

Was Faust a quack or an evil sorcerer?

written by Chris McCarron

The landlord of the Lion's Inn knocked on the door. The frightened man finally unlocked the door and there amid the broken furniture was the body of the much feared sorcerer, Faust. Faust's body was mutilated and twisted about in unnatural ways. In Wurttemberg, Germany the townspeople wrote down their belief of the mystery behind the death. On a plaque at the Lion's Inn reads "One of the most powerful devils, Mephistopheles, whom he had called brother-in-law during his lifetime, had broken his neck, as the pact had expired after 24 years, and delivered his soul to external damnation." This murder occurred around 1540. Historians disagree about much when discussing Faust, but most agree that Faust had been famous for years as being either a quack or an evil sorcerer.

Johann Gast, a Protestant Pastor said that the dog and horse Faust owned were actually evil spirits who along with Faust were part of a contract with Satan. On the other hand was Trithemius, who also dabbled in magic, who called the infamous Faust nothing more than a fool who should be horsewhipped. Johann Faust graduated from Hiedelberg University in 1509. He soon became known as an astrologer and necromancer, one who communicated with the dead. For a short time Faust was schoolmaster at a boy's boarding school in Nurenberg, but in 1532 he was fired and exiled from the city "for corrupting the morals of his young students." Faust was happy to boast of his powers, he called himself "Fountain of the Necromancers, Astrologers, Second of the Magicians, Chiromancer, Aeromancer, Pyromancer, Second of Hydromancy."

During the Renaissance astrology was seen as a respectable science. Some forms of magic were acceptable, these were called White magic. Legend has it the Faust was one of the few who practised black magic. Black magic as defined as "Consulting with evil spirits and demons in order to gain secret knowledge."

Martin Luther, brave enough to separate Catholics and Protestants, stated that he needed God to save himself from demons sent by Faust.

Word of mouth describes Faust's incredible feats. Faust could tap a table and wine would pour from it.

Faust could order a demon to bring him fresh strawberries in the middle of the winter. One bizarre story had Faust being so hungry that he ate a whole horse as well as the cart of hay the horse was pulling. One day Faust saw a group of men struggling to lift a barrel from a cellar. Faust yelled to the men "You are foolish. I can bring up the barrel by myself." The men watched as Faust rode the barrel out of the cellar.

Why did Faust trade his soul in order to achieve special favours from evil spirits? The answer may again be the plaque in the Lion's Inn "Though finally damned- did indeed for 24 years enjoy the power and pleasure of the forbidden secrets of Satanic evil. Forbidden... but seductive.

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