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influenced by the Erasmian humanistic tradition**

Harvey R. Leavitt

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A STUDY OF THE RELIGIOUS POSITION OF CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE
AS INFLUENCED BY THE ERASMIAN HUMANISTIC TRADITION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of English
and the
Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies
University of Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by 784
Harvey R. Leavitt
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Accepted for the faculty of the College of Graduate
Studies of the University of Omaha, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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Chapter I

The Humanistic Tradition From the Early Renaissance to the Age of Marlowe

1

Introduction

Christopher Marlowe still remains a largely undefined dramatist in the twentieth century. Scholarship in the past fifty years has shed much light on the historical facts of his life, but there has been little effort to place his dramatic output in the stream of English letters. He remains to many a curiosity, both in the style and the content of his works. The facts of Marlowe's life, discovered by scholars, have created as many problems as they have solved. Fragmentary evidence has been utilized in an effort to prove Marlowe an atheist, while other fragments have been used in an effort to prove he was a Catholic and still other evidence sees Marlowe as an Anglican in the service of the Queen. All of the conjecture has some basis in fact, but by the contradictory nature of the allegations, Marlowe could not possibly have been all three.

To seek answers to the dilemma provided by the conflicting evidence, the logical place to search would seem to be Marlowe's dramatic production. It alone stands as reflection of Marlowe's mind; imperfect as a total view

of Marlowe's perspective of man's and God's relationship, there seems no better manner of hypothesizing his stand on theological questions. His output spans the mature years of his life, and patterns emerge in the plays that remain consistent throughout his productive years. These consistent elements would seem to provide a basis for making judgments on the mind of Marlowe.

In seeking the answers to the question of Marlowe's religious stance, M. M. Mahood views Marlowe as a student of humanism, and observes that his plays are an outgrowth of his observations of humanism as a fallacy.¹ Mahood summarizes the fallacy as she sees it depicted in the Elizabethan dramatists:

Natural man, growing aware of his insufficiency, likewise begins to crave the completion of his experience in the knowledge of spiritual worlds. Here he runs his head against a wall erected by himself; his vaunted self-sufficiency prevents him from putting any faith in that interpenetration of the natural and spiritual worlds which is implicit in Christian doctrine. Deprived of his self-esteem, he swings rapidly from his assertion of man's greatness independent of God to the other blasphemy of denying human greatness altogether. The titanic hero shrinks to the plaything of malignant powers which are more capricious than just.²

¹M. M. Mahood, "The Tragedy of Renaissance Humanism," in Shakespeare's Contemporaries, ed. M. Bluestone and N. Rabkin (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1964), p. 104.

²Ibid.

As Mahood sees it, the plays of Marlowe represent the decay of the humanistic movement. She views the heroes of Marlowe's works as denied seekers who turn to fatalism when they cannot completely reconcile the roles of man and God.

But another reading of the plays of Marlowe seems to be suggested by Mahood's comments. Marlowe's heroes do not necessarily turn to fatalism in their encounters with God. In their search for knowledge about their physical and spiritual worlds some men see themselves as the representatives of mankind, and their approach to God becomes that of the challenger. These men, and they seem to be represented in the plays of Marlowe by Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus, operate at the fringes of the human experience, seeking to define the spheres of interest controlled by man and by God. They seek to find the point at which natural law and divine law come into conflict, thereby delineating the areas in which man can find mastery and the areas in which God remains master. Through their challenge these adventurers in the quest for human knowledge open new vistas of experience for their fellow man and extend the humanistic ideal.

Obviously these men cannot operate within the realm of traditional and orthodox religious experience. They do not deny the existence of God, but the view of God that emerges is directed toward a deistic point of view. The

heroes Marlowe creates see the spheres of man and God as separate, but somewhere in the gulf between the two spheres lies a meeting point at which the two forces collide. They seek to find this point so that roles can be circumscribed. Seeking two separate spheres of interest, in effect, denies an interpenetration of the worlds of God and man. The approach is rational and reasoned, always dignifying man and always assuming that man can create order and behavioristic standards that will reflect the capability of man in organizing his community under standards that will create harmony and goodwill among men. This became a denial of orthodox religious experience which concerned itself with dogma and ritual instead of the relationships among men. In Tamburlaine and The Jew Of Malta Marlowe deals with this theme. He criticizes the role of orthodox religions because they have become perversions of their original purposes, creating ethical and humane relationships among men, and in an ironic tone Marlowe reflects on their failings. Again, there is no denial of orthodox religions, only the implication that they have failed in their present emphasis, and that by returning to a fundamental behavioristic emphasis they can reclaim their role in the community of men.

In his point of view Marlowe is not an original, for he is dependent upon the tradition of humanism brought to England by Erasmus. Though Marlowe is a liberal in the

tradition, he still remains tied to the tradition that Erasmus established. Erasmus, in his position on the frontiers of religion, in his dislike of dogmatic orthodoxy, in his behavioristic emphasis stressing Christ as a model of behavior, in his use of a living tradition stressing ethical and humane relationships between men, and in the essential unity of all men through these principles, is the precursor of Marlowe. Marlowe belongs to the liberal interpreters of the Erasmian tradition because of the thought prevailing in the England of his day, and because of independent conclusions he arrived at that were forward looking in light of the relative intolerance to religious attitudes based on behavioristic standards in sixteenth-century England. Marlowe's views are merely an extension of the Erasmian position on behavior, perhaps without the emphasis on a Christ model, and on Erasmus' criticism of the church as an institution that had lost sight of its original goals.

In seeking Marlowe's role as an extension of the humanistic ideal, it is necessary to first define humanism and the role it played in shaping the mind of Renaissance England. After defining humanism and placing it in the perspective of English society, as it was brought to England by Erasmus, the tradition must necessarily be followed through the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary, so that the developing pattern of English humanism

can be seen as a force that was transmitted to the mind of Marlowe. Further, the special forces that operated during the reign of Elizabeth must be examined so that the liberal position that Marlowe represented can be reconciled with the national purposes, both religious and political, that Elizabeth maintained for Great Britain.

To define the position of Marlowe working from his plays, a chronological approach was used. Tamburlaine, an early play, presents the seed of both the themes: man as a challenger to God in his search for reasoned knowledge, and the anti-orthodox theme that seeks to reestablish the church as a leader in behaviorism. The Jew of Malta, following in the chronological sequence, further develops the anti-orthodoxy theme. And Dr. Faustus, the latest of the plays, examines in detail the theme of man as a challenger.

In this treatment a consistent pattern of development occurs, and it seems that something more than accident was operating to create the view of Marlowe that emerges from the works. The Marlowe that emerges in an examination of his works is unconventional, liable to the kind of criticism his enemies directed toward him, but more devoted to the humanistic ideal and the ethical relationships between men than he has formerly been credited. If he seems a rather conventional twentieth-century man, it is a tribute to the far-reaching mind that explored the relationship of

men to their God and their church, and whose ideas seem more relevant today than to this own contemporaries.

2

The History of Humanism

Like the greater movement which threatens to engulf it, the Renaissance, defining humanism becomes a process of extrication from a body of thought that surrounds and penetrates its resolution of man's place in the scheme of the universe. That a definition of humanism is conspicuously absent from the works of scholars in the field is a reflection of the complexity of the problem rather than a criticism of the scholarly endeavors. Any attempt at definition stumbles over the encroachments of a body of biases, apologies for biases, and all of the strangely contradictory forces at work within the broad boundaries of humanism as an intellectual movement. To attempt to succeed where so many others have failed is not the force that drives a student of the period, but to delineate one of the forces at work within the humanistic sphere and to prove its existence as a force with which men had to come to grips is a worthwhile objective.

In an examination of the broad currents of the humanistic movement, which seems incumbent though the approach desultory, the first great touchstone of scholarship for the modern era, Jacob Burckhardt's The Civilization of the

Renaissance in Italy, cannot be overlooked with its conception of a rebirth and revitalization process coupled to the rediscovery of the works of ancient Greece and Rome and the chronological limitations set for the Renaissance in Italy, the book set in motion the intense scholarly activity which the twentieth century has brought to the field. Burckhardt's seminal study set off the meteoric rise of activity because it took a firm position, a position which stated rather unequivocally that the Renaissance was a distinct break with the past, had its beginnings in fourteenth-century Italy and was clearly declining by the end of the fifteenth century. Burckhardt's work did not have incendiary qualities, for scholars assimilated and digested its content from its publication in 1860. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, J. A. Symonds', Renaissance in Italy appeared, reinforcing the theories of Burckhardt in a detailed seven volume study. If the undertakings of Burckhardt and Symonds had remained untouched by scholars, the knowledge of the Renaissance would have been greatly expanded. But the twentieth century, with an awakening interest in Medieval scholarship, had charted new directions. As new discoveries of the middle ages came into scholarly focus, the tightly circumscribed world that Burckhardt had envisioned slowly began crumbling. The forces at work in the middle ages were discovered to be potent forces in the

Renaissance cosmos.

It is not the purpose of this study to explore all of the scholarship and the disagreements that have emerged since the publication of Burckhardt's work. It does, somehow, seem necessary to synthesize the conflicting views that arise out of a study of the Renaissance, not so much for the sake of creating unanimity as for creating a working tool.

It is not so important to name the opposing forces as to give a view of the polemic factors that have been created by Burckhardt's work. On the one hand we have seen the constant reinforcement of Burckhardt's theories of abrupt change coupled to a rebirth of the classics. Countering this view is the staunch medievalist view that the Renaissance was merely the flowering of a movement which had its beginnings at least as far back as the twelfth century.³ Hovering between the extremes are Douglas Bush, Wallace Ferguson and Paul Kristeller, scholars who recognize the forces of medieval thought, but who also believe in Burckhardt's conception of a uniqueness for the Renais-

³For a detailed view of this position see: Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (London, 1948), and Charles H. Haskinds, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1927 and 1955), pp. VII-IX, 3-12.

sance period.⁴

The compulsion to detail the conflicting forces is strong, but the necessity to maintain a perspective is far stronger. The underlying reasons for investigating the polemical structure of the criticism is first to arrive at a chronological limitation for the period. The synthesizers, particularly Kristeller and Ferguson, cautiously reinforce the dating that Burckhardt gives the Renaissance -- 1300 to 1600.⁵ While dating of the period is not an end in itself, it does sufficiently limit the period under investigation to make an inquiry a more precise matter. And while the study of three centuries of the complex multi-directional flow of Western Civilization is certainly an investigation of selectivity and bias, the direction of human behavior and thought processes can be charted in

⁴Douglas Bush, "The Renaissance and English Humanism: Modern Theories of the Renaissance," in The Renaissance Medieval or Modern? ed. Karl H. Dannenfeldt (Boston, 1959), pp. 86 ff. Bush professes his sympathy for the views of the Medievalists who contend the Renaissance is an extension of the middle ages, but his efforts at synthesizing the conflicting views in this work belie his sympathies.

⁵Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Interpretation of the Renaissance: Suggestions for a Synthesis," in The Renaissance Medieval or Modern? ed. Karl H. Dannenfeldt (Boston, 1959), p. 103 and Paul O. Kristeller, Renaissance Thoughts II (New York, 1965), p. 2.

some limited fashion.

Some cognizance must be taken of the more practical matters of civilization before the basis of this work, the philosophical and moral overtones of the age, consume all of our attention. Passing attention is required of the economic forces that helped shape the age. The decline of feudalism and the rise of embryonic capitalistic structures were beginning to be felt as movements in the civilization of Western Europe. The bureaucratic decay of the church as an institution, while not a new process, became a matter of increased concern to the laity. Coupled to these elements was the rising awareness of a broader world, a world of divergent nations and peoples who now had means of transportation and communication that made social intercourse with other cultures viable. The political scientists see the advent of techniques and reasoning processes that gave impetus to the development of science.

All of these elements taken together might best be termed a sort of native tradition: movements in the society of nations based on change of social and economic institutions that had grown with the culture. The medieval world had reached a maturation point and the institutions that had suffered for a land-based economy were now in a state of change. The Aristotelian tradition, nurtured by Saint Thomas Aquinas in the twelfth century, and the basis for his

rational theology which also started the stream of scientific rationalism that undermined his theological position, helped give the modern mind its direction.⁶ When all of these elements of change are found in a society, when a reassessment of all of the social and economic institutions is imminent, and when at this critical moment in the evolution of a society a rediscovery of the works of the ancients of Greece and Rome occurs, the moment has arrived for the intellectuals to enforce their philosophical will.

While this may appear to be a bald oversimplification of events, it is the essence of the direction of human affairs in the Renaissance period. The masses of men who lived through the movement did not see dramatic changes from generation to generation, and if there was a change in their living conditions it was most often a movement from the agriculturally-oriented Manor to the commercially-oriented city. Relations with the church were moving from a state of clerical terror and dictatorship to a greater involvement by the laity in activities formerly held to be solely within the realm of the church, like the involvement in lay education and patronage of arts and learning.⁷ If the generalized overtone of the medieval period might be

⁶Bush, "The Renaissance and English Humanism," p. 88.

⁷Ferguson, "The Interpretation of the Renaissance," p. 105.

described as an age of passivity, the Renaissance might be described as an age of increasing awareness. With social and economic institutions in various stages of upheaval, the populations in movement and age-old ties being dissolved, the forces of tradition were being supplanted by a growing and ever undulating wave of skepticism. The traditional relationship of a man to his parish and to his feudal lord was no longer as evident. New values were needed for new social circumstances and new environments. For the common man it was perhaps an era of groping and searching for a new order in his universe. To the intellectuals and nobility, a new order was desirable to maintain the continuity of nations and city states; and for the intellectuals, particularly, the awareness of the classical world and its ideas of statecraft and the individual's relationship to the political unit and to the universe seemed suitable to the evolutionary course of society. Aside from the practical effects of the establishment of codes of order, both in the physical and spiritual world, the intellectual movers of the society felt themselves pulled toward the direction of the liberating forces in society. If the changes in their lives were not physical, they were, nevertheless, dramatic in terms of freeing the individual from the thought processes superimposed upon the collective thought of the national hegemony by the communal thinking that feudal organization demanded.

Thus, the outpouring of humanistic thinking was a collective force emanating from the upheaval in the institutions of the common man, which demanded resolution of the problems created, and from the intellectual and political leaders who searched for resolution and found themselves enmeshed in the philosophy they had created. With the coincidental discovery of the ancient learning, the native evolutionary forces were fused with the neo-revolutionary character of the new findings. Out of this merger of forces was compounded the humanistic philosophy.

For the twentieth-century student of humanism, the only view is backward to seek that ill-defined wellspring of humanistic influence. Paul Kristeller attempts to make a disclosure of the nature of humanism by severely limiting his definition, and yet works only through means not ends. His contention that the foundations of humanistic thinking are bound up with the tradition of studia humanitas as a means of achieving a satisfactory end through which human values and ideals could be attained is somehow correct.⁸ Yet his attempts are warped in much the same fashion as others who would believe that the contemporary student is incapable of separating humanism from humanitarianism.

⁸Kristeller, p. 4.

Kristeller would have his reader believe that the definition of humanism can somehow be defined in amoral terms, relieved of any subjectivity. In his attempt to bring all of the humanists under one blanket, he has denuded his definition of the emotionalism that makes the humanistic influence remain a siren to those who seek firmer understanding of the forces that shaped the modern world. He rebukes those who would believe that humanism upheld the dignity of man, for he sees exceptions that dispute this stand. Although these exceptions exist, and while a great variety of views on the condition of man were held, it is evident from even the most cursory analysis of the literature of the time that man was a subject of intense discussion and debate. And because of the very direction of literary debate, there is the tacit implication that man is so significant that it is impossible to draw valid conclusions about him without dignifying his position, implying that he is worthy of discussion. It is not dignity of a pedestal variety that the reader demands, but an agreement of sorts that man is not a plaything of capricious Gods, the kind of fatalism that infected the middle class mind of the middle ages.

Kristeller further points out that for the humanist, human values and ideals could be attained only through

classical and literary studies.⁹ This is in effect justifying a cloistered world of the proverbial "ivory towers" and placing learning at the peak of the pyramid instead of placing it at the cornerstone. It was the by-product of the scholarly efforts, the transmission of ideas from the ancient civilizations to Renaissance Europe, that made humanism a living force.

It is not difficult to agree with the wellspring definition of Kristeller's, but the attempt at precision fails in that it is too restrictive and limits to the realm of scholarly exercise the scope of a movement that was an active force. The traditional elements of humanism that Kristeller reiterates are significant first forces, but it was the individual stamp upon the learning of the ancients and the efforts at conciliating ancient philosophy with contemporary custom that created the activity (not thoughts) that gave humanism its impetus.

The Italian humanists translated, criticized, and explicated the works of the ancients, drawing on the resources delivered to them from the defeated Byzantine empire. And as Kristeller indicates in his extensive list, a list of not unusual proportions and discovery, but workmanlike,

⁹Ibid.

the Italian humanists were concerned with grammatical correctness and style, the content of the works, and with popularizing the content and form through the dissemination of the works.¹⁰ Beyond the scope of the study of the ancients, the humanists were creating original literature, imitating the form of the classical models and on occasion slipping into the vernacular. As educated men, they were called into the service of their government and performed ghost writing functions, propagandized and generally reflected the political thought of their time through the masses of letters that flowed from their pens. Speech and oratory were furthered by the humanists, occasional and ceremonial speeches predominating, but a large number functioned as models for the students of the humanists. Biography was another important phase of the humanists' literary activity and reflected the importance of individualism and individual experience during the time. Poetry flowered in a form peculiar to the period, from a belief that poetry was "largely the ability to write verse" and could be taught. Subject matter for poetry was unlimited, but elegies and epigrams, relatively easy forms to work with, were most significant and could be handled by the dilettantes.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 6-13.

It seems apparent in negotiating a list of humanistic interests that these men are necessarily limited in vocational activities. Most tended to be teachers and scholars, with a large number moving in and out of governmental activity. To say that these men were in touch with the masses of men and were concerned with mundane practical activity would be misleading. This was an intellectual elite in a society that was only now energizing a prospectively educated middle class. Their involvement with the nobility and moneyed classes is notorious, and it is involvement which was translated into the activities of nations because of the precipitating force of the humanists rather than through direct primary influence. These early Italian humanists provided the seed for what has become broadly known as the humanistic movement. It was in the role of teacher and aide to leaders that the humanists exerted the greatest influence, for in this area of endeavor they influence the minds that gave communal leadership. Though imperfectly, some conception of the Platonic ideal of the leader as a virtuous philosopher reflecting his goodness upon his people and the people absorbing and reflecting a portion of the slowly diminishing source light back upon the leader, found its way into the thinking, at all levels, of the republican city states. Political life, exploratory

activities, literary creativity, the printing press, all make humanism come alive, but "the Renaissance hits its creative stride only when it finds really new ground in the plastic arts." ¹²

Perhaps the best definition of the humanist comes through the thought that humanism had a "lay conception of life," ¹³ The humanists covered up the initiative of man as a creator of fortunes, and bestowed knowledge of worldly capacity and worldly success and the passions that go with them. ¹⁴ It is out of this conception that the humanistic movement seeks and finds a momentum. The essence of the humanistic revolution is theologically centered in the consideration that the world is not a circumscribed existence with specific limitations placed as burdens upon the upper reaches of man. Humanism recognizes man's higher estate, but implied in the recognition are the fallibility and frailty, the risks, responsibilities and freedoms. ¹⁵ "Man is no longer the contemplative soul, but is a transformer

¹²Giorgio De Santillana, ed., The Age of Adventure, introduction (New York, 1956), p. 19.

¹³Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 11.

placed at the outside limit of absolute risk, a free force taking consciousness of itself." 16

Thus the humanistic movement, while seemingly prescriptive in the areas of scholarly discipline, becomes a liberating force on men's minds. The dichotomy asserts itself in the stern division between form and content. The imitative and stylized language of the classical models is used to clarify contemporary subject matter. Too often ideas are sacrificed to conventionality of form and the impact of ideas is sterilized by the rhetorical mold. Among the works marking the culmination of the exaggerated rhetorical method was Lyly's Euphues, published in 1578, and which remains as an extravagant example of the art.

The Renaissance, with its roots in Italy, slowly began its way across the European continent. Like any new movement, the revolutionary zeal reached its apogee in Italy, the home of the earliest Renaissance activity. While the world of scholarly activity was international in scope and scholars communicated in a common tongue--Latin--Italy remained the cradle of the movement for its first hundred years, and furnished most of the scholars that populated the courts of Europe. The humanistic scholars, devoted

16 Ibid., p. 16.

to the verbal arts, were the seed for a broadly based European movement. Their influence, not only as advisors and secretaries to monarchs, but also as educators of the young nobility, gave direction to a new generation of rulers. The young nobles, steeped in the traditions of the humanistic cultural and philosophical outlook fertilized and mobilized the minds of nations from the pinnacles of power downward. Even in the hands of absolute monarchs, this inverted structuring promoted only a slow and deliberate dissemination of the new learning to the lesser nobility and gentry. For the masses, whose education had been neglected no matter what the current educational philosophy, things were relatively unchanged, and for these common folk the new learning would become reality only as it was absorbed into society's cultural tradition, a slow, conservative, but relatively painless process.

And so as the movement, which had been nurtured in Italy moved northward and westward across the face of Europe, it became increasingly conservative. While the new learning had opened new vistas in terms of methodology, it became the responsibility of the emerging medieval civilizations to apply new techniques to the world around them. If society's discoveries in science and geography

were not remarkable feats in themselves, with the Copernican system replacing the Ptolemaic universe and the new devices for making absolute measurements like the mariner's compass available, the effects these discoveries and others of a similar nature had upon man's view of himself were revolutionary. A man-centered earth began its phoenix-like rise out of depths of clerical despotism and a decadent hierarchical structure in the church. That man was an individual of a peculiar worth rather than a pawn in a capricious system was not so much a new thought as a re-incarnation of a fundamental Christian view that had been overturned by corrupt teaching of the original Christian view, and the temporal direction of the clergy.

The revolution in man's view of himself became "an other" directed force emanating from the substantive world of physical measurement and exploration. Philosophy and religion did not direct the revolution, but ultimately had to come to terms with the results of the scientific and multifarious other pursuits. The Renaissance Catholic Church was no more a conservative force than other religious bodies when faced with change. It is perhaps symptomatic of our own time, and here we find perhaps the best corollary, that religion becomes a frozen force incapable of giving answers to a society that has grown sophisticated and jaded

by the traditional morality. Morality and man's view of himself changes and for the church to be relevant, it must make one of two accommodations. First, it may lead the revolution and create standards appropriate to the times and yet maintain an evolutionary stance so that old and new are fused in such a fashion that men are not cut off from the past, but at the same time adopt a contemporary motif. Churches have been historically reluctant to make this accommodation.

The second, and more customary approach to making the church more relevant has been the footdragging, conservative direction that establishes the church as a bulwark of last generation's standards, or at worst the last century's standards. Then, when church attendance declines or when church going becomes a perfunctory duty with rote recitation replacing meaningful relationships between cleric and congregation, the church seeks answers for its decline and makes the hurried adjustments that alienate the middle-aged members with the overturning of tradition, and alienates the young with its slow progress.

This is the dilemma that faced the Catholic Church in Renaissance Europe, and coupled to the corruption of the times in the clergy, the problems were compounded. As the Renaissance spread across Europe and as the learning that

was to liberate the minds of men became more widely dispersed, the traditional relationships between priest and flock began to disintegrate. The congregation began demanding answers to natural phenomena that were now being explained by reason and science. They wanted answers that would relate the church to the new-found facts, not evasions or homilies that would forestall a reconciliation of the world as they now perceived it and the obviously timeworn teachings of a church that needed updating.

While most of the debate that centered on the church position, in terms of the new-found knowledge, was between scholars and representatives of the church, and often the two groups were indistinguishable, the masses of men had not yet been exposed to enough of the new learning to change their lives. This was the great conservative wellspring that traditionalists could draw on for support, and though time was operating against the traditional forces, for ultimately the knowledge would filter down to the faithful, the traditional forces could argue persuasively with the knowledge that temporary numerical advantage was theirs.

It was in Italy that some turned to paganistic and atheistic views, but in the eyes of most scholars this force has been greatly exaggerated. But with the recognition that the liberal forces in Italy could create problems in the rest of the jurisdiction of the church, discussions

were launched on the direction of the church by far-sighted clerics. As the Renaissance moved northward through Germany and the low countries, the forces of traditionalism and church reform clashed and disputed the direction of the church. But something vital was happening within the church, for now it was possible to debate, and this very debate, while polemic, still granted a common ground and maintained an interest in the activities of the church. For the first time men were able to question and dissect the values established by the church; and from this time forward man's relationship to his religious institutions could never be the same again. The mask of divinity was penetrated and with that penetration the clergy were revealed as fellow mortals.

3

Erasmian Humanism

Out of this ferment embracing Western Europe, one man is singular as the fructification of a new knowledge gained from the theological struggles. Erasmus, said to be the last man to embrace the total knowledge of man in his time, emerges as the spokesman for Christian humanism. A truly international man who divided his time between England and the low countries, intermingling his divided life with excursions through the continent, he was perhaps the finest

expression of the Renaissance. Entering England for the first time in 1499, it was he more than any other man who was responsible for the transmission of humanistic spirit to an insular England, shielded by the breach of the channel from the rapid incursions of the new learning.

Though Erasmian involvement in all facets of humanistic learning is significant, his pronouncements on theological questions and clerical dissembling are the main influence on Marlowe:

More and Erasmus in their attitude to religion were the spokesmen of the best element in society. We can in fact speak of a Catholic Reform movement. This movement is in danger of being forgotten: the Protestants regarded it as a timid precursor of their own movement, and Catholics have not until recently cared to know just how radical the attitude of good Catholics was at the moment when Luther appeared on the scene.¹⁷

It was among the main concerns of Erasmus to reconcile humanistic learning and Catholicism. In this role he took the unpopular position in theological circles of attacking the accumulated hearsay that had gained stature in the medieval church. His attacks were not on the church as an institution, but on mortals who corrupted and bent the teachings of the church in the guise of an infallible clergy. In The Praise of Folly he mauls the theologians:

¹⁷H. A. Mason, Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period (New York, 1959), p. 101.

These theologians are happy in their self-love, and as if they were presently inhabiting a third heaven, they look down on all men as though they were animals that crawled along the ground coming near to pity them. They are protected by a wall of scholastic definitions, arguments, corollaries, and implicit and explicit propositions.¹⁸

Ego, pride and self-importance were the obvious flaws that the clergy presented, but further than the excesses of personal aggrandizement was the responsibility for the parishoner that was avoided by these same clerics. Erasmus attacks because he sees the failure of the ecclesiastics to relate church to people, and further because the clerics are capricious and dictatorial in their relationships with the flocks they are to serve. He pins the responsibility down concretely and tells us that "they [the theologians] think they are upholding the universal church, which is otherwise about to crumble to ruins, by the influence of their syllogisms."¹⁹

Erasmus sees the medieval church that the Renaissance had inherited as irrelevant to the dawning sixteenth century. Scholastic sniping and esoteric arguments occupied the minds and activities of the clergy rather than the duties of leadership and example that Erasmus saw as the basic tasks confronting the church. Erasmus is driven by the need to

¹⁸ Erasmus, "The Praise of Folly," in The Essential Erasmus, trans. from the Latin by John P. Dolan (New York, 1964), p. 143.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 146.

bring the church back to the original condition set forth by Christ. Erasmus, theorizing the words of Christ, makes his position clear once again:

Many years ago in the sight of all men I promised, in clear language, not through the use of parables, the inheritance of My Father to those who perform works of mercy and charity--not to those who merely wear hoods, chant prayers, or perform fasts.²⁰

Mercy and charity, fundamental tenets of Christianity and fundamental tenets of the ethical behaviorist, are brought forward as the cornerstone of the Erasmian theological position. This was not an unusual verbal gesture in the age of Erasmus, but it was unusual for the clergy to live a life dedicated to make the proposition true. Erasmus does individualize himself however, for he is prepared to make a break with orthodoxy. As a loyal critic of the Church, he clearly stood for internal reform; but with the open-minded Renaissance tradition operating behind him, he could see a variety of paths to a spiritual merger with a Godhead. A. N. Whitehead sees that Erasmus, like Origen, has grasped the central importance of treating popular religion in such a manner as to keep a proper balance between its divine sources and their adaption to what is important in a given time and place.²¹ Preserved Smith

²⁰Ibid., p. 149-50.

²¹A. N. Whitehead, Religion in the Making (New York, 1926), p. 144.

extends the position of Erasmus beyond that of Whitehead:

That he saw through the accretions of superstition, dogma and ritual to the "philosophy of Christ"; that he let his mind play freely on the sacred arcana of the traditional faith; that he recognized reason as the final arbiter in these matters as well as in social and political affairs--all this is the whole genius of Erasmus.²²

As a Renaissance man, Erasmus had the utmost respect for reason, but reason is not the same as dialectics to Erasmus. Reason backed by substantial and measurable evidence has its place in the Erasmanian cosmos. But for the doctors, lawyers, scientists, and particularly the theologians of his time, he saw the dialectics "had become a prestigious intellectual gymnastic."²³

It is through an overview of Praise of Folly that we can best put Erasmus into perspective. Paul Mason puts the more pragmatic Erasmus before us in his statement:

For the wisdom of Folly throughout is human wisdom. Folly represents good sense, a right attitude to life. But it is one which recognizes the harmony of Man and Nature, Body and Soul. Consequently, when she comes to speak of the religious, she treats them as she did the studious, all those in fact who violate the

²²Preserved Smith, Erasmus (New York, 1923), p. 441.

²³John P. Dolan, The Essential Erasmus, introduction (New York, 1964), p. 13.

harmony of man's nature, or prefer illusions to reality.²⁴

Here then, is assembled the Erasmian position, in a Renaissance voice of moderation he has taken for himself the middle ground. He binds the natural man in the Romantic sense of a noble savage²⁵ to a world in which man has, through the powers of rationally used reason, capabilities for greatness and discovery of the secrets of the physical world around him. Into this sphere, he injects the corporeal function of the body and the spiritual function of the soul. He has assembled the complete man from body to instinct, through mental capability to the ephemeral soul. Here is man with his four functions in harmony, interpenetrated by the last in the series--the soul. Through the soul is found the conscience of man and his attitude toward his fellow man, and beyond this level, man's relationship with his God. But the soul in its interpenetration of the other functions does not rule, does not delimit. The soul outlines the path, but does not set up an arbitrary end or roadblock in man's quest for knowledge. The soul sets up rules as to how the game is played, but

²⁴Mason, p. 84.

²⁵Erasmus, p. 124.

not the length of the game.

Erasmus, conscious of the advances the best of the scientists had made, is as acute in his omissions as with his declamations. He refuses to pit the physical sciences against religion, preferring to leave them in separate spheres. Apparently there is no contradiction between science and religion in his mind, for he views the nature of man as something established by God, and among these capabilities is the potential for extending knowledge.

The eschatological system of Erasmus is by no means complete, for it is a blend of the pagan, the reasoned mind and the doctrine of Catholicism. There are contradictory forces operating, but the potential for man, freed from clerical, and particularly monastic despotism, is filled with unlimited opportunities for self-realization in the corporeal world; and the potential for breaking down a portion of the mysteries of the supernatural world lies in the breakdown of scholastic dialectics and the introduction of moderate discussion based on the uncorrupted text of the scriptures.

While Erasmus attempts to reconcile the classics with Christianity, some believe that he is a Christian first and a classic second.²⁶ This position further views the

²⁶Mason, p. 102.

theology of Erasmus as derived from the life of the times, from his genuine participation, and from the living tradition.²⁷ At the same time other critics see the reforming ideals of Erasmus based on an undogmatic Christianity, eviscerated and without Christ at its wellspring.²⁸ Both critical views have substance and draw attention to the dilemma of Erasmus and the humanists. They are both Christian and classic and in viewing the collected works, we find one of the positions, either Christian or classic taking precedence at particular moments. The ever-shifting moods of the humanists, Erasmus included, leads us to believe that they could never completely clarify their position. But perhaps clarification was not the aim of Erasmus.

His ultimate goal is to get contemporary man on a path directed toward ethical and humane treatment of his fellow man. If the Catholic Church can contain the far-ranging world of Erasmus, then he is content to remain within the Church. Erasmus, who is notorious for his dislike of dogma, is not an orthodox Christian, but a pragmatic,

²⁷Ibid., p. 82.

²⁸Martin Luther, On the Bondage of the Will, trans. by J. I. Parker and O. M. Johnston (London, 1957), p. 19.

ethically-motivated and humane man whose church takes on more significance because it is out of harmony with his position. Bringing the church into harmony with his ethical position is one of his major goals and in his attempts he is on the frontier of religion.

The Erasmian position, a position complicated by the advent of classical learning in Western Europe, the decadence of the Church, and the reconciliation felt necessary by the Christian humanists to align the newly discovered classics with the backward-looking theological position of the Church, all complicated the mind of Erasmus, all tempered his thinking, all made his exact position difficult for him to ascertain. But the groping and the reaching for a position were never sacrificed to his ethical persuasions. The Christian humanism of Erasmus' day was a fragile philosophy, made important by sensitive minds like More and Erasmus. It could never outlive these men, but something of the spirit persisted, and out of this spirit was hardened a direction for humanism that was inherited by Marlowe.

Marlowe inherited the idealism of the position Erasmus had earlier begun. Humanism received its test by surviving the reigns of the English monarchs from Henry VIII through Elizabeth, a subject to be discussed at length in

the remainder of this chapter. The direct results of Erasmian thought are apparent in their influence upon Marlowe. Two elements of Erasmian thought are most readily observable in the writings of Marlowe. First, reason maintains a preeminent position, and even matters of faith can be justified through the use of reasoned evidence. The second major influence that survives in a direct line from Erasmus to Marlowe is the critical view of orthodox religion. Erasmus satirized the problems of the Roman Church as an internal critic, while Marlowe took up the cry as society's critic of all orthodox religion. But both men sought the same ends, the elimination of false dogma and ritual that interfered with the primary duty of religion, bettering the relationships between men.

Just as Erasmus saw all of the world as his realm, so did Marlowe. Marlowe ranges in a cosmos that exceeds even that of Erasmus, for he looks upon the universe as proper realm of exploration for man, even if man is incapable of understanding all that ranges through the cosmos. Man is a creature of dignity for both Erasmus and Marlowe, and his capabilities are unlimited. Both are optimists: both are convinced that man can seek and find the answers to his relationship with his fellow man and to his God through rational means.

Both men arrived at their appointed time in history to face major upheavals in tradition. Erasmus saw his duty as a reconciler of Christian and classical thought, but he approached the problem as a Christian. There is less assurance as to the position of Marlowe, but his efforts would lead observers to believe that he took on the role of defending the classic view of man to the Christian world.

As Erasmus moved out of the world fixed by scholastic thought and traditional Catholicism, he saw his job as one of liberating Catholic thought from hierarchical decay and useless dogma. As the Christian world became splintered, Marlowe had a far broader task: to find the elements that bound all of mankind together, outside the theological differences of the factionalized church.

Because of the nature of his time, an era of broad differences in the approach to religion, Marlowe had to take a more daring path. The characters in his plays, power-seeking protagonists, play a game of absolutes. Their tests are critical and timidity can be destructive to the goals of man. His heroes throw caution to the winds, for only by living and grasping at the fringes of man's experience can they hope to better mankind.

But this moves ahead of the tradition that created Marlowe. Marlowe was dependent upon the force of Erasmus,

but the events of religious upheaval and political crisis between the death of Erasmus and the mature mind of Marlowe tempered and directed the humanistic tradition.

It is necessary then to view the dislocations in theology and politics that marked the fortunes of the English monarchy during the time in which English humanism matured. The mood of the English nation, tempered by revolutions and counter-revolutions, made possible the liberal humanistic forces that directed Marlowe. The liberal humanism of Marlowe was not an accident, but was derived from the forces already in motion in his society. Erasmus remains the seminal force behind the flow of English society, but the society itself made Marlowe's far-reaching mind possible.

4

The Erasmian Tradition in England

Douglas Bush has wisely commented that the world of Marlowe was more than half medieval.²⁹ Such a commentary seems anachronistic in viewing the world of the sixteenth century as the age of discovery. And yet even a Marlowe, university educated, still used the Ptolemaic system for

²⁹Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century 1600-1660, Oxford History of English Literature Series, ed. F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobree (New York, 1962), V, 1.

descriptions of the universe. E. M. W. Tillyard's view seems to shed the most illumination on the enigma. "Recent research has shown that the educated Elizabethan had plenty of text books in the vernacular instructing him in the Copernican astronomy, yet he was loth to upset the old order by applying his knowledge." ³⁰

The penchant for order in the Elizabethan world can be ascribed mainly to two elements operating in sixteenth-century England: first, the resurrection of classical learning, which created intense interest in an orderly world, and which has been discussed in some detail, and second, the religious instability of the age, compounded by the vicissitudes of the monarchy.

Our particular problem, that of ascertaining the causes for the Marlovian religious stance, can perhaps best be explained by a further investigation of the monarchy and the religious life of the sixteenth century. James Kelsey McConica in his work, English Humanists and Reformation Politics, brings a scholarly eye to the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI.³¹ The facts of Henry's reign

³⁰E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York), p. 8.

³¹I am indebted to McConica for my overview of the scene through the detailed descriptions he has furnished in his book.

are too well known for additional condensations to be of value, but the influence of the Christian humanist tradition led by the thoughts of Erasmus exerted an influence that contributed to the decisions that Henry VIII made:

The sponsorship for this devout humanism comes from the highest quarters and is never far from the royal family itself. Indeed, the King, the Lady Margaret, Wolsey, Queen Catherine, and the Princess Mary, along with the collective entity of Syon Monastery, together account for perhaps half the total number of book dedications in this early period.³²

With the relatively large influence that the humanists maintained at court, it would seem readily apparent that the royal family would absorb a considerable measure of the Erasman outlook. And when the crisis arrived, beginning in 1527, with the initiation of Henry's divorce proceedings against Catherine, an Erasman-derived justification was utilized:

The concerns of the first several months after the convening of Parliament in 1529 were entirely Erasman, with royal power being invoked to correct the failures and abuses which Wolsey's enormous power had left neglected. Within this atmosphere of acceptable Erasman reform grew those more radical proposals augmenting royal power which were neither inherent in nor markedly repugnant to that accommodating creed.³³

³²James Kelsey McConica, English Humanists and Reformation Politics (London, 1965), p. 63.

³³Ibid., p. 109.

The year 1534 marked the passage of a series of acts abolishing papal authority in England. Events had been moving toward this state for the preceding seven years, and this was merely the final act in a progression. This final renunciation of papal authority was in part nourished by the Lutheran break, but more importantly by the acquired tradition of Erasmian reform. The move wrenched English society, and with the final dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, the face of English society was changed. Monasterial reforms resulted in redistribution of lands formerly controlled by the church, and added to the wealth of royalty loyal to the state controlled church. More important to the fabric of English society was the new dualistic monarchy, heading both church and state affairs. The break necessitated the realignment of thinking for the faithful, and the break with Rome was certainly of a traumatic nature, overthrowing a centuries' old tradition. Uncertainty gripped the realm, and it was difficult for men to sort out their allegiances so that old views would not conflict with new. Doubt was certainly the order of the day, and out of the doubt people began groping for a new order.

Out of the King's divorce came a sort of Erasmian schism. The conservative movement in Erasmian thought,

led by Thomas More, could never accept the divorce of the King. The schism, leading to the death of More and Cardinal Fisher in 1535, split the humanist movement.³⁴ The other extreme in the schism was the group that turned to Protestantism. Tyndale, a disciple of Erasmus in his youth, was the first to take the turn and Cranmer followed his course.³⁵ With the persecution of Fisher and More, the conservative Erasmians were driven underground or abroad and a moderate group maintained its ties with the government.³⁶

Though the humanistic breach was significant, particularly to those whose lives were sacrificed to their cause, the basic Erasmian influence on the monarchy remained unaltered. "Royal injunctions on Church reform, primers for popular devotion and (after long delay) provision of an approved translation of the Bible are all fruits of this work."³⁷

The five years, from the execution of More to 1540,

³⁴Ibid., p. 124.

³⁵Ibid., p. 125.

³⁶Ibid., p. 149.

³⁷Ibid., p. 151.

were marked by the attraction to Thomas Cromwell of the best minds in the humanistic movement. Out of Cromwell's policy "the Henrician commonwealth had been given a definite character."³⁸

It was an Erasmian policy, and a capacious mansion which could contain most opinions except the extremes of Protestantism and a rooted attachment to Rome. ...The Media via of the Henrician settlement was to many not simply a compromise, but the fulfilment of a positive tradition rooted in the cause of Erasmian reform. It is this which explains the loyalty of the intelligentsia through so many uncertainties.³⁹

In 1540 Cromwell was beheaded on charges, that among them included a charge of circulating heretical works through the realm. Trevelyan sees the death of Cromwell as royal acknowledgement that things are going too far or too fast, and that this is a period of oscillation rather than a backward conservative move. Cromwell's death was a warning to others to act, not necessarily think, more carefully.⁴⁰ "Two days later the Supreme

³⁸ Ibid., p. 199.

³⁹ Ibid.,

⁴⁰ George Macaulay Trevelyan, A Shortened History of England (Baltimore, 1959), pp. 226-7.

Head, with judicious discretion, put to death three Lutheran and three papal martyrs, to show that in the realm of doctrine nothing had changed." ⁴¹ Thus, while Henry could use individuals as reminders of the path he had destined for England, the basic Erasmian view remained untouched.

The last years of Henry's reign, usually considered the conservative years, still bore fruit in the matter of public worship.

The fundamental Henrician position, even in its most conservative phase, combined orthodox doctrine in essentials (papal supremacy being defined as an error) with sweeping changes in other spheres: in vernacular Scripture and liturgy, in education, and in the popular observances of late medieval religion. In this fashion it became the most complete fulfilment of the Erasmian programme which Europe had yet seen. ⁴²

The reign of the child king, Edward VI, from 1547 to 1553 contrasted sharply with the reign of his half-sister, Mary, who held sway from 1553 to 1558. In Edward's reign Protestantism made great inroads, and the country was flooded with Protestant literature. Most humanists made the adjustment, with the humanistic Protestantism marked less by the extremes of Luther than by the thinking of Melancthon,

⁴¹McConica, p. 194.

⁴²Ibid., p. 235.

Ochino, Oecolampadius, Zwingli and Bucer. It was a moderate Protestantism, though some of the conservatives in the Erasmian camp felt the compulsion to choose exile. All through the period the existence of Erasmian thought, though in its most liberal interpretation, still exerted its power on the English Church. The works of Erasmus pietism were continued in production and this is the most obvious continuity with the past.⁴³ Reform in liturgy was accelerated and the Prayer Book of 1549, while not radical, led to the Prayer Book of 1552, a more Protestant document, published through the leadership of Cranmer. Exiles tended to become more sympathetic with Catholic views, and upon Edward's death they returned to England.

Mary's five years on the throne reversed the policy of the Edwardian reign and set in motion a rebirth of Catholicism in England. Her Catholic religion, her marriage to Philip, her demands for the elimination of the supremacy laws and the restoration of the Catholic religion, all alienated her from the people of the realm who at this point in history looked upon Catholicism as a foreign creed.⁴⁴ Over 300 Protestants were burned in four years.

⁴³Ibid., p. 251.

⁴⁴Trevelyan, p. 230.

Cramer, a powerful force in the Edwardian reign, suffered a martyr's fate, and the exiles returned home to find a sympathetic monarch. Through all of the turmoil of the conflicting reigns of Edward and Mary, the Erasmian viewpoint, while vacillating between the interpretations of liberal and conservative forces, was never dead. Although there had been a severe Catholic reaction on the continent to the works of Erasmus, his works of a conservative nature continued to be published under the reign of Mary.⁴⁵ Roles were reversed during the reign of Mary and the religious community as well as the confidence of the people of England was tried again. The eleven schizophrenic years of the Edwardian and Marian age were all reflected in the mentality of the English when Elizabeth mounted the throne in 1558.

The twenty-five year old Elizabeth ascended to the monarchy six years before the birth of Christopher Marlowe. George Mosse has said that "the Elizabethan Settlement was built upon national unity and not upon theological considerations."⁴⁶ This change in direction by the ruler was the first attempt at bringing the warring religious

⁴⁵ McConica, p. 278.

⁴⁶ George L. Mosse, The Reformation, Berkshire Studies in European History Series, (New York, 1953), p. 80.

factions together. "She chose a middle road, endeavoring to make the national church as inclusive as possible, thus creating an instrument for national unity rather than for denominational dissension."⁴⁷ The Church, rather than moving in the direction of Elizabeth's predecessors toward the specific theological outlook of the monarch, became an all-encompassing instrument, and Elizabeth chose to reveal her position only when absolutely necessary.⁴⁸ In the Prayer Book of 1559, she substituted vague phrases for well-defined doctrine so that both Catholic and Protestant could read their theological position into this broad tent.⁴⁹ Her success is underscored by the fact that she was not excommunicated by the Pope until 1570, and war with Spain did not ensue until 1588. Her technique made hope possible for everyone who came in contact with her reign, but she held out no promises, only vague policies that protected the national interests of England.

The Supremacy Act was reconstituted under Elizabeth,

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

and the Act of Uniformity enforced allegiance to the newly-constituted Church. Uniformity to a vague liturgy seems to be an almost self-defeating kind of law. Yet, it asserted the power of the monarchy over religious life, no matter how loosely the law might be interpreted. The returning Protestant exiles were disappointed in the new policy, reading into it Catholic overtones, and Catholics, supported by Philip of Spain, attempted to destroy Elizabeth. Parliament was sympathetic to the Puritan element within the Church, and in time the conflict between Parliament and Elizabeth was reduced to a series of compromises eliminating Parliamentary authority in religious matters.

"The war with Spain completely identified Catholicism with the national enemy."⁵⁰ Catholicism had more effectively defeated itself in England by the association with Philip than anything Elizabeth could have done. She never dealt as effectively with the Puritans, but there was still room for all but the most extreme under the broad Anglican Church.

Elizabeth's first Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, Marlowe's benefactor, was a man of moderation and kept the Church on a broad and inclusive path.⁵¹ His

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 84.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 82.

views and those of Elizabeth helped create and maintain what was perhaps the most liberal of all European churches.

The Church that Elizabeth established out of the turmoil of her half-brother's and half-sister's reigns was still fervently a part of the Erasmian tradition. Her attitude toward the Church established her as the rightful heir to her father's tradition, but the forces of the time, the additional power of the Parliament, and the threats from abroad forced her to take a far more pragmatic position than her father. Under her direction the Church took on a distinct personality, rather than remaining a disassociated Catholicism. But more than this, it became a tolerant church, at any rate based on sixteenth-century standards. Broad guidelines replaced dogma, the clergy was closer to the masses, and common sense coupled to exalted human reason were forward-looking movements in the church. All these moves represented the Erasmian reform outlook. Still, the Anglican Church had gone far beyond what Erasmus would have hoped. The complete and unyielding break with Rome and the Protestant excesses that had crept into the organized Church would have dismayed him. Yet, the manner in which the Church brought all Christians under its banner and attempted to include rather than exclude men would have pleased an Erasmus with the view of a universal Christianity

embracing all who could share his ethical position.

Out of the tense sixteenth century religious ferment emerged the mind of Marlowe, conditioned by upheavals, disturbed by debates on ritualistic questions, confused by the vagaries of Elizabeth's position, frightened by the threat of Spanish Catholicism, but relatively certain of his ethical position, he emerges in a setting reminiscent of Erasmus' age. While the reform in the Church has already taken place, Marlowe is searching for the perspective that will make the Church more than a blanket to cover the various directions of Christian thought. His conviction that the behavioral characteristics of men are more important than the source of inspiration is in the Erasmian tradition, and a church with this naturalistic view would have accommodated him far better than the Anglican. That Christ was or was not important to the Marlovian stance is not as important as the scholarly conjecture, in large quantity, might lead us to believe. The significant point is that his works reveal an ethical humanist, not totally hostile to Christianity, but never totally convinced of its benefits either. In his skeptical and grasping works, we see a man struggling to reconcile natural and divine law. He is rewarded with partial success, but hope is always held for answers in the realm of man. Defining the

total power of man and the role circumscribed for him.

M. M. Mahood sees that:

Natural man, growing aware of his insufficiency, likewise begins to crave the completion of his experience in the knowledge of spiritual worlds. Here he runs his head against a wall erected by himself; his vaunted self-sufficiency prevents him from putting any faith in that interpenetration of the natural and spiritual worlds which is implicit in Christian doctrine.⁵²

Mahood sees this phenomenon as the "humanist disintegration", and because man doesn't accept a middle state, he is helpless between the extremes of rationalism and fatalism.⁵³ Thus, Mahood further states, "the titanic hero shrinks to the plaything of malignant powers which are more capricious than just."⁵⁴ This is perhaps an exaggeration of events, for the fragile Christian humanistic movement, a name that never truly described the phenomenon, died with Erasmus and More. The forces that Erasmus set in motion in England, the liberation of man from the despotism of the church, were merely carried to a logical extreme by Marlowe. From an Erasmian position of reformed Catholicism, we may view Marlowe as

⁵²Mahood, p. 104.

⁵³Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 104.

plunging ahead and embracing deism.⁵⁵ From the Erasmian position of reasoned religion, dependent on God, and seeking a harmony among man, God, and nature, we move to the Marlovian stance in which man and God are competitors for the dominion over nature. That man was incapable of ultimately defeating God in this battle was not so important as the newly enlarged sphere of interest man acquired from pressing his challenge and man's effort to circumscribe the sphere of God. More of a case might be made for an unflagging optimism in the capability of man by Marlowe than in a pessimistic fatalism that Mahood would ascribe to the Marlovian hero. This Marlovian position is not unusual in the "high Renaissance", but the drama that he created, placing man on the fringes of human capability and in conflict with the powers of heaven is a bold step forward in the revelation of men's minds in a medium that would enjoy a good deal of public exposure.

Thus, the Marlovian position is that of a universal, natural or deistic outlook, an outgrowth of the Erasmian Universal Christian. His confidence in reason and fundamental Christian behavior that could be recaptured, is the full realization of the liberated Renaissance man. And

⁵⁵F. P. Wilson, Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare (London, 1953), p. 45.

the anti-orthodox position of Marlowe can be equated to the low esteem in which Erasmus held dogma. The world that Marlowe portrays is not so much decadent humanism as it is overreaching and overgrasping humanism, always extending and always infringing on the realm of Gods so that man's position may be extended and clarified.

Chapter II

Tamburlaine, I And II

Of the three major works that tend to reveal Marlowe, Tamburlaine, The Jew of Malta, and Faustus, there is a general claim by all Marlovian critics that Tamburlaine comes first in a chronology. While the productive career of Marlowe extends for only six years, and thus the ordering of the plays takes on far less significance than ordering plays in the more lengthy career of Shakespeare, there is a development in the themes of naturalistic religion, the anti-orthodox attitudes, and the attitude toward the role of man.

In treating Marlowe's earliest work, Tamburlaine, we encounter some initial difficulties. First, we are dealing with a two-part play of ten acts, and the critical problem of determining the relationship between the two parts continues to engross critics. The problem that seems to vex the critics is the dual contentions that the first part of Tamburlaine is either an independent play or is tied directly to part two.¹ No important scholarship has come to bear on the problem, though a good deal of conjecture

¹Hereafter in this chapter the two parts of Tamburlaine will be designated Tamburlaine I and Tamburlaine II.

has been put forth. Through my investigation and attempts to deal with the Marlovian stance, that the religious experience of man is best found in a naturalistic and anti-orthodox position and that the value of man and his relationship to the infinite cosmos is best determined by man's challenge to the Gods for domination over the fates and natural law, it seems probable that the two parts are seeking one conclusion and are closely related. The inquiring mind, forcing the issues of dominion, will have the only opportunity to delineate realms of human and divine authority, and even then in the light of new discovery absolutes can be reversed and the challenge renewed. This is a part of the vigor of man's experience and the way in which man advances his civilization. It is in this battle for dominion that Marlowe sees the best in man expressed.

The second problem in dealing with Tamburlaine is in overcoming the scholarly disdain in which Tamburlaine II has been held. It is customarily dismissed by most critics with a terse sentence or two. It seems almost incongruous that the critics would allow themselves this sort of frivolity, for in seeking to find out the mind of Marlowe they have reached far afield. Here in Tamburlaine II, as close to the dramatist as is possible to venture, there

appears to be a large untapped resource, for it is in this play that Marlowe draws upon his own resources. In Tamburlaine I, he largely used up the materials of his sources for Tamburlaine.² Part II cannot be construed as purely the product of imagination, for as F. S. Boas rightly views it, Marlowe has taken a variety of historical scenes and incorporated them into Tamburlaine II.³ But Tamburlaine II provides a valuable insight into the mind of Marlowe as to the selectivity and subjectivity of his mind when he had a relatively free hand in selection. Further, it would seem important to note the way that these accretions are fitted to the religious stance of Tamburlaine II. Again, I would hope to relate this section to the Marlovian universe.

Harry Levin perhaps best expresses the view that occurs to any student of Marlowe as he investigates the criticism available. Levin views, with regard, documented evidence that has been established concerning Marlowe's life and death, but feels that the twentieth century has not yet

²F. S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe A Biographical and Critical Study (London, 1964), p. 88.

³Ibid., p. 88. ff.

made its critical reevaluation.⁴ There is a whole body of scholarly conjecture that has been incorporated into the critical thinking of modern critics. Views that Tamburlaine is a chronicle rather than a tragedy, that there is no conflict in the work, that most characters are two-dimensional, and that the play is filled with bombast are assumed a priori by the majority of critics. The realm of critical inquiry is sharply limited by the tacit acceptance of the traditional limitations that have been imposed on the works, and little fresh inquiry has been made.

Before delving into the specific evidence for my position on Tamburlaine, an overview of the work will help clarify the specific premises I intend to explore.

John Bakeless epitomizes the view of traditional criticism more than any other with his opening remarks on Tamburlaine:

It is long, noisy, tedious, and frequently absurd. Its characters are designed to be superhuman but succeed merely in being not human. It is blood-thirsty with a more than Elizabethan blood-thirstiness. It is full of mere rant, and it is often bombastic.⁵

⁴Harry Levin, The Overreacher A Study of Christopher Marlowe (Cambridge, 1952), pp. viii, ix.

⁵John Bakeless, Christopher Marlowe: The Man in His Time (New York, 1964), p. 87.

But, John Bakeless has not viewed the characters through the unlimited cosmos of Marlowe. In the far-reaching cosmos that Marlowe envisions, there can certainly be room for argument that the foibles of individuals cannot be explored in detail. The point in question is that Bakeless' perception of Tamburlaine, tainted by the traditional view, may be more faulty than Marlowe's conception of good drama. To lose focus and restrict the critical view to individual characterization as the basis of good or bad drama, no matter the premise of the dramatist, would seem unproductive in uncovering the value of the work.

If we view Tamburlaine in its infinite perspective, then perhaps we shall discover more of the genius of Marlowe. Levin puts the perspective of Marlowe's works well in his discussion:

Quantities are quickly multiplied beyond the reckoning of mere arithmetic...It is not enough for his heroes and heroines to be better than their literary prototypes; they must be the best of their kind; and more than paragons, they must be pareils, beyond compare, resembling only the phoenix. Typically, the lines that characterize them commence with "The only..." and conclude with "...the world." ...Their typical gesture is to pose an absolute alternative, to impose an intransigent choice between uncompromising extremes...they stand pledged to hazard everything for an inestimable prize...⁶

⁶Levin, pp. 22-23.

The dares and vaunts expressed by Tamburlaine are reflections of a man poised on the frontiers of human capability, challenging the resources that mankind can muster in his attempts at understanding and subjugating the universe. Certainly a Tamburlaine will hazard everything to expand that frontier. If the hero's efforts seem cruel and savage to Bakeless it is because Bakeless' senses are offended, not his historical knowledge of man's nature. Beyond this justification lies the enigma of the characterization, which Bakeless attacks as being non-human, but at the same time he sympathizes with cruelties perpetrated on the characters. M. C. Bradbrook takes the position that the opponents of Tamburlaine are purposefully constructed so that there is no interest attached to them. The deaths of the Virgins of Damascus and of Bajazeth are not intended to create sympathy but are only used as a means of displaying the nature of Tamburlaine.⁷ Thus, a purpose seems evident in the creation of many of the two-dimensional characters that Bakeless cannot reconcile with the literal quality of his interpretation.

That Tamburlaine is a long and noisy play, there can be no quarrel, but to state, as Bakeless does, that it is

⁷M. C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (London, 1952), p. 139.

tedious and frequently absurd are value judgments that do not need scholarly rebuttal. While the inner conflicts that many consider to be the highest development of the dramatic form are not obvious in the work, Tamburlaine's conflict for dominion of the earth, and further, the cosmological conflict that he as a member of the earthly race represents creates a tension in the work. The reader is moved rapidly along in his attempt to discover the hidden force that will be Tamburlaine's down fall. The effect of the play is much like the effect of a periodic sentence. We know the resolution is coming, that the mortality of man cannot be diminished, but how this will come about is the information withheld until late in the play. Thus, the tension is there though it would be misleading to sustain the thought that the play moves inexorably forward. There are any number of condescensions to popular taste in the theater, particularly in Tamburlaine II in which Marlowe is sometimes groping for material. The scene in which Olympia deceives Theridamas into killing her is essentially a demonstration of ingenuity and adds little to the play except perhaps a popular appeal.

Bakeless' contention that the play is filled with mere rant and bombast is another view that has had widespread appeal. Again, his appeal is subjective, for the only

areas that could be construed as bombastic and ranting are those speeches in which Tamburlaine hurls threats at the gods. Duthrie takes up the same argument:

In the same way, we may be somewhat disconcerted to find at the end of the play that no sooner has Tamburlaine shown his leniency to the Soldan in deference to Zenocrate than he goes on to rant about the god of war resigning his room to him-- his old bombast rings out again unaltered.⁸

This view, though popular among traditional critics, enforces a particular view of Tamburlaine that does not seem entirely valid. Duthrie, Bakeless and others take a narrow view of Tamburlaine's character. They attempt to reinforce their earlier conjecture that his character is flat. This nullifies any effort to view Tamburlaine as the universal man, the representative of mankind, and relegates him to the position of a futile extremist representing only a debauched individual. But if we see Tamburlaine as a representative of mankind, seeking to enlarge man's capacity for understanding, exerting pressure on the thresholds of human knowledge, he assumes a symbolic quality these critics deny. The bombast they allege exists becomes the quality of challenge that represents the outward grasping

⁸C. I. Duthrie, "The Dramatic Structure of Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great, Part I," in Shakespeare's Contemporaries, ed. M. Bluestone and N. Rabkin (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1964), p. 67.

for human understanding of the complexities of a universe just beginning to unravel its mysteries.

In seeking to prove Tamburlaine a representative of humanity, I again find myself in conflict with traditional critical viewpoints. Most critics see Marlowe as taking a critical view of the character he created. Tamburlaine represents, to these critics, an outgrowth of a character from a morality play. They see Tamburlaine as a usurper, a negative example of everyman and attempt to enforce their view as Marlowe's. This position negates the possibility of a positive competitive force incorporated into the character of Tamburlaine, a force for expanding the mind and knowledge of man. Certainly this is not the traditional Christian humanists' view, for as Irving Ribner states:

Nature for the Christian humanist is the creation of God controlled only by God, and human reason is an attuning of human will to divine will in recognition of the divine law which operates in all of nature, and thus a willingness to live by those moral laws--the altruistic feelings, love, kindness, loyalty, and other--which all men intuitively recognize and which are enshrined in Christian belief as reflections in normal human intercourse of the love of God by which the whole creation moves.⁹

Ribner's definition has a strong portion of intel-

⁹Irving Ribner, "Marlowe's Tragick Glass," in Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama In Honor of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia, 1962), p. 100.

lectual vacuity, for while it defines an ideal, it is difficult to distinguish this view in any one Christian humanist. Erasmus retains enough of the classic to exalt reason beyond the purely mechanical discharge of an obligation to a God.¹⁰ He is deeply concerned with men and refuses to circumscribe spheres of interest. In the same manner, Marlowe in his creation, Tamburlaine, is reaching out with a groping hand attempting to find the outer limits of man's sphere of influence. In Tamburlaine's conflict with the gods for dominion, we learn not only some of the limitations, but some of the greatness of man. Though Marlowe ranges farther, and in the minds of some destroys the idealism of Christian humanism, he merely extends the spirit of inquiry, established by humanistic scholars, to realms of theological inquiry heretofore considered heretical. Marlowe's move is perhaps the next step in a logical progression of the liberalized Erasmanian position, which attempted to remain within the Church's cloak.

In his efforts to shed light on Tamburlaine, and more specifically Marlowe, Ribner attempts to show the skeptics' view of the universe:

The skeptics, on the other hand, exalt the power of man to control the universe by his own strength

¹⁰ See above for this view, pp. 29-30.

and reason, without regard to divine influence. They see nature not so much as the reflection of divine will, but as something governed by immutable laws which may be studied; nature can be controlled once these laws are understood. They envision man as the potential master of his environment.¹¹

Marlowe is caught between the two positions, for the reason he recognizes divine influence as a force, but a force of indeterminate nature. Marlowe sees nature as controlled by immutable laws, but is convinced that the gods exert an influence on the laws. This does not necessarily negate a deistic position, for the initiation of the laws may be the only force that Marlowe seeks. The third position that Ribner takes on the skeptic, in which he contends that man is the potential master of his environment opens up broad avenues of discussion. Ribner fails to limit the environment, and while Marlowe believes, or at least acknowledges, the worldly dominion of Tamburlaine, his cosmos is universal. Marlowe has no allusions that man can conquer the universe, but he is adventurous and seeks to know the limitations. In light of my interpretation of Tamburlaine, one conclusion is significant: Marlowe had a positive outlook toward his character and Tamburlaine represented a posture that would ultimately benefit mankind.

¹¹Ribner, p. 100.

That Tamburlaine is a natural man is clearly portrayed from the textual evidence. His third speech reveals him as a shepherd in origin, and at the same time indicates his aspirations for divine forces:

I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove,
 And yet a shepherd by my parentage.
 But, lady this fair face and heavenly hue
 Must grace his bed that conquers Asia
 And means to be a terror to the world,
 Measuring the limits of his empery
 By east and west, as Phoebus doth his course.
 (I. ii. 34-40)¹²

In this early speech Tamburlaine reports on his upbringing, an upbringing which does not reflect a tradition of nobility, but rather a reflection of power and deeds. His force is dependent then on his own capabilities rather than inherited power. He draws on natural ability to raise himself from the position of a shepherd. Tamburlaine's speech foreshadows most of the important activity to come. The word "lord" has a dual meaning, indicating both his noble aspirations and his efforts to attain an almost divine quality by challenging the gods. At this stage the world is still the peak of his aspirations, but as his opponents

¹²Irving Ribner, ed. The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe (New York, 1963). This textual quotation and all following in this study are taken from Ribner's book. While C. F. Tucker Brooke's edition is often used as the definitive edition, Ribner's work, much more contemporary, draws on the more recent scholarly discoveries.

tumble down before him, his reach is extended.

The qualities of the natural man can be seen in the pattern of living that Tamburlaine chooses. His integration with nature becomes more important when we recognize that Tamburlaine is a nomadic tent dweller. He defeats city after city, state after state, and yet refuses the accommodations of the civilized city life. His thirst for power takes on a geographic quality rather than conquest for material benefits, and the treasures he accumulates in the course of his conquests do not become an end in themselves, for he is almost indifferent to the accumulation of gold and treasure. On the few occasions that gold and treasure are discussed, the conquest of Babylon and the capture of the gold is most typical. The capture of the gold is merely an act depriving the Governor of a possession important to himself. Tamburlaine says:

Go thither, some of you, and take his gold.
(Pt. II. V. i. 123)

There is no further mention of the gold, and we see no change in Tamburlaine's standard of values.

The natural man, Tamburlaine is not subjected to the same communal influences that place a premium on material possessions, and beyond this single example we can follow a pattern indicating freedom from other elements of an organized society. Tamburlaine's natural religion is not

a consciously arrived at position, but rather the normal outgrowth of his pattern of living. Religion and religious rites are normally forces exerted by fellow members of the community, an organized community. Tamburlaine, in his free existence, is not subjected to the coercion of these influences and reflects his freedom with his direct communication with the gods. In a classical sense the gods are personified and Tamburlaine talks of them as he would talk of mortals:

Though Mars himself, the angry god of arms,
 And all the earthly potentates conspire
 To dispossess me of this diadem,
 Yet will I wear it in despite of them...
 (Pt. I, III. i. 58-61)

He seeks no intermediaries as do his Christian and Moham-
 medan enemies, and thus retains an intimacy in his religious
 experience that he feels they lack. This sense of immediacy
 in his religious experience makes his challenge to the gods
 less blasphemous and more like a family disagreement over
 preemptive rights. It is in this competition that Tambur-
 laine begins to lose sight of his mortal qualities. His
 comrade Theridamas reinforces the distorted view Tamburlaine
 has begun acquiring:

To be a king is half to be a god.
 A god is not so glorious as a king.
 (Pt. I, II. v. 56-57)

Then Meander, in the opposing camp questions the origins of

the overreaching Tamburlaine:

Some powers divine, or else infernal, mixed
 Their angry seeds at his conception,
 For he was never sprung of human race...
 (Pt. I. II. vi. 9-11)

Marlowe builds on this theme and the elevation of Tamburlaine to a quasi-god is developed both through the speeches of those surrounding Tamburlaine and Tamburlaine himself. Tamburlaine begins building a messianic image about himself:

Now clear the triple region of the air,
 And let the majesty of heaven behold
 Their scourge and terror tread on emperors.
 Smile stars that reigned at my nativity,
 And dim the brightness of their neighbor lamps;
 (Pt. I. IV. ii. 30-34)

The allusion to nativity clearly indicates his messianic frame of reference, and yet the speech still retains a duality that seems apparently irreconcilable, but can be resolved with ease. Eugene Waith sees a Tamburlaine who "both seeks and despises earthly glory, he both claims and defies the power of the gods."¹³ It is in understanding the duality of his relationship with the gods that we come to understand Tamburlaine's split nature. When he seeks

¹³Eugene M. Waith, The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden (New York, 1962), p. 68.

a battle victory over mortal foes he invokes the gods:

To let them see, divine Zenocrate,
I glory in the curses of my foes,
Having the power from the imperial heaven
To turn them all upon their proper heads,
(Pt. I. IV. iv. 28-31)

In the realm of man against man, Tamburlaine feels that the gods can assist in a victory, and he chooses to proclaim himself an instrument of divine power:

I that am termed the scourge and wrath of God,
The only fear and terror of the world...
(Pt. I. III. iii. 44-45)

When Tamburlaine begins exercising his power outside the worldly sphere, then he comes into conflict with the gods. As the messianic urge strikes him again he shows his defiance of the gods:

The god of war resigns his room to me,
Meaning to make me general of the world.
Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne.
Where'er I come the Fatal Sisters sweat,
And grisly Death, by running to and fro
To do their ceaseless homage to my sword.
(Pt. I. V. ii. 387-393)

Here, in these lines he challenges the authority of the gods through his vaunts of power. He feels the qualities of a god because he has assumed a power over life and death. In this speech he indicates his dominion over the forces of the underworld, and because he has usurped this power in the realm of natural law, Tamburlaine acquires a sense of divine

power. The fallacy that Tamburlaine has not yet recognized is his inability to give back life that has been taken.

The transmutation of Tamburlaine's character is given further impetus through the symbolic use of his war tents. Through the use of symbolic qualities, he is transformed into a god force. The terms of battle with Tamburlaine are simplified for his opponents by the tent colors that Tamburlaine displays. On the first day of the siege the tents are white. It is a merciful Tamburlaine who inhabits the white tent, and if the cities submit on the first day everyone lives. Tamburlaine is effectively playing the role of a merciful god to the people and all he demands is homage and acknowledgment of his authority. On the second day of battle red tents are pitched by Tamburlaine's armies. On this day the administrators and fighting men of the city are doomed. They become representatives of the city and through the death of the soldiers the city may be saved. The analogy to Christ should be readily apparent at this stage, and the coloration of the tent, red, adds impact to an image already well conceived.

The third stage, the obliteration of the city and all its inhabitants, is accomplished on the third day, the day of the black tents. All of the vindictiveness of a thwarted

god is brought to bear upon the population, and his ultimate authority is proven.

Here again Marlowe is building the god imagery surrounding Tamburlaine. Marlowe moves from comparisons in the early portions of the play to the position in Act four in which the divine qualities of Tamburlaine are literally stated.¹⁴ Now everyone begins recognizing the divine qualities exhibited by Tamburlaine. The Governor of Damascus recognizes the powers of Tamburlaine:

Still doth this man, or rather god of war,
Batter our walls and beat our turrets down;
(Pt. I. V. i. 1-2)

The defeated Bajazeth recognizes Tamburlaine's divine power in his revelations to his wife:

Ah, fair Zabina, we may curse his power,
The heavens may frown, the earth for anger quake,
But such a star hath influence in his sword
As rules the skies and countermands the gods...
(Pt. I. V. ii. 167-170)

Not only does Bajazeth see Tamburlaine as a divine presence, but also he sees Tamburlaine as winning the battle for dominion and countermanding the gods.

The final scene in Part I further reinforces the divine qualities of Tamburlaine. Waith tells us that "it is

¹⁴see Tamburlaine I, IV. ii. lines 48-73 and lines 110-125.

Tamburlaine's god-like caprice to spare Zenocrate's father." ¹⁵ But it appears to be more than a capricious act, for like other gods Tamburlaine can be moved, and through the intercession of his wife, Zenocrate, he is moved to spare the Soldan. It is through the cumulative acts of devotion and fealty to her husband that Zenocrate is able to act as an intermediary force. Through all of Part I we observe the deification of man, perhaps an ultimate expression of pagan humanistic expression, but I contend that Part II was planned along with Part I, and the events portrayed in the first five acts are merely a prelude to the total expression of a Marlovian view of the cosmos.

Before examining the fruition of Part I, we must examine the attitude toward orthodox religions that is displayed in the first half of Tamburlaine. Again, we have only some glimmers of a position that is more fully developed in Part II. Thus far we have seen that Tamburlaine is a natural man, perhaps the archetypal noble savage. His natural life merges gently into his devotion to a natural religion, bare of intermediaries in his relationship with the gods. The role of the gods is not clearly delineated in Tamburlaine's mind and the possibilities for challenge always

¹⁵Waith, p. 77.

remain in his mind. Among the best clues to the position of Tamburlaine is in an exchange with the conquered Bajazeth. Tamburlaine expresses not only an unorthodox view of religion, but also his own relationship with the gods:

The chiefest god, first mover of that sphere
 Enchased with thousands ever-shining lamps,
 Will sooner burn the glorious frame of heaven
 Than it should so conspire my overthrow,
 (Pt. I. IV. ii. 7-11)

In this speech Tamburlaine exhibits a confidence that the gods are directly interested in his activity, and that his challenge has not only been successful, but that he has also cowed the gods. He has met the gods directly, in his eyes, and in this primary relationship, the direct confrontation of man and gods, he has proved a potent force. Human reason and a fundamental religious experience reflect here the ideals of the Erasmian tradition. But more importantly expressed in the speech is the concept of a deistic god. When Tamburlaine speaks of the first mover, he is reflecting in principle the deistic philosophy. His thoughts are tempered as the speech continues and there is no certainty that he is speaking of a deus abscondi, but certainly the sphere of the god has been removed from active daily participation in the activities of man. The distance between the soul and the heavenly conception has been radically altered

and the close proximity of soul and heaven in the orthodox religions is refuted to the extent that there is a gulf between man and heaven, though the distance can be negotiated.

Tamburlaine's thoughts and words in Tamburlaine I promote this point of view, and the position is a reflection on adherents to the orthodox religious viewpoints. Bajazeth and Zabina, after they have been conquered, find little sustenance in their Mohammedan faith:

Bajazeth. Ah, villains, dare you touch my sacred
arms?

O Mahomet! O sleepy Mahomet!

Zabina. O cursed Mahomet, that mak'st us thus
The slaves to Scythians rude and barbarous!

(Pt. I. III. iii. 268-271)

Their rejection of Mohammed is more than the rejection of "heathen" religious rites. More than this it is a reinforcement of Tamburlaine's view of a natural religion without intermediaries. Bajazeth slaps at Christianity, particularly the ritualistic elements that smack to him, and perhaps Marlowe, of a mysticism not relevant to behaviorist religion:

Now will the Christian miscreants be glad,
Ringing with joy their superstitious bells...

(Pt. I. III. iii. 236-237)

While superstitious bell ringing may be a minute aspect of the traditional accretions surrounding religion, it reflects, nevertheless the position of Erasmian thought and

a Marlovian view that these are tendencies that detract from the true religious experience.

While there is no direct contact with Christian forces in Tamburlaine I, the attitudes toward orthodox religion are hinted at so that we are prepared for what occurs in Tamburlaine II.

Zabina reflects in her speech the final effect of placing too much faith in an orthodox religion. She makes the full circle from too much faith and confidence in the power of her orthodox religion to a complete rebuttal of faith:

Then is there left no Mahomet, no God,
No fiend, no fortune, nor no hope of end
To our infamous, monstrous slaveries?
(Pt. I. V. ii. 176-178)

And though she frames her thoughts in a question, it is rhetorical in the sense that all is finished for her. As she prepares to kill herself, she invokes the powers of hell and confirms the failure of an orthodox and ritualistic religion to provide for man's reason in a time of critical testing for the religion.

In the last act of Tamburlaine I, the final statement is made on orthodox ritual. The governor of the beleaguered city of Damascus sends forth four virgins to the camp of Tamburlaine to plead the cause of the city. The pagan

ritual of sending the sacrificial virgins to the gods is clearly indicated, but the god-like Tamburlaine scorns the implications that the virgins are sent to appeal to his mercy. Instead, Tamburlaine had them led unceremoniously away to death and the destruction of Damascus is completed. Again the failure of orthodox ritual is demonstrated and natural superiority exerts its power.

The first part of Tamburlaine ends on a high plateau for Tamburlaine and his entourage. He defeats the Soldan of Egypt, Zenocrate's father, and spares the Soldan from death through his decree. Tamburlaine has challenged the gods, has become a quasi-divine being and has absolute dominion over large territories. With all of these successes behind him, he has marriage rites with Zenocrate solemnized. Tamburlaine is assured of his earthly capabilities, and it remains for Tamburlaine II to define the overreaching mentality of a Tamburlaine who now believes his destiny may be larger than his earthly conquests.

Tamburlaine's expansionistic goals are clearly in focus as Tamburlaine II opens. Levin, who is sympathetic to Tamburlaine in Tamburlaine I, turns from the hero in Tamburlaine II. He sees Tamburlaine revealed "as a mortal, a human being whose strength is his inhumanity and whose

weakness is his mortality." ¹⁶ Here Levin tends to narrow his perspective of Tamburlaine and disallows the conqueror as a representative of mankind. Eugene Waith in quoting the last five lines of the play retains a more universal perspective:

Meet heaven and earth, and here let all things
 end,
 For earth hath spent the pride of all her fruit,
 And heaven consum'd his choicest living fire!
 Let earth and heaven his timeless death deplore,
 For both their worths will equal him no more,
 (Pt. II. V. iii. 249-253)

Waith sees the words of Amyras as indicating the perspective in which Tamburlaine should be placed. The key words have come earlier in Waith's view when Amyras has talked of his father's "anguish and his burning agony" (Pt. II. V. iii. 209). Waith sees the words of Amyras indicating that "Tamburlaine's sufferings are the inevitable concomitants of his greatness and his service to humanity." ¹⁷ Tamburlaine in this view becomes the universal representative of man's aspirations. And though Levin would see Tamburlaine's weakness as his mortality, it is in the immortality of the human race that Marlowe speaks to us through the

¹⁶Levin, p. 50.

¹⁷Waith, p. 85.

representative being. The sacrifice of Tamburlaine's life to the striving and overreaching mentality that embraces his every act is a movement forward in man's aspirations to become knowledgeable of his cosmos. This is a weakness of individual mortal flesh, that the individual must give up the corporeal shield, but Marlowe indicates an optimism for the continuation of the human species, and for its powers to build on the acquisitive minds, such as Tamburlaine's, that will a legacy of knowledge to the surviving eons.

That this grasping search for knowledge and the battle for dominion with the gods is outside the orthodox framework of Elizabethan religious experience is readily observable through the blows Marlowe inflicts on the orthodox religions. But it is not so much religion that comes under fire as the orthodoxy and the ritualism that have perverted the highest aspirations of the conventional religious experience.

Helen Gardner makes a valuable comment on Tamburlaine II when she indicates that "man's desires and aspirations may be limitless, but their fulfilment is limited by forces outside the control of the will."¹⁸ Again, she, as others,

¹⁸Helen Gardner, "The Second Part of Tamburlaine the Great," in Shakespeare's Contemporaries, ed. M. Bluestone and N. Rabkin (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1964), p. 78.

fails to account for Tamburlaine, the representative of mankind, and in her interpretation, Tamburlaine's personal tragedy becomes mankind's tragedy.

The defiant vaunting of Tamburlaine I is translated into more concrete terms in Tamburlaine II. The immense courage and the overreaching for power are evident in Tamburlaine II, but Tamburlaine's acts of defiance over control of nature have a doomed message from the beginning of Tamburlaine II. There is an aura of futility superimposed upon the courage of Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine's description of his sons in Act One reveals his inability to control the natural laws of heredity:

But yet methinks their looks are amorous,
 Not martial as the sons of Tamburlaine.
 Water and air, being symbolized in one,
 Argue their want of courage and of wit;
 Their hair, as white as milk, and soft as down--
 Which should be like the quills of porcupines,
 As black as yet, and hard as iron or steel--
 (Pt. II. I. iv. 21-27)

And a moment later Tamburlaine's disappointment becomes literally apparent:

Would make me think them bastards, not my sons,
 But that I know they issued from thy womb,
 That never looked on man but Tamburlaine.
 (Pt. II. I. iv. 32-34)

But even with the knowledge that he cannot gain dominion in the realm of heredity cannot daunt Tamburlaine. His ability to recover his equilibrium and march off in new directions

reflects the capacity of mankind to continue probing.

Roy Battenhouse, in his rather conventional and doctrinaire writings, would lead us to believe that Tamburlaine's downfall is a "notable example of lack of temperance."¹⁹ Clearly the theme of temperance has been important in Elizabethan criticism and the recognition of the Nichomachean Ethics as a moving force in the age cannot be discounted. Yet, Marlowe cannot be classified among those who believe in the effects of temperance as the only modicum of Elizabethan behavior. Perhaps Marlowe's life would be the best refutation of that view, but in reading Tamburlaine we cannot help being impressed by the intemperate behavior of the hero. He vaunts, dares, and gambles, but without this mentality in at least a small portion of mankind, progress would be an impossible thought. The intemperance that Marlowe has created in Tamburlaine becomes a virtue if we view Tamburlaine as the representative of man's striving for knowledge.

It is with the death of Zenocrate that doors start closing for Tamburlaine. This assertion of the gods'

¹⁹Roy Battenhouse, "Tamburlaine's Passions," in Marlowe A Collection of Critical Essays ed. Clifford Leach, Twentieth Century Views series, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1964), p. 59.

dominion cannot be countered with a mortal act, and Tamburlaine is faced again with the knowledge that he can only assume power over death, but cannot breathe life into the dead. Upon Zenocrate's death Tamburlaine continues to hurl challenges at the gods and furies:

What, is she dead? Techelles, draw thy sword
 And wound the earth, that it may cleave in twain
 And we descend into the infernal vaults,
 To hale the Fatal Sisters by the hair
 And throw them in the triple moat of hell,
 For taking hence my fair Zenocrate.

(Pt. II. II. iv. 96-101)

And after crying out at the furies he raises his sights to heaven and vents his wrath:

Raise cavalieros higher than the clouds,
 And with the cannon break the frame of heaven.
 Batter the shining palace of the sun,
 And shiver all the starry firmament,
 For amorous Jove hath snatched my love from hence,

(Pt. II. II. iv. 103-107)

Tamburlaine does not lose easily, and though he has lost a battle for control of nature, he finds a secondary victory:

Where'er her soul be, thou /to the body/ shalt
 stay with me,
 Embalmed with cassia, ambergris, and myrrh,
 Not lapped in lead, but in a sheet of gold,

(Pt. II. II. iv. 129-131)

He has lost Zenocrate's soul, but he will defy the laws of nature and prevent the natural decay of her body through an embalming process. His act of defiance, coming so soon after Zenocrate's death, demonstrates once again the

power of the human will and the thirst for dominion over nature.

As the play progresses, Tamburlaine discovers in himself the power that had eluded him earlier. He discovers that he can control the function of heredity, though in a negative fashion. After discovering the cowardice of Calyphas, he stabs his son. Tamburlaine's remarks preceding the stabbing reveal his belief that his son is a failure not worthy of carrying on Tamburlaine's name:

Here, Jove, receive his fainting soul again,
 A form not meet to give that subject essence
 Whose matter is the flesh of Tamburlaine,
 Wherein an incorporeal spirit moves,
 Made of the mould whereof thyself consists,
 Which makes me valiant, proud, ambitious,
 Ready to levy power against thy throne,
 That I might move the turning spheres of heaven,
 For earth and all this airy region
 Cannot contain the state of Tamburlaine.
 (Pt. II. IV. ii. 36-45)

Not only does Tamburlaine assert his dominion over nature, though in temporary fashion, he compares himself to Jove, mightiest of the gods, and in turn defies Jove by threatening against his throne and challenges him again for dominion not only of earth but of the "airy region" also. Tamburlaine refuses to be turned from his task, though he sees the mortality of his fellow men.

The Tamburlaine of Tamburlaine I had clearly defined his dominion over earth and his thoughts were just beginning

to reach beyond. In Tamburlaine II, he seeks to challenge in the "airy region", and the challenge is manifested in speech after speech. It culminates in Act Four, for here he challenges for dominion over the underworld, earth and heaven:

And in my helm a triple plume shall spring,
Spangled with diamonds, dancing in the air,
To note me emperor of the three-fold world;
(Pt. II. IV. iv. 116-118)²⁰

The challenges that Tamburlaine casts upward are infectious in their powers. The powers and overreaching of Tamburlaine inspire those around him, and here again he plays the role of mankind's inspiration. This is displayed, perhaps negatively, through the character of Theridamas. Theridamas, charged with the care of Olympia, widow of the Captain of the Balsera, and a captive of Tamburlaine, has decided to do away with herself. Her method is to convince Theridamas that she has an ointment:

With which if you but 'noint your tender skin,

²⁰Ribner, in his textual footnote, indicates the three-fold world as Europe, Asia, and Africa, but the case for heaven, earth and the underworld seems as significant if the line is interpreted in light of the material following rather than the preceding context, as Ribner apparently does. If nothing else, a symbolic reading of "three-fold world" seems to give the impression of heaven, earth and underworld. See also IV. iv. line 63.

Nor pistol, sword, nor lance, can pierce your
flesh. (Pt. II. IV. iii. 64-65)

Theridamas, with a confidence strengthened by the knowledge of Tamburlaine's challenges to dominate nature is convinced that man has capabilities to perform an act which would normally culminate in death. Olympia anoints her throat with the ointment, and Theridamas, taken in by his belief in man's capability, stabs her throat, and she dies. Again, death intrudes and the mortality of individual humans is demonstrated, but the determination to experiment, to enter into unknown realms is unquenched. Individuals often suffer the fate of Olympia in the works of Marlowe, but the hope for bettering the human condition remains unaltered.

Tamburlaine has instilled a confidence in his followers, and even as his death approaches, his god-like qualities remain unimpaired in their eyes. Techelles, in his invocation to the gods to save Tamburlaine, in actuality is invoking his divine leader:

Oh, then, ye powers that sway eternal seats
And guide this massy substance of the earth,
(Pt. II. V. iii. 16-17)

Tamburlaine, the leader and seeker after dominion has swayed eternal seats, for he has dethroned the kings who have claimed divine authority, and his dominion over earth, while not complete, is only halted by his death.

As the end appears inevitable, Tamburlaine's followers do not beg for divine mercy for their leader, rather they follow his example and rebuke the gods. Usumcasane cries out:

Blush, heaven, to lose the honor of thy name
(Pt. II. V. iii. 28)

And the fading Tamburlaine declares war on the forces of heaven:

Techelles and the rest, come, take your swords,
And threaten him whose hand afflicts my soul.
Come, let us march against the powers of heaven
And set black streamers in the firmament
To signify the slaughter of the gods.
(Pt. II. V. iii. 46-50)

Finally the mortal Tamburlaine, recognizing that death is upon him, makes his reconciliation with the gods. But he does not indulge in any obsequious flattery to insure himself a place in the heavenly sphere. He maintains his dignity in his conciliatory speech:

In vain I strive and rail against those powers
That mean t'invest me in a higher throne,
As much too high for this disdainful earth.
Give me a map; then let me see how much
Is left for me to conquer all the world,
That these, my boys, may finish all my wants.
(Pt. II. V. iii. 120-125)

In this speech he never admits defeat, but defends his powers and his overreaching as gifts the gods have decreed too significant for this earth. He is to be raised to a higher throne, and by implication the battle is not ended but merely elevated to a new sphere. Then he quickly turns

to the affairs of the mortal world, choosing to invest his sons with the zeal for overreaching power, the only bequest he deems worthy of his attention. Forgotten are the lands and riches that he has acquired, for it is in mortal conquest that he retains an interest.

The final bequest of Tamburlaine comes moments before he dies. While his sons are the objects of his speech, it is directed toward humanity:

By equal portions into both your breasts,
My flesh, divided in your precious shapes,
Shall still retain my spirit, though I die,
And live in all your seeds immortally.
(Pt. II. V. iii. 171-174)

It is the spirit, the will to do battle, to fight for dominion over the natural universe that Tamburlaine bequeaths to mankind. The courage he has displayed in his life and the quest for knowledge and dominion are his bequests to mankind. Even in his final hours Tamburlaine continues his battle for dominion. With death imminent Tamburlaine still remains defiant:

Then will I comfort all my vital parts,
And live, in spite of death, above a day.
(Pt. II. V. iii. 100-101)

And Marlowe instructs us in the Prologue to Tamburlaine I:

View but his picture in this tragic glass,
And then applaud his fortunes as you please.
(Pt. I. I. i. 6-7)

The tragedy of Tamburlaine is merely his mortality as an

individual human being. The outlook for humanity is far brighter, and in this respect the play is less a tragedy and more an instrument of hope. This, in essence, is the spiritual message of Tamburlaine.

Tamburlaine II makes far stronger statements on orthodox religious experience than Tamburlaine I and the indictment is more encompassing. The question of Marlowe's atheism is inextricably bound to a discussion of his anti-orthodox views as expressed in Tamburlaine and his other plays. It is not my purpose to involve my arguments with the possibilities of Marlowe's atheistic views, as ascribed by some of the critics.²¹ Implicitly, my entire case assumes that atheism is not a part of the Marlowe credo, but this does not negate a skeptical view, divorced from orthodox and conventional religious dogma, based on a universal religion and linked to a natural and deistic outlook. This is perhaps as close as it is possible to make

²¹See Paul Kocher, "Marlowe's Atheist Lecture," JEGP, XXXIX (1940), 98-106. An interesting hypothetical case, but a circumstantial case based on the words of prejudicial witnesses, as is most of the atheistic evidence. John Bakeless, in his remarks, pp. 65-66, 170-171, 187 ff. takes a more cautious scholarly position and merely lists the evidence without making strict judgments. That Marlowe was unorthodox in his religious views is the best conclusion that can be drawn from the charges. Certainly there was some foundation from which his critics made statements, but these remain lost to scholars thus far. See also F. S. Boas, pp. 108-115.

surmises about the Marlovian religious view. It is certainly a skeptical Erasmanian position, but most certainly an outgrowth of the Erasmanian view of humanity and not a betrayal of that elusive force, Christian humanism.

It would seem an evasion of responsibility to avoid coming to terms with a significant three lines in Tamburlaine that have been grasped by a number of critics as evidence of Marlowe's attitude toward a deity. Tamburlaine speaks:

Seek out another godhead to adore--
The God that sits in heaven, if any god,
For He is God alone, and none but He.
(Pt. II. V. 1, 198-200)

Waith quotes Kocher's view of the line, "the God that sits in heaven, if any god," as a view more blasphemous for a Christian than Tamburlaine's defiance of Mahomet and the burning of the Koran.²² Both Waith and Kocher, as well as others, see the parenthetical remark as a questioning of the existence of God.²³ Their view along with the views of other interested critics is predicated upon only one

²²Waith, p. 83.

²³Waith, p. 83. Levin also exercises this view on p. 51; Boas, on p. 98, sees a "transcendent deity." A vagueness pervades this section of Boas work, but our views are not widely separated, though our view of a Marlovian God may well be.

interpretation of the key parenthetical remark, "if any god." The position of the modifying parenthetical remark makes their interpretations suspect. If Marlowe had wanted his reader to suspect the existence of a deity, would not his ends have been better served by placing the modifying element in closer juxtaposition to the modified word, "God"? Thus the line would have read: The God, if any god, that sits in heaven. The line in its original form seems only to question where the God is sitting. This does not deny His existence, only his exact location, and a deistic God very well might be at work putting the first forces in motion that will create another universe, or in a more crude fashion Marlowe may be questioning the thought that God is a seven day a week, twenty-four hour a day workman who remains only in a circumscribed heaven awaiting the prayers of an all-important earth being. In effect, Marlowe very well may be puncturing again, the egocentric and possessive qualities that orthodox religion has indicated exist between man and his God.

The earliest views on orthodoxy come quickly in Tamburlaine II. Tamburlaine's enemies, the pagan Orcanes and his compatriots Gazellus and Uribassa make an alliance with Sigismund, the Christian King of Hungary. Here, the pagan

and Christian forces swear an oath of mutual protection.²⁴ Here Marlowe is reflecting on the universality of men, for driven together by a common need, the two groups find areas of agreement rather than positions that will fracture the alliance. They are brought together as equals and we find a merging of Christian and pagan interests. Here is a true universality brought about by common need.

But the alliance, forged out of common need, does not last long when Sigismund decides he can conquer the pagans. Sigismund directs his forces to take arms against the pagans in a sort of holy war:

Then arm, my lords, and issue suddenly,
 Giving commandment to our general host,
 With expedition to assail the pagan,
 And take the victory our God hath given.
 (Pt. II. II. ii. 60-63)

The Christians, false to the ideals of a true Christian behavior, lose the battle, and Sigismund sees the loss as an act of God:

And God hath thundered vengeance from on high
 For my accursed and hateful perjury.
 (Pt. II. II. ii. 2-3)

Orcanes, who prior to the battle had invoked Christ as a defender of justice had called for an honest Christ:

²⁴Tamburlaine II, I. ii.

If he be jealous of his name and honor
 As is our holy prophet Mahomet,
 Take here these papers as our sacrifice
 And witness of Thy servant's perjury.
 (Pt. II. II. ii. 43-46)

He ends his pleas beseeching the enemies' Christ:

...On Christ still let us cry,
 If there be Christ, we shall have victory.
 (Pt. II. II. ii. 63-64)

After Orcanes' victory it is apparent that his plea for justice has succeeded, and the false Christians perish. A natural religion of justice has prevailed over treachery. Orcanes honors both Christ and Mahomet:

And Christ or Mahomet hath been my friend.
 (Pt. II. II. iii. 11)

Now he follows with the thoughts of the universal man:

Yet in my thoughts shall Christ be honored,
 Not doing Mahomet an injury,
 (Pt. II. II. iii. 33-34)

Orcanes has merged Christianity with his Mohammedan religion and we see a unification of religious thought embodied in his faith. A religious faith based on man's relationship with man is established as the foundation of the faith, but a deification of higher forces still exists. It is an ethical religion with an implied faith in a divine force that is exhibited in Orcanes and this is perhaps a good reflection of the Marlovian stance also.

The view of Christianity expressed is not so much an anti-Christian view as an anti-orthodox view. Marlowe

attacks the followers of Mahomet also, and we see in lines following that all orthodoxy feels his wrath. In the earlier incident he has railed against the false Christians, men who have perverted the behavioristic concepts embodied in Christian thought. It is the destruction of ethical concepts intrinsic to Christianity that Marlowe comments on, and as in the works of Erasmus, Christians encounter failure when there is a perversion of the fundamentals of the faith.

In the final act, scene one, we find the counterpart to the anit-orthodox view as applied to Christianity.²⁵ Here, Tamburlaine, after conquering Babylon, gathers the sacred books of Mahomet from the temples. Tamburlaine has not only defeated the Christians, but he has also defeated his fellow disciples of Mahomet. Men who merely follow the same ritualistic dictates, then, cannot find peace with Tamburlaine, and beyond this position, the religious orthodoxy of Tamburlaine's enemies, though they be his co-religionists, tends to invalidate the orthodoxy of the Mohammedan faith in Tamburlaine's mind. This position has been implied throughout both parts of the play,

²⁵Boas, p. 97.

but until Act Five of Tamburlaine II the break has never been clearly stated. Tamburlaine is disillusioned with the capacities of the men he fought against, and sees their failings as a reflection of orthodox religion. Thus, he tells his followers:

Now, Casane, where's the Turkish Alcoran
 And all the heaps of superstitious books
 Found in the temples of that Mahomet
 Whom I have thought a god? They shall be burnt.
 (Pt. II. V. i. 171-174)

After burning the Koran, Tamburlaine invokes his God:

There is a God, full of revenging wrath
 From whom the thunder and the lightening breaks,
 Whose scourge I am, and Him will I obey.
 (Pt. II. V. i. 181-183)

But this is a different God than he has invoked on past occasions. This is not a divine presence, but merely a reflection of his own nature. It is a purely naturalistic God, arising out of Tamburlaine's momentary mood. A moment later Tamburlaine asks Mahomet for proof of his existence, while he is burning the holy books:

Why send'st thou not a furious whirlwind down
 To blow thy Alcoran up to thy throne,
 Where men report thou sitt'st by God himself?
 Or vengeance on the head of Tamburlaine
 That shakes his sword against thy majesty
 And spurns the abstracts of thy foolish laws?
 Well, soldiers, Mahomet remains in hell;
 He cannot hear the voice of Tamburlaine.
 (Pt. II. V. i. 190-197)

Tamburlaine asks for reasonable proof in his attack on Mahomet, and incidentally, the attack is as valid upon Christ

as Mahomet. But the attack is not on the Godhead, but only on those that Tamburlaine sees as inept intermediaries about whom a religious orthodoxy has grown, for following the attack on Mahomet, he utters the lines already discussed:

Seek out another godhead to adore--
 The God that sits in heaven, if any god,
 For He is God alone, and none but He.
 (Pt. II. V. i. 198-200)

Assuming my earlier interpretation as accurate, Tamburlaine is here expressing his belief in one divine source. His attack on Mahomet is an attack on orthodox religions which have perverted the relationship between men and their God. Tamburlaine is saying, seek the true source of power not an inept representative. There is only one other potent force operating in the universe beside Tamburlaine, in his view.

The attack on orthodoxy then becomes an affirmation of a natural religion, based on man's direct relationship with his God, divested of orthodox intermediaries about whom religious schools have developed. The drive to return to the essentials of religious experience is the force that drives Tamburlaine and his creator, Marlowe. It is this same divine source that Tamburlaine and Marlowe have vowed to battle for dominion over nature, but there is a respect and a genuine religious element injected into the competition.

These are not the views of an atheist. Certainly they were unorthodox views in Marlowe's day, a skeptical, competitive religion, stripped of the dogma and superficiality of ritual that had a tendency to separate men from each other. This was a religion in the Erasmian tradition that would hope to bind men together, to allow them to find a common religious experience, and to bring them back to the roots of religious example--ethical behavior.

Out of the criticism of religion in Tamburlaine, nowhere do we find that Marlowe and Tamburlaine have completely given up on the potentialities of the orthodox faith. Rather, Marlowe has been a harsh critic who sees that religions of the orthodox mold have not answered the problems of man's behavior. If he, as Erasmus, can bring men back to the uncorrupted sources of the orthodox religions, then his criticism will be tempered.

The play, Tamburlaine, seems to establish the religious and ethical position early in Marlowe's career. His later works, The Jew of Malta and Doctor Faustus, tend to isolate specific elements of his belief and more intensively develop his position. Thus, Tamburlaine, though superficial in many respects, rebuffed by many as simply bloodthirsty, gives us the most complete view of the Marlovian religious and ethical spectrum.

Chapter III

The Jew of Malta

Among the plays of Marlowe, The Jew of Malta, because of the text, has a singular quality. The only extant text is dated 1633, with Prologues by Thomas Heywood. Since the first publication that is available to scholars appeared some forty years after the death of Marlowe, there is considerable scholarly speculation on the authenticity of the text, particularly the last three acts in which the hand of another is strongly suspected by Bakeless, F. P. Wilson and Irving Ribner.¹ Their evidence, on which they make this judgment, is based essentially on internal evidence. They view the last three acts as lacking the diction and the poetic power of Marlowe and thus conclude that Marlowe could not have created this inferior portion of the play. At the same time, they view the admission by Heywood, as author of the Prologues, to mean that Heywood might have been that inferior hand. Their views are further reinforced by their individual readings of the play, and in all cases they see a serious interruption in the continuity which, to

¹See John Bakeless, Christopher Marlowe The Man in His Time (New York, 1964), p. 138 and F. P. Wilson, Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare (London, 1953), pp. 64-5 and Irving Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke Glasse'", in Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama In Honor of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia, 1962), p. 104.

their minds, indicates dual authorship. F. S. Boas, in his appraisal of the work, quotes from H. S. Bennett's 1931 edition of the play and shares Bennett's view that the last three acts are not proven to be the work of Heywood.² J. C. Maxwell approaches the problem in the most conciliatory fashion, and maintains that the play fulfills its early expectations, thereby skirting the issue of authorship:

Objections to the play as we have it are largely the result of building up a picture of the sort of play critics would like Marlowe to have written; naturally they are disappointed when they find he did not follow their prescriptions...It is true that impressive set-speeches are confined to the beginning of the play, but it is hard to see these early scenes as pointing forward to anything substantially different from what we actually have.³

In my reading of the play, in which I view it as an extension of a view expressed in Tamburlaine, the anti-orthodox attitude and the implicit commentary on ethical behaviorism form a consistent pattern through The Jew of Malta. I can reconcile myself to the possibilities that in forty years changes occurred in the text, but the play,

²F. S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe A Biographical and Critical Study (London, 1964), p. 134.

³J. C. Maxwell, "The Plays of Christopher Marlowe," in The Age of Shakespeare, ed. Boris Ford (Baltimore, 1963), p. 166.

as it exists, certainly bears the philosophical imprint of the Marlovian religious outlook.

There is no doubt that The Jew of Malta is a tragedy of revenge as Levin sees it.⁴ Nor is there any doubt that we see a play of Machiavellian burlesque and policy as Ribner views the play.⁵ All of these elements contribute to the play and make it the effective stage drama that it is.

But outside these traditional conventions, the play stands as a bold attack on orthodoxy and sounds a call to the ethical behaviorism that was touched upon in Tamburlaine. From our first encounter with the play, the title, we recognize that Marlowe is pointedly encountering orthodoxy. In the title, the protagonist is identified with an orthodox faith. This play, as has been repeated by all of the critics, has no direct source and is a product of Marlowe's mind, embellished perhaps by stories of Jews that circulated at the time. But practically speaking, this is Marlowe's creation and it is presented from Marlowe's vantage point, not that of a source book.

Ribner sees The Jew of Malta as blatantly anti-

⁴Harry Levin, The Overreacher (Cambridge, 1952), p. 60.

⁵Ribner, "Tragicke Glasse", p. 104.

Semitic, but views it as at least as anti-Christian.⁶ He overlooks the Turks, who, as followers of Mohammed, appear in slightly better light, but also come under attack by Marlowe. Thus, in the play, the three major divisions of Western orthodoxy feel the flagellating pen of Marlowe.

That Barabas is a villain, that he stoops to the most dreadful and cruel acts is without question in the play. But the motivation for his activity is the source of controversy among readers of the play. Those of the Bakeless, Wilson, Ribner coterie, who believe that the play was completed by another dramatist, would say that Barabas is a consistent character through the first two acts, and his reactions are those of a man who has been wronged. The last three acts, in their view, would indicate a pure villain, motivated only by a satanic drive to commit evil for evil's sake.⁷ Barabas' actions grossly outweigh the injustices done to him.

Levin, however, who sees the play as essentially the product of Marlowe, feels the unity that exists in the plot:

The overplot, framed by the siege, is the inter-relationship between the Christians and Jews, the Spaniards and Turks. It is connected with

⁶Ibid., p. 101.

⁷Ibid., p. 103.

the main plot through the speculations of Barabas, who is caught up in the underplot through his misplaced confidence in Ithamore.⁸

This, then, is Levin's view of the integrated five acts that compose The Jew of Malta. Farther than this, Levin points out that "morally all of them [Jews, Christians and Turks] operate on the same level, and that is precisely what Marlowe is pointing out."⁹ The justification for the activities of Barabas is simply that the same activities would have been carried out by the others if they had been placed in similar circumstances. Bevington sees the Jew as a villain in the first scene of the play and his later viciousness as a return to his original character rather than a startling development in his character.¹⁰ All these views point up a consistency in the development of Barabas, and a further extension of these views to encompass the anti-orthodox theme and ethical behaviorist attitude displayed is not far astray from the conditions that have been established.

⁸ Levin, p. 67.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ David M. Bevington, From "Mankind" to Marlowe Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 225-26.

To simply say that The Jew of Malta is a play of revenge utilizing an anti-Semitic overplot for the edification of the contemporary audience would be grossly misleading. Certainly the caricature of the Jew had a good deal to do with the popular appeal of the play, and Barabas became the stage type for the Jew, a model widely imitated in the Elizabethan theater. But the condemnation of all orthodoxy is apparent to any reader looking beyond the stereotype of the Jewish stage image created by Marlowe.

Machiavel sets the tone for the entire play in his prologue:

I count religion but a childish toy
And hold there is no sin but ignorance.
(Prologue. 14-15)

It is important to note that he attacks religion, not God, in the prologue, and the play remains consistent in this viewpoint, for nowhere is God attacked, but religious ritual and the perversion of religious ideals based on behavioristic principles are attacked.¹¹

The values of the society in which Barabas operates are established early in the play. First, Barabas tells us in an early soliloquy, through the perversion of the Biblical promise God made to Abraham, what he expects of

¹¹see above, pp. 72-3.

his orthodox religion:

These are the blessings promised to the Jews,
 And herein was old Abram's happiness.
 What more may heaven do for earthly man
 Than thus to pour out plenty in their laps,
 Ripping the bowels of the earth for them,
 Making the sea their servants and the winds
 To drive their substance with successful blasts?
 (I. i. 103-109)

Barabas converts the promise of the land of milk and honey, a fruitful land, into an outpouring of material wealth with nature shackled to the whims of man. This is Barabas' indictment and a moment later the indictment gathers the Christians into its fold:

Who hateth me but for my happiness?
 Or who is honored now but for his wealth?
 Rather had I, a Jew, be hated thus,
 Than pitied in a Christian poverty;
 For I can see no fruits in all their faith,
 But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride,
 Which methinks fits not their profession.
 (I. i. 110-116)

These are not the brooding words of a man who feels he has been wronged by the Christian society in which he lives. Though they are the recollections of past experiences, they are also the foreshadowing of events to come. The Christians who profess charity and poverty are the same Christians who honor him for his wealth, who covet his wealth and who base their values on the same standards as Barabas. While the perversion of Jewish ideals is apparent in Barabas, the hypocrisy of the Christian com-

munity is more directly exposed; for Christians are expressly forbidden to participate in the money lending activities that were one of the few sources of income for Jews forbidden to own property in most Western European states. Barabas does not directly castigate Christianity, but attacks those who are false to the behavioristic demands of the faith. It is the corrupt monasticism, a direct force on the Christian populace of Malta that is responsible for the corruption of the lay followers of Christianity. Here again, in the tradition of Erasmus, Marlowe makes his attack upon the perversion of fundamental church teachings and the contrast between profession and practice.¹² It is this schism between the philosophical underpinnings of the church and the clergy's manipulation of the teachings that Marlowe attacks.

It is in scene two that we see the first contrast between the profession and the practice of the Christians. Ferneze, the governor of Malta, has gathered the four Jews of Malta together and demanded that they contribute the ten years of tribute owed the Turks. He makes no demands upon the other citizens of Malta, and the whole burden falls upon the Jews. The Jews are given the choice of contributing

¹²See above, pp. 26-8.

half of their wealth for the tribute or, if they deny half their estates, they will forfeit all they have and will be forced to become Christians. Ferneze's justification glows with idealism:

No, Jew. We take particularly thine
 To save the ruin of a multitude,
 And better one want for a common good
 Than many perish for a private man.
 (I. ii. 97-100)

But he fails to justify the conditions for exempting all other citizens of Malta from this call for tribute, and the Jews, with good reason, felt unjustly put upon. And a moment later, the devil begins reciting scripture:

Be patient, and thy riches will increase.
 Excess of wealth is cause of covetousness,
 And covetousness, O, tis a monstrous sin.
 (I. ii. 123-125)

Ferneze rebukes the Jew for the very act he, himself, is committing. Marlowe's attack on Christian hypocrisy comes early in the play, and he maintains this unrelenting attitude throughout. Here again is the contrast between profession and practice.

But there are no redemptive qualities in the reaction of Barabas to the injustice. He counters with what constitutes a perversion of the Mosaic code of justice as he replies:

Ay, but theft is worse. Tush, take not from me
 then,
 For that is theft. And if you rob me thus,
 I must be forced to steal and compass more.
 (I. ii. 126-128)

Barabas counters an immoral act with the threat of an equally immoral act. All parties flounder in a world of potential for ethical behavioristic practices, and all suffer the afflictions of denial. It is the failure of orthodox religions to impart the underlying philosophical approach to man's relationships with his fellow man and its preference for meaningless ritual and tolerant corruption that lead to Marlowe's denial of its potency.¹³

There is never a question in the play of moral right opposed to moral wrong. This view is best exemplified by Barabas' statement:

Your extreme right does me exceeding wrong.
(I. ii. 154)

Ribner points out the immoral quality of the play in his telling statement:

Jew, Christian, and Turk in this play all live by the same code, the success of the one following upon the downfall of the other, as each is able to seize the advantage and practice his policy the more efficiently.¹⁴

Indeed, the entire play is couched in terms that will not allow us to turn our gaze from the direction Marlowe intended. There is a preoccupation with language that directs our thoughts to the orthodox religions. Barabas

¹³See above, p. 89.

¹⁴Ribner, "Tragicke Glasse", p. 104.

describes Ferneze not as a villainous man, but as a Christian, and Barabas is most often described as the Jew. Even the nominally neutral title "Turks" is often found with the modifier "infidel," and the implication gives an almost orthodox quality to the term as it is repeated in the play. The tension between the three competing groups is always played upon, and thus the differences emphasized. The subversive influences that tend to separate mankind are accentuated, and orthodox faiths assume a role that make them divide rather than unite mankind. Levin states the case effectively:

Meanwhile, by craftily pitting infidels against believers, one belief against another, fanaticism against Atheism, Marlowe has dramatized the dialectics of comparative religion.¹⁵

Thus, Marlowe is again in the camp of Erasmus, pointing out the factionalizing of mankind through the jealousies of orthodox faiths. Though Erasmus operated in a smaller world, the world of divided Christianity, the intent is the same, to bring men back to a common source of ethical behavior.¹⁶ While Erasmus operates within a totally Christian framework, his liberal and pragmatic position

¹⁵Levin, pp. 69-70.

¹⁶See above, pp. 32-3.

could indicate that Marlowe's position is the next logical step.

Since Barabas dominates the play, his lines accounting for about half the play, it is through his words that we come to understand Marlowe's position, and it is through the actions of the other characters that we see Marlowe's anti-orthodox position amplified.

Barabas' speeches literally overflow with attacks on Christian orthodoxy, but again his actions deny him a position above those that he attacks. After his goods have been confiscated to pay the Turkish tribute, he is consoled by his daughter Abigail. His reply is stoical, that of a man conditioned to the hypocrisy of Christians and he replies:

No, Abigail. Things past recovery
 Are hardly cured with exclamations.
 Be silent, daughter, Sufferance breeds ease,
 And time may yield us an occasion,
 Which on the sudden cannot serve the turn.
 (I. ii. 237-241)

He is patient, recognizing that the Christians have been failed time and again by their corrupted orthodoxy. And then he makes a commentary that is intended to reflect on the Christian behavior, but which applies only too well to himself also.

Ay, daughter, for religion
 Hides many mischiefs from suspicion.
 (I. ii. 282-283)

The remainder of Act One is constructed of Barabas' plots to get Abigail into his former home, which has been converted into a nunnery. She takes the false oath so that she will be accepted as a nun, and then retrieves a cache of jewels and gold that her father had secreted under a floor board. The retaliation for Christian hypocrisy is Judaic hypocrisy, initiated and planned by Barabas. Abigail is untouched by her activity, for she enacts the role of the loyal child. Her purity and virginal goodness, her unselfish behavior all serve as an effective contrast to the hypocrisy and destruction around her. At the highest symbolic level she becomes a Mary figure, both in her religion and her purity. She is, at the same time, a well-meaning hypocrite converted by friars who are both worldly and carnal. Abigail is also an effective contrast to her father, Barabas, whose name is synonymous with the anti-Christ. She effectively establishes the decadent orthodoxy by her example of essentially ethical and well-meaning behavior, and symbolizes the universality of ethical behavior by transcending the two orthodox religions she is associated with in the play.

In Act Two, the ideas that Barabas had touched on regarding his reactions to Christian oppression are

further detailed:

We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please,
 And when we grin, we bite; yet are our looks
 As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.
 I learned in Florence how to kiss my hand,
 Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
 And duck as low as any barefoot friar,
 (II. iii. 20-25)

Barabas reveals himself as a product of Christian oppression, a man conditioned to action by the activities attributed him by the Christians.¹⁷ Barabas makes himself into the villain that the Christian society has told him he is. This is his revenge on an orthodoxy that has lost sight of its behavioristic principles. But in so doing Barabas betrays his own orthodoxy and betrays any hope of a reconciliation with the other orthodox faiths by his vile behavior. Thus, orthodox religions, often involved in petty explications of dogma, lose sight of behavioristic principles and men are left to fend for themselves in seeking models for behavior.¹⁸ The men portrayed in The Jew of Malta are men abandoned by their religion.

¹⁷James Baldwin in Notes of a Native Son brings a similar view into focus when he asserts that the nightmare image the white man has of the Negro is transformed into reality so that the Negro may revenge himself on the society that has created him.

¹⁸See above, p. 34.

Act Two is mainly concerned with Barabas plotting his first revenge on Ferneze. By using Abigail, who by now has managed to free herself from the nunnery, as the bait, he sets Lodowick, the son of Ferneze, against Mathias. In doing so he tells his daughter:

It is no sin to deceive a Christian,
For they themselves hold it a principle,
Faith is not to be held with heretics;
But all are heretics that are not Jews.
(II. iii. 306-309)

In making this statement he reveals the petty jealousies that have become magnified by the orthodox religions, and orthodoxy becomes divisive rather than a sincere behavioristic force that would unite mankind. The statement reflects equally on Christian and Jew, and orthodoxy again is the loser.

But Marlowe is a showman interested in keeping the Elizabethan audience entertained and so he puts lines in Barabas' mouth that would inflame the audience. Barabas speaks of Lodowick:

This offspring of Cain, this Jebusite
That never tasted of the Passover,
Nor e'er shall see the land of Canaan,
Nor our Messias that is yet to come,
This gentle maggot--Lodowick, I mean--
Must be deluded.
(II. ii. 298-303)

Speeches of this nature by Barabas are interspersed throughout the play, adding to the caricature created and at the same time creating a focus that Marlowe perhaps intended

as a diversion from his all-encompassing attack on orthodoxy, and which might be termed a protective device.

Another important event in Act Two is Barabas' acquisition of the slave Ithamore. Here the anti-Christ Barabas is joined by a treacherous disciple, a Turk, and the third major orthodox group enters the intrigue. Up to this point, we have had but one brief encounter with the Turks. In Act I. ii. the Turk, Calymath, has made his demand for tribute from Ferneze, and our knowledge is limited to the blackmail the Turks are exacting from the Christian inhabitants of Malta. Thus, none of the three groups has appeared in a righteous moral position.

Ithamore, the Turk, becomes the image of his master. Not only is he involved in all of Barabas' villainy, but in his role in the underplot he is involved in the same kind of double dealing that leads to the downfall of Barabas. The underplot, a convention of Elizabethan drama, was most often a parody of the main plot, usually adding comic relief. It was very often a sop for the groundlings, heavy-handed and filled with puns. In The Jew of Malta the underplot is conveyed through the characters of Bellamira, a courtesan; Pilia-Borza, a thief, procurer and blackmailer; and Ithamore, Barabas' double-dealing slave. Ithamore, deceived by the cunning of Bellamira and Pilia-Borza, reveals the

treacheries of Barabas; and the blackmailers, using Ithamore as their instrument, begin their assault on Barabas. Thus, the underplot swings on the axis of blackmail and revenge just as Ferneze's relationship with the Turks and Barabas' relationship with Ferneze are framed. The entire play is built on the premise that men use one another, and that the forces of orthodoxy are nearly impotent. The behavioristic dictates of the orthodox religions have been submerged by the ritual and the corrupt uses to which men, clergy pointedly included, have put the orthodox faiths. Again the admonition of Erasmus to get back to fundamentals of religion is apparent.¹⁹

The bloodshed starts in earnest in Act Three. The carefully plotted encounter between Lodowick and Mathias that Barabas has engineered bears fruit, and the two young men kill each other over the bait, Abigail, that Barabas has put between them. Ithamore admits to Abigail that Barabas tricked the two men into dueling:

Why the devil invented a challenge, my master
writ it, and
I carried it, first to Lodowick, and inprimis
to Mathias.
And then they met, /and/ as the story says,
In doleful wise, they ended both their days.
(III. iii. 18-21)

¹⁹See above, pp. 34-5.

Abigail instantly sees her father's hand in the affair and begins questioning Ithamore carefully. After the facts are established, Ithamore begs one question of Abigail:

Have not the nuns fine sport with the
friars now and then?

(III. 111. 32-33)

It is a question totally extraneous to the context of the scene, but obviously set up by Marlowe to point out corruption in the Monastic orders. Abigail dismisses Ithamore without answering, but the question, even from the mouth of a blackguard, stains with its implications. The question also works as a foreshadowing device, for upon learning the truth of her father's activities Abigail makes the decision to convert to Christianity. And yet as events turn out she is merely exchanging one orthodox corruption for another.

While Abigail awaits Friar Jacomo, who is to recon-vert her to Christianity, this time in a sincere fashion, she turns on her own orthodox faith after seeing the depths to which her father can stoop, and the indictment is carried over to the servant Ithamore also:

But I perceive there is no love on earth,
Pity in Jews, nor piety in Turks.

(III. 111. 47-48)

She bases her judgment on behavioristic conditions that she has observed in men and has seen in the betrayal of the two orthodox faiths. The last three acts, primarily action,

give much latitude for this interpretation. The failing that has gone undetected by Abigail is the hypocrisy of the Christians, and in her new enthusiasm for Christianity she establishes high ideals, higher than the ideals already observed in the Christians and certainly ironic in view of the Christian activity to follow:

And I was chained to follies of the world,
 But now experience, purchased with grief,
 Has made me see the difference of things.
 My sinful soul, alas, hath paced too long
 The fatal labyrinth of misbelief,
 Far from the Son that gives eternal life.
 (III. iii. 60-65)

She sees Christianity as her escape from the follies of the world, but apparently she hasn't observed the double dealing of the Christians, nor the corruption of the Monastic orders. The abject depths to which her father has sunk blind her to the failings of all others. Still, unlike others in the play, she remains pure in her ideals, making errors of judgment, but in a behavioristic sense is open and malice free.

Perhaps the ultimate disintegration of the decadent orthodox faiths, as portrayed in the play, is the dissolution of the family unit, the prime relationship among men. Separate orthodox faiths, making their separate superficial appeals, divide Barabas and his daughter. Orthodoxy helps create a situation in which no recon-

ciliation is possible. Barabas sees his only open course as revenge, and the culmination is infanticide, the poisoning of his daughter and the other nuns of the order. Here is the betrayal of ethical behaviorism, this time in the name of orthodoxy, again revealing the divisive qualities of the orthodox faiths and the superficiality of the dialectics that have perverted the basic behavioristic goals of organized religion. Barabas puts a curse on Abigail as soon as he discovers she has defected:

Ne'er shall she live to inherit aught of mine,
 Be blessed of me, nor come within my gates,
 But perish underneath my bitter curse,
 Like Cain by Adam, for his brother's death.
 (III. iv. 27-30)

In this curse, he invokes his orthodoxy by analogy to his Old Testament knowledge, but as he poisons the pottage, his revenge becomes more personal and the breakdown in his behavior is once again apparent:

Vomit your venom, and envenom her
 That like a fiend hath left her father thus.
 (III. iv. 100-101)

Abigail's defection becomes, in Barabas' mind, the betrayal of jealously held orthodoxy. Yet, we can never be quite as harsh in our judgment of Barabas as of the Christians, for as Maxwell points out so well: "The kind of undignified weapons with which Barabas later fights are the only ones

available for him.²⁰ The Christians and Turks usually have alternatives, and deal from a position of numerical strength. Barabas is a lonely representative of an orthodox faith, defending it, as he interprets it, with the only tools left to him.

The Turks are reintroduced to the plot in Act Three. The knights and Bashaw, representatives of Calymath, return to Malta to receive the tribute promised them by Ferneze. The Turks, who had originally set the cruel actions in motion by their demand for tribute now assume their responsibility in the words of the Bashaw. When Ferneze questions his motives in returning to Malta, he replies:

The wind that bloweth all the world besides,
Desire of gold.

(III. v. 3-4)

Thus, there is an admission by the Turks that they are motivated by the same materialistic drives that have created the turbulence in the other orthodox faiths. The immorality of all three orthodox groups has now been clearly stated by representatives of each, and the corrupt behavior has a clear source.

The last scene of Act Three reveals the dying Abigail, last survivor of the nunnery, making her final confession to Friar Barnardine. She reveals her father's part in the

²⁰Maxwell, p. 167.

deaths of Lodowick and Mathias, and in a conciliatory tone asks Barnardine to:

Convert my father that he may be saved,
And witness that I die a Christian. /She dies.7
(III. vi. 38-39)

True to the corrupt orthodoxy he portrays, Marlowe gives Barnardine his damning line:

Ay, and a virgin, too--that grieves me most.
(III. vi. 40)

The goodness that Abigail reveals is toppled quickly by the remark of Barnardine, and the Christian decay retains the upper hand.

Barnardine seals his own fate as Act Four opens. After some preliminary jousting with Barabas, Barnardine gives strong hints that he will break with the integrity of the confessional. As Barabas and Barnardine discuss Lodowick and Mathias, Barnardine reveals his trump:

I will not say that by a forged challenge
they met.
(IV. i. 47)

With the knowledge that he is vulnerable to blackmail, Barabas feigns interest in Christianity. He begins by baiting the trap of vengeance with wealth:

Great sums of money lying in the banco,
All this I'll give to some religious house,
So I may be baptized and live therein.
(IV. i. 76-78)

The two Priars in attendance, Barnardine and Jacomo, are

quickly taken in by his ploy. They begin competing for Barabas' wealth by promising special treatment in their individual religious houses. The two Friars are at each other's throats, and Barabas has established a motive for their deaths. He stalls them with his decision, and he and Ithamore go off to plan the Friar's deaths.

Then, in a violent piece of stagecraft, Ithamore, at the direction of Barabas, strangles Barnardine. They set up the body in a lifelike position on the street, and the unwary Jacomo, with Barabas' wealth in sight, walks down the street making his plans:

This is the hour wherein I shall proceed--
 O happy hour--wherein I shall convert
 An infidel and bring his gold into our treasury.
 (IV. iii, 1-3)

The motivations of the Friar are clearly in focus, and they are not in the realm of soul saving. The clergy is subject to the same temptations and failings as the flocks they lead. The corruption is pointedly at the top, and the orthodoxy reflected in the lay community is of a like nature.

Jacomo passes the lifeless figure of Barnardine, and thinking him alive strikes out. The body falls and Barabas and Ithamore seize the initiative. Jacomo, who has struck out in jealousy over the wealth of Barabas, is speedily turned over to the authorities and Barabas is revenged. The two Friars, at the same time, receive a poetic

justice, and the theme of total immorality in the play is continued. Orthodoxy has failed at every level, and translated into human terms has engendered violence and negative behavior.

The last scene of Act Four is the burlesque of the main plot. Here Bellamira, Pilia-Borza and Ithamore begin their blackmail of Barabas. Barabas, disguised as a French musician, poisons the degraded threesome, and the violence moves toward a crescendo. The dying blackmailers reveal the truth of Barabas' treachery to Ferneze, and he discovers the reason behind his son's death. Barabas feigns death by taking a potion and is thrown over the wall of the city, only to revive and make an alliance with the Turks who are outside the city. The Turks who are about to attack the city to exact the tribute promised them by Ferneze, but never paid, are led into the city by Barabas. After the Christians are defeated by the double dealing of Barabas, he begins having second thoughts and starts dealing with Ferneze again.

Barabas creates an elaborate plot to eliminate the Turks. He builds a hidden trapdoor to drop Calymath into a boiling cauldron, sets explosives in the building the Turks occupy, and prepares to establish relations with Ferneze. Not to be outdone, Ferneze springs the trap on

Barabas, killing the diabolical Jew. He takes Calymath prisoner, and the series of double dealing acts comes to an end with victory for Ferneze.

In the context of the play the Christians are winners, and the Elizabethan audience could take comfort in the results. The end of Barabas was perhaps fitting and he receives his just end. Yet, in the moral context of the play there can be no winners. In a play that is immoral, filled with vengeance and violence, the winner is merely the most successful blackguard. Christianity wins the immoral and treacherous contest, with Judaism playing it to almost a standoff. The Turks remain in the background, but retain the responsibility for initiating the actions that led to the violence and double dealing.

All the orthodox religions suffer at the hands of Marlowe. The decadence is portrayed through the perversions of the fundamental orthodox paths by men. His attack is clear and pointed, and none of the Western faiths is omitted from the catalog of sins. Marlowe's call is to the fundamentals of faith, to the significant directives that will clearly assess human activity and its moral overtones.

Marlowe, in The Jew of Malta, has taken a position that he hinted at in Tamburlaine and expanded it. He points the accusing finger directly at orthodox religion in this

play. True to the tradition of Erasmus, he dissects the corruption, satirizes orthodox failings and entertains, all at one time.

Out of the play the religious stance of Marlowe, anti-orthodox but not anti-God, emerges. Ethical behaviorism, the foundation of Marlowe's view, remains the focal point of a position clearly illuminated in The Jew of Malta.

Chapter IV

Doctor Faustus

Doctor Faustus, like Tamburlaine, is another of the Marlovian overreachers, voluntarily placing himself at the fringes of the human experience, and consciously alienating himself from the moral tradition. While Tamburlaine comes to represent the universal man, aspiring for knowledge as a flatly characterized everyman,¹ Faustus retains the mark of individuality, and his efforts to become mankind's benefactor are heightened by a self-imposed martyrdom.

Doctor Faustus is based on a legend ascribed to the period in which Medieval and Renaissance thought first came into conflict. The dating is important because it serves to reinforce the determination and the courageous self-sacrifice of Faustus, an early Renaissance man, in a society heavily encumbered with the established scholastic tradition. The potent strain of individualism depicted in the Faustus character reflects mightily on personal stress under which the early Renaissance thinkers and activists operated. Opening new vistas of experience became obligatory to this breed of men, but the pressures of resisting traditional forces, with all of their ingrained and coercive

¹See above, p. 32.

demands upon the collective psyche, demanded action both startling and illuminating. Faustus is attempting to deal with the traditional thinking, to break the patterns of scholastic traditionalism, and to help set the direction of Renaissance thinking. That his action is extreme, is undeniable, but that his action is servile to the Renaissance dream is also undeniable. Notoriety and fame are as important to his purposes as is his act, selling his soul to the devil for knowledge, for his actions cannot create a universal interest unless they mark a severe departure from the established moral tradition. Thus, his quest serves a dual purpose: to enlarge man's sphere of interest and experience, and to delineate and circumscribe the spheres of man and God. His ends are served best if men reflect on his act and take cognizance of the implications of his action, and further that men are moved by the physical evidence of knowledge acquired through the act.

Thus, the possibilities are indicated that Faustus' activity with the devil is premeditated, and that his death is suicidal, all for the sake of the Renaissance ideal.² Faustus, the doctor of divinity, bred on the

²I am indebted to Arthur Mizener, "The Tragedy of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus," College English, V (1943), 70-75, for an overview of Doctor Faustus, and for the initial impetus to the direction I take. Though we part ways quickly, he remains a departure point for much of my thinking.

scholastic tradition, but disenchanted with its potential for real knowledge, would most naturally turn to a test of God as the basis for his experiment. In the first scene of Act One he catalogs scholastic learning, and in their turn dismisses logic, medicine, philosophy, and law, as "external trash."³ He then turns to divinity and claims:

When all is done, divinity is best.
(I. i. 37)

His judgment of divinity is a comparative one, and only indicates to him an area worthy of his gigantic test. He does establish the conflict between divine and natural law in this early moment in the play before he renounces God:

If we say that we have no sin,
We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us,
Why then belike we must sin,
And so consequently die.
Ay, we must die an everlasting death.
What doctrine call you this? Che sera, sera;
What will be, shall be! Divinity, adieu!
(I. i. 43-49)

The central conflict of the play is established in this early speech, for the nature of man, a propensity for sin, is brought into conflict with divine law which demands everlasting death for sinners. His first challenge to God is in the exclamation, "Divinity, adieu!" Faustus is making the first in a series of calculated affronts to God, for

³I. i. line 35.

he is bidding the Divinity to intercede. His affronts are calculated to move God to direct action, to intercede in human affairs and make His divine will and sphere of interest clear to man.

In his calculated affronts, Faustus turns to magic, a term which can be construed as synonymous with knowledge in the context of the play. He holds forth that:

These metaphysics of magicians
And necromantic books are heavenly.
(I. i. 49-50)

Not only is the irony of "heavenly" apparent as the play unfolds and the devil grants Faustus powers to conjure spirits, but also the calculated blasphemy in describing necromantic books as heavenly. The complete reversal, from doctor of divinity to necromancer, established in eight lines, would appear to be less a shoddy job of characterization than a premeditated effort at establishing the martyrdom mentality of the calculating Faustus.

As Faustus continues to soliloquize, his musings turn to thoughts of power:

All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings
Are but obeyed in their several provinces,
Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds,
But his dominion that exceeds in this
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.
A sound magician is a demi-god.
Here try thy brains to get a deity!
(I. i. 57-63)

Again he approaches the conflict of natural and divine law,

but this time from a new direction. Natural elements, wind and clouds, part of the earthly atmosphere are subjected to Faustus' scrutiny. These elements lie within man's realm of comprehension and understanding, but thus far have not been subjected to the control of man. He who succeeds in controlling the natural forces will have reached the fringes of man's knowledge, and can provide sound competition for whatever Godly control exists. In this fashion, the magician or man of knowledge becomes half god, a controller of natural phenomenon, and Faustus casts himself as the seeker. But this, as much of Faustus' musing, is but idle conjecture. His real interest is in the collision point of natural and divine law, the point at which man infringes on divine law to the degree that there can be no reconciliation with God. After his musings he evokes a secondary response from the representatives of good and evil.

The good and bad angel enter, polemically separated, each advising Faustus on a course of action. The good angel attacks the necromantic books and advises Faustus:

Read, read the Scriptures. That necromantic
book is blasphemy.

(I. i. 74)

Faustus has made himself conspicuous, and the conditions for a confrontation with God are established. As the bad angel tempts Faustus with the promise of control of natural elements, Faustus listens, and then in an orgiastic out-

burst he recites the catalog of gross and profane activity that he will demand of the spirits:

How am I gluttred with conceit of this!
 Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
 Resolve me of all ambiguities,
 Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
 I'll have them fly to India for gold,
 Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
 And search all corners of the new-found world
 For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.
 (I. i. 79-86)

He continues on in this vein and calls for all of the voluptuousness of fleshly existence. Boas' contention that Faustus literally sells his soul to the devil for twenty-four years of voluptuousness seems to evaporate when the events of the Faustian existence are examined.⁴ While Faustus hurls the words forth, his demands upon the spirits are seldom gross. The desire for riches is never translated into demand upon Mephistophilis, and a reasonable assumption could be made that once again Faustus has created the calculated affront. Boas has interpreted mere words as action, and further evidence will indicate the differences between word and deed in the play.

As Valdes and Cornelius enter Faustus' rooms, he takes up the challenge again, this time before witnesses:

Philosophy is odious and obscene;
 Both law and physic are for petty wits;

⁴P. S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe A Biographical and Critical Study (London, 1964), p. 210.

Divinity is basest of the three.
(I. i. 107-109)

Traditional theological study bears the brunt of his attack, an attack not only on the impoverished scholastic tradition, but on the relationship between God and man that the system engendered. Faustus gloats over his victories to Valdes and Cornelius, revealing his view of the traditional system:

And I, that have with subtle syllogisms
Gravelled the pastors of the German church,
And made the flowering pride of Wittenberg
Swarm to my problems as th' infernal spirits
On sweet Musaeus when he came to hell,
Will be as cunning as Agrippa was,
Whose shadows made all Europe honor him.
(I. i. 113-119)

Faustus relates the use of subtle syllogisms to a reputation for cunningness, a perversion of the scholastic spirit. Through his clever mind he has brought the pastors to his feet. He has played the scholastics' own game and has won. But winning is an empty reward if the system gives no rewards but plaudits for cleverness, and Faustus seeks action. Tangible evidence is demanded by his Renaissance mind and Agrippa, a German conjurer, is honored by Faustus. Again Faustus seeks an anti-God figure, a challenger and a man certain to elicit a response from heavenly forces, for he seeks the direct intervention of God. But this time he fails. There is no response from the angels and the affront has failed.

Valdes and Cornelius revel in their own voluptuousness, thinking only of treasure and sensuality. Faustus, guilty by association, makes a stand on necromancy:

Valdes, as resolute am I in this
As thou to live; therefore object it not.
(I. i. 135-136)

Faustus has committed himself to a role of action before witnesses. Valdes and Cornelius, timid men, encourage Faustus, for they cannot bring themselves to face the dangers of everlasting damnation. Valdes volunteers his knowledge to Faustus:

First I'll instruct thee in the rudiments,
And then wilt thou be perfecter than I.
(I. i. 161-162)

With only rudimentary knowledge, Faustus will surpass Valdes in the art of necromancy. From their standpoint they are using Faustus for ends they lack courage to pursue. But Faustus is a willing tool, a calculating blasphemer, ready to accept the limited knowledge Valdes can give. Faustus' progression can only be as successful as the instruments of challenge and the affronts he uses, and Valdes can set him on course. The users become unwittingly used by Faustus and retain only a secondary interest for the doctor, as witnesses and messengers for his experiment. As the scene ends, Faustus again iterates his goal, the effect of which is to only make him more conspicuous:

This night I'll conjure, though I die therefore.
(I. i. 166)

Even before the devil enters the scene, Faustus has committed himself to an irrevocable course of action. The devil and his subordinates can only become devices of an end that Faustus has clearly in view.

The short second scene of the play, some thirty-three lines, helps establish the veracity of the Faustian character. Two scholars, friends and associates of Faustus, discover that Faustus has taken up the necromantic art. The first scholar establishes the esteem in which Faustus is held:

I wonder what's become of Faustus, that was wont to
make our schools ring with sic probo.
(I. ii. 1-2)

Esteem is tempered with the prior knowledge of Faustus' far-ranging mind, and the first scholar recognizes the mind that is groping on the frontiers of human experience:

I fear me nothing will reclaim him now,
(I. ii. 31)

But loyalty and recognition of the special brilliance of Faustus' mind is a strong force and the second scholar refuses to give up the battle:

Yet let us see what we can do.
(I. ii. 32)

In this short scene Faustus is established as a part of the intellectual community, esteemed by his colleagues, recog-

nized as a revolutionary, yet retained as a member of the community of men and thinkers. Faustus' love for mankind, established by his selfless suicidal course, is reciprocated by his fellow man, though Faustus is separated from them by the gulf separating the active Renaissance mind and the devout, but severely constricted, scholastic philosophy. The Faustian and Renaissance ideal, the thirst for knowledge with evidence acquired outside the internal machinations of the mind, is never lost from view in the play. Faustus attempts to embrace the whole universe with an intense optimism toward the capability of man in this venture. His failure, if that term describes the end result, is only one of degree, for it is only through a Faustian point of view that an assessment of his accomplishment is acquired.

Faustus becomes earnest in his attempts to elicit a direct response from God in the third scene. He begins with the ritual of the black arts, assuring himself that the end justifies the means:

Then fear not, Faustus, to be resolute,
And try the utmost magic can perform.
(I. iii. 14-15)

The key word in the quotation is "try", for Faustus recognizes that the potential for a heavenly response will come only through trying God. This is not a battle for victory, but a battle of responses. Faustus seeks direction for human exploration, and knowledge of natural law. He can only

discover answers when he finds the areas that God has pre-empted as His own. Faustus seeks to reconcile the world of natural law, under which man is born, and the world of divine law, under which man is operative. The natural craving for knowledge is brought into conflict with the divine law of sin, and this is the very desire of Faustus, to circumscribe spheres of influence.

As Faustus invokes the spirits of the underworld, again calculating the conspicuousness of his act, he is startled by the results of his act, the appearance of Mephistophilis in the form of a devil:

I charge thee to return and change thy shape;
Thou art too ugly to attend on me.
(I. iii. 22-23)

Faustus' expectations are not fulfilled, for he is expecting a response from God, and even his perception cannot be reconciled to his desires:

Go, and return an old Franciscan friar;
That holy shape becomes a devil best.
(I. iii. 24-25)

His thoughts return to divinity and holiness as he seeks the devil in another form. The reality of his confrontation is startling, but Faustus acts with aplomb and sends the devil off to change form while he gathers his wits. Now that he has conjured the devil, Faustus must find uses for him that will further his ends. When Mephistophilis returns, Faustus is ready for him:

I charge thee wait upon me whilst I live,
 To do whatever Faustus shall command,
 Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere
 Or the ocean to overwhelm the world.
 (I. iii, 35-39)

Again, words belie deeds for Faustus' love of mankind will not allow him to destroy the earth through flood, an act that thus far had only been accomplished by God. Mephistophilis becomes a part of the blasphemous process that Faustus has set in motion. Faustus still seeks a response from God, but even the threat of world annihilation gathers no response from God.

Mephistophilis tells Faustus that he is the servant of Lucifer and is responsible to Lucifer not Faustus. Faustus wants to know why Mephistophilis appeared, and is determined to know if the conjuring was the cause. Mephistophilis replies:

That was the cause, but yet per accidens,
 For when we hear one rack the name of God,
 Abjure the Scriptures and his Savior Christ,
 We fly in hope to get his soul;
 Nor will we come unless he use such means
 Whereby he is in danger to be damned.
 Therefore the shortest cut for conjuring
 I stoutly to abjure the Trinity
 And pray devoutly to the prince of hell.
 (I. iii, 46-54)

Faustus has an unusual concern with cause and effect in his conjuring, for the response was not what he had intended. Faustus' first concern was with a premeditated blasphemy, and the arrival of the devil was merely a by-product of his

act. The primary purpose was to cause a consternation in God, creating the need for active response. Now Faustus must adapt to the new situation, the entry of Mephistophilis and Lucifer.

Faustus reinforces his role as blasphemer by instantly aligning himself with Lucifer:

There is no chief but Beelzebub,
 To whom Faustus doth dedicate himself.
 The word 'damnation' terrified not me,
 For I confound hell in Elysium.
 (I. iii. 57-60)

The quick and adaptable mind of Faustus creates blasphemy upon blasphemy, compounding his flagrant act. When he cries out that the word 'damnation' doesn't terrify him, Faustus is operating in a vacuum of knowledge. He is challenging, unaware of the terrors of hell, but convinced of the merits of his cause, the opening of new vistas of experience for man.

Faustus, in his search for knowledge, begins questioning Mephistophilis. No bargain has been reached, or even discussed, but Faustus' curiosity and seeking mind assert themselves quickly. He asks that the Scriptures be proven through direct testimony:

Was not that Lucifer an angel once?
 (I. iii. 65)

He receives an affirmative reply and counters with the question of why Lucifer is prince of the devils. Mephistophilis

replies:

O, by aspring pride and insolence,
For which God threw him from the face of heaven.
(I. iii. 68-69)

Mephistophilis' answer evades the answer quantitatively, and he gives the reply that Faustus has known all along. Faustus is determined to find quantitative limitations, for his concern is not with pride and insolence so much as it is with how much pride and insolence. The concept of sin has already been clearly delineated and now Faustus seeks to find the point at which man or the angels are cut off from God's mercy. As Faustus continues his interrogation of Mephistophilis, he discovers that Mephistophilis is condemned to hell, but the inquiring mind seeks to establish the limitations of hell. All Mephistophilis can deliver is the concept that any place deprived of God is hell. Mephistophilis concludes with a warning:

O, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul.
(I. iii. 81-82)

But Faustus cannot take the word of a fallen angel, a form alien to human existence, as evidence. Faustus is determined that the relationship between God and man shall be established, and he will not accept analogous evidence as bearing directly on man's problem:

What, is great Mephistophilis so passionate
For being deprived of the joys of heaven?

Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,
 And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.
 (I. iii. 83-85)

Faustus in his suicidal sacrifice will teach Mephistophilis that men have fortitude, that they are a force to be reckoned with. And then urged on by the forces he has set in motion, Faustus deliberately cuts himself off from God by offering his soul to Lucifer:

Say he surrender up to him his soul,
 So he will spare him four and twenty years,
 Letting him live in all voluptuousness,
 Having thee to attend on me,
 (I. iii. 90-92)

But the call to voluptuousness, and the cataloging of earthly pleasures that Faustus will derive from a relationship with Lucifer are merely words again. These are words that seem to Faustus to have the power to inflame God, to create a reaction, but they go unnoticed.

The final scene in the first act is comic relief. Wagner and Robin play on the main plot. Wagner conjures two devils and immediately sends them on their way, and then promises Robin he will teach him how to turn himself into a dog, cat, mouse, and other lower animals. The act reinforces the main theme of the story, but the power is not knowledge, only power for the sake of novelty. There are no higher purposes in the activity, and the action only intensifies the dedication of the all-sacrificing Faustus.

As the second act begins, Faustus is in his study ruminating on his decision. Pricks of conscience, and concern for the eternal self nag at Faustus. But the spirit of self-sacrifice overcomes the self-concern and he turns back to the baiting of God. In another of his premeditated stabs at God, Faustus deifies Lucifer:

To him I'll build an altar and a church,
And offer lukewarm blood of new-born babes.
(II. i. 13-14)

The deification of Lucifer, calculated to create a response, is coupled to the gory imagery of human sacrifice and inhuman savagery. There has been nothing so far displayed in the character of Faustus to indicate the savagery incipient to the lines, but the lack of response from God drives Faustus to take a more daring path. He drives himself to make statements that become more and more brazen as he searches for a way to cause a reaction from God.

The boldness of Faustus is partially rewarded, for the cruel outburst draws a response from God. The good and bad angels appear once again, filling Faustus with warning and temptation, but again God's response comes through an intermediary force, the good angel, who can give Faustus only the most general advice. A conflict is established in the final lines of each of the angels:

Good Angel. Sweet Faustus, think of heaven and

heavenly things.
 Bad Angel. No Faustus; think of honor and wealth.
 (II. i. 21-22)

The conflict between the two angels is not effective in creating conflict in the mind of Faustus. He maintains his earlier path, affront to God and allegiance to the devil, without any qualms of conscience. The failure of the good angel to change Faustus' mind is a failure in the nature of the conflict, for to the Renaissance mind, heaven is not necessarily in conflict with the earthly successes of honor and wealth. Faustus is not swayed by an argument that is backward looking, that reflects a medieval role of man, a role that denied man dignity and maintained that man was a passive and subservient player in the game of life. Faustus refuses to accept the tenets of the conflict, refuses to believe that man cannot play a dual role and still find a dignified and knowledgeable role, based on the discovery of his own capabilities, in the physical universe. By deliberately cutting himself off from God, Faustus attempts to force the issue of division of power and knowledge between man and God. In his role, Faustus does not deny the existence of God, nor does he deny the omnipotence of God. He only attempts to discover which powers God jealously guards for Himself and which powers man can share and experience. The very assumption that such a relationship

could exist between man and God is incomprehensible to Faustus' contemporaries, for his approach questions the foundations of a theological system that dealt only with God, relegating man to a subservient role, a role that could not be reconciled with influence in the cosmological order.

Thus, Faustus becomes the embodiment of the liberated Renaissance man, a position hardened and intensified by the comparison to his contemporaries in the play. Faustus sees himself as the liberated man, but further he sees himself as the liberator of mankind. He is a man with a mission, a mission to overturn old systems, a mission to make men more aware of themselves and their capabilities. He grasps, overturns and overreaches only because this operates in opposition to the old theological position, and this is the only manner which will force men to react to his new views. The calculated affronts are as shocking and provoking to men, as Faustus believes they will be provoking to God.⁵ His ends are doubly served by his means.

In this role Faustus becomes an extension of the Marlovian position, a liberator and free thinker, an unconventional thinker, a gadfly in his society, always controversial

⁵See above, p. 61 for the initiation of this concept in Tamburlaine I.

and always provoking. As Marlowe's pursuit of knowledge made him suspect in his society, so did Faustus' knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge as a worthwhile occupation is intrinsic to the character of both Marlowe and his creation, and the discovery of direction for human curiosity by both men justifies the unrewarding directions, relative to their societies, each undertook. In each, knowledge becomes a positive value though the ends are not always readily observable because of society's reactions to their radical means.

When Faustus recognizes that the alternatives given him by the good and bad angels are in conflict with his Renaissance ideal, he decides to maintain his course of action, to maintain a position of opposition to God so that he can probe the nature of the relationship between men and God. After the angels depart, Mephistophilis reminds Faustus of his original commitment to him:

But tell me, Faustus, shall I have thy soul?
 And I will be thy slave and wait on thee
 And give thee more than thou hast wit to ask.
 (II. i. 44-46)

In a bland climax Faustus replies to Mephistophilis:

Ay, Mephistophilis, I'll give it him
 (II. i. 47)

Faustus makes his decision matter-of-factly, seemingly giving no consideration to the matter. But he has never lost sight

of his goal, and the manner in which he acquiesces is calculated to arouse the wrath of God because of the decision and because of his lack of deliberation and consideration for the appeal of heaven. The suicidal course of action has already been decided upon, and the responses are conditioned to only one thought, to evoke a response from God.

Mephistophilis demands a contract from Faustus signed in blood. Faustus opens a vein, but the blood does not flow, and he momentarily looks upon the denial of a natural law as an omen:

What might the staying of my blood portend?
Is it unwilling I should write this bill?
Why streams it not that I may write afresh?
(II. i. 63-65)

In asking the series of three questions, Faustus demands to know causes. Is this an internal action, a reluctance by the body to give itself up to eternal damnation, in effect the subconscious mind of Faustus reacting and controlling a natural function? Faustus recognizes the unconscious desire to save himself and overcomes his reluctance through an act of will:

Why shouldst thou not? Is not thy soul thine own?
(II. i. 67)

He deliberately makes the decision, acting out the role of man by wilfully making the decision for his soul. As the act of deeding his soul to Lucifer is completed, Faustus,

in another of his blasphemies, mocks the final words of Christ, "consummatum est:"

Consummatum est; this bill is ended,
And Faustus hath bequeathed his soul to Lucifer.
(II. i. 73-74)

As Faustus completes the deed he looks upon his arm and sees the stigmatic Homo fuge inscribed. Man fly, the words tell him, and perhaps this is the direct action he seeks from God, but the words are not explicit enough, and he suspects his own sensory perception and turns away from the heavenly implications by recognizing the fate he has selected for himself. Homo fuge turns to an ironic commentary for Faustus:

Homo fuge! Yet shall not Faustus fly.
(II. i. 80)

He has made his decision. Other men shall fly to God, but Faustus in his self-sacrificing spirit will give up heaven for man. Again, the act is premeditated, for Faustus has not yet found answers about the spheres of interest he intends to circumscribe.

Mephistophilis, recognizing a basic need in Faustus, the need for direct action and evidence, appeals to the weakness. It is a weakness only in the perception of Mephistophilis, for it represents a part of the Renaissance dream, direct physical and tangible evidence for abstract theory. Mephistophilis plays on the idealistic Faustus by

presenting direct evidence and action that appeal to the senses of Faustus. The devil's disciple conjures a show of devils, and the play takes a new direction, for now there is interaction between Lucifer and Faustus. After the show, Faustus reads the terms of the covenant with the devil to Mephistophilis. Again, Faustus is revealed as the calculating blasphemer, for nowhere in the compact is mentioned specific powers that Faustus shall be granted. Most of the articles deal with Faustus' responsibilities to the devil, and the shrewd Faustus would certainly manage more than the acquisition of an errand boy, in the guise of Mephistophilis, if he truly believed he could acquire knowledge from Lucifer. The very act, deeding himself to the devil, is Faustus' calculated affront demanding an action from God.

Now that Faustus has signed the compact, he must play the devil's game. Contrary to the contention that Boas makes, that Faustus truly sells his soul for a life of voluptuousness, the contrary would seem true.⁶ Faustus begins questioning Mephistophilis, and the questions are directed to the composition and makeup of the physical and spiritual cosmos, certainly not the questions of a man dedicated to a voluptuous existence:

⁶See above, p. 125.

First will I question with thee about hell.
 Tell me where is the place that men call hell?
 (II. i. 113-114)

The answers that Mephistophilis gives are not particularly illuminating, but Faustus has expected nothing more, and the quality of the questions should not be determined by the quality of answer Faustus receives. Mephistophilis' answers are evasive, and avoid just the areas that Faustus is most interested in:

All places shall be hell that is not heaven.
 (II. i. 124)

Mephistophilis refuses to circumscribe spheres of interest, and Faustus has gained nothing from the questioning. Faustus follows with a question of pain after this life. Mephistophilis again evades a direct answer and so Faustus switches tactics. Since he has had no response from God, even after taking up with Mephistophilis and asking two provocative questions, Faustus begins playing the lascivious role. But even in his role as a wanton, calculated to be offensive to God, Faustus cannot break completely with his true moral values:

But leaving off this, let me have a wife,
 The fairest maid in Germany,
 For I am wanton and lascivious,
 And cannot live without a wife.
 (II. i. 138-141)

He wants to appear to be corrupt, but his thoughts do not carry him outside the traditional role of marriage. He

demands a wife, not a whore. It is Mephistophilis that introduces the idea of extra-marital activity, and again Faustus quickly acquiesces, knowing this will compound the affront.

Faustus, the seeker after tangible evidence, tells Mephistophilis that he will repent after he beholds the heavens. He maintains his role as a knowledge seeker and then begins his questioning again. Mephistophilis begins a discussion of heaven derived from Faustus comments:

But think'st thou heaven is such a glorious thing?
I tell thee, Faustus, 'tis not half so fair
As thou, or any man that breathes on earth.
(II. ii. 5-7)

Faustus has a question of evidence before he accepts the answer:

How prov'st that?
(II. ii. 8)

Mephistophilis replies to Faustus:

Twas made for man; then he's more excellent.
(II. ii. 9)

But Faustus, master of the scholastic debate and quick to discover the defect in Mephistophilis argument, quickly counters:

If heaven was made for man, 'twas made for me.
I will renounce this magic and repent.
(II. ii. 10-11)

Faustus is not swayed by Mephistophilis' argument, but gives evidence that it is he, not Lucifer, who is in control.

Faustus refuses to accept the argument that heaven was made for men, and Mephistophilis is playing scholastic word games, games that Faustus has mastered. The mere utterance of the word "repent" brings a response, and the two angels appear once again. The good angel indicates that the way to God still exists:

Faustus repent; yet God will pity thee.
(II. ii. 12)

The juxtaposition of the lascivious demands, the utterance of the word "repent" and the entrance of the good angel with the knowledge that heaven is still available to Faustus, cannot fail to impress the challenger. He has blasphemed, conjured spirits, uttered words of fleshly sin, and signed a pact with the devil. Yet, the way to heaven is still available to him. His curiosity instead of being sated is immediately increased. He must find the breaking point, the point at which man is irrevocably separated from God.

The premeditated quality of his break is further reinforced in Faustus' next speech:

My heart is hardened; I cannot repent.
Scarce can I name salvation faith or heaven,
But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears:
'Faustus thou art damned!'
(II. ii. 17-20)

He has broken with God and has damned himself. God still maintains an open door, but Faustus, in the name of man,

must continue on with his quest, and in the process damn himself. He accepts the challenge as the representative of man.

Faustus continues his questioning of Mephistophilis, moving now to the structure of the universe. He begins the line of questioning at the general level:

Speak; are there many spheres above the moon?
(II. ii. 34)

Faustus receives no information outside the realm of human experience, and in disgust attacks Mephistophilis:

These slender questions Wagner can decide.
Hath Mephistophilis no greater skill?
(II. ii. 49-50)

Faustus continues with a line of astrological questioning, and gathering no answers that help to reveal the nature of the universe finally asks the question he has been building to:

Now tell me who made the world.
(II. ii. 67)

The series of questions, far from revealing a voluptuous Faustus, reveal the seeker for human knowledge. Mephistophilis' answers have proved disappointing, but Faustus' expectations from the accidental conjuring of the devil are not high. His humanistic ideal, the search for man's dignified role, and man's capability for acquiring knowledge about the physical and spiritual world remains

unimpaired. Faustus' search is for the remote God, a deity not involved in the day to day operations of the world. Faustus seeks that moment when a man is so conspicuous by his deeds that God feels the compulsion to intervene. Faustus maintains the implicit assumption of the humanists that there is a gulf between man's realm and God's realm, but he searches for the point at which the two spheres make contact. He upholds the dignity of man, glorifies his role as a willful thinking creature capable of expanding his knowledge into unknown areas, but Faustus still seeks to confront God and find the moment at which the inquiring human will be cut off from God by infringing on divine law. Faustus' goal is not to disprove the existence of God, nor to diminish the power of God, for he only seeks to circumscribe roles and rights. All of Faustus' seeking is based on the humanistic assumption that man is dignified and capable, and that his sphere of interest is not interpenetrated by God, a refutation of scholastic thought that implied man was subservient to God's dominion in every aspect of existence.

Thus, the implications of the Faustian experiment reveal man as a species with a specific role and a dominion over earthly matters. The behavioristic characteristics of man are within his own control, providing they do not make

the ultimate challenge to divine authority. God is rejected as an egocentric divinity, demanding the subservience of man, and is placed in the role of the ultimate authority to which man is answerable. In all of this is implied the role of man as Erasmus saw him, a belief that the reason of man coupled to a behavioristic model, like Christ, could move man toward a state of perfection. And also implied is a denial of church ritual that did not relate directly to the relationship of man to man; again the call that resounds through Erasmus' works. In all of this is an attempt to reconcile the paganism of the classical world with the Christianity of the modern world and create an ethic derived from the best of both worlds, affirming the existence of God, but also affirming the importance of man.

Faustus becomes an affirmation of all these ethical persuasions, sometimes encumbered by the flaws intrinsic to man's makeup, but always moving forward to delineate the roles of man and God, and seeking to reconcile ancient ideal with the basic Christian ideal.

After Faustus has finished questioning Mephistophilis, the two angels reappear. Faustus discovers from the good angel that there is still time to repent. His experience with Mephistophilis has not left him encouraged, for the answers he has received are shallow and worthless. Con-

juring, blasphemy and interaction with Mephistophilis have not caused the response he seeks, so the fertile mind of Faustus creates a new direction. He lowers his goals from God to God's son:

O Christ, my Savior, my Savior,
 Help to save distressed Faustus' soul.
 (II. ii. 83-84)

Faustus hasn't given up his original goal, that of seeking a direct response from God. He now seeks through prayer, in the role of a penitent, direct action from Christ. Affronts had not worked in the past, so now an attempt to seek God through prayer, juxtaposed upon his previously irreverent position, may bring the desired response, for perhaps God will pay special interest to a reformed sinner. Success eludes Faustus, and his prayer succeeds only in revealing an angered Lucifer, for Faustus has broken a promise by praying to Christ. Faustus' prayer has failed, so he renews the old assault on God by resuming his blasphemy:

And Faustus vows never to look to heaven,
 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. 97-100)

To entertain Faustus, Lucifer offers a parade of the Seven Deadly Sins. Faustus accepts the offer, but in almost a refutation of the earlier speech, reveals what his mind

dwells on:

That sight will be as pleasant to me as Paradise
was to Adam the first day of his creation.
(II. ii. 106)

Faustus' conditioning obviously shows in the allusion to Adam and Paradise. He still remains within the framework of religious experience no matter what his blasphemy reveals. Lucifer remains, as before, the tool of Faustus.

The parade of sins dominates the remainder of the scene. The sins, personified as they are, make an effective contrast to the character of Faustus. They act as they do because of their nature, while Faustus has made a willful choice. As the sins exit, Faustus flings the challenge heavenward again:

O, how this sight doth delight my soul!
(II. ii. 163)

And then in the finest sense of the probing Renaissance mind, Faustus exclaims:

O, might I see hell and return again safe, how
happy were I then!
(II. ii. 165)

Faustus cannot bear to see the potential for discovering both the nature of good and the nature of evil passed by. Through the parade of the Seven Deadly Sins, he has had a glimpse of hell. He is struck, for the first time, with the horror of the vision, and his call for a safe return reflects a gnawing

in his soul. But he has committed himself to a purpose, to discover the role of man in the universe, and to discover the division of interests between man and God. Faustus accepts a conjuring book from Lucifer as the devil is about to depart. The parting is amiable for Faustus sees the superficial magic, as well as the relationship with Lucifer, as a key to his continuing challenge.

The final scene in Act Two is between Robin and Dick, and while the scene maintains the focus of the play, the use of necromancy to challenge the authority of God, the two characters are concerned only with voluptuous pleasures. They become the exemplification of the misguided use of knowledge and wallow in their own voluptuousness. Again, they provide relief from the intensity of Faustus' unrelenting challenge.

The third and fourth acts of Doctor Faustus are not generally attributed to Marlowe, though there is belief that Marlowe's ideas helped shape these acts.⁷ The prologue to Act Three seems to maintain a continuity with the prologue to Act One. In both instances that the chorus appears in the prologues, and in the epilogue to Act Five, when they

⁷See Boas, pp. 205-7. See also F. P. Wilson, Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare (London, 1953), pp. 74-5.

again appear, the chorus seems to be a reflection of traditional morality, dominated by medieval theological teachings. The chorus functions as a foil for the reaching Renaissance mind of Faustus. The prologue to Act One sets the tone for the chorus, a sneering, self-righteous attitude confirmed by the irony of their later pronouncements:

In th' heavenly matters of theology,
Till swell'n with cunning of a self conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
And melting, heavens conspired his overthrow;
For, falling to a devilish exercise
(Prologue Act I. 20-24)

The chorus in an ironical voice comments on the events to occur in Acts Three and Four:

Not long he stayed within his quiet house
To rest his bones after his weary toil,
But new exploits do hale him out again,
And mounted then upon a dragon's back,
That with his wings did part the subtle air,
He now is gone to prove cosmography,
That measures coasts and kingdoms of the earth,
(Prologue Act III. 15-22)

The admonition is clear; Faustus should remain at home. The image of the waxen wings is recalled in the speech, reflecting the attitude of the chorus, that a fall is due. And again the image of the dragon, a monster, helps to reflect the disparaging view the chorus has toward Faustus' activity.

The actual events of the third and fourth acts do not help to define the character or the quest of Faustus. Though the hand of Marlowe is not apparent in the acts, there

is no real disintegration of the character of Faustus. Rather, Faustus begins toying with the necromantic arts that Lucifer has endowed him. Faustus' activity in Act Four is taken up with Pope baiting, a favorite sport of the Elizabethans. While his activity was certain to delight the Elizabethan audience, the direction of the play is interrupted by the long interlude in which Faustus entertains the audience with tricks. Still, the tricks do not reflect a voluptuous life, but rather an anti-orthodox stance, common to Marlowe's plays. The Pope is capricious and consumed with self-importance, and Faustus seeks to deflate the pompous and fatuous Pope. The essential conflict, between man and God, is lost to view as Faustus uses his art to puncture the ego of the pretentious Pope. The trickery is based on a man-to-man relationship and reflects on a behavioristic standard that Faustus seeks. Faustus operates in the sphere of man, for the love of man, in his role as deflator. It is the Pope who revels in voluptuousness, not Faustus, who has power to satisfy his every whim. The scene helps to reinforce the positive qualities of Faustus, and enobles him because of his judicious use of power that could have been extended to voluptuous uses.

The final scene in Act Three is again between Robin and Dick. After they steal a wine cup and are being in-

terrogated by the vintner, they again conjure Mephistophilis. The conjuring is an act of pure voluptuousness, and is even too much for Mephistophilis, a spirit dedicated to the corruption of men's souls. So purely wanton and without reason is the act that Mephistophilis turns Robin and Dick into ape and dog. Again an effective contrast is made to the character of Faustus, the man who has the capability to create a completely voluptuous existence. Faustus, comparatively, is the continent man, restrained and yet curious and reaching when he upholds the humanistic ideal.

Act Four is dominated by two major incidents. Faustus has now achieved renown, part of his plan to help demonstrate to the traditional society the significance of man. As Faustus is about to enter the Emperor's court, Martino speaks on his fame:

The learned Faustus, fame of Wittenberg,
The wonder of the world for magic art;
(IV. i. 10-11)

Faustus has succeeded in making himself conspicuous in the world of man, and now remains his task of making himself conspicuous to God.

Faustus' scene with the Emperor helps to reflect the partial consummation of Faustus' dream. The Emperor is concerned with the role of man, and his own duties as Emperor. What then could be more natural than his request

of Faustus, to conjure the spirit of Alexander the Great, another renowned Emperor? Faustus panders to the whim of the Emperor, knowing that the conjured spirit cannot communicate or lead the present Emperor. But in conjuring Alexander, Faustus demonstrated the nobility and the continuity of the human species, and in so doing helps to further the concept of the dignity of man, a creature with unlimited power and capability. Through this scene Benvolio, humbled by Faustus, plots his revenge, the death of Faustus. But Faustus, representative of the humanistic ideal, a seeker after knowledge and a believer in the dignity of man, defeats Benvolio the skeptic. Narrow minded and traditional views fall before the humanistic ideal.

Faustus' twenty-four years are moving swiftly by and the imminence of his death begins pressing him. The sixth scene of Act Four introduces a chastened Faustus, aware of the limitations on his life, and conscious of his failure to force action from God:

Now, Mephistophilis, the restless course
That time doth run with calm and silent foot,
Shortening my days and thread of vital life,
Calls for the payment of my latest years.
Therefore, sweet Mephistophilis, let us
Make haste to Wittenberg.

(IV. v. 1-5)

Faustus' thoughts are interrupted by the brief interlude with the horse-courser. Faustus sells his horse to the

man, but admonishes the courser not to ride the horse into water. Faustus sinks back into his thoughts, seeking a way to make his challenge to God succeed:

What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemned to die?

Thy fatal time draws to a final end,

Despair doth drive distrust into thy thoughts.

Confound these passions with a quiet sleep.

Tush! Christ did call the thief upon the cross;

Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit,

(IV. v. 33-38)

Faustus regains his perspective which had been temporarily lost while he had been playing tricks on the Pope and conjuring for the Emperor. He despairs in his thoughts, recognizing that he has not accomplished his desired result, a response from God, but he turns to quiet sleep, reassuring himself with an analogy from the death of Christ. In his quiet conceit, he believes he will literally find a twelfth-hour solution to the goal he has established.

As Faustus sleeps, the horse-courser returns and relates a tale of woe. Contrary to the advice of Faustus, and true to human nature, he almost instantly rode his horse into the water to discover the veracity of Faustus' statement. The horse turned to a bottle of hay, and the courser moans his lost wealth. The short scene serves to intensify the nature of man, a curious creature bound to a commitment of knowledge for knowledge's sake, in spite of the consequences of his action. In short, the courser's experience

is a capsule of Faustus' experience: he, sacrificing his wealth, and Faustus sacrificing his soul in the quest for knowledge.

The final two scenes in Act Four bring the characters of the subplot together with Faustus and the characters of the main plot. The sixth scene is set in a tavern and the characters who have been duped by their own curiosity, the courser and the carter, who lost a load of hay to Faustus, are comparing notes with the comic characters. The fame of Faustus has spread, and everywhere men talk of him and his deeds.

The seventh scene brings Faustus to the presence of the Duke of Anholt and his wife. Faustus, again operating in the sphere of human activity erects a castle in the air for the pleasure of the Duke. Faustus' actions appear to be the grand public relations gesture, and the act can only increase his fame. And for the Duchess he sends the spirits to find grapes which are out of season in the northern hemisphere. Faustus presents the grapes to the Duchess, and they, of course, are the best grapes she has ever tasted. The grapes become in a sense the forbidden fruit, the forbidden fruit inviting investigation of man's traditional role in a circumscribed world. The grapes arouse the curiosity of the Duchess, causing her to specu-

late on their origins, and she is grasped by the spirit of the inquiring Renaissance.

After Faustus demonstrates his abilities for the Duke and Duchess, the low characters gather round him. They begin accusing Faustus of duping them, but as they begin, Faustus strikes them dumb. They do not recognize the curious nature they are endowed with, and seek only to place the blame on Faustus. Faustus strikes them dumb, recognizing that not all men can be moved by their experiences to dwell on the human condition. Faustus detects a need for wisdom and knowledge along with experience. The low characters cannot attain to the dignity of man until they become participants in man's total experience. But they have helped serve his ends by spreading Faustus' fame through the world, and without a recognition of his accomplishments in the world, Faustus' sacrifice is meaningless.

The final act takes place in Wittenberg. Faustus has returned home to spend his final days, still seeking the moment of confrontation with God. In the first scene Faustus' scholarly friends gather at his house. The confirmed scholastics are no longer so committed to their course. Faustus has, in Promethean fashion, brought them the gift of curiosity. The friendship between Faustus and the scholars has remained unimpaired and Faustus listens

to their request for rational evidence to prove their conjectures about Helen of Greece. Their curiosity is directed toward a conception of beauty, and they desire to see the paragon of beauty that had been idealized in literature.

Faustus, serving his ideal doubly, conjures the spirit of Helen for the scholars to gaze upon; thus fulfilling their curiosity and encouraging them to step beyond the circumscribed scholastic boundaries. He further challenges God by indulging in the necromantic art, thus hoping to cause a response.

After the demonstration is finished, the scholars leave and a mysterious old man enters Faustus' study. Whoever the old man may be, he represents the wisdom of mankind. The indication that he is old, helps to proclaim him the embodiment of man's accumulated wisdom. He advises Faustus:

Though thou hast now offended like a man,
Do not persevere in it like a devil.
Yet, yet, thou hast an amiable soul.
If sin by custom grow not into nature.
Then, Faustus, will repentance come too late;
Then thou art banished from the sight of heaven.
(V. 1. 41-46)

In the words of the old man Faustus has discovered the key to garnering a response from God. His offense is still the offense of man, but if Faustus takes on the nature of the devil, he will perhaps find the point at which divine law imposes its will upon human curiosity.

The recognition of the nature of his final test weighs heavily on Faustus. Up to this point he has felt that he controls the relationship with Lucifer, but now, by the nature of the experiment, he must take on the characteristics of the devil. The old man advised him that when Faustus took on the nature of the devil, he would be irretrievably lost from heaven. This is the supreme test for Faustus, for his sacrifice had been constructed from abstract theory. Now he has a knowledge of the devil, knowledge that indicates the vacuity of both the experience of hell and the mind of Lucifer. Faustus questions his decision:

Where art thou, Faustus? Wretch, what hast thou
done?
Damned art thou, Faustus, damned; despair and
die!
Hell claims his right, and with a roaring voice
Says, 'Faustus, come; thine hour is almost come';
And Faustus now will come to do thee right.
(V. i. 55-59)

He discovers that the terrors of hell are more than he had earlier assumed, and is frightened by his decision, but gains a hold on his emotions and continues on his course. His personal courage and the love of man drive him to continue the experiment, to determine the validity of past wisdom, and to present physical evidence to the dawning world of rationalism.

The old man leaves Faustus, but indicates that repen-

tance and salvation are not out of reach:

I see an angel hovers o'er thy head,
And with a vial full of precious grace
Offers to pour the same into thy soul.
(V. i. 61-63)

The appeal is still strong to Faustus, now tottering on the brink of eternal damnation. Imminent death frightens the committed Faustus and he cries out:

What shall I do to shun the snares of death?
(V. i. 73)

But the reappearance of Mephistophilis jars Faustus, for Mephistophilis is more ludicrous than frightening. Faustus reasserts his allegiance to the devil, still attempting to cause a response from God:

And with my blood again I will confirm
The former vow I made to Lucifer,
(V. i. 80-81)

Mephistophilis' threat follows Faustus' vow:

Do it then, Faustus, with unfeigned heart,
Lest greater dangers do attend thy drift.
(V. i. 82-83)

Mephistophilis' threat, after the fact, indicates that Faustus is still in control, still capable of altering his destiny. Faustus is still trying God. Then the nature of the final challenge occurs to Faustus. He demands that Mephistophilis conjure the spirit of Helen. Faustus then gives himself up to Helen:

Her lips suck forth my soul, See where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.

Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
 And all is dross that is not Helena.
 (V. i. 102-105)

Helen the spirit is actually a devil, and in making her his paramour Faustus has committed the sin of demoniality, bodily intercourse with devils.⁸ In this act Faustus has taken on the nature of the devil.

The old man pronounces Faustus' fate:

Accursed Faustus, miserable man,
 That from thy soul exclud'st the grace of heaven
 (V. i. 119-120)

Faustus has found the point at which divine law intercedes in man's activity. Faustus is now out off from heaven permanently. The bodily intercourse with the devil has made salvation impossible. All the curiosity, the blasphemy, the conjuring and activity with the devil are within the sphere of man, and though man may indulge in these sins, he can still find salvation. Faustus has found the dividing point, the absolute limit to which a man may extend himself and still return to the grace of God. He has to go beyond the point of return to establish the sphere of man, but his commitment has been an act of will and self-

⁸W. W. Greg, "The Damnation of Faustus", in Marlowe A Collection of Critical Essays ed. Clifford Leech, Twentieth Century Views series, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), pp. 105-6.

sacrifice. In the first part of scene two, the devil and his disciples begin making plans for the soul they have captured. They predict Faustus' final agonies and then retire as Faustus enters with his scholar friends. The scholars attempt to sooth the agitated Faustus after he reveals that he has indulged in deadly sin:

Yet, Faustus, look up to heaven, and remember mercy
is infinite.

(V. ii. 39-40)

But Faustus, the self-sacrifice, will soon be the evidence to disprove the scholar's optimistic statement. Faustus wills to mankind the knowledge that God's mercy is not infinite, and that ultimate damnation can be acquired by the deadly sin of demoniality. Faustus, in his agitation, does not realize the value of his bequest, the gift of knowledge to mankind, and the knowledge that God is not infinite in His mercy. The scholars depart telling Faustus that they will pray to God for mercy on him. These are their final words to Faustus and the realization of the knowledge they have acquired from Faustus can only come after his death.

Faustus' goals were beyond his grasp, goals to cause a direct response from God and to demonstrate through a confrontation of man and God that they had clearly defined spheres of interest. He discovers only the limits of God's mercy, a task of significance, but in his own appraisal of

his activity Faustus judges himself a failure. It is a subjective appraisal that is seen late in the play, and by all objective standards Faustus' challenge has been a success. Faustus has clearly demonstrated that man can acquire knowledge about God, and that man's curiosity can expand in many directions before it infringes on divine law.

Faustus, viewing himself a failure, attempts to blame Mephistophilis for tempting him, clearly self-delusion on Faustus' side. But Mephistophilis gladly takes credit and attempts to convince himself and Faustus that he has dictated Faustus' downfall. But he is clearly avoiding the issue of Faustus' free will, and merely takes credit for what is now the willful downfall of a soul.

The good and bad angels reappear to Faustus. The good angel reinforces the vision of damnation that the old man had presented to Faustus:

Ah, Faustus, if thou hadst given ear to me,
 Innumerable joys had followed thee;
 But thou didst love the world.
 (V. ii. 96-98)

Faustus can now take some measure of pleasure from his act of sacrifice, for the angel has proclaimed him a lover of the world, a lover of mankind. The two angels argue the advantages for man of the rewards for good and evil, but the debate is empty for the fate of Faustus has already been decided.

In his final soliloquy Faustus beseeches God for mercy,

a mercy he now knows he will never find. As he lingers on the thoughts of hell and his eternal future, he curses himself:

No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer
That hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven.
(V. ii. 178-179)

He still judges himself a failure because not all of his goals have been realized, but he realizes the motivation for his action has not been evil and that while he is doomed to hell, he is not a sinner purely for the sake of sin:

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
(V. ii. 184)

He, in effect, cries out to God, "damn me but look upon the nobility of my purpose as an unselfish act for my species." Faustus never renounces the nobility of his purpose. He cringes and cries out as the devils carry him away:

Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! Ah, Mephistophilis!
(V. ii. 186-187)

He reacts only to the horrors of impending hell. He seeks time to pursue his curiosity of the physical world further, but his grand experiment has been completed, and the self-sacrifice, no matter how unwilling his final departure, is consummated.

The scholars enter Faustus' chambers to discover that the devil's work has been completed. The evidence is now complete and God's mercy is no longer infinite. The self-

sacrifice is rewarded with respect from his friends:

And all the students, clothed in mourning black,
 Shall wait upon his heavy funeral,
 (V, iii. 17-18)

The chorus, true to their role as representatives of traditional morality, regard his fall as justified:

Faustus is gone. Regard his hellish fall,
 Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
 Only to wonder at unlawful things,
 Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
 To practise more than heavenly power permits.
 (Epilogue, 4-8)

The Faustian ideal, the challenge to God, the delineation of spheres of interest for man and God, the assumption of a new and dignified role for man, all are realized. Faustus, true to the humanistic spirit has challenged God without denying Him. He has opened new vistas for man's exploration and has left a body of rational evidence to support his work. The mankind that Faustus has left behind is farther along the path to the humanistic value, the overthrow of orthodox dictatorship, and a new emancipated role for man. This is Faustus' bequest. This is the ideal of the humanistic revolt.

Conclusion

An investigation of the plays of Marlowe has indicated a repetition of specific themes that seem to demand conclusions on the religious and humanistic positions of the playwright. Contrary to the views of Mahood,¹ humanism seems to remain a positive force in the works of Marlowe. Rather than becoming fatalistic in its consequences, the challenging humanism, through the devices of selfless and inquiring individuals, is portrayed as a vital and positive force, seeking to establish man's role in terms of his newly acquired knowledge.

Marlowe's humanism seeks to integrate the new knowledge with religion, and out of the seeking role, portrayed by Tamburlaine and Faustus, comes a religious stance outside the traditional orthodoxies. But the new religious position does not seek to negate all of man's traditional religious experience. It is a religion that makes new demands upon man. As Marlowe sees it, for man to understand his relationship with God, he must constantly explore his physical and spiritual environment, seeking to understand more about his God, and consequently learning, on a

¹See above, p. 2.

vast new scale, much about his own capabilities.² Out of this exploratory activity man learns of his dignity and of his potential for controlling his earthly destiny. From this recognition of man's powers comes a new emphasis, a concern with man's behavior and relationships with his fellow man.

Marlowe does not come to these conclusions independently, for he operates in a tradition established by Erasmus and transmitted to him, though in an obtuse fashion, through the vascillating positions of the state church. For while the formal position of the state controlled church moved from a disassociated Catholicism, to Protestantism, and from Catholicism to early Anglicanism, the undercurrent of Erasmian thought remained an informal religious touchstone that helped maintain a continuity from the early reformist views to the position of Marlowe.

Though Erasmus remained within the Catholic Church, he represented a view that sought to eliminate dogma that didn't contribute directly to behavioristic principles for men or help to create a more meaningful relationship between man and God. He sought to eliminate extraneous ritual that didn't further these same ends, and to eliminate

²See above, p. 34.

orthodox traditions that had no meaningful rationalization except to encourage clerical excesses and power. Erasmus saw behaviorism as the basis of a positive religious experience, and saw Christ as a model for man's behavioristic ideal.³ He saw also that religion must have a contemporary relevance and that it had to be integrated with man's acquired knowledge and new view of his role in the universe.

Marlowe took up where Erasmus left off. Living in a nation that had broken with the Catholic Church, he attacked all orthodox religions, not so much to seek their demise, but to eliminate the same corruptions that Erasmus saw in the Roman Church. He, as Erasmus, saw the need to get back to the foundations of religious experience, experience rooted in behavioristic principles. While Erasmus sought only to make the Catholic Church more relevant, Marlowe seeks to make all religious experience relevant, and through his behaviorism seeks to unite all men on the basis of common humanistic concerns.

Marlowe, like Erasmus, has positive views toward both God and man, and again, like Erasmus, seeks to place both in a new perspective based on contemporary knowledge and the dignified role of man. While Erasmus is a severe

³See above, pp. 27-9.

critic of his times, he is not the militant that Marlowe becomes through his plays. Erasmus criticizes the failings of men who have perverted the basic teachings of the Church. Marlowe goes beyond and places his characters outside the traditional religions so that they may seek answers based essentially on their powers of perception and their rational experiences. Though Erasmus and Marlowe have the same ends in mind, and both seek the ends through rational means, Erasmus chooses to remain within the Catholic Church and maintain the posture of conciliator of old and new. Marlowe is not wed to orthodoxy in the same way, and his concerns are with man and God without the complicating effects of maintaining a relationship with an orthodox body of thought.

Out of this positive direction in his thinking Marlowe generates a distinct thematic position for his humanistic plays. Tamburlaine I and Tamburlaine II, early plays, establish the foundation for his later works. Both of his major themes, anti-orthodoxy and confidence in man's ability to control forces in the universe, are introduced in these plays.

Tamburlaine emerges as a quasi-God, pitting himself against the forces of heaven, always grasping for power and seeking to enhance the powers of man. He reaches for

power, blasphemes against the gods and seeks reactions from the forces of heaven that will allow him, as a representative of man, to determine where natural and divine law come into conflict. He seeks, in the name of man, to master all in the realm of natural law, and by so doing learns of the capability and power of man. In effect, Tamburlaine redefines the spheres of interest belonging to the gods and to man.⁴ There is no negation of the god forces in the play, only a more clearly defined sphere of interest. Man is released from the bondage of total subservience to the gods, and an affirmation of humanistic thinking is intrinsic to the play.

In a more concentrated effort, Doctor Faustus enlarges on the same theme. Faustus' energies are not siphoned off by other demands upon his time. He does not literally seek to conquer the world as does Tamburlaine, nor does he feel compelled to enslave men to his ideas on a literal level. He works in more sophisticated ways, but is always focused directly on his goals. He seeks to enlarge man's sphere of interest, again by challenging God and demanding that God expose his self-interests through direct intervention.⁵

⁴See above, pp. 59-61.

⁵See above, pp. 122-23.

But Faustus seeks his ends by conquering the world through the power of his ideas and not through physical force. To achieve his ends Faustus becomes a self-sacrifice, willing to gamble his eternal existence for the acquisition of knowledge. His altruism on behalf of mankind becomes an expression in the confidence he has in humanity. Faustus, like Tamburlaine, attempts to grasp natural law in the name of man, and seeks to find the point of conflict between divine and natural law. He, at once, like Tamburlaine seeks to make God more remote by indicating man's capability and power, but at the same time seeks to bridge the gulf established by showing the relationship between the spheres of man and God. In this way the relationship between man and God becomes less direct than the position assumed by Medieval thought, but more reasonable and meaningful in light of man's discoveries about the physical universe, and his own condition. In this fashion Marlowe integrates contemporary thought with religion, the same direction that Erasmus chose, and attempts to make man's relationship with God more relevant.

The other dominant theme in Tamburlaine, the theme of anti-orthodoxy, actually takes a more positive position than is indicated. In his anti-orthodox views, Marlowe is demanding a return to ethical behavioristic principles.

In Tamburlaine, among the other themes, the orthodox religions collapse as behavioristic influences. Members of the Christian and Mohammedan orthodoxies are ethical failures in their relationships with other men. The Christians break faith with allegiances,⁶ and Tamburlaine, who sees the failure of Mohammedanism in controlling the behavior of his co-religionists, turns on his faith.⁷ Through both parts of Tamburlaine, men turn on their orthodox faiths, discovering that in times of crises their religion has not given them a foundation for making capable decisions. Orthodox ritual, the mere repetition of dogma, and the rote recitation of principle no longer suffice, for men must have a clear idea of the ramifications of their behavior. Orthodoxy breaks down because it does not give rational answers to the problems of behavior, and faith alone is not sufficient for Marlowe's characters who need to find a sound basis for their relationships.

The Jew of Malta approaches the same theme, again with an intensity that is lacking in the diffuse Tamburlaine. In this play all of the major western orthodox faiths feel the punishments of Marlowe. The entire play is a study

⁶See above, pp. 87-8.

⁷See above, p. 91.

of behaviorism, related through characters with strong identifications with the orthodox religions. As each character's behavior breaks down, and he turns away from ethical and humane relationships with his fellow men, his orthodox faith suffers in reflection. Vindictiveness, cunning and murder replace a concern for mankind and for the individual members. Positive behavior disintegrates because no positive good can come out of the distorted and irrelevant orthodox religions which have lost sight of their purposes. The worst instincts of men dictate their behavior, and orthodoxy is subservient to their destructive goals, rather than leading the way to an ethical relationship among men. Orthodoxy suffers not because it is an evil force, but because it has not remained relevant, and has bogged down in tradition that no longer has the power to lead men.

Marlowe's alternative, the antithesis of what emerges in the play, would be a universal religion based on behavioristic principles that would seek to unite rather than separate men. Again the source of this direction is Erasmus who would use Christ as a behavioristic model for mankind.

Marlowe emerges from the works as a leader in behaviorism, a man in conflict with orthodox religions and a firm believer in man's capacity for knowledge and dignity.

To serve these ends, he would seek a more liberal world, eliminating divisive orthodox faiths and substituting, in effect, an idealized Christianity, drawing upon Christ as a model of behavior and eliminating all of the accretions that do not directly serve his ends. Marlowe would see man challenging God for power in the universe, with man's challenge derived from his own cognizance of himself and his capabilities. That man can never acquire all the powers of God seems apparent in the context of Marlowe's plays. But by constantly challenging for dominion over the universe, man glorifies himself and dignifies his role, taking more responsibility as a creator of his own destiny, and thereby demanding more humanity of himself.

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