Dr. Johann Georg Faust (approx. 1480 – 1540) was a German alchemist who was born in the village of Knittlingen, Württemberg (it is also claimed in Roda in the province of Weimar, and also in Helmstadt near Heidelberg in 1466). He has alternatively been known by the names “Johann Sabellicus” and “Georg Faust.”

In 1507, Johannes Trithemius of Sponheim wrote that Faust was a con-man and a drifter who preyed on the gullible. He said he had fled a teaching position in Kreuznach after molesting several of the boys there.

He may have then gone on to the University of Heidelberg to study, obtaining a degree in divinity from Heidelberg University in 1509, and then to Poland where a friend of Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, says Faust studied magic at the University of Kraków.

Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon are said to have alleged Faust’s companionship with the devil.

After that, he appears at the University of Ehrfut in central Germany. It is said that when he lectured on Homer he conjured up Homer’s heroes for his students.

He was expelled from Ehrfut by the Franciscan monk Dr. Klinge (who was the cathedral preacher from 1520-1556). Dr. Klinge asked for Faust’s repentance. Faust refused the monk’s offer of intervention and admitted having signed a pact with the Devil, and said that he trusted the Devil more than God.

In 1523 he is said to have visited Auerbach’s Tavern in Leipzig where he conjured wine out of a table, and rode a barrel of wine. Goethe often visited the same tavern as a student centuries later.

From then on, as his reputation for genius grew, so did his notoriety, and he was expelled from a succession of cities.

It is said that Faust had predicted that the Bishop of Münster (Franz von Waldeck) would capture the city of Münster, and that he correctly predicted the outcome of Philipp von Hutten’s Venezuelan expedition.

Once, while he was in prison, in exchange for wine he offered to show a chaplain how to remove hair from his face without a razor. The chaplain provided the wine and Faustus gave the chaplain a salve of arsenic, which removed both the hair and the flesh.

Faust died in 1540 or 1541. Legend says that he came to a terrible end near Wittenberg, where the devil tore him to pieces and left him on a dung heap, with his eyes glued to a wall.

History to Legend

In 1587 a chapbook “Historia von D. Johan Fausten” was published about the sins of Faust, and was soon translated into English, where it inspired Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, was studied by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (who may also have read the German version), and the legend of Faust grew.

http://www.faust.com/legend/johann-georg-faust/