

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

A COMPARISON OF MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE
CROSS AND CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

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On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid in completing this work.

INTRODUCTION

The sixteenth century period of the Renaissance era produced prominent figures in the areas of literature, art and religion. William Shakespeare, a product of the Renaissance time period, is quite possibly the most famous playwright that has ever existed. His brilliance, however, was preceded by a writer named Christopher Marlowe, who began a different style of writing that would establish the Elizabethan language that was so prevalent in the Renaissance period. Marlowe's writings, significantly less famous than Shakespeare's, arguably gave more attention to the changing religious values at the time. Marlowe was writing plays that were deeply connected to the evolving difference in religious thought that had began years prior to the time of his writing.

Martin Luther, another prominent figure out of the Renaissance period, began a change in religious thinking that would be called the Reformation. Through his frustration with the Catholic Church and the beliefs that came with it, Luther turned to a reformed way of understanding Christianity through his study of Biblical texts and the writings of Jesus' contemporaries. Luther put his focus on the cross and would come to call the true method of understanding faith, "theology of the cross," and established it in direct refutation of "theology of glory." He made his ideas and beliefs public and spoke out against the established Church, actions that would create negative consequences for him. However, he was able to effectively record his "theology of the cross," a topic that is still of contemporary significance.

The significance of these two figures, Marlowe and Luther, for the purpose of this thesis, comes from the similarities between religious thought and literary expression.

Within the play *Doctor Faustus*, one of Marlowe's more famous works, one can see that the changing religious beliefs of the time are ideas addressed within the play. The plot focuses around a man who decides to pursue magic as a form of scholarship, denounces God, and enters into a bound relationship with the Devil. Beyond its general religious tone, which is obvious in the first pages, one can see particular themes that emerge from the many experiences that Faustus encounters. I hope to show that these themes can be closely related with the theology that Luther developed just years earlier.

The primary goal of this thesis is to effectively illustrate a significant comparison between two sixteenth century figures and show how Martin Luther's theological development may have influenced Christopher Marlowe's writing years later in a different part of the world. This comparison will show that, even while we continue to study Luther's influential theology today, his theology was already being used in literature such a short time after it was introduced. I will establish a comparison between *Doctor Faustus* and Martin Luther's "theology of the cross." A background will be given for the two figures that will establish their significance at the time, as well as the influence of their works. The play will also be thoroughly discussed so as to establish an understanding of the story and allow for comprehension of the comparison being made. Luther dealt with many different topics regarding faith and theology.

The main focus here is put on his "theology of the cross" in contrast with "theology of glory." However, for this comparison I will expand further on Luther's theology, going beyond a general understanding of "theology of the cross." A theme that

will appear in all four sections of the paper is the idea of epistemology and how one knows what they know. Much of Luther's theology is based on the extent of what one's knowledge of God can or cannot be. This theme of epistemology will be apparent in each section due to the focus that Luther puts on the knowledge in all dimensions of his theology. The four aspects of his theology I will focus on are: reason, hidden and revealed God, sin and the Devil, and justification. The comparison will then be made within Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* illustrating these ideas as they present themselves in the story of Faustus' life.

CHAPTER 1

MARTIN LUTHER AND HIS THEOLOGY

Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 in a town called Eisleben in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany.¹ Luther spent his college years studying at the University of Erfurt, a college that taught the seven liberal arts. After receiving his Masters of Arts from the University in 1505, he went on and for two months and pursued the occupation desired by his father by studying law. His study of law would cease when he was struck by lightning while traveling by horse during a thunderstorm. As he lay in shock on the ground he cried out to Saint Anne that he would become a monk if he were allowed to live. On July 17, 1505, Luther entered the Monastery of Eremites of Saint Augustine in Erfurt where he would carry out his vow. He was ordained into the priesthood in 1507

¹ *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., vol. 8, s.v. "Martin Luther," 5534.

and the following year, by the will of his superior Johann von Staupitz, he began graduate studies at Erfurt. He transferred three times during his studies as a graduate student, first to the new university at Wittenberg, back to Erfurt, and finally back to Wittenberg where he finished his studies in 1512.² A defining moment in Luther's life was when he was sent to Rome in 1510 while in his second stay at Erfurt, where he realized that the Rome he thought to be the embodiment of the Catholic spiritual faith was really about worldly objects. The streets in the city were filled with prostitutes living in elegant houses and often visited by members of the high clergy.³ Although quite disgusted by this, along with beggars and people relieving themselves in the street, Luther was most upset with the irreligion of Rome. The priests did not believe in life after death, mocked the doctrine of transubstantiation, and Luther was rushed along by Roman priests in his recitation of mass.⁴ Luther went to Rome expecting to find the holy center of the Catholic faith and instead found unbelief and wickedness. After his time in Rome, Luther returned to Erfurt briefly but would eventually travel back to Wittenberg. After he received his doctorate, Luther taught for many years in Wittenberg. It was here that his thoughts began to center around the theology that would become fundamental in the reformed Christian thought and the current way of thinking at that time.

At this point in Luther's life, he began to draw controversy in the theological, as well as political, world. The controversy took shape when Luther posted his Ninety-Five

² *Encyclopedia of Religion*. (The information to this point is all found in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, on pages 5534-5537)

³ Richard Marius, Martin Luther (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 82.

⁴ Ibid.

Theses which were printed and distributed throughout Germany, specifically to Albert of Brandenburg who was selling indulgences near Wittenberg. At that time, indulgences were essentially a way to demonstrate satisfaction in penance; but by Martin Luther's time they had evolved into a promise for release from purgatory. Most of the money from these indulgences was going straight to the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.⁵ Once Luther's Theses were posted and his ideas were the center of public debate, the movement of what is now known as the Reformation was beginning. As a result of the controversy surrounding his emerging ideas, Luther would go into political exile, eventually be excommunicated from the Catholic Church, and would be considered a political outlaw.⁶

Theology of the Cross

During his time in exile, and even the years when he was continuing his responsibilities in Wittenberg, Luther was able to not only to translate the New Testament into German, but also develop his well-known and foundational *theologia crucis*. Luther developed the term *theologia crucis*, which means "theology of the cross," to be the words to describe a reformed Christian way of faith. Shortly after distribution of the Ninety-Five Theses, Luther was asked to appear before the Heidelberg chapter of the Augustinian order and present and defend a different series of political and theological theses, an event that would come to be known as the Heidelberg Disputation. Included there were the ideas of his emerging theology. Where, through his careful organization

⁵ *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, 1st ed., vol. 3, s.v. "Martin Luther," 460

⁶ Ibid.

of the theses, Luther brings us from the law of God in the first thesis, to the love of God in the twenty-eighth thesis, through the cross.⁷ His theology of the cross is more specifically in the sixteenth through twenty-first theses:

[16] The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.

[17] Nor does speaking in this manner give cause for despair, but for arousing the desire to humble oneself and see the grace of Christ.

[18] It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ

[19] That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened (Rom. 1:20)

[20] He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

[21] A theology of glory [*theologia gloriae*] calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross [*theologia crucis*] calls the thing what it actually is.⁸

The ideas of self-righteousness and the grace of God within the sixteenth through the eighteenth theses will be discussed later in the justification portion of this paper. The two theses within the Heidelberg Disputation that are most associated with theology of the cross, then, are the nineteenth and twentieth theses, which are followed by a conclusion in the twenty-first. These two statements made by Luther set the stage for his theology and differentiate between a theology of glory and a theology of the cross, respectively. Thesis twenty-one then makes the distinction between the two theologies and declares the

⁷ *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 5536.

⁸ Luther's Works, ed. Harold J. Grimm and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), "Heidelberg Disputation" vol. 31: page 40-41.

“theology of the cross” as the true theology. These three theses from the Heidelberg Disputation set the framework for Luther’s theology and allow for a beginning understanding of the parts of his theology that will be discussed in this study.

His theology would be the alternative to what he called *theologia gloriae* or “theology of glory.” According to Douglas John Hall, emeritus Professor of Christian Theology at McGill University, the closest we can get to describing “theology of glory” is triumphalism. Triumphalism

refers to the tendency in all strongly held world-views, whether religious or secular, to present themselves as full and complete accounts of reality, leaving little if any room for debate or difference of opinion and expecting of their adherents unflinching belief and loyalty.⁹

This kind of theology is what brought Luther to develop a new way of looking at faith, one that did not establish Christian faith as a complete knowledge of reality. Through the Heidelberg theses Luther established that he was against the glory theology. This allowed for him to describe the “theology of the cross” by saying what it did *not* entail, a strategy called *via negativa*.¹⁰

For Luther faith is not something that is easy, straight-forward, and entirely understood, as would be in “theology of glory.” Faith is focused on humanity and the sin, suffering and personal conflict that one must incur to understand that this faith is about God’s love for humanity. In this discussion of *Doctor Faustus* and the themes from Martin Luther’s “theology of the cross” that are present in the play, I will focus on certain aspects of Luther’s theology that develop his thoughts further in comparison with

⁹ Douglas John Hall, The Cross in Our Context (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 17.

¹⁰ Hall, 24.

the play. However, I feel that this idea of humanism within Luther's theology helps summarize a general understanding prior to a study of specific themes. Finally, I will return to Douglas John Hall for a summarizing statement that:

The theology of the cross, which may be stimulated...by a certain kind of anthropological pre-understanding, is nevertheless first of all a statement about God, and what it says about God is not that God thinks humankind so wretched that it deserves death and hell, but that God thinks humankind and the whole creation so good, so beautiful, so precious in its intention and its potentiality, that its actualization, its fulfillment, its redemption is worth dying for.¹¹

With this general understanding of the "theology of the cross," one can then look deeper into more specific elements that Luther addresses when discussing his theology. By developing the thoughts of Luther into a more focused scope of study, the relationship between Luther's theology and the play *Doctor Faustus* will be more easily constructed. The themes that will be used from Luther's theology are recurring throughout any understanding of "theology of the cross." Through reason one is able to comprehend the things of God that are visible through the suffering of Christ on the cross. To understand the relationship between humankind and God, one must understand where God is in the world and the role of God in the world. At the heart of Luther's theology is the justification of human beings by the grace of Christ through faith. In order to develop these recurring themes in Luther's theology, we must now move into an understanding of the work that will be compared.

¹¹ Hall, 24.

CHAPTER 2

THE ORIGIN AND STORY OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Christopher Marlowe was born in February of 1564 in the town of Canterbury.¹² He began his education in 1581 at The King's School in Canterbury and later received an Archbishop Parker scholarship that enabled him to attend Corpus Christi College of Cambridge University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1584.¹³ The six-year scholarship, with the intention to take holy orders, allowed Marlowe to take three more years of education beyond those at Corpus Christi.¹⁴ He did not complete all three years as he is thought to have been doing spy work for the Privy Council of Queen Elizabeth at Rheims Seminary.¹⁵ After he finished his six years of education, he moved from Cambridge to London where he began writing plays. He was writing at the same time as William Shakespeare, who was the more brilliant writer at the time, but being some months older than Shakespeare, Marlowe led the age of the Elizabethan language, medium and blank-verse.

While in London, Marlowe became acquainted with other writers of the time, poet Thomas Watson and dramatist Thomas Kyd. His association with Kyd played a large part in Marlowe's reputation of being an "atheist" and a denier of all Christian doctrine.

¹² *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 1st ed., s.v. "Christopher Marlowe."

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, Drama Classics ed., (London: Nick Hern Books, 1996), v.

¹⁵ Marlowe, v.

Thomas Kyd was arrested for inciting mob violence resulting in his house being searched where documents containing heretical statements were found. The documents denounced Jesus Christ and Kyd, in order to protect himself, said the documents got “shuffled in” with his and they were actually Marlowe’s papers. Accompanying this accusation of Marlowe being irreligious, Kyd also claimed that in conversation Marlowe would “gybe at praiera & stryve in argument to frustrate & confute what hath byn spoke or wrytt by prophets & such holie men.”¹⁶ Kyd was saying that Marlowe was making a mockery of prayer and saw the words of the prophets as false. Whether or not these claims were true is unknown, but it is understandable why, with their loyalty to the church and the state, the people of Elizabethan times would have been likely to accept these claims and condemn Marlowe for his “atheism.”

Doctor Faustus in its Historical Context

Doctor Faustus, a play written by Christopher Marlowe in the late sixteenth century, is one of the most controversial, and most criticized, works of the Elizabethan era. Robert Kimbrough writes,

No Elizabethan play outside the Shakespeare canon has raised more controversy than *Doctor Faustus*. There is no agreement concerning the nature of the text and the date of composition; and the centrality of the Faust legend in the history of the western world precludes any definitive agreement on the interpretation of the play, the doctor being the product of revolution both of the Renaissance and the Reformation.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Everything from footnote fifteen to this point is retrieved from this source.

¹⁷ Robert Kimbrough, “Christopher Marlowe,” in *The Predecessors of Shakespeare*, eds. Terence P. Logan and Denzell S. Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 14.

Doctor Faustus was written during the Renaissance period and around sixty to eighty years after Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses,¹⁸ placing the play within a context of changing beliefs and ideas. There was a large rise in Puritanism in England, and with the Reformation and the repudiation of superstitious parts of the Catholic faith such as transubstantiation, the Devil was left with the intriguing magic. Consequently, over half of the almost 800 indictments of witchcraft occurred during Queen Elizabeth's reign,¹⁹ making *Doctor Faustus* a direct representation of the personal struggle of religion against superstition at that time. Despite its focus on magic and its relevance to the time it was written, it is also an extremely Christian play, as Leo Kirschbaum states, "there is no more obvious Christian document in all Elizabethan drama than *Doctor Faustus*."²⁰

One difficulty arises when studying this work by Christopher Marlowe in that there are two texts of *Doctor Faustus*, an A-text and B-text. The A-text is the earliest edition and is dated 1604, a reprint of a lost copy in 1601, a three-year difference that is thought to be significant by historians.²¹ Within those three years, the 1602 Henslowe's *Diary* has a record of payment to two writers for their additions to the play.²² At that time, then, this edition was thought to be closer to what Marlowe's original had been, considering the B-text was longer by over a third. This view changed, however, when the critic W.W. Greg came out with his study, *Marlowe's Doctor Faustus*, in which he

¹⁸ Marlowe, xvii.

¹⁹ Marlowe, xvii.

²⁰ Leo Kirschbaum, "Marlowe's Faustus: A Reconsideration," The Review of English Studies 19, no. 75, (Jul., 1943): 229.

²¹ Marlowe, x.

²² Ibid.

determines that the A-text had to have been a traveling version of the play in the way the performers had recalled *Doctor Faustus*.²³ The differences are great, with longer and more developed scenes in the third and fourth acts of the B-text, consequently being more humorous and having more complicated scenes.²⁴ Prior to Greg's study of *Doctor Faustus*, most critics had preferred the A-text, not always because it was thought to be closer to Marlowe's original but because it was, in a sense, more serious.²⁵ This thesis will use the A-text in order to be more uniform with past studies. However, this study will focus on stories that are, for the most part, included in both texts. The importance of the textual difference will not affect the argument being made, so the reader will forgive the focus on one text and the omitting of irrelevant scenes in the comparison made.

The Story of Dr. Faustus

The play is set in the 1580's in Wittenberg, Germany where the character Faustus resides and is a theologian at the University of Wittenberg. *Doctor Faustus* begins with a single Chorus character setting the scene and the history of the Faustus character. The Chorus explains that Faustus is very intelligent, received the doctor as a title, and excelled in matters of theology. It is then foreshadowed by the Chorus character that he falls "to a devilish exercise...cursed necromancy; / Nothing so sweet as magic is to him."²⁶

²³ Marlowe, x.

²⁴ Ibid, xi.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 3.

At this point in the play, Faustus discerns the best form of scholarship that will bring him ultimate knowledge and power. This portion of the play will be addressed in the chapter on reason, thus I will move forward with the plot following this point. The first struggle that Faustus encounters is in the form of two angels, Good and Evil, which come to Faustus to persuade him. The Good Angel tells Faustus to leave the book of magic alone and warns him of the wrath that will ensue from God if he continues in his practice of magic. In contrast, the Evil Angel counters with words like “famous” and “treasures,” all that Faustus needs to hear as he proceeds to talk about all the treasures he will make spirits “fetch” for him.²⁷ This early intervention by the Angels is a physical representation of the internal struggle that Faustus will have throughout the play between repentance and his desire for power. As the scene ends, two friends of Faustus who are magicians themselves are delighted that Faustus has decided to turn to the dark arts and promise to help him learn and become better than they are at magic.

As Faustus begins his study of magic, his first feat will be to conjure up a devil by the name of Mephistopheles who will attend to Faustus throughout the play. Faustus sets up a circle in which he stands and recites an incantation that will supposedly conjure up a devil. When Mephistopheles appears, Faustus sends him back to change shape into a Franciscan friar, a reference to what Martin Luther said about the devil dressed as a monk who was looking over his shoulder as he translated the Bible.²⁸ Faustus does this because he believes a monk’s “shape becomes a devil best.”²⁹ Mephistopheles then

²⁷ Marlowe, 6.

²⁸ Ibid., xvii.

²⁹ Ibid., 11.

informs him that it was not Faustus' magic that conjured him but simply that when the devils "hear one rack the name of God, / Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ, / We fly in hope to get his glorious soul."³⁰ Mephistopheles then explains how he came to be in hell, a story which will be focused on in the sixth chapter dealing with sin and the Devil. Mephistopheles goes on to say that earth is within the realm of hell, to which Faustus refutes Mephistopheles' attempt at dissuasion by not believing that there will be pain after this life. Faustus then offers the deal with Lucifer, which will ultimately be his downfall throughout the play. The deal is that Lucifer will receive his soul in exchange for twenty-four years of living in "voluptuousness" and having spirits attend to whatever he asks, whatever he demands, and "slay [his] enemies and aid [his] friends."³¹ Faustus orders Mephistopheles back to Lucifer to propose the deal, and Faustus revels in all the possibilities and opportunities for power he will have with Mephistopheles attending to him.

As the play goes on, the next interaction between Faustus and Mephistopheles brings confirmation from Lucifer that Faustus will indeed have his terms met. At this point, Faustus must write and sign a contract in his own blood to ensure the deed with Lucifer. However, as he begins to write after stabbing his arm, the blood hardens and he is unable to write. He begins to question whether he should go through with this or not, another example of his constant struggle between good and bad. Mephistopheles makes the blood liquid again and Faustus signs the contract with Lucifer, at which point many devils come and put crowns and robes on him. This scene is important in illustrating

³⁰ Marlowe, 12.

³¹ Ibid.

Faustus' understanding of what he is doing: seeking power through magic while not understanding how horrible hell is. Again, Faustus says things such as, "Come, I think hell's a fable," and, "Think'st thou that Faustus is so fond / To imagine that after this life there is any pain?"³² Mephistopheles attempts to inform Faustus of the horridness of hell, but Faustus with his new powers makes a demand for a wife. Mephistopheles quickly informs him that marriage is an institution of God and Faustus can have any woman he wants, every night of his life, just not a wife. At the end of the scene, Mephistopheles gives Faustus a book of spells that will commence the power and pleasure that Faustus desires.

In the next scene involving Faustus, he is angry at Mephistopheles for "depriving" him of the joys of heaven and wants to repent. Mephistopheles claims that humans are better than heaven because heaven was made for humans, to which Faustus replies, "If it were made for man, 'twas made for me. / I will renounce this magic and repent."³³ The Good and Evil Angels appear with the former reaffirming the repentance while the latter tells Faustus that he will not repent. Mephistopheles continues the conversation with Faustus, this time about who made the heavens, a question which Mephistopheles refuses to answer because speaking of this is against the kingdom of hell. This makes Faustus angry, and he says to himself, "Think, Faustus, upon God, that made the world,"³⁴ which causes Mephistopheles to return to hell and retrieve Lucifer, Beelzebub and the Seven Deadly Sins. While Mephistopheles is absent, the Good and Evil Angels return and

³²Marlowe, 21.

³³ Ibid., 25.

³⁴ Ibid., 27.

attempt to persuade Faustus in their ways. Just as Faustus is crying out to Christ, Mephistopheles returns with the other devils from hell. Lucifer scolds him for going against his deed and calling out to Christ. In order to keep him loyal to his promise, Mephistopheles gives him a show of the Seven Deadly Sins in their true form, or their more desirable way. Faustus immediately returns to his lust for pleasure by saying, “O, this feeds my soul.”³⁵

As twenty-four years pass within the play, the time goes remarkably fast for the reader and the audience. Acts three and four are somewhat similar in that they include three events in Faustus’ twenty-four years as a magician that are examples of his trickery against those he does not like and those he wants to impress. His goal in these scenes is to humiliate people and gain world-renowned fame, thus making him feel powerful. The first example in Act III, Scene 1, Mephistopheles and Faustus go to a banquet of the Pope and his Friars and play tricks on them. This is interesting because of the reference to the Pope; the leader of the church that Luther was in such conflict with. The two make themselves invisible and say blasphemous comments and snatch plates from the Pope’s hands as he attempts to distribute them. The Pope and the Friars conclude that there is a ghost and the Pope crosses himself before they get up and all run out of the banquet room. The Friars return to bless the room and rid of the ghost they believe to be present, but Faustus and Mephistopheles throw fireworks at them and the Friars run from the room again.

The next two events come subsequently in Act IV, Scenes 1 and 2, and both involve performing miraculous magical acts in the presence of powerful people, the

³⁵ Marlowe, 30.

Emperor and a Duke, to gain fame and power for Faustus. In the first scene, Faustus goes before the Emperor who has heard of Faustus' great magic. Out of respect, Faustus denies his level of greatness that the Emperor has heard from his men; Faustus tells the Emperor that he will do anything that he desires. The Emperor asks him to bring before him the bodies of Alexander the Great and his Paramour, as they were when they were alive and well. Although Faustus can only conjure their spirits in this form, they both agree that this will be sufficient and Faustus sends Mephistopheles to obtain the spirits. Mephistopheles and the two spirits appear before the amazed Emperor, as Faustus meanwhile humiliates a knight that had doubted him earlier by putting horns on his head. The final example in Scene 2 is much shorter and is another example of impressing a person of high power and sovereignty. In this scene the Duchess simply wants a plate of grapes, and since it is winter in Germany, it would be impressive for him to present her with these grapes. Faustus sends Mephistopheles to retrieve the grapes and presents them to the Duchess who is very delighted and rewards Faustus for his great magic.

The final act is possibly the most important and most meaningful in all the play, as it shows Faustus' realization of the deal he has made, how little he has gained, and his desperation for God to pardon him of this horrible deed. The last part begins with Faustus still trying to impress people, namely the other scholars he is associated with, by conjuring the spirit of Helen of Troy. The scholars and Faustus have decided that Helen is the most beautiful woman in all of time. He sends Mephistopheles away to bring her, he does so, and Helen walks across the room in front of an astounded group of scholars. Still unaware of the deal he has made with Lucifer, one scholar states, "Since we have seen the pride of nature's works / And only paragon of excellence, / Let us depart; and for

this glorious deed / Happy and blest be Faustus evermore.”³⁶ At this point, the character referred to as Old Man appears and makes an attempt to get Faustus to repent and turn to God. His words cut deep into Faustus, who realizes more than ever the dynamic of his fate. Faustus accepts the words of the Old Man that an angel is hovering over his head and waits to pour a vial of mercy on his head.³⁷ He begins to follow on the path of repentance, saying to him, “Ah, my sweet friend, I feel thy words / To comfort my distressed soul. / Leave me a while to ponder on my sins.”³⁸ Immediately, Mephistopheles appears and gives Faustus a dagger, threatens to tear his flesh if he repents, and demands that Faustus reaffirm his vow with Lucifer in blood again. Faustus obliges Mephistopheles and asks that Mephistopheles torment the Old Man with the powers of hell, to which the Old Man evades by the grace of God. Before this, however, Faustus makes his last request of earthly pleasure before the end of his twenty-four years. Faustus tells Mephistopheles to conjure Helen of Troy again in order to fulfill his gluttonous desires and relieve him from his thoughts of repentance. Mephistopheles brings Helen before him and Faustus recites the most famous line of the play, “Was this the face that launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? / Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss. / Her lips sucks forth my soul. See where it flies.”³⁹ This line’s fame comes from its irony. He finds heaven in the lips of a conjured spirit of hell, a spirit that cannot make him immortal and is nothing more than something

³⁶ Marlowe, 47.

³⁷ Ibid., 48.

³⁸ Ibid., 48.

³⁹ Ibid., 49.

of earthly pleasure. The final scene in the last act includes Faustus revealing the deal he has made with Lucifer to his scholarly counterparts and his slow and mentally painful last hours on earth. When he tells the scholars about his vow with Lucifer, they tell him to repent and turn to God, to which he obviously responds that he has tried and it is not possible. The scholars tell Faustus that they will pray for his mercy, and they depart as Faustus fears that being in their presence will make God punish them as well. When the scholars leave, the clock strikes twelve and Faustus goes into his final soliloquy of despair and pleading for mercy from God. The time passes very quickly as his time on earth ends and the devils take him away, he pleads with the lines, “My God, my God, look not so fierce on me! / Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while! / Ugly hell, gape not. Come not, Lucifer! / I’ll burn my books. Ah, Mephistopheles!”⁴⁰

With an understanding of the plot of *Doctor Faustus* and the theology of Martin Luther, one can begin to focus on specific parts of Luther’s theology as they compare to the play. Within the play, themes that are closely related, if not directly related, to Luther’s theology are present: reason, the concept of a hidden and revealed God, human’s relationship with sin and the devil, and justification. While narrowing the focus on Luther’s theology, the relative themes within the play will be discussed and made apparent.

⁴⁰ Marlowe, 53-54.

CHAPTER 3

REASON AS A MEANS OF COMPARISON

Most concepts of Luther's theology are difficult to understand because of their paradoxical nature and the level of thought it takes to understand what Luther is saying. Luther refers to many concepts as they are "after the fall" or after humans committed original sin. Reason is what allows humans the "capacity to reflect and understand," and "exist consciously and thus historically."⁴¹ Luther claims that humans can "know" God; reason gives us the ability to understand and judge whether we "know" God exists. However, other statements show the conflicting side of reason, knowing nothing of God, when Luther states:

If his righteousness were such that it could be judged to be righteous by human standards, it would clearly not be divine and would in no way differ from human righteousness. But since he is the one true God, and is wholly incomprehensible and inaccessible to human reason, it is proper and indeed necessary that his righteousness also should be incomprehensible.⁴²

Reason does not necessarily know what God is or what is good in God's eyes, but human reason does know what God is not and what is wrong. Luther states, "Reason is unable to identify God properly...It knows there is a God, but it does not know who or which is the true God."⁴³

⁴¹ Bernhard Lohse, Martin Luther's Theology, ed. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999), 197.

⁴² LW, "The Bondage of the Will" 33:290.

⁴³ LW, "Lectures on Jonah," 19:54.

Reason, outside of theology, can be understood more generally as the capacity for knowledge. It is easy to see, then, how this pertains to Luther's explanation of the knowledge of God in terms of faith. Reason is understood as:

Critical understanding, insight, mental activities in the broadcast sense, the weighing of arguments, the capacity for drawing conclusions, as well as, finally, the philosophical effort at a comprehensive view of the world and humankind.⁴⁴

Faith, in contrast, is the willing relationship one enters into with God with the recognition of sinfulness and judgment of God. A person of faith has to make a conscious decision to enter into a relationship with God and, thus, can use reason to establish knowledge to the extent that is possible.

This distinction between reason and faith is most definitely an example of knowing and not knowing within epistemology. On one hand, Luther's theology focuses on the knowledge of God. Luther believed that the knowledge of God was through the cross of Christ. On the other hand, though, Luther focuses a great deal on the fact that theology is not what makes God known to human beings; faith provides one with the knowledge of God. This would mean that one could be a theologian and study God, but to truly "know" God, one must enter into a faithful relationship with God.

In *Doctor Faustus* we encounter the more general capacity for knowledge; a personal conflict of reason. The character of Faustus is using his ability to reason in order to determine the most beneficial form of scholarship, rather than using it in terms of God. Faustus begins the first act of the play by contemplating what the greatest type of

⁴⁴ Lohse, 201.

scholarship may be. Of logic, he questions whether “To dispute well”⁴⁵ is the extent of this scholarship; he determines it is and therefore worthless to study. He debates a while longer the study of physics and how he has cured many diseases and eased the plague in certain areas, but he is still just a man. He concludes with “Wouldst thou make man to live eternally? / Or, being dead, raise them to life again? / Then this profession were to be esteemed. / Physic farewell!”⁴⁶ He shortly considers law but determines that to be “Too servile and illiberal” for him.⁴⁷ Religion is the scholarship that seems to be most rewarding to him, but then he reads from the St. Jerome’s Bible, the Latin translation from the original Hebrew and Greek texts, about how “the reward for sin is death,” and “if we say we that have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there’s no truth in us.”⁴⁸ He neglects to read on where the Bible says that God will forgive our sins and nonetheless decides that living a life of “everlasting death” is not the life for him. At this point, he denounces God and picks up a book of magic. As a result of his desire for power and satisfaction, the turning point of the play comes early when he makes his decision to pursue the profits of magic.

Although he does not understand it as so, Faustus is attempting to define and achieve righteousness by his own means. The idea that magic will bring him power and give him all his worldly desires is the attempt at self-righteousness; achieving righteousness by one’s own means is something that Luther refers to as impossible. One

⁴⁵ Marlowe, 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

must rest one's faith on the paradoxical incomprehensible knowledge of God's righteousness. Faustus, being a theologian prior to his turn to magic, has presumably reasoned that God exists in some form throughout his study. However, he comes to the conclusion that there is no hope in religion if humans are full of sin and condemned to death regardless of the life they live. The incomprehensible parts of religion, for Faustus, are what make religion insufficient to study and trust. Faustus is unable to embrace the idea that righteousness comes in a form that is unattainable to human reason, and thus seeks worldly desires that give him immediate satisfaction.

CHAPTER 4

HIDDEN AND REVEALED GOD IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

The idea of an incomprehensible and unknown God brings us to Luther's idea of God being paradoxically hidden and revealed, a concept that is possibly the most difficult to understand. In my own encounters with the concept of a hidden and revealed God, a God who cannot be God if completely known but is still present, I find it difficult to understand how God is not the all-powerful picture of God, but is still the divine God. God is present within and among us; however, God hides within the world so that we may grasp onto the places where God is present. In our pursuit of finding and seeing the righteous God, in all his glory and majesty, we fail to realize the implications of this. The experience of seeing God in all God's majesty would be too brilliant and terrible for a

human to bear.⁴⁹ However, as sinful creatures we are always on a search to find God and to experience this revelation. Our nature of corruption, therefore, is taken up by God and led in the direction of sacraments and external manifestations and we are able to grasp onto God through these.⁵⁰

Faustus cannot be seen as a person who is constantly searching for God and trying to understand God's power. This is simply not the case. Faustus, in fact, denies the power of God by saying, "There is no chief but only Beelzebub,"⁵¹ and he swears his dedication to the Devil. God consistently shows presence in Faustus' life by hiding within people that surround Faustus. Despite this, while there is no doubt that Faustus is indeed corrupted and even led in the direction of salvation, the difference is that he does not grasp onto God. Faustus would rather pursue his ultimate desire for power; power, it could be argued, that would surpass or evade the power of God. As a result, Faustus seeks this power through things other than Christ. He realizes before he is taken to hell, through his many references to Christ, that this power is unattainable.

The distinction of "theology of the cross" and "theology of glory" is essential in this understanding of a hidden and revealed God. In "theology of glory" one places God in heaven, above all things and seeks God in things other than Christ. Also, a picture of God is formed and God is seen as a majestic and omnipotent or all-powerful being. While the majesty of God is not in question, one must return to the notion that God's majesty is too much for humans to bear. So, God must be seen through the eyes of the

⁴⁹ Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 21.

⁵⁰ D. Martin Luthers Werke, Briefwechsel (Weimar, 1930-1948), vol. 39, p. 217.

⁵¹ Marlowe, 12.

“theology of the cross.” God must be seen as a God within Christ, a manifestation of God, a revelation of God. God is also clothed with promises and hidden behind a mask of something that is able to be known to humans. The most important concept to understand within the paradox of God hidden and revealed is that while God is hidden for our sake. According to Luther, to seek God anywhere else but in the cross would be seeking idle things; although Faustus’ intentions were not to seek God, he was seeking for power through idle things. God is revealed through the cross and Christ, where God seems to not be present at all, as Jesus cries from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”⁵² After a life of seeking power through worldly temptations, Faustus makes a similar plea, “My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!”⁵³ In both instances God seems to abandon both Jesus and Faustus, yet both still acknowledge the existence of God and the ever-presence that God has in the world.

I would like to return to Faustus’ original struggle with deciding what scholarship is most beneficial. An important idea that I discussed in the previous chapter is the difficulty Faustus has with accepting a form of scholarship that one does not benefit from in the end. In other words, Faustus does not see a point in studying and believing in a life that is condemned to death regardless of the level of knowledge one gains. It can be argued that if humans were not ultimately punished by death because of sin, Faustus would see the study of theology as the best scholarship. Even further, it seems as though Faustus would find legitimacy in religion if there were evidence of God. Again, we must return to the fact that Faustus does not read further in the Bible to the point in which it

⁵² Mark 15.34 NIV (New International Version).

⁵³ Marlowe, 53.

shows God's relationship with the sinner. This is only the beginning of Faustus' misunderstanding of the role of God.

As the play progresses and we examine the magical actions of Faustus, one can see the level of control that he wants in the things that happen in his life. Faustus wants visible proof of his scholarship on a certain topic, as well as the power that comes with it. If he can see his knowledge and power working, he is ultimately satisfied. This is the problem with the study of religion; visible proof of God's forgiveness is not there. Faustus cannot see a positive representation of God, revealed in nature, people and the gospel, if one is condemned to sin from the beginning of life. Even as Faustus contemplates repentance throughout the play, the worldly, visible things are what keep him on the path of magic and his agreement with the Devil.

The Good Angel and the Old Man are ways in which God is hidden through people on earth, and yet revealed in their push for repentance in Faustus' struggle; however Faustus cannot grasp onto this. Here is another example of Faustus, in pursuit of knowledge and power, grasping onto magic instead of the places where God is hidden. These characters certainly play a large role in Faustus' contemplation of repentance but are not ultimately able to reveal God enough for Faustus to understand. I am convinced that Faustus would repent almost immediately only if God was revealed to him in all God's glory. However, Faustus does not realize that this is something that he could not bear as a human under Luther's "theology of the cross." Christopher Marlowe does not allow Faustus to get this far in his thinking because of immediate intervention by Mephistopheles. However, Faustus could control his ultimate fate by repenting, but repentance is far too difficult when immediate satisfaction is given by the Devil. I would

conclude then that God is too hidden for Faustus. If it were possible for a human to comprehend God in completely revealed form, then faith would not exist and this is what is the difficulty for Faustus.

CHAPTER 5

DOCTOR FAUSTUS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH SIN AND THE DEVIL

In dealing with sin, one must begin with the knowledge of sin and how sin exists in an individual's understanding. Through conscience, one can know what sin is and can see what is wrong in the eyes of God. Consequently, while realizing the incomprehensibility of human's inherent sinfulness, one must understand what sinfulness means in faith. The knowledge we have of sin only comes from the Word of God and therefore must be believed rather than completely known.

As mentioned before, some of Luther's concepts refer to life before "the fall" of humankind and original sin. Nothing pertains more to this than sin itself. Original sin comes from the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where Adam eats the forbidden fruit in direct disobedience to God. The problem with this action is the mistrust of God, the root of all sin in Luther's eyes.⁵⁴ From this original sin, Luther saw the sins of individuals as a directly related connection. Sin can be seen as putting oneself before God, not allowing God to be God, as Adam showed with eating the fruit. Adam was acting out of temptation, not selfishness. However, because this action is what made humans inherently sinful, this was the beginning of selfish actions. People in the

⁵⁴ H.H. Kramm, The Theology of Martin Luther, (London: James Clarke & Co., 1947), 38.

contemporary setting will act selfishly even while claiming good deeds, doing things that one deems right in the eyes of God with their own self-worth in mind. In relation to this, one should not avoid participating in the world, as a monk may practice celibacy to avoid the sin of the flesh, because this causes a sinful attitude within the self as one removes themselves from the “sinful world.” One can take the understanding of original sin to mean that, no matter how evil or good a person may be, all people are sinners who fall short of the law in the eyes of God.

The beginning of the play *Doctor Faustus* and the story throughout offer an opportunity for comparison to not only Luther’s theology, but the Christian religion in general concerning sin. In Christian belief, certain sinful actions are understood as being against the word of God, mainly from the Ten Commandments. The sinful things that are presented to Faustus throughout his remaining twenty-four years of life are not disguised as good. All things presented to Faustus in the play are entirely sinful and he accepts them for what they are. For example, when the Seven Deadly Sins are presented to Faustus, they are not intended to be misinterpreted as good things. They are temptations, of course; this is what makes them sinful in nature. However, Faustus knows they are sinful yet his desire for pleasure makes the sin something good. In the story of Adam and Eve, it is understood that the Devil had to tempt and deceive Adam into the “original sin.” Faustus does not need to be deceived; his temptation is strong enough on its own due to Faustus already being inherently sinful.

The majority of Luther’s understanding of the Devil came from the traditional view of the relationship between sin, the world or flesh and the devil. As an example, he found the devil in the world, more specifically the Catholic Church, as attempting to use

the pope in evil ways to destroy the Christian church. Luther understands the relationship between God and the devil not as war waged on the battlefield of earth, but rather as a struggle of humanity between God and the temptations of the devil.⁵⁵ “The devil not only misled the first humans to fall into sin but continually leads their descendents into temptation. It is he who is at work behind all false doctrine and heretics.”⁵⁶ The devil, then, is constantly working against the will of God, tempting people against following God’s word and driving people into lives of misfortune. Luther claims the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan are constantly struggling against one another, as can be seen in the play through the temptations of Mephistopheles battling with calls for repentance by the Old Man and the Good Angel. However, Luther claims that God is still the Almighty and the devil is somehow used by God.⁵⁷ This is a difficult concept to understand in that it gives the devil a considerable amount of power, seemingly the same amount of power as God, while still preventing the devil with any Almighty power.

Dualism in Luther’s theology is somewhat present in the statements he makes regarding the Devil and God. Bernhard Lohse addresses these “dualistic tones” in Luther’s theology by stating that his dualism “extended to the idea that wherever God’s kingdom is not present, there is necessarily the kingdom of the devil.”⁵⁸ Luther goes even further in saying that the devil is the god of this world and is in constant battle with God:

The world and its god cannot and will not endure the Word
of the true God, and the true God neither will nor can keep

⁵⁵ Lohse, 254.

⁵⁶ Ibid..

⁵⁷ Kramm, 41.

⁵⁸ Lohse, 255.

silence, so when these two Gods are at war with one another, what can there be but tumult in all the whole world?⁵⁹

However, Luther always maintained that God was the Almighty and that even the devil must serve God. Luther describes it as God being in control of the good while also being in control of evil as God hides himself behind the earthly evil so that when humans encounter this evil, they might turn to God and receive mercy.⁶⁰ This presentation is made very clear in *Doctor Faustus* as the Devil and Mephistopheles present evil to Faustus. With the understanding that God is hidden within the evil of the world, we can see the temptations offered by Mephistopheles as opportunities presented to Faustus to turn to God for mercy. The difficulty with this comparison is that each time Faustus is close to repentance, he is presented with more temptations to keep him loyal to his contract. God is present and, in a sense, controlling these situations. The question then is why Faustus can never get to the point of turning to God for mercy, even when the opportunity is right in front of him. The Devil is God's opposition and yet is still used by God, so why does Faustus deny God so many times? It is the drive for ultimate power through magic, and the temptations of earthly pleasures, that ultimately keep Faustus from turning to God for mercy. The difference is that Faustus makes a conscience decision to deny God and give all allegiance to Satan, while others who are presented with the same temptations turn to God to alleviate the evil of the world.

There is no doubt that the Devil holds a massive amount of power in this world. So much power, in fact, that the Devil could be deemed the "god of this world."

⁵⁹ LW, "The Bondage of the Will," 33:52.

⁶⁰ Lohse, 255.

However, in contrast, there is no doubt that God is the one true God. As a result, whatever the Devil does on earth to tempt humans away from God, the Devil is still subject to God's omnipotence. This returns us to the subject of dualism; a concept which is critical to the understanding of human's relationship with God and the Devil. God effectively keeps the Devil so powerful on earth in order to use the Devil for God's wrath. Once again, this is a somewhat paradoxical concept within Luther's theology, that:

What God's wrath does and what Satan does frequently appear to be one and the same. The devil is "God's devil." And yet at the same time he remains the devil, the enemy of God, who wants the opposite of what God wants.⁶¹

This understanding of Luther's position on the power of the Devil may seem irrelevant because Faustus does not need to be deceived into the evil ways of the Devil. To a certain extent, this claim is correct. However, the understanding that the Devil leads humans into a life of sin is still important. Faustus may not need to be deceived into sinful action, but he is still led there by the Devil's presentations of temptation. The Seven Deadly Sins, the opportunity for trickery against leaders of the church and the conjuring of Helen of Troy are all provided by the Devil. One difference from Luther's understanding of the Devil's power is that Faustus does not need to be deceived into accepting these worldly pleasures. In a sense, it just takes one step out of the process, but is still part of the struggle between a relationship with God and the temptations of the Devil. Also, Mephistopheles will not allow Faustus to speak of having a wife, an institution that is solely God's. Along with this, through Christ, a believer is also God's and is not under the control of the Devil. A believer is still subject to temptation by the

⁶¹ Althaus, 165.

Devil in an attempt to get one to denounce God; however that believer is still God's.

Although subject to the temptations of the Devil, Faustus is not a believer and is therefore under the control of the Devil. If Faustus were to turn to God, through Christ, he would not avoid the temptations of worldly pleasures, but he would ultimately be saved by the grace of God.

Luther establishes that the evil that is done on earth is attributed to God and not the Devil because God uses instruments to carry out what happens, a concept that returns to the idea of a hidden God. It is important to understand that God is working through these instruments and that when bad things happen on earth there is a distinction between what God does and what the instruments of his power do. An example that can be used here, taken from German theologian Paul Althaus, is the concept of death. Luther recognizes that Satan has the power of death, but being an instrument that God works through, God is the one that allows us to die. To attribute this power solely to the Devil, outside of God's instrumental power, is to deny the ultimate power of the world as being God's. This returns one to the idea of God using wrath to humble the believer and allow for solitary trust in God.⁶² This is a difficult concept to believe in, that God is still good when allowing the evil to take place. However, it is what allows one to receive the grace of God if one believes that humans only deal with God, even when God is using instruments of wrath.

Expanding on this concept, Luther establishes the relationship of humans in between the two powers of God and the Devil. Again, the idea of sin being encompassed within the flesh, the world and the Devil, Luther identifies this as the "unified will which

⁶² Althaus, 166.

surrounds us on every side and is opposed to God.”⁶³ The Devil ends up being the lord of the earth because the Devil is involved in all the sin that keeps us distant from God. The Devil is the ultimate opponent to God. Luther finds the Devil in everything that goes against the will of God, in all the things that reduce God’s divinity. The earth is the Devil’s kingdom of sin and disobedience.⁶⁴ “It is the devil who stands behind all enemies of the word, behind the misinterpretation of Scripture, behind all false doctrine and sects, and behind philosophy.”⁶⁵ Included in this concept is the doctrine of justification and how the Devil does everything to blind humans to this concept and to the truth of God’s mercy. This is most certainly happening in *Doctor Faustus* as Mephistopheles presents the evil things of Satan in order to keep Faustus away from God. This intervention by Mephistopheles gets Faustus to reduce the power of God and give all power to the Devil, who will ultimately keep Faustus distant from God.

One must understand that humans are by nature sinful creatures that are distant from God and unable to live up to the word God has established. Humans are ultimately condemned to death due to their constant sinful actions, God’s punishment for a life of sin. However, Jesus Christ died to forgive these sins, an event that is central to the understanding of Luther’s theology. Almost certainly the most central idea to the “theology of the cross” is the idea of justification and why humans are saved despite constant sin. While humans are condemned to death on earth, humans live for eternity with God because of Christ dying on the cross. Humans receive the righteousness of God

⁶³ Althaus, 162.

⁶⁴ Althaus, 162.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Althaus cites Luther’s Works 34:144 in this description but the quote used here is Althaus’ words.

through Christ, not because of what they do, but by believing and having faith God allows one to be saved.

CHAPTER 6

JUSTIFICATION AND *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

To understand justification in Luther's eyes, one must see God as the creator. God is able to create righteousness, destroy sin and give life, powers that are exclusive to God. For one to attempt to obtain righteousness by doing acts that are morally and ethically in tandem with God's law is attempting to take away the powers of God. Luther states this point very clearly:

For God is he who dispenses his gifts freely to all, and this is his praise of his own deity. But he cannot assert his deity in dealing with self-righteous people who are unwilling to accept grace and eternal life from him freely but want to earn it by their own works. They simply want to rob him of the glory of his deity.⁶⁶

In a sense, it could be seen as an insult to believe that through one's works, righteousness can be obtained. Regardless of how hard one works, one cannot perfectly follow the law of God through works and the must turn to God for grace. This is the idea of humility that Luther introduces as a prerequisite to mercy. "God humiliates man, in order that he may justify him; he makes man a sinner, in order that he may make him righteous."⁶⁷

This concept relates to the chapter on sin and the Devil, in which the Devil is an

⁶⁶ LW, "Lectures on Galatians 1535," 26:127.

⁶⁷ Alister McGrath, Luther's Theology of the Cross (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 153.

instrument of God's wrath and a way to humiliate humans into justification. In order to receive this justification one must realize one's own unrighteousness, and understand that life is a "futile situation" without God.⁶⁸

Luther began his study as a monk with the belief that the things he did on earth, the good and the bad, were kept track of. The idea at that time was that any person of the faith, especially a monk, was to practice perfection in the eyes of God. This meant that one was attempting to become holy in order to acknowledge the presence of the Almighty God. At the beginning of Luther's monasticism, doing good works was the path to salvation and Luther was determined to follow this path. However, as he focused his life around the drastic methods of salvation such as chastity, sobriety, fastings and poverty, he found no sense of "inner tranquility" and no balance between the weight of sin and salvation.⁶⁹ We find this action, while not for the same purpose, within the character of Faustus. In his attempt to gain knowledge and power through the study of magic, Faustus essentially tries to make himself holy. Again, Faustus does not realize that this is an attempt at self-righteousness. However, through scope of Luther's theology one can see the drastic methods Faustus is using without finding any inner harmony. Through his magical acts, Faustus finds immediate joy. By the end of the play, though, "for vain pleasure of four-and-twenty years hath Faustus lost eternal joy and felicity."⁷⁰ Luther would say that it is not possible to fully comprehend the part of God's law that condemns a human to death; however Faustus is beginning to see what his actions have caused.

⁶⁸ McGrath, 155.

⁶⁹ Roland Bainton, Here I Stand (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), 33-34.

⁷⁰ Marlowe, 51.

Faustus cannot receive justification from God because he denied the saving grace of the Gospel of Christ.

His final realization of what he has done, his ambition to become powerful beyond all things, comes out of fear. Faustus has a fear of death because of what he knows comes after death. Faustus does not die as a normal human does; he is simply taken to hell at the end of his twenty-four years. Regardless of the method in which Faustus is taken from the earth, he still has a fear of the end of his life. Luther struggled with the same fear of death; a fear that consumed him. Ultimately, the consuming fear was making Luther suffer and question his worth in the eyes of God. The word that he used for this fear was *Anfechtung* and has no equivalent in the English language.

It may be a trial sent by God to test man, or an assault by the Devil to destroy man. It is all the doubt turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man.⁷¹

In Luther's struggle with this concept he could only see himself as a small person not worthy to stand before God. Luther could only see himself as a person filled with sin and unworthy of God's righteousness. The same is for Faustus as he begs to be saved by God at the end of the play. Out of his fear of hell and the realization of his sinful actions through magic, Faustus seems himself as unworthy as well. In response to a fellow scholar's suggestion to "call on God," the scholar being present when Faustus reveals the deal he has made, Faustus responds with, "On God, whom Faustus hath abjured? On God, whom Faustus hath blasphemed?"⁷²

⁷¹ Bainton, 31.

⁷² Marlowe, 51.

God accepts the sinner as being imperfect. For a human to become just in the eyes of God is impossible without the work and death of Christ. H.H. Kramm proposes two questions regarding the justification of humans:

(1) Does God declare a man to be justified on the ground of Christ's work? Or (2) does the work of Christ cause a man to improve in such a degree that God justly recognise him as justified on the ground of his improved quality?⁷³

Luther would have given merit to the claim that when God enters into a relationship with a person and accepts their sinful nature, God would naturally improve the life of that person. However, Luther would conclude that it is not the improvement of that person's life and actions but purely the work of Christ that ultimately causes a person to be just in God's eyes.

It is important to examine this subject on the basis of one of Luther's largest problems with the Catholic religion at the time he was developing his theology. At that time, followers were being told that in order to be righteous in God's eyes, one must perform the "works" of God. Essentially the only way to be just in God's eyes was to live fully by the law of God. Luther put all of his attention in his early experience in the monastery toward doing good works and would exhaust himself with how much work that would entail. His frustration grew as he saw no improvement or results from his constant struggle to obey the law of God. This realization that every person was condemned to death because they would always fall short of following God's law was a turning point in Luther's thoughts on faith in relationship with God. This is a direct similarity to Faustus' struggle of deciding his scholarship, although Faustus ultimately turned away from religion instead of toward a different way of thinking.

⁷³ Kramm, 48.

At this point, we can combine the last two ideas of justification and clearly explain Luther's view. The fulfilling of the law of God is not the path to righteousness, regardless of the method one takes to do so. Luther conflicts on this point with the opinion of St. Augustine, an important Christian theologian who lived over one thousand years prior. Luther agreed with Augustine that fulfilling God's law with one's own human power would not lead to justification.⁷⁴ However, the difference between the two is that Augustine believed that the way to justification was the fulfillment of God's law with the help of the Holy Spirit, where Luther believed that justification comes only through Christ and not the law.⁷⁵ It is important to follow the law of God, but not essential in receiving justification and salvation. God gives free grace in order for humans to be justified as long as one enters into relationship with God through faith. The reason Faustus does not receive this grace is because he does not establish faith in relationship with God.

One cannot ignore the recurring theme of God playing an active role in what happens in a human's life. Even in the study of God's relationship with the Devil, we still find God in control of everything while still giving freedom to humans. For God to be passive, one would then be able to prove the claim that God is allowing bad things to happen. On the contrary, that would also take God out of the role of the provider and a God who makes good things happen. An active God is a harder to accept for some believers. However, for Luther this is essential to the justification of God. If God is active in humans' lives, God controls not only the positive aspects of our lives but also controls and causes the bad. How can the one we call God *cause* bad things to happen?

⁷⁴ Althaus, 121.

⁷⁵ Althaus, 121.

Our answer is within the entire explanation of justification. The nature of humans does not allow for a righteous life without God. Humans are by nature sinners and thus subject to the wrath of God, the punishment is a life filled with the Devil's temptations and consequences. This life, being one in which the only way to be saved is through the free grace of God through the cross, must involve an active God that participates in the lives of humans.

Faustus experiences an active God who, through angels and different mediums, attempts to get Faustus to repent. Through an understanding of Luther's thoughts, one knows that God is active through the allowance of the Devil's "reign" on earth. In the play this is shown in the efforts of Mephistopheles to coerce and support Faustus in his evil-doing. On the other hand, we know that God is active through the appearance of angels, one Good and one Evil, and also the Old Man. The Evil Angel is obviously on the side of the Devil, where the Good Angel and the Old Man do all they can, nearly successful on separate occasions, to get Faustus to repent and turn to God for grace. This is an exact representation of Luther's theology regarding an active God; bringing sinful humans to the grace of God through the Devil's influence. The difference in the play is that Faustus chooses magic, the way to immediate satisfaction, instead of turning to God for comfort in surviving the hell that is on earth according to Mephistopheles.⁷⁶ The most powerful example one can find of the Devil and other demons acting as an instrument of God is when Mephistopheles himself informs Faustus on how horrible hell is, telling his story about how he came to be in hell:

Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,

⁷⁶ Marlowe, 13.

Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?
O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul!⁷⁷

Even the Devil himself is trying to get Faustus to realize what he is doing and understand what hell will be like for a person who condemns their life to eternal damnation by going against God.

Finally, one can see the error in Faustus' original contemplation of the scholarly path he would take. Again, Faustus was searching for the scholarship that would give him all the power in the world through knowledge. However, what Faustus failed to realize is that, while knowledge may be important, it is not what ultimately brings justification. Understandably, Faustus was not in search of being saved by God through Christ at the beginning of the play; however, by the end he is pleading for salvation. Luther would have said that justification by God relied solely on the "daily living" of faith.⁷⁸ "Justification...does not depend on what a person knows theologically,"⁷⁹ but true justification comes from experiencing knowledge through faith. Faustus turned away theology without realizing that true knowledge did not come from scholarship at all.

CONCLUSION

Through this comparison I have established a direct relationship between ideas in Luther's "theology of the cross" and themes in the play *Doctor Faustus*. Martin Luther's

⁷⁷ Marlowe, 13.

⁷⁸ Mary Solberg, Compelling Knowledge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 99.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

development of his theology began a way of thinking that influenced an entire period in time. He was the leader of a new way of thinking that brought people away from what they were supposed to believe about religion. Luther's theology particularly influenced the Christian faith in a significant way; however it also influenced other areas of thought as time went on. Around sixty years after Luther's thoughts were introduced, we find theatrical literature that is beginning to use theological thought within its lines. Not necessarily with Luther's theology in mind or with the similarities that *Doctor Faustus* shares with this theology, but plays were influenced by changing religious thought. Luther's theology did not develop the Lutheran faith immediately; it took time and many years of continued discernment by many people. With this understanding, the themes of Luther's "theology of the cross" appearing in *Doctor Faustus* shortly after being introduced and in a completely different part of the world, show the beginning of a revolutionary way of thinking of the Christian faith. It is with comparisons like these that one can see the true dynamic of the effects Luther had on the world of Christianity.

Bibliography

Althaus, Paul. The Theology of Martin Luther trans. Robert C. Schultz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966. This book is translated from German. The goal of this book according to the author is to establish a comprehensive overview of the elements of Luther's theology. His goal was to write a book that all people studying Luther could understand and gain a general knowledge of the theology. This book, for me, was especially helpful in the understanding of sin and the devil.

Understanding that Althaus gives a conservative approach to God's role in the world, I hope to have used this source only generally so as to establish the role of God in relationship with the devil. I did not want to convey that the only way of thinking of God is that God is in control of everything, but that God is present in the works of the Devil and is necessarily the omnipotent God.

Bainton, Roland. Here I Stand. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955. Bainton develops a great understanding of Luther and the development of Luther's theology in a readable and literary way. It is written more like a novel than it is a history book. This allowed for a better understanding of the material due to the writing style Bainton used. I used this book for the sole purpose of establishing an understanding of Luther's original inner struggles dealing with faith. The information that I found very useful was from his time studying to become a monk. During that time, when he visited Rome, he developed a frustration and anger with faith as he was being taught versus the way which he later developed that it should be.

D. Martin Luthers Werke. Briefwechsel, Weimar Ausgabe, 1930-1948. This source is printed in the German language so it was not used directly. The translation I used was from a quote used in the Althaus source that helps with the understanding of how God leads humans to righteousness by being hidden within the world. This German version of Luther's works has some matching references, however there are things included in the English and German versions that are not the same in both, thus the use of both in this paper.

Dictionary of Literary Biography, 1st ed., s.v. "Christopher Marlowe." I used the encyclopedia to just get a general understanding of the history of Christopher Marlowe's life and how he came in to the Elizabethan playwriting. I wanted to make sure that there was an understanding in this paper of who Marlowe was and where *Faustus* came from.

Encyclopedia of Religion. 2nd ed., vol. 8, s.v. "Martin Luther." The use of this encyclopedia was to get a general understanding of Martin Luther in a historical perspective. I wanted to learn more about his life and how he came to be a monk and consequently begin to develop the "theology of the cross." The information taken from this source does exactly that; it establishes a background of Luther for the reader.

Encyclopedia of the Renaissance. 1st ed., vol. 3, s.v. "Martin Luther." This encyclopedia was used to not only get background information on Luther but to also put him in a historical context. Luther and Marlowe are both considered to be from the Renaissance period, Marlowe being more closely associated with the Elizabethan era within that. I wanted to get a picture of Martin Luther not necessarily through the eyes of theology.

Hall, Douglas John. The Cross in Our Context. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. Douglas John Hall is emeritus Professor of Christian Theology at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He is also a widely known Christian theologian. I only used one chapter from his book; the chapter that dealt specifically with a general description of theology of the cross. I found this of particular value when comparing "theology of the cross" with "theology of glory" and the method in which Luther used to contrast the two. It was extremely helpful in developing the background of Luther's theology and its development

Kimbrough, Robert. "Christopher Marlowe." In The Predecessors of Shakespeare, edited by Terence P. Logan and Denzell S. Smith, 14. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973. This book contains essays about the Renaissance playwrights that came before Shakespeare. Each essay is written by a different author. They begin with a biographical section about the playwright then move into critical analyses of the plays that were written. There is a lot of reference to other articles and authors within the *Doctor Faustus* section of this article. However, the main concern I was dealing with was establishing the play as a controversial play at the time it was written. It was also intriguing that the article mentioned the main character being a product of the Renaissance and the Reformation, making reference to Luther.

Kirschbaum, Leo. "Marlowe's Faustus: A Reconsideration." The Review of English Studies 19, no. 75 (Jul., 1943): 229. This article begins by talking about Elizabethan drama and how each Elizabethan play establishes some world-view. It talks about how a play needs to be understood in its context; first that it is a play and its purpose is to get an audience member to believe what is being performed, and second, that the time in which it is presented is important. I only referenced one part of this article, but perhaps the most famously quoted in all other resources I found. It establishes *Doctor Faustus* as a Christian document, a fact that is important in my comparison.

Kramm, H.H. The Theology of Martin Luther. London: James Clarke & Co., 1947. H.H. Kramm, at the time of writing this book, was the Minister of the German Lutheran Church St. Mary in Savoy, London, and of the Lutheran Congregation at Oxford. The book moves fairly quickly through information regarding Luther's theology. The entirety of the book was not of utmost importance to my research. Thus, the information that I found relevant was in the sections on the doctrines of the nature of man and of salvation. With very brief descriptions of things like the

devil and justification, his descriptions are very understandable and get straight to the point. Through this book I found it very easy to understand complicated things within Luther's theology.

- Lohse, Bernhard. Martin Luther's Theology, ed. Roy A. Harrisville. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999. This book is a translation from German to English by the editor. Thus, while the textual content may not be exactly the same, the ideas expressed are those of the author. In Lohse's foreword he explains that this description of Martin Luther's theology is the first to evaluate the theology in historical context and address Luther's attitude toward the Jews. This is not of particular importance to this paper, as I focused on the chapters which would contain information related to the topics I was discussing. For this reason, I only used Part Three of the book, "Luther's Theology in Its Systematic Context." This section very easily laid out the topics relevant to my discussion and gave a very thorough description of all parts. More specifically I focused quite a bit on the sections of this book dealing with reason and faith and how it pertains to the play.
- Luther, Martin. Luther's Works, ed. Harold J. Grimm and Helmut T. Lehmann. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957. The works of Martin Luther are in German and in English, with different organization and through translation have explained things differently. The English version is what I most used for any quote I took from Luther himself. Due to the amount of volumes in Luther's Works, I relied mainly on references by the authors I was using for my paper. I used many different volumes that covered the topics that I was studying, again because I was relying on references by the other sources used. It is extremely helpful to see these things directly from the source and the context in which they come from. It was hard, however, to get a complete understanding of the context because of the size of each of the writings within the volumes.
- Marius, Richard. Martin Luther. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999. On top of being a Reformation scholar, Marius was an English and writing professor at Harvard University and also a very established writer himself. This book doesn't focus directly on Luther's theology but more on Luther's life. Obviously, to discuss Luther's life it is impossible to not include his theology, but the focus is on the development and what caused it. I was interested in getting more information about his trip to Rome, because I was able to give a general understanding from my education, but not to the extent I wanted. I used this book to retrieve that information and did not go any further into its contents.
- Mark 15.34 NIV (New International Version). I used the Bible to reference the part of the Passion story of Christ on the cross. The passage I used comes from Jesus crying out to God right before he dies; the only time that Jesus ever feels abandoned by God. It is interesting the comparison between this line and the one Faustus uses at the end of the play, both feeling abandoned by God but for different reasons.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus*. With an introduction by Simon Trussler. Drama Classics ed., 3-54. London: Nick Hern Books, 1996. Probably the most essential book that I used in this thesis, being that it is the play to which the comparison of Luther's theology is made. This particular copy of the play has the A-text and the B-text, as well as an introduction that is cited later. As explained in the paper, I used the A-text to be uniform with past studies. More importantly, the examples used in the comparison are from both texts, so choosing of one text is not of extreme importance. The introduction was extremely helpful in understanding the history of the Renaissance period, the writing of the play, the development of characters, the themes within the play and even the relationship to Luther. It was mainly helpful in the history of the play and how it was developed, and the context in which Marlowe was writing.

McGrath, Alister. Luther's Theology of the Cross. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985. This source was used very briefly in the discussion of justification and the humiliation of man. The section of the book that I used was dealing specifically with the righteousness of God and how that began Luther's discovery of the "theology of the cross." The focus is put on the sinful acts of humans being the works of God.

Solberg, Mary. Compelling Knowledge. Albany: University of New York Press, 1997. I only briefly used Solberg's book to make an important point about knowledge and faith. This is a great book to get an understanding of "theology of the cross" as well, however I relied more on the description in Hall's book. The reason for this was because the general understanding that I had of "theology of the cross" from other sources was simply reinforced by her description, therefore not need to reference her book in my description.