed to find any benefice to believe in him, and in conclusion, this Faustus image shaping play is a drama where devils win.

To conclude, in the competition between God and devils, we see the battles as a kind of relativity. It is not that God almighty is really in what means in words, but a fact every reader can deduct: God loses His power and has in some sense conquered or failed in confronted with the also powerful devils and driven by the devils, Faustus has come to win his own bread, his part of challenging God and his power and authority. To describe this, it is proper to quote the slogan of the 1381 the English Lollard priest John Ball Peasants’ Revolt or Wat Tyler’s Rebellion:

When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman? From the beginning all men by nature were created alike, and our bondage or servitude came in by the unjust oppression of naughty men. For if God would have had any bondmen from the beginning, he would have appointed who should be bond and who free. And therefore I exhort you to consider that now the time is come, appointed to us by God, in which ye may (if ye will) cast off the yoke of bondage, and recover liberty¹⁵.

If this said equality can also be applied to that between God, the devils and Faustus, we will be able to understand Faustus better and be a good listener to the rhythms and feet of his heart-beat. Although Faustus first is webbed and trapped in God’s “good will” and secondly by the

hidden crafts of the devils, he still can be interpreted as a being as equal and just as God is despite that knowing can be the same perilous as power is, but that would be another topic outside this paper.

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¹⁵ Dobson, 1970, p. 375 quotes from Thomas Walsingham’s *Historia Anglicana*:

When Adam dalf, and Eve span, who was thanne a gentilman? From the beginning all men were created equal by nature, and that servitude had been introduced by the unjust and evil oppression of men, against the will of God, who, if it had pleased Him to create serfs, surely in the beginning of the world would have appointed who should be a serf and who a lord” and Ball ended by recommending “uprooting the tares that are accustomed to destroy the grain; first killing the great lords of the realm, then slaying the lawyers, justices and jurors, and finally rooting out everyone whom they knew to be harmful to the community in future.