



The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus

Christopher Marlowe

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The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, commonly referred to simply as Doctor Faustus, is a play by Christopher Marlowe, based on the German story Faust, in which a man sells his soul to the devil for power, experience, pleasure and knowledge. Doctor Faustus was first published in 1604, eleven years after Marlowe's death and at least 10 years after the first performance of the play. It is the most controversial Elizabethan play outside of Shakespeare, with few critics coming to any agreement as to the date or the nature of the text. Using Mephistophilis as a messenger, Faustus strikes a deal with Lucifer: he is to be allotted twenty-four years of life on Earth, during which time he will have Mephistophilis as his personal servant. At the end he will give his soul over to Lucifer as payment and spend the rest of time as one damned to Hell. This deal is to be sealed in Faustus's own blood. After cutting his arm, the wound is divinely healed and the Latin words "Homo, fuge!" (Flee, man!) then appear upon it. Despite the dramatic nature of this divine intervention, Faustus disregards the inscription with the assertion that he is already damned by his actions thus far and therefore left with no place to which he could flee. Mephistophilis brings coals to break the wound open again, and thus Faustus is able to take his oath that was written in his own blood.

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