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A medieval morality theme is modified by spirit of new age."

OR

Bring out medieval and renaissance elements in Doctor Faustus.

Doctor Faustus, by Christopher Marlowe, is a riddle, calling for diverse views and opinions from critics for ages. On the surface, it seems Doctor Faustus is the tragedy of a man who actually loses directions in an attempt to strive boundlessly and thus progressively loses his soul by disintegration as well as by capture. On the one hand the tragedy seems to have elements of both Christian morality and classical tragedy. On the other, Marlowe seems to have used Faustus as a ploy to scathingly attack so called Christian values.

Despite the duality in themes and characters, instability is fundamental in Doctor Faustus, as a theme and as a characteristic of Faustus himself. Marlowe has brilliantly depicted the internal struggles of Faustus, his hilarity and agony, seriousness and irresponsibility, the extremes of optimism and depression, enthusiasm and hatred, commitment to Hell and aspiration to Heaven, pride and shame.

Even when critics try to establish their notion by terming Faustus as Renaissance hero, certain aspects suggest he is a mediaeval hero. According to the **medieval view**, man was created by God and placed in the universe. By no means should he aspire or attempt to go beyond his assigned place. For medieval person, aspiring pride was one of the greatest

sins that one could commit. One would be duly punished if one commits the sin. For example, Lucifer was ousted from heaven for he took pride in his skill and knowledge and so he revolted against God. Faustus seems to have shared the same fate with Lucifer.

He has certainly the desire for forbidden knowledge. He has already studied various subjects including **Logic, Metaphysics, Medicine, Law and Theology** at the universities and impressed scholars with his knowledge but he rejects all of them.

Philosophy is odious and obscure;

Both law and physic are for pretty wits;

Divinity is basest of the three,

Unpleasant,harsh,contemptible,and vile:

Tis magic,magic, that hath ravish'd me.

He craves for more since his knowledge on these subjects will not give him power that he always aspires to acquire. **Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man,** he remarks. He starts studying Metaphysics of Magician, and considers **necromantic books as heavenly.**

In order to acquire eternal knowledge, he impulsively makes a contract with Lucifer, ironically which ultimately brings about his damnation. In the end he realizes he has crossed the line and committed the greatest sin. He learns that supernatural powers are not reserved for human beings. With his attempt to handle or deal with the powers, he has actually transgressed the will of God. From this perspective, Faustuss damnation is just. Therefore, it seems Doctor Faustus does no longer remain a tragedy rather it becomes a morality play enveloping various implications including the act of justice. Even the chorus, in the end, admonishes the audience that it is

unwise to transgress the natural law of universe and the restrictions placed upon humanity.

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,

And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,

That sometime grew within this learned man.

Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,

Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,

Only to wonder at unlawful things,

Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits

To practice more than heavenly power permits."

On the other hand Doctor Faustus bears certain traits that typically establish **Renaissance** Point of View. The Renaissance period remarkably opened new horizon in the realm of science, technology, theology, philosophy and other arena of knowledge. The new discoveries in science and technology had considerably changed the existing notions about life and death, hell and heaven, therefore, stirred up mens imagination and subsequently led them to believe that infinite was attainable. His urge for knowledge is well expressed in his speech:

O, what a world of profit and delight,

Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,

Is promised to the studious artisan!

All things that move between the quiet poles

Shall be at my command.

A renowned scholar **R.M.Dawkins** remarks **Doctor Faustus tells the story of a Renaissance man who had to pay the medieval price for being one.** With his rejection of Gods authority and his unquenchable thirst for knowledge and control over nature, Faustus actually turns out to be a secular spirit enunciating the advent of modern era. Driven by the urge to acquire universal knowledge, Faustus rebels against the limitations of medieval knowledge and the restrictions imposed on humanity. Critics often hold that Marlowe has used to Faustus as a mouthpiece to venture his voice against the stoic nature of church. His desire to rise up to the challenge and greater heights is not what results in his doom. He has certainly made mistakes. He craved for eternal knowledge but in the end he actually achieves nothing but the knowledge of chimera, of phantasm, of false shows and masquerades, of cheap tricks and dump shows. And here lies the irony.

It is indeed impossible to define Faustus from a single perspective. Doctor Faustus is, therefore, a dichotomy between Christian and Renaissance views in the truest sense of the terms.