

GEORG FEDERLIN SUSPECTED OF BEING A WITCH

Translated by Carol Sanman

During the reign of Margrave (Marquis) Wilhelm von Baden (1593 - 1677), the worst witch hunts in Baden took place. This was in the middle of the Thirty Years' War. In Bühl alone, 70 people were suspected of witchcraft in the years 1628 and 1629. They were interrogated and most of them were sentenced and executed.

Among them was a Georg Federlin, probably from Bühlertal, who was accused of witchcraft by several people who were executed before him. I could not find a link to the Gamshurst Federles. The first Federles mentioned in Bühlertal are Hans Fäderlin (of the court in Bühl) and Michael Fäderlin (a property owner in the Sundhalde in Bühlertal.) The church records for Bühlertal do not begin until 1690, so it was not possible to find out where they came from.

Who is this Georg Federlin? I am pretty sure that this is the Georg Federlin who lived in Bühlertal in the years 1617 and 1622. In these years, he and another 18 people advanced money to the Margrave Georg Friedrich of Baden-Durlach for "Kriegshülff (war help)". Eight of these 19 people were also interrogated, tortured and probably executed. The belongings of those executed were inventoried and distributed.

Since Georg did not want to confess to the accusations made against him - how could he? He was tortured in order to extract a confession from him. The protocol of the interrogation has been preserved. It was transcribed by Dr. Suso Gartner into our present spelling and printed in his book "Malefizprotokoll des Amts Bühl 1628 - 1629".

I explain this protocol below in a slightly abbreviated form.

Georg Federlin

Thursday, the 24th of this [month = Nov. 23].

Has Mr. Lt. Eschbach, in the presence of the Common Schultheiss, questioned Georg Federlin nicely for a quarter of an hour? Because he has both stated "circumstantially" of all executed and for their Ensign had been declared. (This could mean that his compatriots named him as a witch). He was also in public disrepute with many. He should confess his guilt in all goodness and give no cause for authorized torture. He offered no other excuse than that he knew nothing about this vice. Which is why he was then bound and gradually pulled up by the cord so that he could still reach the ground with his feet. But since he did not want to confess anything, he was lowered again after half a quarter of an hour. Then leg-irons were put on his right thigh, he was pulled up again, but not raised from the ground. And since this did not catch anything with him, the little wreath was also put on him. Since he had made a start, he was soon lowered again.

However, since he was a bit fickle, he was still a little bit dressed and at his request he was given respite until the afternoon.

Afternoon

The aforementioned gentlemen reminded Federlin of his promise today. At first, he was reluctant to confess the truth. Since the rack was placed before him, and he was seriously threatened with it, he admitted something. Then immediately denied it. That is why he was tied to the rack and tightened for about half an hour. As soon as he was lowered again, he confessed:

He had once, namely 16 years ago, gone into the woods. In the process, the evil enemy came to him in the form of Klaus Greden's wife, with whom he had committed carnal immorality. Thereupon the latter had revealed himself to his paramour and had made him deny God with threatening words.

Eight days later he had the witch's wedding on the arbor in the parlor. The burnt Tuch Peter of Steinbach bound them both together in the devil's name. They had meat that tasted bad and good wine. But they lacked salt and bread. The sign had bitten his beloved on the left thigh. His beloved was called Margreta.

Dances

In the following summer, they would have held a dance under the arbor. In the process, a hailstorm, which spoiled the vines, had been cooked (probably means occurred). Attendants would have been: [There now follow a number of names of men and women, but they are not important in this account].

Friday, the 25th [Nov. 24].

Morning

The above-mentioned Federlin was further questioned in the presence of the two aforementioned gentlemen as to which other persons were present at the above-mentioned dances. He confesses amicably that [More names follow] were also at the dance.

Around St. John's Day of this year, they held a dance on the Schartenberg. Hail and rain boiled and spoiled the wine and acorns.

The third one was held soon after on the Wasen at Altschweier and a weather was boiled to spoil the remaining wine on the vines. Thereby had been found: [There follows again a whole series of names.]

On an anointed stick he had ridden every time to these and other dances and had spoken to it: Up and away, don't bump into anything.

Human damage

Six years ago, the aforementioned Georg himself hit a little boy named Hanslin on the head in the name of the devil, so that he soon died.

In addition, 14 years ago, he had grabbed the arm of a year-old girl named Annalin in the name of the Evil One, and she died within 14 days.

A year ago, he hit Hans Greden's wife on the head in the name of the devil, from which she suffered for three quarters of a year before dying.

Two years ago, he had grabbed the thigh of his brother-in-law, Friedrich Herbst, in bad faith. He suffered great pain for about eight days and had to be helped by the Schwarzbauer.

Six years ago, he killed Bartlin Hänfer's three-year old son in the same way.

Animals

Six years ago, he had beaten Hans Gassenmüller's cow in a bad way, so that it fell down within eight days.

Six years ago, he killed his own Kalbin in the same way.

*Before the **Tumult**, he did this to a calf of Georg Duppel.*

In addition, he did this to a sow 10 years ago.

He also did it to his brother-in-law Friedrich Herbst's sow.

Ten years ago, he did it to a calf of Friedrich.

Seducing people

Six years ago, he had led Bartlin Hänfer's daughter to this vice with the help of her mother.

Confession and Communion

He had never confessed this vice except a year ago in Fremersberg. However, the evil spirit had not left him. The holy (sacred). He received the holy host (Communion) in the name of the evil one and threw some of them in to the sink.

One shakes ones head somewhat incredulously when one sees what absurd accusations led to an indictment and ultimately also to a conviction at that time. But even in the year 2021, one can only wonder what abstruse opinions some people still have today and spread this in the media.

Bühl, November 2021

Rolf Federle