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## THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

By RUSSELL AND CLARE GOLDFARB

No critic in print has thoroughly interpreted the dramatic function of the seven deadly sins in Christopher Marlowe's play, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. The most significant oversight concerns Faustus' relation to the sins. Faustus is completely unaware that he has possessed or will be possessed by each one of the mortal sins, and interpretive criticism has missed the complex irony which results from Faustus' lack of self-knowledge. There has been important historical scholarship which places the sins in a religious setting, rather than in the dramatic context of Marlowe's play, and for background purposes such work is relevant to the present study. For example, in "The Orthodox Christian Framework of Marlowe's *Faustus*," Joseph Westlund notes that the presentation of the seven deadly sins recalls similar exhibitions in Catholic morality plays which were popular during Marlowe's youth.<sup>1</sup> Marlowe was familiar with medieval popular literature, and strains of Catholic thought run through *Dr. Faustus*. But so do strains of Reformation thought. Both C. L. Barber and Clifford Davidson have shown undeniably Protestant aspects of the play.<sup>2</sup> Since the play combines Catholic and Protestant material, it expresses a religious system which is at best fluid and a religious attitude which is in spirit eclectic. And eclectic is precisely the word to describe Marlowe's approach towards the seven deadly sins.

In fact it would have been difficult for any Renaissance man to approach this subject with authority. When scholars, including church scholars, used the term "deadly sins," they frequently mean "cardinal" sins. (Deadly sins are mortal: they may lead to damnation and the death of the soul; cardinal

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Westlund, "The Orthodox Christian Framework of Marlowe's *Faustus*," *SEL*, III (Spring, 1968), 200.

<sup>2</sup> C. L. Barber, "'The form of Faustus' fortunes good or bad,'" *TDR*, VIII (Summer, 1964), 92-119; Clifford Davidson, "Doctor Faustus of Wittenberg," *SP*, LIX (July, 1962), 514-523.

sins are simply principal vices.) In the British Isles there was a lingering tradition of an eightfold scheme of sins; the continent had a sevenfold sequence. When such different authorities as John Cassian, Gregory the Great, and St. Thomas wrote about the seven or eight sins, they arranged them in differing orders. Clearly the question of authority was (and is) thorny. But although theologians dispute certain particulars about the sins, there are areas of agreement.

Both scholarly and popular writers agree that pride is the chief sin, for it signifies rebellion against God. As Morton W. Bloomfield writes in his excellent history, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, "Pride meant rebellion, dangerous independent thinking, setting up one's own interests as supreme; meant disobedience, upsetting the divinely appointed order, and—above all—ultimately heresy. So it was that to medieval order and discipline, pride appeared as the worst of all the sins and the root of all evil."<sup>3</sup> According to Gregory the Great, "There are four marks by which every kind of pride of the arrogant betrays itself; either when they think that their good is from themselves, or if they believe it to be from above, yet they think that it is due to their own merits; or when they boast of having what they have not; or despise others and wish to appear the exclusive possessors of what they have."<sup>4</sup> Pride, to Gregory, was the mother of all the other sins, and he felt that each chief sin grew out of a preceding one. On this point Thomas Aquinas differed from Gregory. St. Thomas did not feel the order of the sins was particularly important; therefore, in the *Summa theologica* the sins do not grow out of preceding ones. Of course Gregory and Thomas did agree that covetousness, envy, wrath, gluttony, sloth, and lechery represented turning away from God and virtue. They were also in essential agreement on definition.

In brief, covetousness is an excessive desire for gain or power. Envy, an endeavor to surpass those above oneself. Wrath, the taking of unjust revenge. Gluttony, the body's inordinate appetite. Sloth, a dryness of the spirit, a sluggishness of the

<sup>3</sup> Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Michigan State College Press, 1952), p. 75. This work is a scholarly study of the seven sins in medieval English literature (exclusive of drama) to Spenser.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory, *Moral.* xxiii. 6 in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, II-II, quaestio 162.

mind which neglects to do good, an oppressive sorrow which so weighs upon a man's mind that he wants to do nothing. Lechery, and kind of surfeit, though primarily venereal concupiscence and pleasure. Excess relates all of the sins, and in Christopher Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*' excessive desire for everything he wants is one sign of his association with the seven deadly sins. From beginning to end their parade is a parade of his mortal vices.

The choral prologue forewarns of Faustus' fate and shows in microcosm the sins which lead to that fate.<sup>5</sup> "Self-conceit" (l. 20) or pride has caused him to "mount above his reach" (l. 21); covetousness and envy have caused him to excel "all whose sweet delight" it is to dispute theology (ll. 18-19). Sin grows from Faustus' inordinate desire to be more than man until "glutted" (l. 24) with knowledge he "surfeits" (l. 25) upon necromancy and prefers magic above everything else; he becomes guilty of sloth because he is unable to do good. Fallen away from God, Faustus at the beginning of the play is already guilty of the desire to sin. He is actually guilty of pride and sloth and prepared to commit himself whole-heartedly to the other sins.

Act one begins with Faustus reinforcing and expanding the choral suggestions. Looking for an art worthy of his wit, he sets aside medicine, law and theology. None can give him power: medicine cannot give the power over life and death; law is too servile; theology, too confining in its demand that man "must sin, / and so consequently die" (I, i, 45-46). Instead of these studies, Faustus chooses necromancy and rejoices in the decision because through magic he can be a god. He confesses, "How am I glutted with conceit of this!" (I, i, 79). Pride, avarice, covetousness, and envy characterize Faustus' words; the supreme objects of his action and love are self-conceit, not self-knowledge; he desires to be God, not to serve Him. He actually yearns for a state of sloth where spirits fetch and carry for him, thus resolving him "of all ambiguities" (I, i, 81), of all physical and mental acts.

After fewer than ninety-five lines, the audience is aware of

<sup>5</sup> References to *Doctor Faustus* in our text are from Irving Ribner's edition, *The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (New York, 1963).

Faustus' involvement with the seven deadly sins. Faustus is blind to his nature, but others in the play see. In fact, they manipulate Faustus because they know his weaknesses. While the Good Angel gives the highly educated, brilliant, scholarly Doctor Faustus the same advice he would give to a simple peasant—"Read, read the Scriptures" (I, i, 74)—the Bad Angel appeals more subtly to Faustus, he could be Jove on earth. The Bad Angel baits Faustus with pride and covetousness, and Faustus is hooked by his words.

Exalted by a vision of power, Faustus is further manipulated by his friend Valdes, who is more articulate than the Bad Angel. Valdes weaves a glorious web of sin as he appeals to Faustus' pride: "these books, thy wit, and our experience / Shall make all nations to canonize us" (I, i, 120-121). He goes on to compare the spirits they will command to lions (I, i, 125), a traditional animal reference to pride.<sup>6</sup> Valdes appeals to envy by telling Faustus he will be master to those in power now; to lust in his similes of women and unwedded maids "Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows / Than in the white breasts of the queen of love" (I. i. 133-134). In short, Valdes knows his man.

The first scene, then, points up Faustus' desire to commit the seven deadly sins and his yearning to transform desire for sin into the reality of sin. The Bad Angel and "sweet" Valdes tempt Faustus to revel in a life that will damn him. The last counselor, Cornelius, knows that the study of magic will make Faustus vow to study nothing else (I, i, 137-138). Thus magic will lead Faustus to sloth: he will be unable to do good; he will be unable to turn to God.

The second scene, though short, contrasts with the first. The servant Wagner parodies Faustus' learning with stilted philosophic language, and he jests about sin: "I am by nature phlegmatic, slow to wrath, and prone to lechery—to love, I would say" (I, ii, 16-17). Two scholars who sincerely worry about Faustus' soul contrast directly with the two magicians, Valdes and Cornelius. Like the Good Angel, the scholars ineffectively try to reclaim a man who has already "fall'n into that damnèd art" (I, ii, 26).

<sup>6</sup> See "The Association of Animals and Sins" in Bloomfield.

When Faustus practices that art, the art of conjuring, he invokes Mephistophilis and asks for twenty-four years to live "in all voluptuousness" (I, iii, 92). He desires power to work his wrath by slaying his enemies (I, iii, 96), power to satisfy his envy, avarice and pride:

. . . I'll be great emperor of the world  
 And make a bridge through the moving air,  
 To pass the ocean with a band of men.  
 I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore.  
 And make that country continent to Spain,  
 And both contributory to my crown. (I, iii, 104-109)

The next scene parallels the relationship between Mephistophilis and Faustus by the comic play between Wagner and Robin. Wagner, in the role of conjurer, thinks Robin "would give his soul to the devil," and he asks the clown to be bound in service for seven years (I, iv). Both Robin and Faustus are gulled into contracts by ignorance: Faustus lacks self-knowledge in that while he desires to control the seven deadly sins, he fails to understand that his intense desire will weaken his moral fibre and allow the seven sins to control him. Robin, on a lower level, simply fears the threats of Wagner. The play will show that Mephistophilis banks upon Faustus' ignorance of his susceptibility to sin, whereas Wagner banks upon Robin's ignorance of the power of Banio and Belcher, the speechless devils who scare the clown and amuse the audience.

The stage now is set for the actual bargain between Faustus and the devil. As Act two begins Faustus in his study wrathfully turns from God in heaven and declares, "The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite, / Wherein is fixed the love of Beelzebub" (II, i, 11-12). The Bad Angel continues to feed Faustus' "own appetite" with promises of honor and wealth; Mephistophilis promises surfeit, "more than thou hast wit to ask" (II, i, 46). Upon this appeal to his gluttony, Faustus stabs his arm to seal the bargain in blood. To assuage any last minute indecision Mephistophilis fetches devils to offer crowns and rich apparel. These symbols which evoke pride, envy, and covetousness delight Faustus' mind. To delight his body and satisfy his lust, Faustus asks Mephistophilis for a wife: "For I am wanton and lascivious, / And cannot live without a wife" (II, i, 140-141). The devil refuses and pacifies him by offering

courtesans instead. Such an offer encourages Faustus' lust while at the same time it precludes the virtue attached to the sacrament of marriage.

Up to this point of the play the seven sins mainly appeal to and appear in Faustus' imagination. But now a strongly ironic section offers a physical presentation of the seven deadly sins. That Marlowe has made Faustus a harbor for the sins is clear to the audience, and we know that Faustus in effect sees a parade of his own vices. Further, the audience is aware that Faustus has had insights into his character at several moments before Act two, scene two. "How am I gluttoned with conceit of this," Faustus gloated at the prospect of power (I, i, 79). More recently Faustus admitted his gluttony by preferring his own appetite before service to God. To Mephistophilis he confessed lechery as the motive behind his request for a wife and he will comment again on his sensual appetite when he recalls that there were times he would have killed himself "Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair" (II, ii, 25). In spite of these insights, in spite of the fact that Beelzebub allows Faustus to question the personified sins "of their names and dispositions," Faustus is blind to the sins as they reflect his own sins. The audience, however, sees Faustus participate in the tableau of the seven deadly sins. And Faustus perversely enjoys his own damnation.

The telling irony of the scene begins as Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistophilis prepare the tableau. They appear in response to Faustus' wavering call for help from Christ. At sight of them, Faustus remembers his blood oath and vows never to look again to heaven. Wrath carries him away as he promises

Never to name God, or to pray to him,  
To burn his Scriptures, slay his ministers,  
And make my spirits pull his churches down.

(II, ii, 98-100)

Gratified by this response, the devils reward him with the spectacle of the sins. Faustus settles himself to enjoy the show and in anticipation he comments, "That sight will be as pleasant to me as Paradise was to Adam / the first day of his creation" (II, ii, 106-107).

Unconsciously still wavering between heaven and hell,

Faustus uses figurative language involving the Scriptures. Lucifer immediately catches this dangerous drift and tells Faustus, "Talk not of Paradise or creation, but mark the show" (II, ii, 108). By marking the hellish show and not dwelling on Paradise or creation, Faustus becomes guilty of sin in general, for he turns away from God. A second interpretation of Faustus' simile leads to the central irony of the scene: Faustus' blindness to the seven deadly sins as reflective of his own corrupted soul. He compares himself to Adam who on the first day of his creation was a perfect creature, one made in the likeness of God. His paradise was a perfect place where Man and nature were part of one harmonious order, a complement to one another. Faustus too complements his "pleasant" sight. Like Adam, Faustus receives pleasure when he is visually presented with "paradise." Faustus is a reverse Adam, and therein lies the irony.

Faustus' interview with the seven deadly sins begins, then, as an ironic dialogue between self and soul. Critics have seen the action, however, as only a very pedestrian affair. To Joseph Westlund it appears in "distinctly uninspiring terms."<sup>7</sup> To J. B. Steane, "The tension is allowed to dissipate itself in the thin naiveté of the Deadly Sins. Marlowe is in fact disappointing."<sup>8</sup> Steane allows that the "picture-book evil which cannot be taken very seriously" does give "dramatic perspective" to the true evil in the play, "but on the whole the scene is regrettable. It is in this sort of thing, mere diversion, that the integrity of the play is compromised."<sup>9</sup> But the scene certainly should be taken very seriously, for it adds an ironic dimension to Marlowe's dramaturgy and it provides an insight to Faustus' understanding of his own character.

When Faustus speaks to the sins, they appear neither in the order established by Gregory the Great (*superbia, ira, invidia, avaritia, acedia, gula, luxuria*) nor by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa theologica* II-II, quaestiones 35 ff. (*acedia, invidia, avaritia, vana gloria, gula, luxuria, ira—superbia* is here regarded as the root of all sin). One notes how the 1604 "A" text of *Doctor Faustus* suggests Marlowe's familiarity with the

<sup>7</sup> "The Orthodox Christian Framework of Marlowe's Faustus," 201.

<sup>8</sup> J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge, England, 1964), p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.



Gregorian order in the way Sloth's speech differs from the version of the 1616 "B" text:

"A" 1604

I am Sloth. I was begotten on a sunny bank, where I have lain ever since; and you have done me great injury to bring me from thence. Let me be carried thither again by Gluttony and Lechery. I'll not speak an other word for a king's ransom.

"B" 1616

Heigh-ho! I am Sloth. I was begotten on a sunny bank. Heigh-ho! I'll not speak a word more for a king's ransom.

Unlike St. Thomas, Gregory stressed particular inter-relations among the sins and thus their order was important to him. Sloth's being carried off by Gluttony and Lechery supports the Gregorian emphasis on *acedia* being followed by *gula* and *luxuria*.

Another 1616 variation of passing interest occurs when Gluttony, telling of his pedigree, speaks of his godmother:

"A" 1604

O but my godmother, she was a jolly gentlewoman, and well beloved in every good town and city; her name was Mistress Margery March-beer.

"B" 1616

But my godmother, O, she was an ancient gentlewoman; her name was Margery March-beer.

The extra phrase in the "A" text involves the audience and perhaps would cause them to identify their own gluttony. The "B" text with the phrase omitted causes the audience to concentrate strictly on Faustus' relation to the sin.

One role Faustus plays during the presentation is that of master of ceremonies. He questions each of the conjured spirits and directs them on and off the stage. In Acts four and five when Faustus himself conjures there are explicit directions that no one is to speak to the spirits: Alexander and his paramour appear before Charles, the German Emperor, but Charles is told, "Your grace demand no questions of the king, / But in dumb silence let them come and go" (IV, ii, 46-47). Helen of Troy passes before two or three scholars, and they are told, "Be silent then, for danger is in words" (V, i, 25). And yet Faustus questions the proper shapes and like-

nesses of the seven deadly sins. He comments on them—"Thou art a proud knave indeed," directs them—"Out envious wretch!" and curses them—"Choke thyself, glutton." The significance of Faustus' participation in the scene is this: despite his involvement with the sins Faustus remains completely detached from them. He fails to identify with a single one of the sins, and thus we have the irony of a man corrupted by the seven sins failing to recognize his corruptors. The man who was "glutted . . . with learning's golden gifts" (Prologue, l. 24) ironically lacks self-knowledge.

The sins return to hell after they have told their stories, and Faustus tells Lucifer, "O, how this sight doth delight my soul!" (II, ii. 163) Lucifer picks up a word dear to Faustus and skillfully turns his thoughts to hell: "But Faustus, in hell is all manner of delight" (II, ii, 164). Faustus immediately asks to see hell, and Lucifer gives assurance he will send for him at midnight. Instead of alerting Faustus to the degradation of evil, the seven deadly sins have whetted his appetite.

Act two ends as Faustus' conjuring is parodied in a comic scene by Robin, who is barely literate. The comic scenes actually degrade the art of magic by subjecting it to a special kind of ridicule. In the beginning of the play magic is exalted: "These metaphysics of magicians / And necromantic books are heavenly" (I, i, 49-50). First the learned Faustus conjured, then the clever Wagner, a servant, conjured, and now the dullwitted Robin practices his magical skill before Dick, a horse courser. The declining respectability of those who conjure obliquely comments on the increasingly disreputable Doctor Faustus.

The remaining three acts show Faustus' deepening involvement with the seven deadly sins. Mephistophilis, anxious to corrupt him, is pleased when Faustus says,

Whilst I am here on earth, let me be cloyed  
With all things that delight the heart of man.  
My four and twenty years of liberty  
I'll spend in pleasure and in dalliance. (III. i. 59-62)

For pleasure and dalliance he then goes to Rome, where Mephistophilis tells him to "devise what best contents thy mind / By cunning in thine art to cross the Pope" (III, i, 80-81).

The action takes place at holy Peter's feast in the papal residence. The Pope, his cardinals, and Bruno, a Saxon, are easy prey, for they themselves lean towards sin. Bruno envies the pontifical state; the Pope covets German authority; the Cardinals apparently cannot resist Faustus' demand that they be struck with sloth (III, i, 116). Further, the Pope orders that Bruno's rich triple crown be put in the church's treasury, a show of avarice; clearly the Pope desires secular power as intensely as Bruno envies clerical power. The Roman scenes add to the irony of the play and serve as a backdrop against which the sins in Faustus' mind are translated into action.

Blasphemous overtones are at once apparent as Mephistophilis parodies the laying on of hands in order to make Faustus invisible. Yet even before Faustus provokes Adrian at dinner, the Pope is moved to wrath by the Cardinals. "Hale them to prison," he orders. "Lade their limbs with gyves" (III, i, 52). "Cursed be your souls to hellish misery" (III, ii, 54). When Faustus taunts the Pope by snatching away food and striking him, he is in turn cursed: "Damned be this soul for ever for this deed" (III, ii, 92). Amidst the ruins of the feast, following the Pope's exit, Mephistophilis and Faustus toss fireworks at the chanting Friars. The slapstick here is of a Laurel and Hardy quality.

Burlesque and parody juxtaposed with straightforward blasphemy are continued in the following comic scene with Robin, Dick, and the Vintner. The trick of Robin holding a cup while the Vintner searches Dick and then switching the cup with Dick as Robin is searched is pure slapstick. When the Vintner catches on, Robin calls the Devil. Whereas the Pope a few moments ago cried to Faustus, "Damned be this soul for ever for this deed," Mephistophilis, deeply annoyed, appears "To purge the rashness of this cursèd deed" (III, iii, 40). Faustus was cursed for his knavery with bell, book, and candle; Robin and Dick are turned into a dog and an ape respectively, traditional animal symbols, incidentally, of envy and sloth.<sup>10</sup> The harmony of tragic and comic elements is apparent in this scene when, for the first time, Mephistophilis appears in other than the Faustus episodes. His appearance

<sup>10</sup> See Bloomfield, Appendix I.

serves two purposes: first, the parallel with the Pope intensifies the blasphemy and parody of papal dignity; second, Mephistophilis announces his growing power over all realms of the play, tragic and comic. As Faustus plunges headlong into sin, Mephistophilis' presence grows stronger.

Act four opens with a choral recapitulation of Faustus' pleasure among rarest things and royal courts. The chorus tells of his return home and subsequent journey to the palace of Emperor Carolus the Fifth. Here his pride is glutted with envy of others and he is feasted among noblemen. Called before the German Emperor, Faustus receives much flattery at the court. When taunted by several gentlemen of the court, Faustus conjures up a vision of Alexander and his paramour. In return for his disbelief, one of the gentlemen, Benvolio, receives horns. Faustus' wrath would go further, for he desires to call up a pack of hounds to hunt Benvolio, but the Emperor intercedes. However, Benvolio and his friends seek revenge. After the mock beheading of Faustus which follows, Benvolio and Martino divide up the body of the "dead" magician, but soon a very much alive and wrathful Faustus torments the frightened men. After suffering Faustus' outrage, they repair to the woods to live in obscurity.

Faustus' desire for revenge pales beside his realization that time is running out. Nevertheless, on his way to Wittenberg he delays to trick an avaricious horse courser and is soon in the midst of a comic scene which contrasts sharply with his growing mood of despair. The horse courser is duped into pulling off Faustus' leg, and the burlesque halts only with Wagner's appearance to call Faustus to the Duke of Anholt. The scene points up Faustus' degradation by showing the sloth into which he has sunk. Unable to do good, unable to do anything worthwhile, Faustus' power is little more than second-rate magic and burlesque in Act four. In return for his soul, he has received a bag of tricks.

Before Faustus arrives at the Court of the Duke of Anholt, all the comic characters of the play arrive at a tavern. All have received some injury from Faustus, and the injuries have parodied some of the seven deadly sins. The horse courser episode in which Faustus received money for an apparition of a horse parodies avarice. A carter had also met Faustus on the

road to Wittenberg and Faustus ate all of the man's hay, a parody of gluttony. Faustus' sins have degenerated from the dream of the "golden fleece that yearly stuffs old Phillip's treasury" to his actually fleecing a horse courser of forty dollars; he goes from St. Peter's feast to a feast on the hay of a carter. These parodies introduce the last scene of the fourth act. Now a Duke, not an Emperor, must feed Faustus' pride and no Alexander appears at Faustus' command, but a dish of ripe grapes for the Duke's pregnant wife. Finally, instead of Benvolio and Martino, gentlemen of the court, Robin, Dick, the carter, the horse-courser, and clowns are bewitched by Faustus. Act four serves to transform the seven deadly sins from the relatively grandiose visions of the first two acts into parodies and comic representations. Even Faustus is a parody of his former self, symbolically without a head or a leg, a fragmented man destroyed by the seven sins.

It is fitting that Act five begins with a feast served by the devils, a feast where Faustus' gluttony is fed by "such belly-cheer / As Wagner in his life ne'er saw the like" (V, i, 7-8). At the conclusion of this feast, Mephistophilis brings in Helen of Troy for Faustus' friends to leer at; then he brings her in again for Faustus alone. It is also fitting that the play ends soon after, for lechery is the last of the sins in the Gregorian order and last in the tableau of sins Faustus witnessed in Act two. Structurally and symbolically, the appearance of Helen completes Faustus' damnation. But before Helen comes to him Faustus gets one more chance to save his soul. An Old Man appears and calls attention to "a vial full of precious grace" (V, i, 62), a gift which moves Faustus close to repentance. Mephistophilis puts a stop to Faustus' wavering with a show of wrath.

Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul  
For disobedience to my sovereign lord.  
Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh. (V, i, 74-76)

Faustus quickly reasserts his vow to Lucifer and asks Helen "To glut the longing of my heart's desire" (V, i, 91). With Helen's kiss his soul flies away. Sorrowing for good but incapable of doing good, Faustus again commits the sin of sloth by turning to Helen. Pride, avarice, envy, lust, and wrath moti-

vate his complex desire to be Paris, to sack Wittenberg, combat weak Menelaus, wound Achilles in the heel, "And then return to Helen for a kiss" (V, i, 106-111). In contrast to the sinful Faustus is the Old Man, a spirit of Protestantism, who defeats the devils by his faith alone and flies to God (V, i, 124-127).

Faustus, who surrendered to the devil, must descend to Lucifer. On the last night, ironically, his friends are worried about the state of his physical health. In reply to a suggestion that physicians can cure Faustus, the Third Scholar offers the carrion comfort, "'Tis but a surfeit sir; fear nothing'" (V, ii, 36). The scholar refers to the probability that Faustus overate at the feast he gave in his study, but the word "surfeit" evokes a response from Faustus that is more to the point. He answers, "A surfeit of deadly sin that hath damned both body and soul" (V, ii, 37). Faustus accurately diagnoses both his physical and spiritual illness; a surfeit of deadly sin has indeed damned him. The insight, however, the recognition, comes too late. "Faustus' offence can ne'er be pardoned" (V, ii, 41). Mephistophilis and the Bad Angel taunt him with the promise of torment as Hell is discovered. "Let thine eyes with horror stare / Into that vast perpetual torture-house," says the Bad Angel (V, ii, 113-114). The sight of gluttons being fed with "sops of flaming fire" must be a cruel and ironic reminder to Faustus of the feast devils recently served him for his enjoyment, a parody in a way of another last supper.

When the clock nears the hour Faustus must descend, he shrieks for forgiveness. But it is God's turn to bend his angry brows and show his heavy wrath. "See where God / Stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows" (V, ii, 147-148). One of the sins which possessed Faustus is now ironically the instrument of Heavenly punishment; Faustus' last call to God accentuates His wrath: "My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!" (V, ii, 184).

Throughout the entire play Marlowe has used the seven deadly sins as instruments of damnation, irony, and drama-turgy. After presenting a microcosm of the sins in a choral prologue, Marlowe has Faustus, already guilty of pride and sloth, eager to commit the sins of avarice, envy, wrath, gluttony, and lechery. Faustus' tempters play on his desires, and

his strongest tempter, Mephistophilis, whets his appetite by presenting the tableau of the sins. By Act three the audience believes Faustus actually guilty of all the sins, and he is at the pinnacle of his black power. Act four begins his descent from the pinnacle. His knowledge is parodied by churls and his participation in the seven deadly sins becomes a burlesque. Faustus' final descent into Hell is preceded by his actively practicing two of the lowest sins, gluttony and lechery. His degradation is over; his damnation complete. Faustus fully realizes that he is surfeited with the seven deadly sins only when it is too late. Throughout the play, Faustus' tragic blindness to his own nature, his lack of self-knowledge, has created the central irony, an irony intensified by Marlowe's dramatic use of the seven deadly sins.

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