

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This Non-African play *Dr. Faustus* is a medieval play. It presented allegorical characters to represent the life of man, the experiences of temptation, the sins and the struggle for salvation and death. *Dr Faustus* contends with the forces of good and evil in the form of personified abstractions including the Good and Bad Angels, the seven deadly sins and the Devil. The play is didactic in purpose intended to instruct the audience in Christian virtues and to warn against vices. Also in the play, one is taken beyond the frontiers of mental world into the region of space and the supernatural.

### **1.1 Purpose of study**

The aim of this study is to explain the themes and styles employed in the play *Dr. Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe. There exists a detailed study of styles in the text in relation to the themes.

### **1.2 Scope of Study**

This essay examines the themes and styles in the play, *Dr Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe uses these elements to realize the subject matter of the work. My choice of Marlowe as a literary artist is informed by his specialty in portraying the essence of man in the light of gaining all but losing his soul. The themes and styles appeal to my literary judgment between renaissance and medieval values, the divided nature of man, power as a corruptive influence which is the focus of this essay.

### **1.3 Methodology**

This is a quantitative research. The primary source of information for this long essay is the text *Dr Faustus*. Others includes; M.H Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms, Anthology: An introduction to literature, Mc Cullen ,J.T., "Dr. Faustus and renaissance learning", Collier's Encyclopedia and Comprehensive Literature* by Martins Amechi.

### **1.4 Theoretical Background**

The play, *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe, has the background of Moralistic approach. This approach is concern with: values, lessons, messages that can help readers improve their lives and understand the world better. This play reinvents the Christian dictum: What shall it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul?

Doctor Faustus sells his soul to the devil and is sent to hell. Marlowe explains Dr. Faustus religious beliefs: in Acts 1, in *Faustus* is given the chance to ask Mephistopheles questions about hell. He could be thought of as an atheist because he denies that there is God and thinks of religions as a false ritual.

He states: "My heart is hardened, I cannot repent. Scarce can I name salvation, faith or heaven, swords, poisons, halts and envenomed my steel

Aare land before me to dispatch myself... I am resolved, Faustus shall not repent" (45).

When he finally asks for forgiveness and wants to repent to God, he is denied and is forced to spend eternity in hell.

The theme of moralistic play is good conduct this play resonates with a wealth of themes that teaches ethical values and lessons to the readers.

### **1.5 Life and works of the Author**

Christopher Marlowe was born in 1564 to John Marlowe, a shoemaker. He had two sister named Dorothy and Ann. He attended king's school, Canterbury and proceeded to Benet College of Corpus Christi'

Cambridge. He earned his Bachelor's degree in 1583. In 1587 he proceeded to a master's degree program which did not pull through as the university had threatened to withhold his final degree. He later completed the program, after which he preceded to London.

His first play *Tamburlaine* was acted in 1587 or 1588. The story is drawn from the Spanish life of Timur by Pedro Mexia. This won him immediate popularity. It was followed in 1604 by *Doctor Faustus*, a great advance upon *Tamburlaine*.

Others include *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward 11*, *the massacre of Paris* and *the Tragedy of Dido*. In addition to these he wrote short poems such as: *come live with me and be my love* translated from *Oxid's Amores* and *Lucani's pharsalia* and a glowing paraphrase of *Musaeus' Hero and leanoler*, a poem completed by Chapman.

Marlowe was reputed to be an atheist who held dangerous implication of being an enemy of God. Often he has been described as a spy, a brawler and a heretic, as well as a "magician", "tobacco- user", and "counterfeiters".

J.A. Donnie and Constance Koriyama have argued against these speculations but J.B Steane remarked: "it seems absurd to dismiss all of these Elizabethan rumors and accusations as the Marlowe myth. Worthy of note is that Marlowe was murdered in prison and died at the age of twenty-nine.

## 1.6 Review of Criticism

Available literature shows that works have been done on *Dr Faustus*, themes and styles. However, my research reveals these facts about the text. Arian Sachs, who interprets the play as an exploration of protestant theology with an orthodox moral, asserts that: in general, the scheme of values in which the action of *Doctor Faustus* takes place is the fundamental Christian outlook which prevailed in the Western world from the decline of Roman secularism to the disintegration of the dogmatic tradition long after the play was written. For Sachs, any interpretation of the play which considers Faustus as a figure to be admired by the audience simply overlooks the religious- historical context in which the play was produced.

Robert Ornstein similarly dismisses the idea of Faustus as an admirable humanist.

Joseph T. McMullen argues that Faustus' down fall comes about as a direct result of his "culpable ignorance". As Mike Pincombe states "for all Faustus' learning, he is still a dilettante when it comes to wisdom. "This argument is not without evidence; Faustus knowingly signs away his soul, despite Mephistopheles' words of experience which warn him to "leave these frivolous demands, which strike a terror to my fainting soul!" (Acts3.83-84). He takes his academic skepticism to an absurd degree, challenging the description of hell offered by Mephistopheles. He offers himself visible proof of its inexistence, with the retort "come, I think hell's a fable". (Acts1.1.130). despite his reputation in the academic world, one can question Faustus abilities as a scholar; the syllogism that he constructs in the first soliloquy provides an example:

Jerome's Bible, Faustus, view it well. (He reads) Stipendium peccatimors est.

Ha!

Stipendium, etc.

The reward of sin is death. That's hard.

(He reads) Sipeccass negamus, fallimum

Et nulla est in mobis veritas if we say that we have no sin We decisive ourselves and there's no truth in us.

Why then be like we must sin and so consequently (Acts1.1.38-48)

From the evidence that Faustus provides his assertion is logically sound, but, through either ineptitude or negligence, the biblical quotations upon which it is built are taken entirely out of context, a fact observed by David Belington: "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God's is eternal life through Jesus Christ our lord" (Romans 6:23); the second, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". (1 John 1:8).

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle postulated the constituents of tragedy. He states that:

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions.

Nearly two thousand years later in Marlowe's life time-echoes of Aristotle's definition of the genre can be heard in Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*. He invests tragedy with a more didactic and utilitarian purpose than does Aristotle.

J.C. Maxwell presupposes that: Faustus is everyman and his sin is a re-enactment of the sin of Adam-pride".

Marlowe *Dr. Faustus* as a tragedy set in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Elizabethan Era is an example of the definition of tragedy postulated by Aristotle. According to his definition, tragedy or tragic situations can only happen to a man born of high repute, rise so high or achieve so high to become master over all his surveys. Such a man must have a basic flaw in his nature or character that would make him fall from that pinnacle and in most cases, that flaw must be of hubris proportion. Pride against the gods.

According to Laura Reis Mayer, *Dr Faustus* is a morality play, a historical allegory, the tale of a hero gone bad due to the dilemma presented by an ever changing world. (3)

The Greek playwright Sophocles explored the basic themes in *Dr Faustus* in Oedipus when the fallibility of the protagonist was attributed to his harsh and rash temper. Shakespeare also employs this basic theme in tragedy *Julius Creaser*, *King Lear* and *Macbeths*.

Arthur Miler the 20<sup>th</sup> Century American playwright contrasted Aristotle's definition of tragedy in his classic play of *Death of a Sales Man* when he explains the tragedy of the common man as opposed to tragedy relating to a man of high birth.

### **1.7 Justification**

Looking at the above reviews, it becomes obvious that works have been done on *Dr Faustus*. My research is different from all these because it centers on the themes and styles. I chose the topic because it has ethical values that are realistic and relevant to modern societies. The situation in the text depicts life and human experiences in modern day society and this is what the topic of this essay examines.

**1.8 Thesis Statement** This essay resonates with a wealth of themes such as the conflict between medieval values and renaissance, power as a corruptive influence, the divided nature of man and the styles in the text.

## **THEMES AND STYLE IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S DR. FAUSTUS**

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